

LST 534 Documentary Newsletter

January, 1998

Volume 1, Issue 1

ODDS AND ENDS

Don't hesitate to send in stories about your time on the LST 534.

We'll run them in the next newsletter

The next newsletter will be April 1st.

Deadline for stories and articles is March 15th.

Introduction by Linda Alvers, RN, MSN

This is the first newsletter for the LST 534 documentary project.

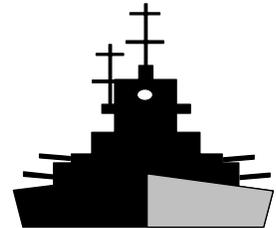
I was talking to a friend of mine in New York the other day and told him about the LST 534. When he found out I have contacted over 50 shipmates, he said "Why don't you do a newsletter?" Thanks to Peter Shure, Editor of a magazine called *Convene*, we are going to have a newsletter.

I am dedicating the documentary to my Dad, Henry Norman Alvers, Cox.

It will be a great way to keep all of you informed on the progress of the documentary. Not to mention having you send in your stories. I'll need your help to make it interesting - After all YOU were there!

So...here goes - our first newsletter.

Track That Ship



We know that the LST534 was built in Evansville, Indiana and sailed down the Ohio River to the Missouri River. What happened in Evansville? For example, how did you get there?-where did you stay?-what was it like to board a brand new ship? Come on all you guys who went to Evansville and embarked on that initial sail. Tell us about it. We'll post your stories and move on down the river.

How It All Started

In Spring of '97, I realized I didn't know anything about my Dad's service. I mentioned this to my Aunt Ruth who told me that Dad's ship was built in our hometown of Evansville, Indiana. I called the curator of the museum, Tom Lonnerberg, who gave

me Jim Sarres' name and address, telling me that Mr. Sarres was the Communications officer on board the LST 534.

On June 1st, 1997, I wrote a letter to Mr. Jim Sarres. When he wrote back, I found out about the United States LST Association and some

of its members.

After contacting the members of the association, I discovered that I could try to find more shipmates on the Internet. We now know the whereabouts of 63 men and their families, and we keep searching for more!

In Memory

Well, it's particularly hard for me to write this section in the first issue since my Dad passed away on October 27, 1997. He was on the nursing home unit of the VA Hospital in Montrose, NY. The nurses who took care of him so well, told us he just closed his eyes and died. It made me feel good to know he died peacefully. He had Alzheimer's Disease and we watched him shrink from a healthy vibrant man to the perils of that disease. I'm not sure he even understood what I am doing. I would talk to him about the documentary and about finding some of his shipmates and so on, but he could not acknowledge anything I was telling him. That didn't stop me - I kept talking. In fact, I still talk to him. When something exciting happens on the project I tell him. Or when someone is sick, I tell him. I know he's smiling on me and this project.

Thanks to each of you who sent condolences through cards or phone calls. My mother and I appreciate it so much. My efforts will always be in remembrance of him and to honor his memory.

In loving memory of Henry Norman Alvers, Coxswain, US LST534.

It's equally hard to tell you about 2 other deaths that occurred in the past few months.

Johnny Wilson passed away suddenly on November 4, 1997 at his home in Morgantown, WV. Many of us saw Johnny and his wife Betty at the US LST Association meeting in Chicago in September. In fact, we interviewed Johnny for the documentary. He was so excited about this project. He gave a great interview, looking into the camera and telling us wonderful heartfelt stories about life on board the 534. I spoke with Johnny and Betty occasionally after the convention - they were helping me name the movie that was playing the night before the Kamikaze attack (it was *The Constant Nymph*).

Johnny's son, John Wilson, Jr. is a diver and plans to help us dive for the LST534 in Okinawa.

He is survived by his wife Betty; four daughters, Stephanie, Melonie, Tamara and Jill; one son, John, Jr.; and three grandchildren.

May Johnny Wilson rest in peace.

Joseph Edward Szymanski, Boatswain Mate, LST534, died on December 19, 1997. That was truly a shock. Joe was in the hospital and had surgery on his right leg to increase the circulation. He was recovering and had just been transferred to a rehabilitation facility. No one expected him to die. He was also very excited about the documentary and the reunion. He kept telling me that he was going to get well so he could be at the reunion in September. He remembered so many of you shipmates and had great stories to tell. He was so proud to have served on the LST534. He was in both theaters - the Atlantic and the Pacific.

