



# USS LCI(L)-85

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Builder: Consolidated Steel Corporation, Orange, Texas

Commissioned: 1 January 1943

Decommissioned: N/A

Disposition: Lost in action on Omaha Beach, 6 June 1944

Length: 158' 6" oa

Beam: 23' 3"

Draft: 2' 8" (forward), 5' 3" (aft -- beaching condition)

Displacement: 216 tons (light); 234 tons (beaching condition); 389 tons (full load)

Propulsion: 8 x GM diesels; twin shafts (4 diesels per shaft); 1,600 hp; twin variable-pitch propellers

Range: 4,000 @ 12 knots

Top Speed: 15.5 knots

Complement: 3 officers, 21 enlisted

Troops: 188

Cargo capacity: 75 tons

Initial armament: 4 x 20mm (single-mount): 1 forward, 1 amidships, 2 aft; 2 x .50 caliber; 2" plastic splinter armor on gun shields, conning tower, and pilot house.

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## **Commanding Officers:**

LTJG Coit Hendley, USCGR

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## History:

### Flotilla 4 / 10, Group 29, Division 57

The Coast Guard-manned USS *LCI(L)-85* was commissioned on 1 January 1943. She was assigned to LCI(L) Flotilla 4. After undergoing shakedown and training exercises, she sailed across the Atlantic in company with the other LCI(L)s of the flotilla and participated in the North African occupation in Tunisia, from 1 June to 9 July 1943. She then landed troops during the invasion of Sicily on 9 July 1943 and the landings at Salerno on 9 September 1943.

She then sailed for England as part of the same flotilla, now renamed Flotilla 10, in preparation for the invasion of Normandy. Her commanding officer was LT(jg) Coit Hendley, USCGR. After undergoing training exercises throughout the spring of 1944, she landed troops on Omaha Beach on the morning of 6 June 1944. She was severely damaged by enemy fire and mines as soon as she landed. Hendley later stated: "The 88's began hitting the ship, they tore into the compartments and exploded on the exposed deck. Machine guns opened up. Men were hit and men were mutilated. There was no such thing as a minor wound." She retracted off the beach and sailed offshore to the *Samuel Chase* (APA-26) where she off-loaded the wounded before she capsized. She was then sunk with a mine. Fifteen soldiers aboard were killed in action, and approximately 30 soldiers and four of the *LCI(L)-85's* crew were wounded. Hendley's "After-Action" report reads as follows:

1. This is a report of the action of the USS LCI (L) 85 during Operation Neptune.
2. The USS LCI(L)L 85 sank on 6 June 1944 at approximately 1430 about 10 miles off the coast of France as a result of a teller mine exploding under the bow and shellfire suffered while landing troops on the beach assaulted by Assault Force "0". All ship's personnel were saved.
3. LCI (L) 85 arrived at the transport area with the other ships attached to Assault Force "0" and circled in the LCI collecting area until times to make the run into the beach. The ship was scheduled to hit Omaha Beach, sector Easy Red, at K plus 120 which made it at 0830 on 6 June 1944. At 0820 we arrived at the line of departure. The primary control vessel for Easy Red beach called to us by loud hailer and told us to go into the beach at this point. As a result of the strong tide running along the beach, the control vessel had drifted until it was almost past Easy Red beach. We actually landed in the left flank of Easy Red or the right flank of Fox Green rather than the right flank if Easy Red as scheduled.
4. We grounded at 0830 and put out both ramps. The water was too deep for the troops to wade ashore so we retracted both ramps and began to back off the beach. As the anchor was secured, something hit the aft winch causing her to stop running. There were no

LCVP's in sight to help unload so we went about a hundred yards to the right and made another beaching.

5. This beaching was made without the anchor as the winch would not start. As the ship grounded a teller mine exploded under the bow splitting the void tank. The port ramp went down and the troops began going ashore. Shells and machine gun fire began to hit us. About fifty troops got down the port ramp before a shell hit it and blew it off the sponsons and over the side. As the starboard ramp had not gone down and the wounded men were jamming the deck, we backed off the beach again.

6. A check revealed that we had approximately 15 dead and 30 wounded men all in the forward part of the ship. We had been hit approximately 25 times by shells. Fire was starting in troop compartments 1, 2, and 3. Water was coming in slowly from shell holes below the water line and the hole made by the mine. No hits had been suffered from the engine room aft.

