



USS LST-326

Builder: Philadelphia Navy Yard

Commissioned: 26 February 1943

Decommissioned: 18 December 1944

Disposition: Sold to France.

Length: 327' 9" oa

Beam: 50'

Draft: 1' 6" bow, 7' 5" stern (unloaded); 8' 2" bow, 14' 1" stern (loaded -- at sea);
3' 1" bow, 9' 6" (loaded -- beaching)

Displacement: 1,625 (light); 4,080 (w/ full load of 2,100 tons)

Propulsion: 2 x General Motors 12-567 diesels, twin shafts/rudders

Range: 24,000 nm @ 9 knots

Top Speed: 11.6 knots

Complement: 111

Troops: 163

Armament: 7 x 40mm (single mount); 6 x 20 mm (single mount); 2 x .50-caliber
mgs; 4 x .30-caliber mgs

Commanding Officers:

LT J. C. Saussy, USCGR: 25 August 1943 - 18 December 1944

History:

USS LST-326
LST Flotilla 11, Group 32

The USS *LST-326* was commissioned on 26 February 1943 as a Navy-manned vessel. On 25 August 1943 the officers and crew of the *LST-175* exchanged places with the Navy officers and crew of *LST-326* and she became a Coast Guard-manned vessel.

On 27 January 1944, she took part in the Anzio-Nettuno landings on the coast of Italy, operating with Task Force "Shingle Peter" she anchored at 0010-A. All troops and DUKWs were discharged according to schedule and the small boats returned reporting that troops had landed with no casualties. Throughout D-Day *LST-326* was under fire from enemy batteries with shells falling as close as 30 feet. At 1324, at the height of the attack, batteries were spotted and estimated within range of her 3"/50 gun. The *LST-326* and *351* requested permission to fire but the request was denied, so the *326* was moored to the outer anchorage as the shelling continued. At 1600 she was ordered to proceed to Sector X-Ray where she arrived at 1830 and anchored. Next day she was signaled to discharge remainder of her vehicles via pontoons causeway. She was beached at 1130 and by 1340 all vehicles were safely ashore. At 1430 she proceeded to convoy assembly area off Anzio and at 2335A formed astern of *LST-320*. Early on the 24th she returned to Naples and moved to Bara, Italy, on the 25th where she loaded six officers and 168 enlisted men of the 1st Armored Division with tanks and vehicles and again proceeded toward Anzio in convoy. On the 26th she opened fire on a German plane flying low up sun, but the plane did not come in. At Green Beach, Anzio, on the 27th she unloaded vehicles and sent in four LCVPs to assist in salvage work, beaching at Red Beach at 1610. Seven red alerts ensued but no action was taken toward the enemy. On the 28th at 0728 there was a red alert and the LST expended 14 rounds of 40-mm ammunition. A stern lookout at 1639 reported a squadron of Curtiss P-40s coming in from the south at 3,000 feet and a minute later the LST was dive-bombed in a surprise attack, three bombs landing from 50 to 100 feet away, starboard and port. The decks were strafed and the barrage balloon carried away with no effective damage. No red alert was received and no ammunition expended.

At 1740 there was a red alert and the *326* began making smoke and ten minutes later there was an attack by four enemy Dornier DO-217s coming in from the north at 3,000 feet. The 3"/50 guns opened fire. A red glow was observed under one plane followed by streaks of sparks. This was later believed to be jet propulsion. Seconds later the cruiser HMS *Spartan* received a direct hit on the after gun turret and there was a terrific explosion. Small boats of the *326* were ordered away to rescue survivors. Another red glow was now observed approaching the *326* all of whose guns were firing the 20-mm at the bomb and the 3"/50 at the planes. This second bomb went forward of the bow and seconds later an explosion was heard believed to be a Liberty ship. Two more bombs were released under continuous fire from all ships but the red glow ceased under

fire and it was not known where these bombs fell. Planes circling the area came on the port side and two more bombs were released but it was not known where they landed. The 326 was secured from general quarters at 1817. Meanwhile at 1805 the LST's small boats returned from the *Spartan* carrying wounded survivors and a Navy officer departed with them for HMS *Delphi*. At 1940 another small boat returned with two seriously wounded officers and five survivors suffering from exposure. The latter were brought aboard for dry clothing and a ration of brandy while the two wounded officers were dispatched to the *Delphi*. At 2100 a Liberty ship 3/4 mile off the port bow burst into flames and began to drift on the 326, who got underway for a new anchorage. Ten minutes later there was a red alert and anchors aweigh she began to make smoke which because of wind direction did not cover her. Anchoring again she maneuvered the stern into the wind to receive the benefit of the smoke. A plane was heard diving on the LST at 2223 and its bomb struck 200 feet off the port bow. All clear at 2243 no ammunition expended.

