

60 YEARS AGO

Attu in the Aleutians

The first American amphibious island invasion of the War took place amongst the remote Aleutian Islands of Alaska in the late spring of 1943. Back in early 1942, Admiral Yamamoto directed a carrier raid on the small settlement of Dutch Harbor and landed troops on both Attu and Kiska, two of the farthest islands from the mainland. Japan never had a plan to invade Alaska itself.

The United States and its Canadian allies wasted no time in conducting air raids on these new Japanese bases throughout the latter half of 1942. In March of 1943 the U.S. won a naval battle that took place near Russia's Komandorski Islands and plans were made for a landing on Attu Island.

Eight LCTs took part in this initial assault on 11 May--fog was a persistent problem in the Aleutians during summer but the seas were calm that day. The LCTs unloaded supplies from the larger LSTs. It took two weeks of brutal battle to clear this island of its 2,379 Japanese defenders. Of this total, only 28 chose surrender over death. U.S. casualties included 600 dead and 1,200 wounded out of a force of 11,000 men.

Tunisia and Sicily in the Med

Preparations for the invasion of Sicily began after the fall of Tunisia in May of 1943. Rommels Afrika Corps had been pushed into Tunisia in April and forced to surrender the key ports of Tunis and Bizerte in early May. Bizerte would soon become home to LCT Flotillas 9 and 10 as they prepared for *Operation Husky*.

The beaches of southern Sicily were not amenable to the larger landing craft but the sandbars had just enough water over them to accommodate an LCT. In between the sandbar and the beach was a "runnel", a small lagoon deep enough to drown a tank or vehicle. The answer to this problem was the pontoon causeway, described by Morison in vol. 9 of his series, *History of U.S. Naval Ops in World War 2*:

The LCTs were *married* to an LST by cutting out a large hinged section of their topsides and were provided with special *jewelry* (Navy term for massive pelican hooks and other hardware used to clamp them to the LST) so each could be *married* to an LST with its bow ramp lowered, at right angles to the LSTs' axis. Tanks were then driven from the LST across the married LCT and into a 2nd LCT which closed the first bow-on, lowered its ramp and took the tanks aboard and then to shore. This method worked and became standard equipment for the LST Flotillas everywhere.

D-DAY MUSEUM BRICKS

As part of their *Road To Victory* campaign, the D-Day Museum in New Orleans sold bricks to the public--to be inscribed with the purchasers name and placed on the grounds of the museum. On behalf of our LCT reunion group, Bud Farmer purchased two such bricks--one for both of the major theaters of the war; Pacific and Europe.

The bricks are now in place and their locations can be found by obtaining a map at the information desk in the museum's Louisiana Memorial Pavilion. The D-Day Museum, visited by our reunion group last June, has achieved national and international recognition with attendance reaching over 829,000 by the end of 2002.

Future plans include new exhibits on the "forgotten" theaters of WWII including North Africa, Sicily and Italy, China-Burma-India, and the Aleutians Islands.

CORRECTIONS...

The photo on page 12 of our last issue of *Flotilla* was mis-labeled as the crew of LCT-213. Dean Rockwell has pointed out that the photo is, in fact, one of his own crew of the LCT-446. And that's Dean himself top row center.

Also please note a typo on page 5...just above the bottom photo, the LCT mentioned there should have been the LCT(A) 2275 which helped the 2273 retract off the beach. Our apologies.

SAVE THE PLEDGE

The American Family Association is joining others in an effort to pass a Constitutional Amendment protecting the Pledge of Allegiance and our national motto, "In God We Trust". This proposed amendment will prohibit judges from declaring them illegal.

To be successful, it will take the largest grassroots effort in history. For more info you can contact your U.S. Senators and Representatives, your state governor or sign the on-line petition at www.wepledge.com

PEACE ON EARTH...

As a prelude to the current War in Iraq, the nuclear aircraft carrier U.S.S. *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75) and the ships in her Battle Group, got underway from Norfolk, Virginia, in December of last year.

Just as the lines were being cast off, this announcement was broadcast throughout the ship and topside over the ships intercom:

*"Peace on Earth to men of goodwill.....
All others Stand By".*