7. We backed off the beach and stood off about 200 yards. The damage control party began fighting the fire and within 30 minutes had them out. In compartments 1 and 2 the fire had been bunks, blankets, etc. burning. In compartment 3 oil from a punctured fuel tank was also burning.

8. As we were carrying several Army and Navy doctors and our pharmacists' mates, the wounded received immediate care.

9. All but about 30 of the troops that were able to go ashore were sent in by LCVP. We could not get enough to complete unloading, so we proceeded to the USS SAMUEL CHASE to unload the casualties. We went along the CHASE about 1200. We had a bad list from the water in the compartments forward.

10. The damage control party was making an attempt to pump out the water with three Pacific Pumpers but it was not too successful. The strainers on the pumps would clog up after five minutes running and would have to be cleaned.

11. By 1330, all the wounded and dead were transferred to the CHASE. We backed away from her and were taken in tow by the AT 98. We had such a bad list that the tugboat captain and I decided to try to pump the water rather than make the beach.

12. The attempt was unsuccessful and the LCI (L) 85 capsized about 1430.

The crew scrambled on board the tug before she went over. She turned slowly on her side and then bottom up immediately. A demolition charge was put in her stern and she then went down completely.

13. Casualties to the crew were four men wounded. These men were placed on the CHASE for treatment.

14. Confidential publications and confidential material on board was on the bridge in a weighted sack and went down with the ship in 14 fathoms of water.

Lt. (jg) Coit Hendley USCGR  
Commanding Officer

[Click here](#) to read LT(jg) Hendley's account of his D-Day experiences written for the *Washington Times* in 1984.

The *LCI(L)-85* earned four battle stars for her service in World War II. All *LCI(L)*s of Flotilla 10 were retroactively awarded the Coast Guard Unit Commendation for their service in the invasion of Normandy.

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"American troops taking exercise on the docks in England prior to D-Day. *LCI-94* in center."; no date/photo number, photographer unknown.

Photo provided courtesy of Mr. Elmer Carmichael, a Coast Guardsman who served aboard the *LCI(L)-85* on D-Day.



"#2 gun crew of LCI(L)-85."; no date/photo number; photo by Elmer Carmichael.

Photo provided courtesy of Mr. Elmer Carmichael, a Coast Guardsman who served aboard the LCI(L)-85 on D-Day.

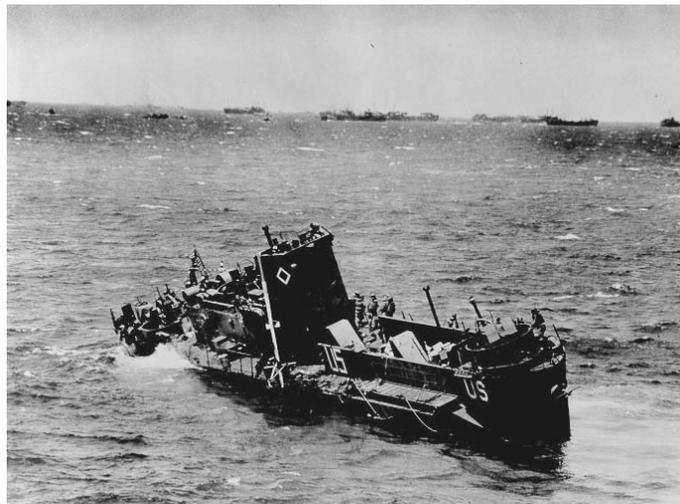


"NORTH EUROPEAN INVASION REHERSALS, SPRING 1944: USS LCT-624 and LCI-85 at a landing beach, probably at or near Slapton Sands, England, during rehearsals for Operation 'Overlord.'"; no date; Photo No. NH-100085-KN; photographer unknown.



"Elmer Carmichael going on liberty in Falmouth, England, in November, 1943.";  
no photo number; photographer unknown.

Photo provided courtesy of Mr. Elmer Carmichael, a Coast Guardsman who  
served aboard the LCI(L)-85 on D-Day.



No caption; 6 June 1944; Photo No. NA 26-G-06-10-44 (4); photographer  
unknown. Official USCG photo in care of the National Archives.

