Hollis Ottaway’s Account of 1941-1945

Hollis, Brian, and Matt

September 8th, 2009

Figure 1: Picture of the LCI that Hollis was aboard during WWII.
Matt’s Introduction - December 2008

A few years ago, just after the passing of Hollis Ottaway on November 19th, 2006, Brian Ottaway came over to Poison Oak Ridge to scan some of the photos from Hollis’s War Experiences. While helping him find some material to archive I discovered a few pages that Hollis had use to document his experiences of those four eventful years. There are about 20 handwritten pages, but Hollis only managed to transcribe about 10 of those pages using his typewriter. I compiled Hollis’s transcript and Brian’s photos into a book where this account can be preserved and duplicated if desired.

Hollis’s Introduction - February 1990

To: The Kids & Grandkids

It was a half-century ago. Don Jossy and I were fishing in the Lewis & Clark River near Astoria and we were celebrating his forthcoming wedding to Emma. You don’t know Don. Wish you did. At that time Don was a county agent in Astoria, Clatsop County. Now, he, Emma and their boys raise filberts and tree fruits near Hillsboro.

Fishing was poor; in fact, we didn’t catch a fish. To be truthful, neither of us had a nibble. But, there was worse news to come. Along about 10:30 or 11:00 that morning a fellow, also fishing, showed up on the other side of the river. The cross-stream visit went something like this: “Hello” “Hello”, “been fishing long?” “all morning”, “any luck?” “nope”, “heard the news?” “nope”, “The Japs bombed Pearl Harbor this morning.” “Oh no”. Yes, that was Sunday, December 7, 1941. President Roosevelt declared war the next day.

Your mother and grandmother (Clara) and I celebrated both my Navy discharge and Christmas, 1945, back in Hood River and Aurora that winter. Actually, the discharge papers are dated January 16, 1946.

This is my accounting for that four-year period.
### DATES & PLACES

**NAVY DAYS**  
**Hollis Ottaway**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 28, 1942</td>
<td>Received Orders - Report to Supt. U.S. Naval Academy on May 15, 1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 15, 1942</td>
<td>Appointed - One Months Active Duty as Apprentice Seaman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 15, 1942</td>
<td>Appointed - Midshipman , U.S. Naval Reserve</td>
</tr>
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<td>Aug. 14, 1942</td>
<td>Appointed - Ensign, U.S. Naval Reserve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep. 14, 1942</td>
<td>Paid $150.00 for uniform gratuity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 21, 1942</td>
<td>Report to training school (Diesel engineers), U of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 7, 1943</td>
<td>Report Immediately Commanding Officer of LCI 216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 7, 1943</td>
<td>Detached from LCI 216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 7, 1943</td>
<td>Report to Commanding Officer Amphibious training base, Little Creek, Va.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 7, 1943</td>
<td>Ordered and Reported to Crew 311l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 13, 1943</td>
<td>Ordered and Reported to USS LCI # 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 22, 1943</td>
<td>Arrived Bermuda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 27, 1943</td>
<td>Left Bermuda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2:** Page 1 of the overall 4 year account
DATES + PLACES
Page 2

Apr. 12, 1943 - Passed through Strait of Gibraltar
Apr. 13, 1943 - First Port in Africa - Nemours, Algeria
May & June 1943 - Many ports in N. Africa - Mostaganem, Tunes, Cherchell, Argew, Phillipville, Bone
LaGoulette, Tunis, Sousse, Oran, Algiers, Bizerte
Jul. 7, 1943 - First landing - Licata, Sicily
Aug. 1, 1943 - Palermo, Sicily
Aug. 16, 1943 - Milazzo, Sicily
Sep. 9, 1943 - Maiori, Italy - Landed Rangers
Appointed LT. (JG) - Weighed 158 tons
Oct. 19, 1943 - Augusta, Sicily - Taranto, Italy
Malta
Jan. 10, 1944 - Naples, Castlemare
Jan. 22, 1944 - Angio Landing
Apr. 21, 1944 - Passed through - Strait of Gibraltar
May 2, 1944 - Arr. Penarth, Wales
May 15, 1944 - Arr. Newhaven
June 6, 1944 - Normandy - Sword Beach
June 7, 1944 - Oct. 12, 1944 - Returned to France 17 times
Oct. 28, 1944 - Passed through Straits of Dover
Oct. 29, 1944 - Great Yarmouth
Oct. 30, 1944 - Grimsby
Nov. 1, 1944 - Decommissioned Ship @ Grimsby

Figure 3: Page 2 of the overall 4 year account
Prior to 1941
Along in the 1920’s and 30’s there were some Aurora experiences that may be of interest to you. There’s also a couple from Oregon State College.

Back in those days Aurora’s Pudding River had a pretty good summer flow and the water was relatively clean, at least we couldn’t see the dirt. So, after a summer day of training, suckering, stripping, and spraying hops, Orren, Dad, and I were pretty dirty and smelly. Upon arriving home we would jump into the model T Ford and head for the river. It was easy; go down the road to Wurster’s slaughter house, open the gate, and follow the rocky road to the gravel pit. This was well isolated, lots of privacy, so we didn’t use swimming suits.

Our swimming was mostly endurance, no fancy crawl strokes and our dives, just big belly flops (I could do better today). Before leaving home, we had picked up a few white marble-like insulators. These would be thrown out in mid-stream and we would dive for them. So we got so we could stay under for a considerable time and also swim up and down the river some distance. Often there would be other boys there. We’d toss a bar of soap back and forth, and before heading home, we were pretty clean. It’s true, Hank Wurster’s dad, Bill Wurster, use to slaughter livestock near the swimming hole for the Aurora meat market.

There was no I-5 highway at that time and all Salem Portland traffic came down 99E through Aurora. Many of the trucks were loaded with scrap metal and we jokingly said to each other “heading for Japan probably come back some day as guns and bullets”.

During the first couple of years at Oregon State College, ROTC was compulsory. I remember well the scratchy woolen shirts, the tight woolen jackets, pants that didn’t fit and building a pontoon bridge across Mary’s River in South Corvallis.

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At that time young Americans were especially concerned with world affairs and we would gather around the radios of an evening to get the latest news. Mussolini had been to Ethiopia. Hitler has moved into Czechoslovakia, Austria, Poland and there seemed to be no end in sight.

Britain and France declared war on Germany in the fall of 1939. Many OSC graduates from the late 1930’s returned to the campus on leave in uniform. Others dropped out to enlist.
I graduated from college June 2, 1941 with a major in agronomy and a minor in soils. My first job was for a seed company in Portland; visiting stores that had sold garden seed, counting the remaining seed packets, and collecting for those sold. I didn’t like the job, didn’t care for Portland, and quit.

