



LCT(5) 213

NORTH AFRICA AND SICILY

James Delk - Quartermaster

I remember seeing blood and guts all over the dock after the raid of the 21st. Several days later we are assigned the unpleasant task of recovering bodies from the Med.

Our LCT(5) 213 was built by the Bison Shipbuilding Company in Buffalo, New York. The keel was laid 4 October, she was launched 15 October and delivered to the U.S. Navy on 29 October, 1942.

Released to the U.S. Navy she was sailed via the Erie Canal and Hudson River to the New York City area. Having completed her fitting out and shakedown cruise she was placed atop USS LST 358.

5 April 1943--With original crew aboard we depart from Bayone N.J. for overseas assignment. We have not been told our destination.

9 April 1943--At anchor in harbor of Bermuda Island. The water is very clear, we can see sharks swimming below the LST. We are laying over waiting for other ships to form a larger convoy.

13 April 1943--A larger convoy having been formed we depart Bermuda. We now have been told our destination: North Africa. Each day at sunrise and sunset we go to general quarters. One morning during the drill we notice a red flare pop up from the ocean. The flare is in the middle of the convoy. Up comes a submarine, one of the escort ships opened fire. No age to the sub which s out to be British. We now know that red flares from the sea is a distress signal.

29 April 1943--At anchor Port Lyautey French Morocco N.W Atlantic, near Casablanca. While in port we are allowed liberty. This is our first time in a foreign country. We are shocked at the culture difference. Some of the local men were wearing mattress covers for trousers!! While in port the port authority request each ship to furnish men for interior guard duty. The skipper of the LST seemed pleased to assign this task to the LCT crew. Myself and one other member of our crew was given this task. Over-armed with ammo, our webb belt and canteen filled with water we commence patrolling the inside fence. A young French girl agreed to take our canteen to the loca1 wine shop and replace our water with wine. I must confess I rather enjoyed that tour of duty.

27 May 1943--We depart for Arzew Algeria

29 May 1943--Anchor in Arzew harbor.

1 June 1943--We depart for Birzette Tunisia.

4 June 1943--arrived at entrance to Lake Birzette. One of our escort ships a sub chaser was sunk. At this time we all thought it was due to a mine. The Navy has this Sub Chaser listed as sunk by an Italian Submarine.

13 June 1943--We are off-loaded from LST 358. On our own at last. We are based at Ferryville Tunisia as a part of Flotilla eleven.

8 July 1943--Loaded with tanks we depart the area of Lake Birzette. We are part of the Invasion fleet bound for Operation Husky in Sicily.

10 July 1943--At approximately 07.30 hour we land on red beach, Licata Sicily. All LCTs hit the beach in one wave. For the next two days we are used to assist other landing craft off the beach.

14 July 1943--We head back for Ferryville. All engines cease to operate. We have to be towed by a British Gunboat back to the Ferryville area.

13 August 1943--Underway for Palermo Sicily

14 August 1943--At anchor Palermo

15 August 1943--Took aboard army troops and equipment at San Steffano Sicily.

16 August 1943--0100 hrs land troops behind enemy lines at San Pietro Sicily.

17 August 1943--Sicily surrenders. We go back pick up army troops and land them at Termini Sicily.

19 August 1943--Back at Palermo. We off-load from liberty ships in the Med. and take to harbor to unload. While in the harbor we are not authorized to fire our guns. During air raid we go to a bomb shelter off the pier.

21 August 1943--We lose two sub chaser due to enemy air raid. The Navy has these ships being sunk at sea on the 23rd. The ships must have been towed away from the