This was one of two photos sent by wire back to the U.S. and appeared across  
the nation's newspapers on 7 June 1944.



No caption; 6 June 1944; Photo No. NA 26-G-06-10-44 (3); photographer unknown. Official USCG photo in care of the National Archives.

This was one of two photos sent by wire back to the U.S. and appeared across the nation's newspapers on 7 June 1944.



**"COAST GUARD CRAFT SINKING:** A Coast Guard LCI (Landing Craft, Infantry) lists sharply after being fatally hit during the invasion of the coast of France. One man clings to a life raft (at left), another lies wounded on a stretcher, and a third sprawls dead on the deck. The wounded were transferred to an assault transport before the ship plunged beneath the waves."; 6 June 1944; Photo No. 2344; photographer unknown.

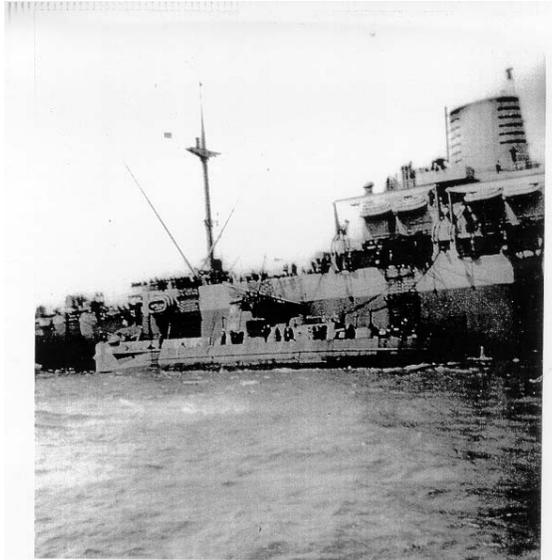


"Wounded American fighters lay on stretchers on the deck of a Coast Guard LCI (landing craft, infantry), ready to be transferred to an assault transport just before the Coast Guard ship rolled over and sank after being hit during the invasion of the French coast. A dead soldier can be seen sprawled on deck at the left."; 6 June 1944; Photo No. 2350; photographer unknown.



ENLARGEMENT TAKEN OFF PICTURE OF L.C.I.(L) #85 COMING ALONG SIDE THE SAMUEL B. CHASE. ELMER CARMICHAEL KNEELING AT THE MOORING BITS AND PAT MCGUIRE HOLDING ON TO THE HAND RAILS.

A closeup of the previous photo provided courtesy of Mr. Elmer Carmichael, a Coast Guardsman who served aboard the LCI(L)-85 on D-Day. He noted: "Elmer Carmichael kneeling at the mooring bits and Pat McGuire holding on to the hand rails."; 6 June 1944; Photo No. 2350; photographer unknown.



L.C.I. (L) #85 TIED UP ALONG SIDE THE USS SAMUEL CHASE (APA-26) AS WE UNLOADED WOUNDED AND DEAD. THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN BY ED MATOUSEK ON L.C.I. (L) #84 WHICH HAD ABOARD A LARGE WATER-PUMP AND #84 HAD BEEN DISPATCHED TO COME TO THE AID OF #85. WHEN THEY SAW THAT IT WOULD BE HOPELESS TO TRY TO PUMP OUT #85, THEY WENT ON THEIR WAY ON OTHER ASSIGNMENTS. L.C.I. (L) #85 SPENT OVER TWO HOURS UNLOADING WOUNDED & DEAD ONTO THE CHASE.

"L. C. I. (L) #85 tied up along side the USS Samuel Chase (APA-26) as we unloaded wounded and dead. This picture was taken by Ed Matousek on L.C.I. (L) #84 which had aboard a large water-pump and #84 had been dispatched to come to the aid of #85, when they saw that it was hopeless to try to pump out #85, they went on the way on other assignments. L. C. I. (L) #85 spent over two hours unloading wounded & dead onto the Chase."; 6 June 1944; no photo number; photo by Ed Matousek.

Photo provided courtesy of Mr. Elmer Carmichael, a Coast Guardsman who served aboard the LCI(L)-85 on D-Day.



ONE OF OUR CREW MEMBERS RECEIVING FIRST AID TREATMENT AFTER BEING WOUNDED ON-DAY AT OMAHA BEACH. PICTURE TAKEN AT THE #2 GUN STATION JUST AFT OF THE BRIDGE AND WHEEL HOUSE.