Dr. Don D. Hill, my major college professor at OSC came to the rescue. He said in a telephone visit “Be down here at 10:00 AM Saturday. Prof wants to see you. “Don Hill was an excellent teacher, a good friend; and, he still is. He’s 95 years old, but very alert, a nice guy to visit. The Prof he was referring to was G.R. Hyslop, the department head.

Prof’s visit was brief; “Be here Monday morning and ready to go out with Harold Finnell on seed certification.”

So, my job at Oregon State College started in July, 1941 with field inspections of certified seed crops throughout Western Oregon; mainly the vetches in the Willamette Valley and the bentgrasses along the coast. Harold had been out of school for only a few years, knew the area geographically, and was a fun guy to be with.

Our first visit to Astoria was particularly memorable. One of the visits was to collect certification charges from the prior season. John, a grower, didn’t want to pay; but no pay, no certification for the current season and he finally came through. The it was off to other growers and new fields.

We checked into the Merwyn Hotel in Astoria that evening and I don’t recall ever staying at a hotel previously. Harold asked “Where would you like to eat.” Of course I didn’t know any restaurants and he responded “I sorta like one in Seaside”. Imagine driving from Astoria to Seaside, about 16 miles, just to eat, and then back to the hotel on a narrow and crooked road.

All of this leads up to December 7, 1941, the day I went fishing with Don Jossy and the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor.

I finished the Astoria work in a day or so and headed for Corvallis; asking myself questions all the way. Should I enlist? If so, which branch of the service would be best. Yes, it was a troublesome time.

Back on the campus, Prof called me into his office and counseled “Remember, Hollis, we need people at home as well as in the service.” I replied that I had a couple days of work down in the Reedsport Coos Bay areas and would let him know when I returned.
Within a few miles, my mind was made up. There were no dependents and I was in pretty good health. Give it a try. It didn’t take long to decide upon which branch of the service. Since I like to keep my feet on the ground, the Army Air Force was out. The army uniforms were not comfortable it was out. With all that Pudding River experience in swimming and boating, the Navy seemed to be the only way to go.

Also, the Navy had a V-7 program. College graduates of good health could sign up, go to school for 90 days, and come out as “90-Day Wonders”. The old-time Navy had a response to this “Yes, they had 90 days schooling and everyone wonders what the Hell they know”. In addition, we had some choices; which school, deck or engineering; what size ship, and which ocean. I chose a deck school so they ended up sending me to an engineering school. I asked for a destroyer, and they put me on an LCI. I asked for the Pacific Ocean thinking that I could get back home once in a while. You know that I was off in the Atlantic.

The February 4, 1942 edition of the Oregonian had an article with the following heading, “Navy Signs Up More Recruits”. On the 31st line Mom Ottaway found the following: “Aurora George H. Ottaway”.

A letter from the Commandant, Thirteenth Naval District, Seattle, dated 28 April, 1942 contained my first orders:

1. Proceed and report to Superintendent, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.
2. Get a physical examination there. If physically fit, you stay; if not, you go home.
3. You’ll be an apprentice seaman for 30 days. If recommended, you’ll be a midshipman, U.S. Naval Reserve and given a course in engineering instruction leading to an appointment as an ensign.

Note: The letter included a bus ticket from Aurora to Portland and a train ticket (Union Pacific and Baltimore & Ohio) from Portland to Annapolis. It also included a check: $10.75 for subsistence and $0.55 for transfer. Mom, Dad, and Orren took me to the R.R. Depot in Portland.
Figure 4: Hollis's physical examination sheet
The rooms in Bancroft Hall held four midshipmen, Bob Nurse from one of the Dakotas, Jim Ogden from Kentucky, A.J. Olson from the Midwest, and me. These three were graduate engineers as were all the other midshipmen, and there were two or three hundred of them. My degree in agronomy didn’t impress anyone at the Academy. Courses included ship design, electricity, and steam. Most of the time I didn’t know what the teacher was talking about.

After about three weeks of being lost academically, I reported to Commander P.L. High, the boss of our unit. “I’m not doing well, I’m not an engineer and I know it. The sooner you find out and kick me out of here, the better off we’ll both be”. He looked through a file in his desk drawer. He looked again and then turned to me. “Your name isn’t here. You don’t have to make decisions in the Navy. Return to class and don’t let me hear that you are goofing off”. I lasted the first 30 days and was now a midshipman.

Later, the head of the steam department called me in. Our conversation went something like this: “At ease, Mr. Ottaway” “You’re not doing well in steam.” “Yes, I know.” “Are you having a
problem with Mr. Hudson?” “No, I think that Mr. Hudson is an excellent teacher. The other midshipmen seem to get along alright. But, I just don’t know what he’s talking about.”

“What engineering school did you attend?” “I attended Oregon State College, School of Agriculture, a major in Agronomy and a minor in soils.” He responded with something like: “What’s Agronomy and what are you doing here, you may get booted out”. I responded that I had tried to get booted but no luck.

Our visit took a change for the better. We started to talk of Oregon and it turned out that he had brought a destroyer into Portland for the Rose Festival. While in Oregon, he had fished and caught a salmon down at Tillamook. It happened that shortly before leaving home I had fished down at Tillamook with Loren McKinley, a long-time friend and had also caught a salmon. We had something in common. His last words went something like this: “You continue class. Do the best you can. I’m sure that Ensign Hudson will understand.”

I passed. At least I was commissioned an ensign on September 8, 1942.
Figure 6: Hollis’s commission into the Navy
My order were to report to the Officer in Charge, Naval Training School (Diesel Engineers), University of Illinois. There were about 75 or 80 of us in class there. Class and lab rooms were located in the University Football Stadium, the stadium that Red Grange build. Grange had been a football hero in earlier days.

Figure 7: 1941 article about officer training at University of Illinois

School was over November 21. At the graduation ceremony, the president of the university said “Regard yourselves as graduates of the university without the obligation of paying alumni dues”.
About fifteen of the class were then ordered to the General Motors Institute of Technology at Flint Michigan. There’s nothing like spending a few weeks in mid-winter up in Flint. We were divided into teams of two. Our objective was to become totally familiar with the 71 series of Diesel engines that General Motors manufactured. Two of us would tear and engine down to the block, dismantle the injectors and blowers, put everything together, and make it run. It was a fun deal. The word was out that we were to become Diesel instructors. However, engineering officers were needed aboard amphibious landing ships more than instructors needed in the classroom.