Joe was such a sensitive man. He used to tell me about helping a young sailor who needed a little nudge or encouragement, even though he was supposed to discipline him. Everyone I talk to about Joe remembers what a wonderful man he was.

He is survived by his lovely wife Jean, a son Bob and two grandchildren.

Joe, we'll miss you.

NAME THAT

DOCUMENTAR

Y

Who is going to come up with the best title?

Send in your suggestions and we will post them in an upcoming newsletter.

We will see if any of you win!

Remember that it has to describe the show, but be catchy enough to encourage an audience to watch.

REUNION

N

Yes, we are planning to meet in September in Washington, DC. We are going to meet in conjunction with the US LST Association Annual Meeting. This will help keep costs down.

Does anybody want to take on the planning of the reunion? I don't think I will have time since I plan to debut the documentary at the reunion in September.

You would need to contact Linda Gunjak at the US LST Association to arrange a room. We need to start thinking about this now. September will be here before we know it!

The Locator Service

I need help locating some of the following shipmates or their families. Any news of these folks would help, such as, where they lived during their service, or a last address you may have.

A THROUGH H

- George David Adams
- Thomas J. Aldridge
- Robert G. Africa
- Homer C. Allen
- Angelo Ecter Apraia
- Everett C. Arndt
- Elmer Irwin Arnoldi
- Clarence L. Arnell
- William W. Aberg
- Gerald Ray Baker
- Virgil E. Beasley
- William H. Beall
- Wilburt Albert Beil
- James Henry Bemberg
- Richard J. Berzinski
- John Martin Bihrer
- Talmage L. Billings
- Lee H. Billingsley
- Grover C. Blair, Jr.
- A.P. Bonner, Jr.
- William A. Borden
- George Boise
- Glenn Wilbur Brown
- William Buchanan
- Edward William Bush, Jr.
- Robert Wesley Campbell
- Edwin Raymond Chodzinski
- William Chronister
- B.R. Coles
- Eugene D. Colvin
- George W. Couchet
- Morgan J. Coughlin
- William T. Dale
- Gene Calvert Dallas
- Herman F. Dean
- Kimsey Dole
- James Edward Flynn
- Emil R. Freier
- R.J. French
- Harold L. Gebhart
- Jesse Leroy Gillette
- Gordon Earl Gossett
- Leroy S. Graham
- Henry Steward Gray
- Donald W. Guthrie
- Frances Hugh Hardy
- Willie Walter Harper
- Marion S. Hmielkowski
- Clyde Jackson Hollingsworth
- John Joseph Hoyt

NEXT ISSUE:

J - P

BIRTHDAYS

JANUARY - APRIL

- Edgar Overstake (1/4)
- Frank Frame (1/14)
- William Dox (2/3)
- Robert J. Foy (3/16)
- Willie Gunn (3/26)
- Anthony Cumello (4/1)
- Alex Fielder (4/14)

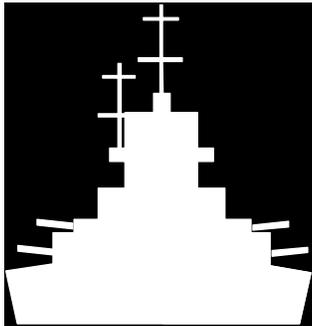
Okinawa

Are we diving for the LST 534? Good question. My videographer, Tom Cummings, has been doing some research to determine what, if any regulations the Japanese government might impose. Other considerations include weather, how much water the ship rests in, and how accessible it is. Stay tuned...

VIEWS FROM THE BETTER HALF

What have you wives got to say? This column is dedicated to all of the wives of the LST 534 crew who have put up with "war" stories forever and a day. Send 'em in!

LST 534 Documentary Newsletter
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LST 534

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Just for Fun

is a column meaning just that - FUN. Jim Sarres has graciously volunteered to keep this column going. We all know how Judge Sarres can keep us laughing!

Thanks Jim.

The following is an actual radio conversation released by the US Chief of Naval Operation on October 10, 1995:

NAVY: Please divert your course 15 degrees to the North to avoid a collision.

CIVILIAN: Recommend you divert YOUR course 15 degrees to the

JUST FOR FUN

SOUTH to avoid a collision.

NAVY: This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.

CIVILIAN: No. I say again, divert YOUR course.

NAVY: **THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER ENTERPRISE. WE ARE A LARGE WARSHIP OF THE**

US NAVY. DIVERT YOUR COURSE NOW!

CIVILIAN: **This is a lighthouse.....Your call!**

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