THIS IS U.S.-COAST GUARD MANNED L.C.I. (L) #94, CREW AND 2 MEDICS RENDERING FIRST AID TO A WOUNDED PERSON. THE SAILOR HOLDING THE BLOOD PLASMA BOTTLE IS CLIFF LEWIS, THE LATE HUSBAND OF ELIA LEWIS AND THE SAILOR WITH THE WHITE SLEEVES SHOWING IS LEE WITTKR. THIS COMBAT PICTURE TAKEN BY ROBERT CAPRA, LIFE MAGAZINE PHOTOGRAPHER.

"One of our crewmembers receiving first aid treatment after being wounded on D-Day at Omaha Beach. Picture taken at the #2 gun station just aft of the bridge and wheel house. The sailor holding the blood plasma bottle is Cliff Lewis, the late husband of Ella Lewis and the sailor with the white sleeves showing is Lee Wittke. This combat picture [was] taken by Robert Capra, Life Magazine photographer."; 6 June 1944; no photo number.

This crewman had been evacuated to the LCI(L)-94 from the sinking LC(L)-85. Photo provided courtesy of Mr. Elmer Carmichael, a Coast Guardsman who served aboard the LCI(L)-85 on D-Day.

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## ***LCI's ARE VETERANS NOW***

by LTJG Arthur Farrar, USCGR

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This article appeared in the December, 1944 (Vol. VI, No. 9) issue of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy *Alumni Association Bulletin*, pp. 181-191. LTJG Farrar was an officer serving aboard the LCI(L)-85 and he describes the history of Coast Guard-manned LCI(L) Flotilla 4/10 and his particular LCI from the time he reported aboard the landing ship to its destruction off the beaches of Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944.

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This is the story of a Coast Guard LCI (L) Flotilla, veteran of three major invasions at Sicily, Salerno, and Normandy, as seen by an officer attached to one of the fighting ships of that Flotilla. I was one of twenty-two members of the class which was graduated from the Reserve School at the Academy in February, 1943, who were assigned to the newly-completed LCI's.

Commander (now Captain) Miles H. Imlay was in command of the flotilla. At that time LCI's were on the list of secret weapons and none of us had even heard of them before. Upon arriving at Galveston no time was wasted in getting down to the docks to see what appeared to be a combination of a bad dream and a Buck Rogers creation.

At this point the LCI's had been commissioned but had not made the shakedown cruise. The Commanding Officers and Execs. had previous sea duty but none had ever before seen an LCI. It is a landing craft for infantry, 157 feet long, with a beam of 23 feet. It carries four officers, a crew of twenty-five men, and has sleeping and messing accommodations for around two hundred soldiers.

First experiences at handling them proved more excitement having disastrous results in mooring the slips. They are light and large enough to catch every breeze. They have no keel to hold them steady, and the large flat bottom reacts to every little twist of the currents. Skippers were having disastrous results in mooring the ships. Stanchions were knocked off so often a welding crew was kept going at top speed repairing the damage. Commanding Officers were called down for poor ship handling and it got so bad that a Lieutenant Commander in charge of one of the groups was sent to show how to bring an LCI in to moor. He brought her in all right but as a result three LCI's had major welding work to be done. No one else has ever come out to show how to handle the Ugly Ducklings.

The shakedown cruise provided invaluable handling experience for officers and crew. It also brought to light some astounding communication work. One division leader showed his complete knowledge of flag hoists by a three-halyard hoist as follows: on the first halyard was "Fox, Oboe, Roger, Mike"; on the second was the one flag "Able"; and the third was "Love, Item, Nan, Easy." Sure enough, the division formed a line.

Another LCI got lost on the shakedown cruise. The skipper headed for Galveston as best he could but when land was sighted it wasn't Galveston. Not knowing in which direction Galveston lay, the best he could do was follow the coast in what he thought was the right direction until some landmark could be recognized. Finally a Coast Guard station was sighted and relief was great. The station was called by flashing light. Coast Guardsmen came out and looked but there was no answer to the signal. The LCI went in closer and the signalman tried semaphore. By this time there was a large group of lookers but no answer. Finally one bright fellow got on a horse and started riding out to meet the ship. When the two were in hailing distance the skipper shouted, "Which way to Galveston"? The Coast Guardsman pointed and shouted, "That-away," and another major communication problem was successfully handled.