I left Michigan on January 2, 1943 and my orders for the next couple of weeks follows:

1. January 4th  Report Navy Base, Norfolk Virginia
2. January 7th  Report Commanding Officer LCI Crew 3111
3. January 11th  Detached
4. January 12th  Report District Staff Headquarters, Philadelphia
5. January 13th  Report aboard LCI #33, The #33 was to be “home” until November 12, 1944
LCI’s had one purpose, at least in writing, “put troops ashore; a specific spot on the beach, and at a specific time”. With this goal in mind, ship designers came up with a shallow draft. Going in for a landing we had a draft of about three feet forward and four feet aft. As we approached a beach, and when we were still about fifty yards away, the stern anchor would be dropped, while we continue on to the beach. When the troops had disembarked, the ship would have greater buoyancy and the boat would rise a bit. Using the stern winch and the reverse gear of the engines, we could pull ourselves off the beach and it worked quite well most of the time. Of course if the engines were turning the propeller too long, we would back over the anchor cable, twisting it around the propeller shaft and that wasn’t good.

**Original Crew**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>J.D. White</th>
<th>W.F. Kaczynski</th>
<th>Came Aboard Later</th>
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<tr>
<td>E.B Manick</td>
<td>R.F. Jessup</td>
<td>J.U. Morin</td>
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<tr>
<td>N.E. Holloway</td>
<td>M.H. Sheffler</td>
<td>D.K. Nichols</td>
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<td>O.P. Olson</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.V. Mongeon</td>
<td>M.H. R.E. Perlinger</td>
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<td>S. Kopic</td>
<td>F.L. Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>H.F. Urlahs</td>
<td>M.E. Heer</td>
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<tr>
<td>H. Kinnamon</td>
<td>E. Perry</td>
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<tr>
<td>R.I. Lewis</td>
<td>J.H. Humphries</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Stone</td>
<td>W.F. Flynn</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.T. Kinsey</td>
<td>D.D. Hardy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Officers</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>H.H. Deakyne</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exec.</td>
<td>J.M. Randel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering &amp; Supply</td>
<td>G.H. Ottaway</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Figure 10: Diagram of the Hollis’s LCI
Special commendation should go to all members of the crew; living together for an extended period of time under cramped conditions, poor ventilation, and poor lighting. The overhead was about seven feet off the deck, and the bunks (merely canvas stretched over a pipe frame) were three-high; all adding up to a two foot allowance per individual. Yes, from twenty to twenty four fellows lived in this compartment, about twenty by twenty-four feet; slept there, ate their meals there, and did so for about two years.

The comradery and honesty between these men was absolutely great. One example comes to mind. While visiting with M.E. Heer, who was both short and slight, and also young, we were interrupted by Herb Urlahs. Herb was tall and husky. He said “Hey Heer, I got liberty the other days and wasn’t ready for it. I was broke. I knew you’d been winning lately so I took some money out of your locker, about seventy dollars. Here it is. What shall I do with it? Heer replied without hesitation or anger “Throw it back in the locker”

In contrast with the crew’s quarters the wardroom was luxury. There were two bunks on one side and the third bunk, mine, swung down over the wardroom table. There was an adjoining head, one
porthole, and an opening into the galley for passage of food.

Much of the following; names, places, and dates come from Roth Perlinder, Pennsylvania. A member of the “Black Gang”, Roth was well-organized, reliable, and dependable, a good man to have aboard ship. Roth kept record of where we were, when we arrived and when we left. The dates and places mentioned herein are in part, some of Roth’s notes.

One of my first jobs aboard ship as supply and engineering officer was to fill the Diesel and water tanks. Then, as I recall we ordered food, twenty-five people for a two-month period. Refrigeration was about the same as you find in a modern home; a little refrigerator and a small freezer. As I recall, back in Aurora, Mom didn’t trust me to buy the right loaf of bread.

Engines aboard an LCI consisted of eight electric GM 6-71’s for propulsion and two diesel GM 2-71’s for generations. The 6-71’s were places side by side, end to end, four on each the starboard and port sides of the ship. One of the four propulsion engines on a side would be engaged in a common bull gear; and then, individually, the remaining three engines would be engaged. Each set of four engines handled a shaft with a reversible pitch propeller.

Figure 12: Diagram of the engines used on the LCI
Whether it was good engines or an excellent “Black Gang” there were no problems coming out of the engine room. Thinking back to my experiences with the steam class at the Navy Academy, I considered myself fortunate.

However, before leaving the Navy Yard in Philadelphia, one of the Black Gang started up a 2-71 generator engine without turning on the water valve for engine cooling. Shortly the neoprene rubber impellers on the water pump heated up and were ruined.

This seemed to me to be something that could happen on a regular basis. A number of people starting up engines, out in warm water, and generally in a hurry. While the spare parts book showed that we carried six or eight more impellers, I was certain that we would need more.

There’s a general understanding in the Navy that if you want something done, see a Navy chief. A friendly chief in the engine supply department there on the base said, “no, I’m sorry, Sir, but we can’t give you any more impellers.” I smiled nice and inquired “Chief, you probably have a suggestion. We’re going to be out to sea for quite a while and we’re going to need more impellers. Tell me what to do.” He seemed reluctant, then grinned, and reached for a telephone directory. I’m certain the chief figured that he was doing his good turn for the day. “Call this telephone number in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, let them know that you’re an engineering officer, give them the number of your ship, and order eight dozen neoprene impellers.” He loaned me his telephone. I did. There will be more on this later.

**Out to Sea**

Finally, on March 19, 1943 the #33 left Norfolk, Virginia and headed out to sea; destination, Bermuda. We heard that earlier LCI’s going to the Mediterranean had already reached Bermuda and sent this message to the mainland: “Reached Bermuda, send rest of them”.

It didn’t take long to realize that my Pudding River experiences as a youth didn’t cut the mustard in the Atlantic. We rolled, we tossed, we hung on, we pitched, and we prayed. Some, probably most, got seasick, I didn’t. When questioned later about getting sick, I replied “No, actually getting seasick wasn’t my major concern; rather, it was staying alive and reaching port”.

Our LCI speed was so slow and with excessive freeboard, and the wind sharp, we couldn’t maintain steerage-way. So as the wind forced our bow to turn, we would steer the rudder in that direction, gave it full speed ahead, and make a complete circle. Fellows off bigger ships in the convoy later questioned what was going on.

If yours is a slow boat and the water is rough, allow three days for the trip Norfolk to Bermuda.
Bermuda was beautiful; pastel-colored roofs, pretty flowers, green grass, and quiet waters in the harbor.

One of the first jobs upon reaching port is to check the ship to determine what damage might have occurred. We found that someone had loosened the hatch on the forward forecastle compartment and it had flooded. This part of the ship had been under water much of the time since leaving Norfolk. Some months later I heard that the flooding occurred because one of the crew members was looking for vanilla extract as a substitute for liquor and failed to lock the hatch.

