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As it approaches I can see a blue pennant flying from the front right fender, with two occupants. This vehicle turned out to be a command car, larger than a Jeep--it was then that I realized it had to be someone of importance.

As it neared within 50 yards, I noticed the passenger--shiny helmet, clean dress uniform. Now the vehicle stops at the front end of our downed ramp. Then I realized it was Lt. General George Patton. He steps from the car, looks toward our ship, then starts to step onto the ramp. He stops and then I ask, "Who goes there?" He looks me up and down, I'm sure he wondered whose Navy we were in, then asks for "Permission to come aboard,". This I grant, and he walks up the ramp and salutes, as do I. I ask his business, and he requests to see the skipper. This action is strictly military, although the way he looked me over I wonder what he thought. I was wearing the .45 even though not quite in uniform.

I asked him to come with me and we start down the deck toward the skipper's quarters, we stop halfway down the deck where I ask him to please wait there, while I get the skipper. Needless to say he was all "spit and polish," he rested there--I went to get the skipper.

Reaching the skipper's quarter's, I announced, "Skipper, General Patton requests to talk with you." He was sitting at his fold-down desk writing, wearing his skivvy shirt and his cutoff khaki pants, just as comfortable as his crew. He turns while still seated and asks me, "What did you just say?" I repeated that General Patton would like to speak with him, he responded, "Sure he does". Then I had to convince him that it was true. He looked out through the partially open hatch, looked astonished, then turned to me and said, "It really is him!" Then he reached for his weather-beaten, seawater-encrusted hat, stepped out onto the deck, trying to look as military as possible while we walked up to meet the General. We saluted, talked to him for several minutes and then I was dismissed. They retired to the skipper's quarters.

Forty-five minutes later both appeared on deck. General Patton saluted, we did the same, then he turned and left the ship. Later at chow, (the skipper ate with us all the time) we were told that our flotilla received a commendation for our work. Nothing was said about our "uniforms" during the landings.

Two days later we were told to prepare for sea. Six LCT's and assorted escort vehicles were to make a behind-the-lines beaching near Palermo, trying to catch a larger part of the German army retreating along the coastal highway.



D-Day Crew of LCT-534

Top Row: Lewis Rockwell (Skipper Lt. jg); Luther Genter (BM 1c); A.B. Assarian (COX 2c); Franklin Dusenberry (SM 1c); Francis McCue (MM 1c); Flavis Hollis (SM 2c); A.L. McDermott (Ensign).

Middle Row: Raymond Badger (QM 1c); William H. Ralston (EM 1c); James Bryant (GM 2c).

Front Row: [unknown]; A.K. Evans; Ed Aumond (SM); Aubrey Collum (SM 2c); L.J. Gilbert (cook); Ed Owens (MM 1c).

Our beaching was a complete surprise and very successful, with no loss of life--but a day late. The Germans had moved all throughout the night. We captured a few hundred rear guard troops, and a lot of their equipment left behind. The action was called The Toorenova Landing.

More about this landing can be found in Morison's, "History of United States Naval Operations In World War II", volume 9 (pp.197-198) which covers Sicily, Italy and North Africa.

After the Sicily and Italian Campaigns, Wm. Ralston continued to serve aboard the LCT-534 and would go north to participate in the landings at Normandy. He was discharged in 1945 and continued to stay in touch with shipmate Ed Owens until Mr. Owens passing in 2001. William and his wife Mary attended last years LCT reunion in New Orleans. They make their home in Norristown, Pennsylvania.