We were ordered to Norfolk for outfitting. As the ships filed down the channel on the way out to the Gulf two red flags were seen flying from the Coast Guard station. The warning was right. A gale met us before the convoy was well out of sight of land. To most of us Ensigns and a large part of the crew, this was to be the first sea duty. It was a rugged initiation. Some say an LCI will roll on a heavy dew. In this gale they did everything. They rolled and pitched and shuddered. Sometimes they hit a wave with a jolt like running into a brick wall. The storm lasted four days. When we arrived at Key West, land never before looked so beautiful. We Ensigns were among the first on the docks. Everyone had on new uniforms and they were all much too large. The five days of bad seas had made a sorry mess of some brand new Ensigns.

Fine weather prevailed at Key West but when we were a half day's journey further on the waves began kicking up again. By night giant rollers were tossing the ships around like fishing corks. The convoy was slowed down. It was difficult

to sleep holding on and that was the only way to stay on a bunk. All the cooks were sick but it didn't make much difference because no one felt good and many who thought they were old salts found themselves violently ill. As for myself, I didn't feel so bad but I just couldn't control my stomach. I didn't need any time-piece for watch standing because my stomach would take on a fit of convulsions every twenty minutes. After eleven of these it would be time to call my relief and at the twelfth one he would take over the watch.

Waves got to be about thirty feet high and were coming at such an angle that many times the ship three hundreds yards away would be completely hidden. I found that I could eat in the fresh air so I took my dinner to the conning station and sat down on the deck to eat. The bulkheads were five feet high. The ship rolled over to the right and I could see all the LCI's in the starboard column. It recovered and rolled back to the left and the port column came into view.

Storms continued until the convoy was within a half day's journey of Norfolk. Upon arriving, several men were sent to the hospital and a few others transferred because of chronic sea-sickness. A colored steward's mate spoke what a lot of us were thinking when he came into the wardroom and in all seriousness asked, "Suh, Do you know any way ah can git into the awmy ?"

The next few days were spent in equipping the flotilla for an extended stay in foreign ports. Each crew also found time to get in target and beaching practice. On the first day of April "good-bye" was said to the U. S. and the journey across was begun. An all-Coast Guard LCI Flotilla was headed for the wars.

Weather generally was excellent. It seemed too nice after the trip to Norfolk. A welcome stop-over was made at beautiful Bermuda, where everyone had a good time. This was our first use of foreign money, though before long a good old greenback was looked upon as a novelty. There were ball games, golf, and a vacation land to visit. The men were given two barbecues with all the free pop and beer they could drink. Our foreign duty was off to a good start.

The trip across was slow. It took nineteen more days, but the weather was good and there were few submarine scares and no action. Landfall was made at a Northwest African port and more intense training for invasion was begun. Much training was needed to successfully beach and retract in a high surf. Weaknesses were found and improvements made on the LCI's. There was a lot of formation running and target practice drills.

Planes to tow targets were not available often enough, so large kites were made. The towing LCI would run up the kite and come at full speed toward and a quarter mile to the seaward of the division firing. The division would also go at full speed to make the target more difficult. So many kites were shot down by the first ship in line that a rule was made so that all firing was to be at the tail of the

kite so every ship would get to shoot. All officers and men on the ship were trained to be able to use the 20mm guns.

A number of hammerhead sharks were seen in the area and often at the noon "time off" period the LCI's would rove around individually, and rifles, tommy guns, and 45's were used against the unwary sharks. The flotilla soon began moving closer to the battle front and our training took us from port to port until the Tunisian campaign was finished and we came to our new home right where the fighting in Africa stopped.

Here something new was encountered. Air raids were frequent but seldom serious. Training with soldiers began. Rangers wanted lots of practice at landing. In a typical practice a division of LCI's went to the docks and took on about 150 rangers each. A beach was selected beforehand and operation plans worked out. The division would steam out in formation and cruise in such a manner as to arrive at the beach at "H" hour. Ramps were rigged and upon approaching the beach they were led out to the balance point and brakes set. Rangers in full equipment lined up orderly and crouched like track men ready to take off. When the beach was hit, the brakes were released, the ramps dropped and would no sooner hit than rangers were on their way.

