

LST534 Newsletter

January/February/March 2001

Volume 4, Issue 1

LST325 Sails Into Mobile

Did you ever think, in a million years, that you might get to see, and board, an LST again? Or like me, for the first time.

It was January 10, 2001, and I went to Mobile, Alabama, with our very own Matthew Wachsmann, to film the arrival of this historic vessel. When I saw it come into the harbor, then slowly sail past me to the dock, I had tears rolling down my face, from blurry eyes. I saw my Dad on board, pointing out his small boat. I saw Joe Syzmanski ordering the Deck Crew to get ready for docking. I saw Norris Long, QM2C, folding the navigation map and making notes in the deck log.

The LST325 voyage began in Souda Bay, Greece, on November 14, 2000, under the command of Captain Robert Jornlin. The ship made its way to Athens on November 14, 2000, left Athens on November 17, 2000 to set sail for Gibraltar, arriving November 30, 2000. It left Gibraltar on December 12, 2000 with a crew of 29 men, one of them being our videographer, Mr. Glenn Gregg. As the crew was thinning out, it became

obvious that our plan to arm the crew with the video camera might not work as their sea duty came first. Captain Jornlin agreed to let Glenn on board to sail across the Atlantic, under the condition that he, too, be assigned sea duty, in addition to his camera work.

The ship set sail on December 12, 2000, for the historic journey across more than 4,000 miles of the great Atlantic Ocean. One of the shipmates summed it up by saying, "Yeah, but nobody's shooting at us this time." There's a million and one stories to be told about this venture... when the ship was discovered, how they negotiated with the Greek Government to hand it back to the US, to the trials and tribulations of an aged crew.

The complete story will be told in a book that is yet to be written and a documentary yet to be produced. I am responsible for the documentary. We shot over 70 hours of material, from Greece to Mobile. And, I'm not done yet, as we will have to do several more interviews to finish out the story. But much like the story of the LST534, this story

belongs to the crew – all I can do is hope to tell it to the world.

Donations of any and all sizes are needed and welcomed. If you are interested in contributing, make checks out to the US LST Ship Memorial, and send them to Linda Gunjak, at this address:

US LST Association
P O Box 167438
Oregon, OH 43616-7438

Monies will be used for the massive repairs and maintenance of this 56-year old monument – a testament we can all see, touch, smell and hear, to remind us that freedom never comes cheap.

A note of interest: While in Mobile waiting for the ship to come in, I interviewed Mr. Jack Niedermair, son of the man who designed the LST, John Niedermair. It was most exciting talking with this man who watched his father draw designs for Winston Churchill. I will have the interview at the reunion and I will ask Jack to come and address our LST534 group.

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One important note, as Matthew left New York, enroute to Gibraltar to capture the arrival of the LST325, he hand-carried and delivered the following poem to Captain Jornlin and the crew.

HOMEWARD BOUND

I SERVED MY COUNTRY
FAITHFUL
AND MADE MY COUNTRY
PROUD
FOR I AM ONE OF THE LST'S
IN THE FLEET
AND THAT'S WHY I'M SO
PROUD

I CARRIED MY LOAD TO
THE ENEMY
UNDER EACH AND EVERY
COMMAND
AND CARRIED OLD GLORY
THE HIGHEST
THROUGHOUT THE LAND

WE MADE OURSELF
KNOWN IN THE FLEET
AND MADE OURSELF
PROUD
FOR I AM AN LST
AND THAT'S WHY I'M SO
PROUD

THE WAR IS OVER
AND THERE IS PEACE IN
THE LAND
NOW WE CAN SET OUR
COURSE
HOMEWARD
FOR THIS LST IS
HOMEWARD BOUND

*Written by Oscar Cress,
GMC3C, USS LST534.
Dedicated to Captain Jornlin
and the crew of the LST325.*

GET WELL

Send a card or say a prayer:

Louis Stockdale, Lt. (jg)
407 Taft Street South
Humboldt, IA 50548

Stephen G. St. Laurent, SF2c
10054 Hayward Road
Spring Hill, FL 34608

Edgar Overstake, SM2c
2170 Americus Blvd South, # 49
Clearwater, FL 34623

ODE TO THE CHAMPIONS

Who are these people –
These doers of deeds,
These dreamers of dreams
Who make us believe?

Who are these people
Who still win the day
When the odds are against them
And strength fades away?

These people are champions,
For they never give in,
A heart beats within them
That is destined to win.