It had been loaded largely with canned food. Crates were broken, labels washed off, and it was quite a mess. This was not an easy compartment to get into and out of; the hatch is only about fourteen inches in diameter and the ladder is vertical. Nevertheless, it was pumped out, cleaned out, dried up, and refilled food supplies.

One of the good points about reaching port is to hopefully get some liberty. Hamilton is the liberty city and those getting to go on liberty would be at the ship’s rail waiting for the liberty boat to come around and take them to the dock. I remember going into the city, checking in at a nice hotel with officers from other ships and getting to stay overnight. The crew was divided into port and starboard section and they would take turns with liberty. Officers would also take turns, two on duty and one ashore. After a few drinks in the hotel bar, a horse-drawn buggy trip around the island, another drink or two, we ate back in the hotel dining room. Later, it was great getting into a bed that wasn’t jumping up and down.

This brings me around to the next day when I got on the liberty boat taking crew members back to the ships. Several fellows, from the #33 and other ships in the harbor as I recall, had been drinking. There’s a story that alcoholic beverage consumers come in three types; lovers, poor drivers, and fighters. Shortly after leaving the dock, a couple fellows got in a fight. I was the only officer aboard the liberty boat and the fight had to be stopped. The main thing, I found, was to jump in the middle with both hands up in the air. Gold braid shows up well and I never did find a sailor that would hit an officer. Of course, I never looked very far intentionally.

March 27th  Left Bermuda

Heading for Gibraltar, we experienced calmer seas, made friends with graceful porpoises, saw flying fish, and enjoyed some sunshine.
You will recall that my bunk aboard ship was over the wardroom table, metal, painted, smooth, and slick. Harry, the skipper, had the habit of coming off watch, stop in the galley for a cup of coffee and drink it there at the table. First, he would kick off his overshoes. So far, all is OK. He’d drink the top two-thirds of the cup, and head out on the deck. With the first slight roll of the ship, the cup would hit the deck.

Sometime later I would step out of my bunk, onto a chair, and to the deck, into cold coffee and stumbling over boots. Harry and I had a little visit about this, but he wasn’t listening.

One dark night sometime later I was called for watch, and stepped out of bed into you know what; cold coffee and boots. I picked up the boot, standing there trying to find a place for them. The porthole was open. Harry came in later looking for boots and we never did locate them. If you are on a cruise, need a pair of boots, and are somewhere between Bermuda and Gibraltar, look out to sea.
This cruise was without any night lights; no running lights, portholes were covered, even passages leading outside were darkened. Really, all we had to do to steer the ship by night was to follow the ship ahead, maintain distance, check the compass, and look for the ships to each side. Clear nights helped and smooth waters aided us. Also, the phosphorescence of the water was of most importance, and we could keep track of others in column by watching their wake. There were two of us up on the conning tower, the officer of the deck and a signalman. We had four hours on duty and eight hours off.

Directly below the conning tower was the wheel house and it was here that the helmsman was located. There was a little lever there that he could move from one side to the other and turn the ship. There was another gadget there with a couple of levers, and by pushing or pulling these levers, he could signal the engine room to increase or decrease engine speed and even stop the engines.

There was another incident that shouldn’t have happened; but, it did. It was a nice day, the sun was shining, and I was off watch. Along with other items in the ship’s inventory of guys was a Hi-standard 22 caliber revolver. Somebody had rigged up a target on a little raft being towed and shipmates were shooting at it. My turn came up. I shot a few times, hit the target rather consistently, and then, a seagull flew over. Yes, I hit it and still feel some shame. May I remind the readers “never fire a gun at something you’ll probably miss.” You may not.

On April 12, seventeen days out of Bermuda; and at about 1600 hours, a call came from the conning tower “Land Ahoy!” Nobody could ever mistake the Rock of Gibralter and it was truly a welcome sight. However, from the time of sighting until it was “broad off the port beam” another three or four hours had lapsed.

My watch started at midnight and it was to be an eventful watch. The same night order prevailed, no running lights. Shortly after midnight we ran into a storm and conditions changed from the usual black night into a blacker night. Rains were heavy and the ol’ 33 tossed and rolled. We were to maintain same speed and same course. Other ships had been thrown around also and we soon separated. It was as if we were the only ship on the Mediterranean.

Then a ship appeared alongside; not another LCI, no it wasn’t a minesweeper or a destroyer, but a freighter. It was huge. A message blinked our way “Compass not working. May we steer off your vessel?” We replied “Permission granted”. Actually, the sea was rough, we knew the 33 was off course, our compass really wasn’t that good; but it was reassuring to have company.

Later, as the first rays of light came across the Mediterranean, the outline of another LCI could be seen off to the starboard. Knowing that the 33 was stationed in the convoy’s starboard column, and having a layout of the convoy, it was only a matter of knowing the number of that ship, and
we could get back in convoy position; either ahead or astern of the other LCI. We headed in that direction.

Too dark to see his number, but quiet enough to be heard by yelling, I picked up a megaphone. “Ahoy there, What’s the number of your ship?” Our conversation got a little out of hand. He responded with “blankety, black blank get the Hell back in column.” He seemed like a fellow who wanted to visit so I shouted “What’s wrong, who the Hell are you?” He came back with “I’m Commander Smith. What’s the number of your ship?”

It didn’t seem like a good time to visit, and if I couldn’t see his number, hopefully, he couldn’t see ours and I gave the order “Left full rudder, all engines ahead full.” I never did get acquainted with Commander Smith.

Our first port in North Africa was Nemours, a small city just West or Oran, Algeria. Shortly after noon while standing on the dock a loaded jeep drove by. It stopped, backed up, and a fellow yelled “Come on Ottaway, we’re going up to the coast.” They were officers from other LCI’s in the flotilla. Don’t know where the jeep came from. There wasn’t much to see; rolling sand dunes, some rock at roadside, and a glimpse of the Mediterranean off to the left. I didn’t know for sure where we were heading; but a turn to the left, down a hill, and into a grove of trees where we were parked by a plain white building.

And then a man, bearded, dressed in a loose white garment, appeared, shook hands all-round, and invited us into his home. He was an Arab chief and owned a large number of sheep. Didn’t find out who made arrangements for the visit.

We ended up at a table in a rather large room; space for twenty-five or thirty; but only eight or ten of us. As I sat down I glanced down a hallway to see a gal, dressed in black, scurry from one side of the hall to the other. That’s the last I saw of her.

