



USS LCI(L)-91

Builder: Consolidated Steel Corporation, Orange, Texas

Commissioned: 6 February 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.

Commanding Officers:

LTJG Arend Vyn, Jr., USCGR

History:

Flotilla 4 / 10, Group 29, Division 58

The Coast Guard-manned *LCI(L)-91* was commissioned on 6 February 1943 under the command of LTJG Arend Vyn, Jr., USCGR. She was assigned to LCI(L) Flotilla 4. She proceeded to Norfolk, Virginia, for a shakedown cruise and to take aboard additional equipment and supplies. From Norfolk she proceeded to North Africa, via Bermuda, and arrived a few days after the Tunisian invasion. She anchored near Lake Bizerte where the other 24 ships of the LCI(L) Flotilla 4, all Coast Guard-manned, were anchored. Taking on troops at Lake Bizerte, the Flotilla transported them to Sicily where they participated in the original invasion of Licata, Sicily, on July 9, 1943, and the Salerno landings on the Italian peninsula on September 9, 1943.

She left Italy in December 1943. Early in January 1944 part of Flotilla 4 (now renamed Flotilla 10), including the *LCI(L)-91*, went to Falmouth, England on maneuvers, landing troops in mock invasions on the beaches nearby. On January 15, 1944, she reached Dartmouth, England, flotilla headquarters for the pre-invasion months. On February 10, 1944, the first rehearsal for the French invasion was staged, mock landings being made at Slapton Sands, near Dartmouth. On February 20th another invasion was staged in which British rocket-LCIs were used for the first time. Two other mock invasions followed the last one being three weeks before the actual "D" day. The final preparations then began for "D" day, June 6, 1944.

The *91* participated in the landings on Omaha Beach on "D" day and was lost in action that day. Her commanding officer, LTJG Vyn, reported of the events that day in his official action report as follows:

10 June, 1944

From: Commanding Officer, USS LCI (L) 91
To: Commander, Task Group 124.4
Via: Deputy Commander, Task 124.4
Information: Commander, Group 29, LCI (L) Flotilla 10
Commander LCI (L) Flotilla 10

Subject: Operation Neptune, Participation in by USS LCI (L) 91

1. This vessel departed from Weymouth, England, in company with Convoy Group One (0-1) at 1715 on 5 June, 1944. In addition to the regular crew, a total of two hundred and one (201) men from Headquarters 116th Infantry, 147th Engineers Battalion, 121st Engineers Battalion, and 7th Beach Battalion were aboard.

2. Approach to the Omaha Assault Area was made according to plan without eventful action. Departure was made from the Transport Area as scheduled and contact made with the Primary Control Vessel.

3. Upon approach to Dog White Beach it became evident that proposed markers for a cleared channel through the underwater obstructions had not been placed. A small break in the Element "C" was blocked by what appeared to be a sunken DUWK.
4. A beaching was made between units of Element "C" at the scheduled time, H-70, 0740 on 6 June, 1944, approximately 225 yards from the back of the beach and 75 yards from the water line. A man rope was led to the beach through a maze of stakes each topped by a teller mine. Troops disembarked reluctantly over both ramps in the face of heavy enemy machine gun and rifle fire.
5. The rapidly rising tide and slow departure of troops made it necessary to move the ship forward to keep grounded. About twenty minutes after grounding it was impossible to move farther in because of the mined stakes. The ship was swinging with the tide toward the stakes on the port bow so the ship was retracted. While doing so a teller mine was exploded at the port bow injuring a few soldiers but not causing fatal damage to the ship.
6. About sixty troops were still on board so a signal was hoisted requesting assistance from small boats. No such aid was forthcoming so a second beaching was made about 100 yards West of the original one in an effort to get in beyond the obstructions.
7. A portion of the remaining troops had disembarked over the port ramp when what appeared to be an "88" struck the center of the well deck and exploded in the fuel tanks below. A blast of flame immediately followed and within seconds the entire well deck was a mass of flames. Water pressure was inadequate to fight the flames. Small caliber enemy fire continued near the beach and intermittent "88" fire near the ship.
8. Because the fire could not be gotten under control to enable the ship to retract the order was given to abandon ship. Personnel disembarked over the side and proceeded in to the beach. Right to ten men, mainly ship's crew, were disembarked seaward in an LCS. Two wounded soldiers were removed to the beach by raft. No living personnel were left aboard the ship.
9. No accurate account of survivors is yet available. As far as can be determined, Numbers 1 and 2 Troop Compartments had been evacuated and most of the personnel had left the exact location of the hit.
10. Orders for the operation were thrown in the fire. Secret and confidential communication publications were removed sea-ward by the Chief Radio Man. All other ship's records were consumed by the fire.
11. One of the soldiers whose name unfortunately is not available was exceedingly helpful in disembarking personnel and checking the ship for survivors. All compartments, except Numbers 1 and 2 which were ablaze were checked to be sure everyone had been evacuated.
12. The hydrographic data regarding this beach, furnished before the operation, was remarkably accurate. The gradients were as reported and the ship grounded at the position predicted by the graphs. The underwater obstructions were a hindrance but the mines and enemy fire were their most effective defense.