Rangers do not feel their way down the ramps. They run. In a few seconds each is flattened out behind a rock, bush or ledge and shooting at their objectives. In practice the LCI would remain beached and in a few minutes the beach was considered taken so all the rangers came back aboard, and put away their equipment. Then the darndest swimming party imaginable would take place in the beautiful blue waters of the Mediterranean.

Plane identification classes were added to the training program. All men received this training but one officer and three men were selected from each ship for an intensive course. As a result all planes used in that area could be easily recognized before they came in range of the guns.

Our first action was in the Sicilian invasion. LCI's from Flotilla Four were assigned several different beaches and consequently went across with different sections of the convoy.

The loading of soldiers was a big day. When troops were aboard, the LCI would go to its assigned anchorage and wait the signal to leave. Troops were kept aboard nearly two days before departing. It was July and swimming was at its best. Soldiers, used to the dust and heat of a dry African plain, took to the water like ducks.

The convoy of loaded ships of every description gathered here was enormous. An air raid was expected and came the night before we left. The raid was made by from fifty to seventy German planes. To get to the ships they had to come in

range of land anti-aircraft defense which was terrific. Dozens of large searchlights picked out the planes and there probably will never be a more intense curtain of fire than was put up to these Nazi raiders. Almost all of the thousand or so ships fired, and this, added to the land AA defense, made it a suicide bomb run. As a result most bombs dropped far out in the fields and no damage was suffered by the convoy. Five planes were seen to fall. Some of the Nazi flyers were picked up out of the water and carried to the invasion.

The trip across was anything but pleasant because of the terrifically bad weather. A fifty-mile-an-hour gale made an angry mess of the usually beautiful and placid Mediterranean. Troops were very sick.

It was extremely difficult to keep position in heavy seas in the daytime, and at night a four-hour O.D. watch was a killer. Because of the cross-seas a course could not be held but changes were rapidly and constantly made to keep in the general direction of the guide. When considering that the LCI upon which we were guiding was doing the same thing it is easier to see why, while on the same convoy course, the helmsman would receive orders to steer courses ranging from 80° to 150°. The heading would be perfect one instant and the next a huge roller would come along, pick up the bow and toss it 15° to 30° off.

Upon reaching the rendezvous area the seas quieted down like magic. This was about 0200. A few searchlights swept over the sea in our direction. More joined and there was a distinctly uneasy and eerie feeling as those lights, evenly spaced along the shore, swept back and forth across our ships. Each moment we expected the big guns of the fighting ships to blast out, but the stillness was unbroken. Far in the distance we could see a lot of shooting where other landings were being made.

Finally came the time to run for the beach. The first wave was delayed for some reason so that when it came time to go the guide started off at full speed. Those who didn't catch on quickly had to run at flank to catch up.

On approaching the beach single shots of tracer fire could be seen at regular intervals of time. They were going parallel to the beach and looked like balls of fire looping through the air. They traveled so slowly we thought someone was shooting flares along the beach to show us where to land. The error was soon realized though upon arriving close enough to hear the shells whine as they hit the water and bounced off. The firing was coming from behind a knoll and was not accurate.

We beached in the darkness before dawn, amid a number of LCI's and LCVP's. All three of the first waves had reached the shore almost at the same time. On my ship we were so scared our voices sounded strange. While the skipper was giving necessary orders the signalman and myself were assisting by reporting everything going on. Upon sighting a tracer coming our way we would yell

"Duck" and the skipper always believed us. Finally while the troops were going off I saw a shell headed directly at the conning station just waist high. I yelled something quick and ducked behind the compass stand. The others ducked too but nothing else happened. The skipper began to laugh and it was catching. He still claims I yelled, "Duck, here comes a pink one !" Witnesses say that shell exploded just before reaching the ship. Anyway, we have never had the same feeling in hitting the beach. Even later when strong opposition was certain all of the officers and crew were rid of the tenseness felt on that first landing.

After disembarking troops the "85" got away as quickly as possible and went back to the transport area. Day was just breaking and an air raid was on. It wasn't serious but everyone got to do some shooting.