Shortly the host disappeared down the hall and came back with a large bowl, smaller plates, some melted butter, and several bottles of wine. The bowl was filled with artichokes, the first I had ever eaten, and they go well with wine. Whether it was the artichokes, the wine, the host, or the surroundings, I don’t know; but, it was a pleasant respite from rough waters and the #33. He offered to barbecue a lamb, but we had to get back to our ship.

Admittedly, the sketch of the Mediterranean isn’t that great; but, with it you can get an encyclopedia and find out where I’ve been and where I’m at. Where I’m going, I don’t know.
For several weeks we sailed East; go ahead two small ports and fall back one. As I recall, this was a pleasant part of our government-sponsored cruise. The Mediterranean was quiet, warm, and blue; the water, clean; the crew, happy, and it was almost as fun as rowing up Pudding River.

Upon entering a port, we received a memorandum, our orders while there. A few excerpts from a memorandum received aboard ship shortly after docking in Arzew (near Cherchell) on May 6, 1943 follow:

“Liberty begins at 1600 and ends on board ship at 2130; for officers, khaki; for enlisted men, dress blues and white hats. Six men from each ship will be allowed liberty.”

“The usual liberty regulations will be enforced.”

“Each ship will deliver to the duty officer of the base, prior to 1500 each day, a list of personnel going on liberty.”

“The sale of beer and wine is authorized by law between 1700 and 2000.”

“Shore Patrol Officer for Friday, May 7 will be Ensign George H. Ottaway from the LCI (L) 33.” That’s me. “Uniform for shore patrol party is as follows: Khaki hat (not overseas), belt, and 45 caliber revolver.”

My first shore patrol assignment ended without problem.

Finally we arrived in Bizerte, located in the Northeast corner of Tunisia. Bizerte consisted of the city, a relatively short canal going through the city, and into Lake Bizerte, a rather large anchorage area. It was about like Depot Bay. The anchorage area was much larger and there was no bridge over the channel.

In mid-May, 1943, Bizerte wasn’t a pretty sight. Much of the city had been destroyed by bombing and shelling, and the channel was almost closed with sunken ships. Through the summer, Bizerte was home port; if we left, it was for only a few days and then back “home” once again. For instance, on May 12 we loaded German prisoners and hauled them up the coast to Bone. They didn’t wish to leave port for they knew that Hitler’s “superior air force” would sink us. Later that month we gave Italian prisoners the same cruise; a one-way trip Bizerte to Bone.
We had interesting moments; others were dull, there in Lake Bizerte. Tunisia was once “protected” by France and Bizerte had a fair-sized French air base along the canal. Shortly after arrival there, a few fellows were with me as we “checked out” the spare parts in the hangar. There was a nice big vise there, the French weren’t using it, in fact they weren’t anywhere around, we were all allies, and we could use it. Shortly it was aboard ship, welded in place, and when painted, looked great. We used it regularly.

Then there was the case of the extra 7x50 binoculars. Each LCI was issued two of these and I’m sure that larger ships had more. We had a problem with our binoculars and with one of our rifles, so we took them ashore to a receiving station for a comparatively large repair ship. This repair ship also anchored in Lake Bizerte had its own bakery, made ice cream, and had movies in the evening. They were the “Haves” and we were the “Have-nots”.

Some time later the binoculars were fixed up and returned to the ship. And then one day, while on base, I stopped to pick up the rifle. The fellow off the repair ship said something like “Sir, here is the rifle and here are the binoculars off the 33”. I said “no, we already have our binoculars”. He replied something like “They don’t weigh very much, you could carry them, here”. I never did like to start a fight, I never liked fellows that ate ice cream when I didn’t have any; and, if you wish to borrow the binoculars, they are here in the Poison Oak Ridge gun closet.

Remember the neoprene impeller order from days back in the Philadelphia Navy Yard? Sure enough, the complete order from Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania arrived while there in Bizerte. Upon visiting with engineering officers from other LCT’s I was aware that a problem existed. Finally, it reached a point when the flotilla engineering officer sent out an official communiqué “all existing impellers from the spare parts list are to be turned in to flotilla engineering office.” He didn’t get many.

This officer, Commander Henry, had never been of help to the #33. Nevertheless, we gave him a few. Then he had to make a big deal “how we happened to have any to give.” I responded that “we happened to have a great crew in the Black Gang” - and, that was true. I still think of that helpful chief back in Philadelphia.

The question could be asked “What do you do all day at anchor in a lake besides paint?” Actually, there is time on your hands and we would all get a little “edgy”. Once in a while we went fishing with hand grenades. Down to our shorts, or even less, we would stand on edge of the deck, some four feet above water, with a pan in our hands. One person was delegated to toss in the grenade, the rest would wait. After the explosion and when the stunned fish appeared on the surface, we dove in. Soon there would be a few fish in each pan and shortly there would be enough for supper; a nice change from the usual diet. This is both illegal and dangerous; don’t ever try it.
Food supplies came over by the shipload; first a ship loaded with creamed corn, two weeks later it was canned green beans, and the next load, cans of cubed red beets. Some folks would say, even today, “not bad”. Fresh eggs were to be treasured.

One day, when tied up at the dock, a communiquè came around “two men from each ship needed to help unload a freighter”, one that was scheduled to leave that night. There was a crew from base supply that should be doing this job; so, there was some grumbling as the two fellows from the #33 headed out. The two returned to ship after dark that evening, each with a case of eggs over his shoulder. After chow the two men said that there were more eggs to be unloaded. Six or eight fellows volunteered. Needless to say, the #33 was well supplied with eggs for a few days. Base supply delivered our quota of eggs within a day or so, one case of eggs as I recall.

Much Mediterranean history comes from Rome, Athens, and Istanbul. Equally important a few centuries ago was Carthage. One day, and I don’t remember why, we received orders “Go to LaGoullette”. This town is only a few miles from Tunis and only a few yards from the ancient ruins of Carthage. There wasn’t much to see in 1943, probably not much more to see today, but it was great in days gone by. Some day I’m going back.

The invasion of Sicily took place at 0230, July 10, 1943; awfully early to be getting out of bed. Our beach was at Licata on the South side of the Island.

Actually, I had been Officer of the Watch from 2000 hours the previous evening until midnight and was relieved by the skipper, Harry. Following the usual custom of getting off watch at midnight, I went down the wardroom and went to bed. Shortly thereafter, I was awakened by one of the crew "Mr. Randel (he was the executive officer) wants to see you on the conning tower." So I dressed, went up on the conning tower and asked "Randy, why are you here, where’s the skipper." Randy replied "He’s down in the radio shack looking at maps finding out where we are."

Harry had lost sight of the LCI ahead, couldn’t see the outlines of the columns right and left, and was lost. We maintained course, picked up speed, and caught up with the rest of the flotilla. I remember picking up a survivor from a sunken vessel, covered with oil and pretty much exhausted, he pulled through OK. Then it was back to Bizerte.