On 1 February 1944, the *LST-326* proceeded to Naples and picking up *LCT-198* prepared to tow her to Bizerte, but due to unfavorable weather conditions the order was cancelled and on the 6th she joined a convoy for Bizerte towing the *LCT-198*. Heavy seas en route caused the *LCT-198* to lose her ramp and misship railings. The 326 anchored in the lee of Cape Guardia at 1630 on the 9th and soon afterwards the *LCT-198* departed for Bizerte. The *LST-326* followed on the 10th. She began loading cargo on the 13th and with eight officers and 67 enlisted men departed in convoy on the 15th for Arzew, Algeria. En route she was ordered to Philippville, Algeria, and anchored on the 16th in the lee of Cape Stora. She proceeded on the 18th with three other LSTs escorted by the *SC-978*. There were continuous rain squalls on the 19th but on the 20th weather conditions moderated as she moored at Arzew. Here she participated in night assault maneuvers until 3 March 1944, attached to Group 3, Flotilla 1.

On 3 March 1944, *LST-326* joined convoy UGS-33 for Naples, via Bizerte. Detached from the convoy at Bizerte she proceeded with *LST-351* and escorts to Nisida, Italy, arriving 8 March 1944. From 23 March, 1944 she was operating on the Anzio Ferry Service. She detached on the 24th for a trip to Ajaccio, Corsica, and returned to rejoin the Ferry Service on the 27th where she operated until 14 April 1944. From April 15 to 30 she was at Palermo, Sicily, for installation of new armament and necessary repairs. She arrived at Oren on 15 May 1944, attached to 11th Amphibious Force and on 19 May 1944, joined convoy MKS-49, which on the 22nd joined convoy SL-158 until 31 May 1944, where with two other LSTs she detached and proceeded to Port Talbot, Wales, under escort of HMS *K-420* and *H-22*.

The *LST-326* participated in the invasion of Normandy on D-Day and, while detailed reports of her operations during the period June 6 -29 are not available she appears to have made a number of trips from England to France. On the afternoon of 29 June 1944, while returning to England in a northbound convoy

from the beachhead in France the 326 passed the southbound convoy in mid-channel. Four ships in this southbound convoy had just been hit by undetermined agents and the *LST-326* was detached to aid one of them, the Liberty ship *SS H. G. Blasdel*, who had already settled considerably by the stern. A small boat with a doctor was lowered by the LST and dispatched to the *Blasdel*. A corvette and another smaller craft were taking off casualties but their facilities were limited. There was a No. 1. sea and the LSTs small boats could not get the men off the sinking Liberty ship soon enough as their number was too great. It was therefore decided to moor the LST alongside the stricken vessel, even though there was no way of knowing whether or not the *Blasdel* would sink shortly or if explosions were imminent. The mooring was accomplished with difficulty because the roll and pitch of the LST were so much greater than that of the Liberty ship that the distance between the two changed quickly from a sharp damaging impact to a distance of nine or 10 feet. Two breast lines were formed at the only point possible, though even here the upward surge of the LST under the Liberty ships overhanging small boat and other projections made the job of the men in the breastline a hazardous one. With the breastline holding the vessel to an average distance of four or five feet, nine dead, 60 wounded and about 200 other survivors were brought aboard *LST-326*, all of them U. S. Army personnel bound for the French beachhead. The entire operation took 1 1/2 hours. The wounded were placed on the tank deck where already there were already some 900 German prisoners of war and the LST 's crew assisted doctors and hospital corpsmen in attending the wounded. The 326 proceeded unescorted to an English port arriving at 0200 on 30 June 1944, and discharging dead, wounded, survivors and prisoners by 0600.

(Further reports of operations of LST--326 are not available.)

The *LST-326* was transferred to the United Kingdom on 18 December 1944. She was returned to the U.S. Navy on 25 February 1946 and was struck from the Naval Register on 26 February 1946. She was sold to France on 5 April 1946.

The *LST-326* was awarded three battle stars for her service during World War II.

Photographs:

None available.

Sources:

LST files, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

United States Coast Guard. *The Coast Guard At War. V. Transports and Escorts. Vol. 2.* Washington: Public Information Division, Historical Section, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, May 1, 1949, pp. 66-116.

United States Navy. *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. Volume VII.* Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1981, pp. 574-742.