We were immediately ordered back to the home port for more troops. Full speed was maintained there and back and in the wee hours of the morning two days later we were hovering off the same beach awaiting landing orders. In our absence the fight had gone well for us and we were ordered to take our troops to the port at Licata instead of beaching again.

Some of the LCI's were assigned as salvage vessels, some were used as messenger ships, some as decoys, and others continued to bring reinforcements. This work continued off and on until the next invasion. Between times the regular training program continued.

Preparation for the landing at Salerno was much the same as before except that troops were picked up at several different ports. It was at one of these ports after being loaded and anchored in convoy formation that our most narrow escape took place. Piper Cubs had been flying up and down the coast all afternoon. About dusk what appeared to be another Cub came leisurely toward the ships down close to the water and with running lights on. No one gave it a second look until a splash was heard. One man said, "He dropped something !" and another yelled "Torpedo !" The plane switched off its lights and zoomed away without a shot being fired at it. The torpedo came rushing on, passed underneath directly amid-ship and kept on its way to strike an LST and put it out of the invasion. A group of army officers were on deck at the time and said they would never again curse an LCI. The torpedo must have missed by not more than two feet.

Some found the landing tough. We found no opposition except for occasional dive-bombing and strafing by single planes that kept sneaking in. The one-plane attacks came on an average of one every hour. Night raids were something else. They were terrific and would occur around 2300 and 0400. The Germans lit up the entire area with so many flares it was possible to read a paper by the light. Several LCI's got very close calls but none was destroyed. The "319" received the most serious damage when a plane that was falling strafed on the way down, causing casualties to some of the gun crew. The follow-up work was

about the same as for the other invasion. We were based in Sicily for the operation and spent some time ashore.

The flotilla was commended for its work and ordered to England. We were told it was because ours was the best LCI group in the Mediterranean. We were glad to get the orders regardless of the reasoning behind them. At last we were getting in the big league.

The trip to England was made unescorted and without incident except that a group flagship became separated in a storm and made the last two days of the trip by herself. It was an amusing incident because in our sailing orders for this trip was one sentence stating~ "It will be a reflection on any ship to straggle or lose position."

England was second best to being home. It looked so good to see stores with things to sell even if coupons were needed to make a purchase. It was a treat to go ashore and just talk to someone without having to make a lot of gestures necessary in getting anything over to the French, Arabs, or Italians.

We were in England for the big push and an intensive training program was started. New circumstances were continually met and a solution learned. Beaching acquired a new twist. The "85" was the first to beach in England and learned the lesson first and thoroughly. The "88" and "85" were sent out to practice. The "85" went in to try the beach first. Instead of grounding out a ways from shore as usual, we were able to go right up to the shore and drop the ramps on dry sand. That was the first dry beaching we had ever made so we waited to see if the "88" did as well. She did, so we started to retract. The ship wouldn't budge. The "88" made it off after a struggle and put a line over to tow. Both ships strained their best but to no avail. We were high and dry. Before the hour was out one could jump ashore from mid-ships and light on the sand. We got off at the next high tide and had to do a lot of explaining to get back in the harbor after dark.

Beaching and target practices were frequent. Possible and probable casualties were outlined and practices set up to remedy them. Ladders were rigged to the bow so troops could get off if the ramps were destroyed. Temporary Catheads and block and tackle were provided to use in case of emergency. Damage control material of all kinds was brought aboard. In short, casualty drills were practiced so that hits in any one part of the ship would not stop its effectiveness.

Many full scale practice operations were made so that landing was natural for both sailors and soldiers. Operations were planned to be as near as possible like the real operation. Often the soldiers believed they were on their way to France until the ship left port and they would be told the plan.

Officers and men were kept busy attending special schools when their ship was not scheduled to go out. Everyone on the ship learned the art of fire fighting at a specially equipped school where roaring gasoline and fuel oil fires were continually started and extinguished for practice. Plane recognition classes got to be almost an everyday occurrence in port. Even the black gang could tell a JU-88 from a B-26 or an ME-109 from a Spitfire. There was a great deal of target practice and even range firing.

Two pharmacist mates were placed on each LCI. All the men were taught first aid for battle wounds. Gas warfare defense received a lot of attention. Each man was given the proper equipment to protect against gas and knew how to use it. He also was taught how to treat himself if he did get gassed. By D-Day there was a definite feeling among the crew that they could take care of themselves. They weren't cocky, but there was a confidence that comes from good training.