Two days later we had loaded troops and were heading back to Licata. That was our job, putting troops on the beach.

Military advances were rapid in Sicily and three days later we had to return to Bizerte, loaded up, and were on our way to Palermo, Sicily. Again the #33 was in the starboard column, this time, bringing up the rear. As I recall, there were at least three, possibly four columns. The last vessel
in one of the middle columns was an LCT (Landing Craft Tank). An LCT is a flat-bottomed and possibly even slower than LCI. That night it disappeared.

The next morning the head of the convoy signaled over “Have you seen the missing LCT?” “No”. Then he ordered “Follow return course to Bizerte”. “Upon finding craft, escort it back to Bizerte or to Palermo, whichever is closest.” We found it tied up at the dock in Bizerte. We headed to Palermo.

Depending upon available docking space in a harbor, LCI’s often tied up in a cluster. The first would tie up to bollards on the dock; then, the following craft would tie up to the outside. Soon there would be several rows, three or four deep; port to starboard and bow to stern.

If we had continued with the convoy, we would have been the last to tie up; furtherest from the dock and closest to the next dock. That next dock just happened to have a large oil tanker tied up. The Germans bombed Palermo harbor that night, a big air raid, and the tanker was blown up. A couple fellows from the outside LCI were killed. Fortunately we were about halfway between Bizerte and Palermo.

We often felt that the #33 had an extra crew member aboard; not listed in personnel records, not wearing dungarees, but there watching over us just in case help was needed.

One of the duties of an engineering and supply officer was to be concerned with supplies, finding out was available at supply bases, putting in our order, and keeping records. Initially, keeping records didn’t seem important. LCI’s, we were told, were expendable, and if the #33 sank, who would worry about a few papers. But, we didn’t sink. So, back to the records.

The records started out with “How many people were served how many meals each month”. And then, you multiplied meals times dollars and you could see if you were within allowance. Our food choices were few. It seemed that supply ships were one-item vessels; the first ship was loaded with creamed corn, the second with string beans, and the third with cubed beets. It was cheaper stuff and we gradually built us a surplus in our allowance. Also, we were further handicapped with a small freezer. No, we didn’t suffer from hunger but it wasn’t home cooking.

Most of the time in early August 1943 was around Palermo. One day we hauled injured from the dock to a hospital ship. Another day while anchored in the bay and after heavy air raids the night before, we watched the Sicilian fisherman, paddling their boats furiously to get ahead of the other boats, picking up the dead fish.
A Sicilian rowboat came alongside one morning selling fruit and vegetables. I spotted a cantaloupe type melon in the bottom of his boat. It really looked good. His price, American money was fifty cents. I bargained and finally made a deal—half a bar of soap that had cost me a nickel. It was good for me and good for him. That is, it was good for me until I took a bite. It had come right out of his cucumber patch.

Life was not always good on the LCI; for either the crew or the troops we landed. We were slow, we rolled around, and we were crowded. Conditions were near perfect for seasickness. They often commented “Well at least we can get off this tub and go dig a foxhole”.

My records show that on August 16, 1943 we landed troops at Milazzo, Sicily. This is on the North side, almost to Messina. At that time General Patton was having difficulty heading East and this landing was a behind-the-German-lines maneuver. Records also say that on August 19 we took troops off the beach at Milazzo. Sicily was finally taken.

Along in early September Harry attended a flotilla meeting for ship captains. He returned with the story “all ships, except five, were told to paint their ships”. We were one of the five. It was understood that painting the five would be a waste of time and paint not very reassuring.

Roth’s records show that we left Palermo September 8 heading for Europe. The landing at Salerno. Only we didn’t land at Salerno. The #33 was one of five to land U.S. Rangers at the small coastal village of Maiori. A good map of Italy will show as you leave Naples, heading South, you will pass Mt. Vesuvius and Pompei, continue on Amalfi Drive through Sorrento, on out to the point overlooking the Isle of Capri, and on a few miles to Maiori.

The beach at Maiori was ideal; while small, it was sandy and right slope for landing. We put the Rangers ashore with dry feet. And they were fast; swish, swish, swish, all ashore in a few minutes. They were supposed to have been there for only three or four days.

We returned to Maiori September 26 to pick up survivors and to haul wounded to a hospital ship. This leads into the story about the .30 caliber carbine rifle in the gun closet.

Many of the wounded came aboard on stretchers. I am not a pharmacist mate and never pretend to be. That day I moved around the stretchers getting them a glass of water, a cup of coffee, or just visiting. Then we moved out and tied up to the hospital ship. It had special slings that could be lowered to pick up the stretchers. One of the fellows was raised in this manner, disappeared into an upper deck for a minute or so and then reappeared and was lowered once again. He motioned for me to come over and said “They won’t let me take the rifle aboard, you take it”. That’s the rifle in the gun cabinet.
Here’s a sideline story about how to get in trouble without really trying... It was in August 1943 that Lieutenant General George Patton found himself in trouble in Sicily. Believing a soldier in a hospital to be a coward, he gave him a verbal chastisement, slapped his face with his gloves, and kicked him out of the hospital.

A few weeks later I saw sightseeing through Palermo with several LCI officers from other ships. All of a sudden a jeep rolled up, stopped, and 2nd Lt. T.E. Lewis stepped out, and stopped us. Our citation reads “Improper uniform: sleeves rolled”. Sure enough, a couple of us had our sleeves rolled half-way between wrist and elbow. Yes, we were booked and released for the Provost Marshal R.C. Briggs, Major CMP, “By Command of Lieutenant George Patton” and it’s signed by W.G. Caldwell, Lt. Col. AGD Adjutant General. All of this citation went to each ship captain. A few days later showed it to me and grinned. Now back to the war.

First however, here’s another sideline story that happened during my 1943 cruise in the Mediterranean. It was late September and we beached at Salerno to take on a load of German prisoners being guarded by Indian soldiers (those from India with long sharp knives).

The Indians were there but our passengers had not arrived. As I walked around the ship, I noted several Indians out on the stern trying to retrieve a rather large piece of cotton material, like a bed sheet. First, they tried a boat hook with no results. Then, it was a throw line. These are like a baseball tied on the end of a small rope. This also didn’t work. And it seemed important for them.

That’s when I got in the act. It was a warm day and I slipped out of my pants, shirt, and shoes and dove in. This was not big effort, no risk, and no big deal. I was glad to be of help. They gathered around me and thanked me and thanked me almost as if I had rescued the king’s crown jewels.

The prisoners arrived, were loaded aboard, and we backed off and headed into the town of Salerno where they were put ashore.

