

19 June 1944

Shortly after sunrise, the sea became very rough, the wind picked up velocity and it was apparent from the gray sky, a very severe storm was brewing. Rather than be washed up on the beach, we weighed anchor and headed for the liberty ships that were sunk to create a breakwater. It was nearly high tide so we had no problem securing our lines to the end liberty ship.

LCT-650 anchored about 75 yards from us and as the wind increased, the bow of LCT-650 was blown over to our bow. Our lines were not strong enough to hold both ships so we got all the ten inch housers we could from the liberty ship to hold our ship and used our lines to hold the bow of the LCT-650.

As the storm became more violent, our ship began to bend amidships. With every large wave, the bow would dip down, the cargo deck amidships would rise up and the stern would settle down in the water. Under these conditions, the lines to LCT-650 broke and the ship drifted away. After several hours of bending, it seemed the ship had to split in half. The men bravely manned the lines under very dangerous conditions. We "deep-sixed" our confidential orders in leaded bag provided and began to consider what to do next.

Surprisingly, an English LCT, HMS-965 seeking shelter, came alongside. It was obvious our ship would soon break up, so we packed all our personal gear, gave the English crew a free hand to take anything they wanted and we boarded their ship. When the storm began to subside, the English Skipper decided to get underway and ride out the storm at sea as our LCT was ready to split in half.

When the sea settled down we went ashore. My men searched the beach for our ship but could only find the bow section. The Officer in Charge on the beach, in his office which consisted of a desk and chair,

told us what he told all skippers that came to him for help: "Stick with your ship". We went back aboard HMS-965 and set sail for Portsmouth, England, arriving there before sunset.

Frank P. Hess,
Ensign USNR

EDITOR'S NOTE

After locating the photo on page 5 at the National Archives, I had contacted Mr. Hess about putting together his recollections on the Normandy invasion. On an earlier visit I had copied an action report by an Ensign Lloyd E. McVey, USNR, who had described the LCT(A) 2273 story in a report to the Commander of U.S. Naval Forces dated 10 July 1944. While preparing this issue, I received this letter from Mr. Hess:

In reading the Action Report, I realized that someone interviewed McVey, took notes and prepared the report 2 weeks later. The report reminded me of a few things I had forgotten, but there were so many erroneous statements in it. I believe the scribe mixed up his notes with those of another ship when he prepared his report.

About 2 days before the invasion, McVey reported for duty on LCT(A) 2273. He told me he had never been on an LCT and didn't know anything about them, but that he had a lot of experience with the Boy Scouts. When I think of fifty men in the small LCT living quarters for some 24 hours, I am sure that his Boy Scout training paid off. I believe my revised action report is accurate.

This certainly illustrates the risks in assuming that the "official" reports found in archival records are always 100% accurate. For this reason, we will make every attempt to use the reports of the Officer In Charge rather than other naval personnel.



LCT(A) 2273 suffers a broken back on Omaha Beach.
Photo from collection of Frank Hess.