Invasion craft began to congregate in such numbers at certain points that it was clear the big day was to be soon. When the troop transports came in and liberty was stopped we knew it was imminent. The Germans knew it too. There were several nuisance air raids but three days before D-Day they came over in earnest. There was a lot of shooting and nineteen men of the flotilla received injury from flak. No damage to ships was done by enemy action although there were some near misses by bombs and eleven mines were found in the harbor next morning.

Troops were loaded and the Commanding Officers given the starting time for the invasion. It was delayed one day but troops stayed on. They had been on the ship four days. For over a week all men had been restricted to the ship. If they had to go on the deck for anything they could go in the company of an officer.

Among the troops on the "85" were three doctors and a lot of pharmacist mates. One army doctor was a captain who won the Silver Star at Salerno. Another received the Purple Heart at Sicily. Both had served in the Tunisian Campaign. They were to set up a first aid station a mile and a half inland at H plus two hours.

The fast assault convoy of which we were a part left port about 1900 June 5. Darkness came about 2330 and we were just about 20 miles off the French coast at the time. By 0200 we were in the edge of the transport area and by 0400 were circling in the assigned position waiting our time to go to the beach.

From midnight on air activity could be seen in France. Cones of flak in varying colors were continually reaching up into the sky. At times there were heavy concentrations of flares as our bombers began unloading on their assigned targets. They were the first allied flares we had seen. Before we had always been on the receiving end and saw German flares.

We were to land our troops at 0830. At 0730 we left the transport area and headed for France at full speed. The weather was still bad enough to cause water to be taken over the bow continuously. Men working on ramps were drenched. Five miles off shore, wreckage was floating around and numerous life belts and packs were observed. At exactly the right time the control vessel was passed and we were waved on in to the beach. There wasn't any activity to be noted on the beach, but the wreckage told of terrific fighting.

A path 50 yards wide was supposed to be cleared through the underwater obstacles but we found it nearer to ten yards wide and only partially cleared. The approach was uneventful and at the edge of the obstacles she grounded. Ramps were dropped and a sailor ran down with a line to take ashore. This was to test the water and to aid the soldiers who were carrying full packs and might stumble in the waves without something to hold to. The sailor immediately went in water over his head. He was quickly pulled back on, the ramps were picked up and we left the beach to try another place. Meanwhile the ship was hit by three 88 mm shells and there were several wounded soldiers.

We then tried ramming through the obstacles about 200 yards to the right of our assigned place. The ship rammed hard and this time the water was just waist deep at the end of the ramps. The water was deeper between the ship and shore but it was decided to let the troops go off.

They went off as fast as possible but the water was so deep and swift that they had to use the life line all the way and it was slow going. Heavy shelling began immediately when the soldiers started off. 88 mm fire was directed at the ship and machine gun fire at the men in the water. Casualties were heavy both places. One ramp could not be used because of the beach obstacles and the other was twisted out of place by the strong current running parallel to the beach. It jumped the rollers and fell down about five feet below the deck level and prevented other troops from going ashore. The skipper backed the ship off the beach as fast as possible and was soon out of the firing sector of the beach defense guns. The broken ramp was hanging down in the water and three men, all wounded, were still clinging on. I happened to be one of them and can testify to a rough ride with plenty of dunkings.

Able-bodied troops left aboard were transferred to small boats for their third try at the beach. I don't know whether they made it or not but they were brave men to be so willing to get in the small boat and again face the fire that had already wounded so many of their comrades.

The broken ramp was hoisted out of the water and we headed for the nearest transport to get medical attention for the wounded. On the way, fire broke out three times and all pumps were kept busy putting out fires and pumping out water. The "85" was practically awash in the stern and listing badly when we reached the transport. The wounded were evacuated and a large salvage tug

came alongside and put over her pumps. It was all in vain and our ship went down soon after.

That ended my experience in the invasion and flotilla, because I was one of those evacuated wounded. My fellow officers who remained over there have told me that all LCI's which landed on that beach reached a similar welcome, and all had lost soldiers and part of their crew. Four Coast Guard LCI's saw their last action on that historic June 6 and others were crippled badly. They were repaired and carried on. A thousand jobs were found for them in the follow-up work and they did them well.

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**Sources:**

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