As they were leaving, we could hear sirens off in the distance. Motorcycles roared onto the dock, and then it was a jeep or two. Finally a big black Buick stopped in front of the #33. Captains and admirals were there. Finally, Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, stepped out. They looked around, shook hands, took a few pictures and left. Big Deal.

We were back in Bizerte for most of October and November. Then in early December we received orders to go to Taranto, which is located up inside the heel of Italy. This, again, is like Depot Bay with a bridge over the entry channel. When the Italian Navy ships came through, the bridge would swing open, and a man in uniform would come out of a nearby building with a horn in his hand.
He would toot around for a bit and the ship would pass through. We went through but there was no tooting.

Heading back to Bizerte we received order to stop in Malta, an important British Navy base during World War II. Immediately a representative of the harbor operations office came aboard. The base had Diesel, water, and a quota of grog; each man in the crew receiving a permit for beer and each wardroom officer allowed to purchase several bottles of gin, whiskey, and squash (a mixer). Realizing that it is extremely dry in Africa, we went for the maximum.

We left Bizerte for the last time in December 31, 1943 and headed for the Naples area. Flotilla headquarters was located in Pozzouli, a small fishing village a few miles Northwest of Naples. It was rumored that Sophie Loren, the movie actress lived in Possouli as a youngster. We saw lots of kids but our job was to get ready for Anzio.

Anzio was quiet initially. Then the Germans got on the offense, and for a while we didn’t know if we would be hauling troops from Pozzouli up to Anzio or from Anzio back to Pozzouli. For a period of time we were hauling troops on a regular basis, leaving Pozzouli about five o’clock in the evening, arriving in Anzio at mid-morning, and returning to Pozzouli that evening.

One of the interesting things that happened to me was when I went up town to get a haircut and there were a number of barber shops. I passed one where the barber was alone. I went in and sat down. He wrapped me up and started clipping away, and then another customer came in, a native Italian. They chatted for a moment and the barber stopped clipping, and let out a yell. A ten-year old boy ran in with an apple box, climbed up on the box and finished my haircut. The barber was working on his other customer.

Another day, while walking around the town a few blocks from the harbor, I came across a wheelwright. He was fitting wooden spokes and an axle to an iron rim. This was fascinating and I sat down on a nearby sawhorse to watch. This was back in my smoking days and I pulled out a cigarette. He continued with his work for a few moments and glanced up. I offered him a smoke. Shortly a couple neighbors joined us and we were all smokers.

Before making a final departure from Pozzouli, I repeated this visit three or four times. Thereafter, though, I carried a pack for each of the men and several pieces of hard C-ration candy for the kids.

One day I was shore patrol officer along the dock. It was my responsibility to make certain that someone was stationed at each LCI and natives were getting aboard. While moving back and forth, I had to pass and open front market; tangerines, grapes, walnuts, filberts, and various other items. Having been raised in a filbert patch, they were of most interest. And it was apparent, just by observation, that a large number were blanks.
I picked out one that I was sure to be empty and cracked it with a hammer on the table. Then I did it again and looked over at the young man running the store. He picked out one that he knew to be good and cracked it, then again. Pretty soon we were both cracking nuts; he the good ones and me, the empties. He was saying “Multi-bani” (very good) and I was exclaiming “Niento-bani” (no good). I’m not sure about my Italian spelling. Finally, I threw a handful of shells into a box and stamped out. I stopped a half block away and looked back. He was standing in his doorway grinning. I grinned and resumed my patrol. After watch, I purchased some and took them aboard ship. They were cracked and roasted in the galley just like my Mom did in Aurora.

The last ten days of February were spent up in Anzio. It was sort of a tugboat, salvage, and rescue mission. There were German E Boats, air raids, and heavy seas. It wasn’t very good duty. One night we picked up a couple survivors from a British destroyer.

Getting from one point at sea to another is relatively simple; look at your chart, determine a course, look at the compass, and away you go. That is, it’s simple if the compass is accurate and if the vessel is not blown off course by wind or tide. Sea travel between Pozzouli and Anzio is not difficult; leaving Pozzouli the ship is on a know course. Four or five hours later, the Ponziame Islands are broad off your port beam. That’s when you bring the ship right to a new heading and four or five hours later you are in Anzio. However, if you have a convoy commander it is easier to follow his ship. It is still the responsibility of each commanding officer to be sure his ship is in safe waters.

Captain Harry was on watch (officer on the deck) one night on our way to Anzio. His signalman was the very dependable Stan Kopic, and we were in a formation with other LCI’s. Harry described the trip in the following way:

Harry: It was a pleasant evening and I could see the ship ahead.

Stan: Captain, I believe that I see land off the starboard bow.

Stan: Captain, I’m pretty sure about land off the starboard bow.

Harry: No, that can’t be. Shortly, we will be seeing the Ponziame off to the port. Look for them.

Stan: Captain, I see land off to the starboard.

Harry: I went over to check the compass and sure enough we were off a couple degrees, but that was standard for the #33.
About that time we scratched bottom. The other LCI’s had also his shoal off from a German beach. We were back in deep water in about forty-five minutes, and that’s when the Germans started firing. Nobody was hit. All’s well that ends well.

It is difficult to discuss Naples without mentioning Vesuvius, Pompei, and the Isle of Capri. My ticket stub for the Pompei visit is dated January 16, 1944. I was with several officers from other ships and it was time for lunch. Our restaurant backed up again Mr. Vesuvius but the big window looked out over the Bay of Naples beautiful. We were the only customers. While still sipping our wine, the door opened, and three men came in. One was a violinist, of that I am certain; one had a concertina, I think, and the third a vocalist. He burst into song with great gusto. With arms reaching out, he couldn’t have done better if the room had been full. It was an excellent lunch. Another great meal that I remember quite well consisted of four eggs. You may ask “How can you be certain it was so great?” When I pay a dollar each for eggs, I’m certain. That meal was on the Isle of Capri and we hadn’t had any eggs aboard ship for a long time.

On April 4, 1944 we left Naples; April 6, Bizerte, and on April 21 we passed through the Straits of Gibraltar heading for England.

This seemed to be a hurried-up trip and we were not wasting any time. Our speed was such and the sea was just right that we would rise on the crest of a wave, the wave would disappear and the ship would slam down, shake a few moments, and we’d do it all over again.

According to Roth’s record, our first stop in Great Britain was at Penarth, Wales on May 2. I remember it as Cardiff, Wales. So, it’s one or the other and it really doesn’t matter because two days later we were on our way along the South coast. Cities that come to mind include Portland-Weymouth, Bournemouth, Portsmouth, Southampton, Brighton, and Newhaven. The small town of Newhaven home port and it was there we loaded British troops for the Normandy Invasion on June 6, 1944.