Arend Vyn, Jr.
Lt. (jg), USCGR
Commanding

LTJG Vyn also submitted a loss-of-ship report, as follows:

19 June, 1944

From: Commanding Officer, USS LCI (L) 91

To: The Secretary of the Navy

Via: (1) Commander Task Group 124.4
(2) Commander Task Group 124
(3) Commander Task Group 123
(4) Commander Task Group 122
(5) Commander Twelfth Fleet
(6) Commander in Chief, United States Fleet

Subject: Loss of ship - Report of

Reference: (a) Article 841 (3) U.S. Navy Regulations

1. The following report is submitted in accordance with reference (a).
2. The USS LCI (L) 91 departed from Weymouth, England, in company with Convoy Group One (0-1), Operation Neptune, late in the afternoon of 5 June, 1944. Approach to the Omaha Assault Area was made according to plan without eventful action. Departure was made from the Trans-port Area as scheduled and contact made with the Primary Control Vessel.
3. Upon approach to Dog White Beach it became evident that proposed markers for a cleared channel through the underwater obstructions had not been placed nor a channel cleared. A small break in the Element "C" was blocked by what appeared to be a sunken tank.
3. A beaching was made between units of Element "C" at the scheduled time, H-70, 0740 on 6 June, 1944, at the left center of Dog White Beach. Troops disembarked reluctantly over both ramps in the face of heavy enemy machine gun and rifle fire. A man rope had been led by a member of the ship's crew, from the ship through a maze of stakes each topped by a teller mine, to the beach.
5. The rapidly rising tide and slow departure of troops made it necessary to move the ship forward to keep grounded. About twenty minutes after grounding it was impossible to move farther forward without detonating mines on the stakes, so the ship was retracted. While doing so a teller mine on a stake at the port bow was exploded injuring a few soldiers and blowing a hole about two (2) feet in diameter in the bow just above the water line, but apparently causing no more serious damage to the ship.

6. After retracting, about sixty (60) of the original two hundred and one (201) troops were still on board so a signal was hoisted requesting assistance in unloading from LCVP's standing off shore. No such aid was forthcoming so a second beaching was made about one hundred (100) yards west of the first one, in an effort to get in beyond the obstructions.

7. A portion of the remaining troops had disembarked after the second beaching when a violent explosion occurred forward, immediately followed by a blast of flames. Within second the entire "well deck" was a mass of flames. Water pressure was inadequate to fight the flames. Small caliber enemy fire continued near the beach and intermittent "88" fire near the ship.

8. Because the fire could not be gotten under control to enable the ship to retract and because of the obvious damage to the hull and bulkheads, the order was given to abandon ship. Personnel disembarked over the side and proceeded in to the beach. A portion of the ship's crew were evacuated seaward in an LCS. All compartments except Troop Compartments Numbers One (1) and Two (2) which were ablaze, were checked to be sure everyone had been evacuated.

9. The original theory was that an "88" shell had penetrated the main deck above Number Two Troop Compartment, exploding in the fuel tanks below. Later investigation, however, supported the theory that mines had done the major damage. The hull was damaged beyond repair, the deck of Number Two (2) Troop Compartment completely blown up. With an incoming tide all compartments below the main deck and forward of the engine room flooded. All combustible equipment and gear in these compartments, in the house, and in the pilot house were destroyed by fire.

10. The salvage crew was making a survey of the material which might be taken from the engine room, Number Four (4) Troop Compartment, magazine, and steering engine room. The 20mm gun barrels, and commissary stores from the commissary locker had already been removed by unknown parties from the beach.

11. Orders for the Operation and classified communication publications were through in the fire. All other ship's records were consumed in the fire.

Arend Vyn, Jr., Lt.(jg) USCGR

Copies to: Commanding

Cominch (Via Air Mail)

Commander Group 29, LCI (L) Flotilla 10

Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard via: Commander LCI (L) Flotilla 10

The *LCI(L)-91* 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.



Photo courtesy of Robert Smith (son of Signalman John R. Smith, Jr., USCGR, a crewman aboard LCI(L)-90).

NOT AN OFFICIAL USCG PHOTOGRAPH.

Sources:

LCI(L) file, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

Herbert E. Nolda with Valerie L. Vierk. *Sailing the Troubled Sea: A Nebraska Boy Goes to War: The World War II Memoirs of an Enlisted Man in the United States Coast Guard*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2007.

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. 117-130.