Volumes have been written of the Allied invasion of Europe; and, if you are truly interested, go to the library and check out a few books. Most Americans, I believe, will remember Omaha and Utah beaches best. A few days earlier every soldier, sailor, and airman of the US Forces received a nice note from Dwight D. Eisenhower. His letter mentioned a Great Crusade, Free World, Home Front, the Blessing of Almighty God, and full Victory. Back on November 8, 1943 prior to the invasion at Salerno, he had written another note; “Look forward, no thought of turning back, strengthen ourselves for tasks ahead, and protectors and supporters of American Democracy.” There was no doubt of what was ahead.
SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Figure 14: Ominous letter of encouragement from Dwight
This is the way I remember D-Day.

As daybreak broke, we were a few miles off Sword Beach near the mouth of the Orne River, and not far from LeHavre, France. There were ships everywhere; battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and miscellaneous amphibious landing craft. And there I was, the row-boaters from Pudding River.

Figure 15: Map of the D-Day operation
We dodged the bigger ships and let the smaller ones dodge us. It wasn’t a good beach for a landing. We hit a sand bar about thirty yards from dry sand and that meant the troops would be wading through two or three feet of water.

There were sunken ships and craft to each side. Numerous allied planes were overhead. Nearly, a large flat barge like vessel was throwing up rockets; whole rows at a time. Most of us aboard the 33 agreed that it took forty-five minutes to disembark and we were glad to leave France.

—End of Hollis’ Account
Conclusion
In order to provide a conclusion from this account of an exciting four years, I’ve chosen to share how Hollis told me he ended his navy days, and then include a letter that was sent out to the family describing major important events of each decade for Hollis and Clara.
—Matt

Ending the navy
After D-Day the tide turned against the Nazi’s in Europe. It wasn’t a question of if the Allies would prevail, but just how long it would take. The United States then shifted focuses towards the Pacific Ocean. A new piece of technology, the radar, had helped the allies defeat the Luftwaffe above England. Engineers had developed a method of installing radar onto smaller boats, such as an LCI. Radar on an LCI would provide a valuable warning against Japanese bombings or kamikazes against battleships. Hollis’s assignment shifted from Europe to the East Coast of the US to test the radar.

In the winter of 1945 one of his radar testing sessions ran into bad weather. The weather was too rough for planes to fly and Hollis’s boat was kept out on the water, despite the lack of planes to test the radar. It was a few days of bobbing up and down, without the orders to come back into base to wait out the storm on land. This upset Hollis.

Upon finishing the exercise Hollis had a talk with his direct supervising order. Needless to say, Hollis didn’t feel that his opinion has been fairly received. He then did something unusual for the military, he wrote a letter to his supervising officer’s supervisor. The next day at the dock an aid of his direct boss came to fetch him; Hollis now had a more receptive audience.

The meeting went something like this:

Supervising Officer: So I heard you were upset with how the last radar test was executed.

Hollis: I am more than upset, I am damn angry about how that was mismanaged.

Supervising Officer: You know, the Navy needs good men like you that get a little upset when things aren’t right. How would you like a promotion to Lieutenant?

Hollis: I am not long term for the Navy Sir. I have a degree in soils from Oregon State College and I am going back to Oregon when the war is done.
That was the end of that. Two large bombs were dropped on Japan that August and Hollis was back in Oregon by Christmas.
Final letter
January 2008

Dear Matt:

Grandpa and I were greatly blessed in our 88-90 years on good old planet earth. We have a new address now, one where I don’t expect to see any Poison Oak or, for that matter, any of the diseases that have come along for humans to endure.

In the 1920’s we were just growing up, me in Idaho and Grandpa in Aurora. It was a vibrant time, but then the Depression came in the 1930’s. I was then in Hood River and Grandpa was working hard on the farm in Aurora, then later for a road company on the Coast. By 1940 the world was changing again, with World War II a growing possibility. We were then at Oregon State College, active in a lot of things, college is really the best part of your life, quite a bit of freedom, not so much responsibility.

In the 1940’s a lot happened. I was a stewardess for a while on United Airlines, Grandpa became a naval officer for a short time at the U.S. Naval Academy, the War was fought and won, Grandpa got a job in Oregon City, Bob was born, and then at a later job in Madras Jim was born, and we were kinda settled in Dallas by 1950. What a decade!!

The 1950’s were also very active. Our generation helped put America back together after 20 years of hardship on many people. The farm in Dallas took a lot of work and everybody chipped in clearing land, planting trees, raising livestock, fixing up the house, etc., etc. Grandpa worked long days, regular work in Salem, night meetings, and then work on the farm. Jean and Tom were born during these years, and became a part of the Guthrie hillside and the Dallas community.

In the 1960’s things were really busy. Kids in school, sports activities, farming, hundreds of trips to town. Bob and Jim were off to OSU, Jean and Tom working their way through the small country schools, then into the big city of Dallas. It was a wonderful time. The kids were able to enjoy all four grandparents, in Hood River and Aurora. The farm was never really a moneymaker, but it was a great place to raise a family. We didn’t know about drug problems, gang problems, or any kind of crime. The doors were always open.

In the 1970’s things changed a bit more. We sold the old house off Guthrie Road and about fifty acres. We built the current house that you know. Jean and Tom were off to college, Grandpa retired, and we were still busy with several trips. New York, Australia, and more local ones. The farm became strictly a tree farm and we enjoyed filling in the blank spots with many trees. Kristine, Julie, and Brian began to bless our lives by the end of 1979.
In the 1980’s and 1990’s we were blessed even more by Matt, Lynn, Megan, Joe, Connor, and then Kinsey. What a lovely group of grandchildren! You were all wonderful in coming to see us, helping us celebrate special events, and sending us great pictures and letters!

As we entered the new century we were slowing down a bit. It was good we could watch trees grow and not chase sheep around the farm! We really enjoyed the 90th birthday celebration for Grandpa. Before Thanksgiving in that year, 2006, he went to be with Jesus. He lived a great, long, life. There were many from our generation that died in World War II, or from many diseases long before 90 years think of Carol’s mother and father.

As it comes time for me to join Grandpa and my other family and friends on those Golden Streets of Heaven I want you to remember the good time we had. I want you to remember that all blessings are from God, so be grateful for what you have, work to achieve what you want out of life, and stay close to Jesus through your years.

Grandpa and I collected a few dollars through the years and it is our pleasure to share some of that with you. I know you will use it wisely.

God bless you!!

Grandma Clara
Figure 17: Picture of the Spring garden at Poison Oak Ridge