They follow their dreams
Though the journey seems far,
From the top of a mountain
They reach out to a star.

And when they have touched it
When their journey is done,
They give to us hope
From the victories they won.

So here's to the champions –
To all their great deeds.
They follow their hearts
And become winners indeed

*By Tom Krause
Chicken Soup for the Unsinkable Soul*

OUR LST534 FAMILY CONTINUES TO GROW

All of the attention paid to the LST325 and the incredible journey of an old ship and an older crew brought Albert Straka, storekeeper, to the US LST Association website.

From there, with the assistance of Ms. Linda Gunjak, he was directed to me. It's always a truly glorious day when we find another shipmate. I sent Al a packet of information (remember that?) which included a picture of my Dad. Turns out that Mr. Straka and his wife, Alicia, live fairly close to Andy and Rose Cumella.

Low and behold, on Saturday, February 10th, Albert and his daughter, Monica, and Andy & Rose drove up to New York and had lunch with me, my mom and Ron. The five of us had a great time getting to know Albert and Monica.

I'm hoping he plans to be in Mobile this September so he can meet the rest of his LST534 family, and you can all welcome Albert Straka in reunion style.



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REUNION UPDATE

As you know, the US LST Association is holding their annual convention in Mobile, Alabama, September 18 -24, 2001. We are piggy-backing the LST534 reunion onto the National again. Here's the suggested agenda that I have set up, for all of you that want to know.

Wednesday, September 19:
Arrive Mobile

Thursday, September 20:
Tour the LST325 and the USS Alabama

Friday, September 21:
Go to D-Day Museum in New Orleans (I went ahead and purchased 30 tickets for the D-Day Museum on Friday. I wanted to make sure we were all able to go over to New Orleans together on the same bus. The tickets cost \$42.00 each, so you can pay me for the D-Day tickets).

Saturday, September 22:
LST534 Suite Open

Sunday, September 23:
LST 534 Suite Open

Monday, September 24:
Travel Home

You must sign up early for the US LST Association Convention.

Linda Gunjak recently told me that the hotels are sold out and she's moving people to hotels a little further away. Because the LST325 sailed into there and there's a lot of excitement about it, the convention this year is going to be BIG.

We will plan on going to the memorial ceremony on Sunday morning. And, let's all plan on going to the banquet Sunday evening - send your money to the LST Association for that. This convention is going to be real exciting, SO BE THERE.

NEWS



Remember I told you about visiting the American Cemetery in Colleville - sur- Mer, France? I sent the Superintendent a copy of "Onto Rugged Shores: Voyage of LST534." I got word that he loved the tape and would welcome you all anytime. If you want to drop him a line, the info is:

Mr. Gene S. Dellinger
Superintendent
Normandy American Cemetery
14710 Colleville - sur - Mer
France

And if you visit the cemetery, drop in and talk to Gene. He does a wonderful job reminding us all what price many young men and women paid for our freedom. Thank you, Gene.

The reunion tape from our Buffalo reunion is now available for rental or purchase. See the enclosed order form to rent this, plus other tapes. Our anthem song is also available for purchase.



Happy St. Patrick's Day

BIRTHDAYS

March 14

Salvatore Lagono, S2c
101 High Street
P.O. Box 144
Portland, CT 06480-1656

March 26

Willie Gunn, Y2c
105 Bull Street
Swainsboro, GA 30401

April 1

Angelo Cumella, S1c (SK)
11 Freeport Circle
Toms River, NJ 08757

April 14

Alex Fielder, Lt (sg)
5950 Ambassador Drive
Fairfield, OH 45014

May 17

Duncan Robey, MoMM3c
8301 Tieton Drive #87
Yakima, WA 98908

May 17

Jim Miller, Phm1c
1452 S. Ellsworth Road #2211
Mesa, AZ 85208

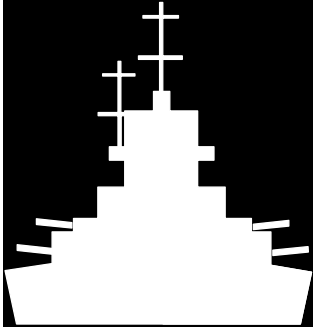
May 19

Alpheus A. Deville, S1c
50 Deville Cutoff Rd,
Deville, LA 71328

**"Change Starts When
Someone Sees the Next Step"**

William Drayton

LST534 Newsletter
250 West 49th Street
Suite 401
New York, New York 10019



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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.

JUST for FUN

*Jokes contributed by David Lord,
freelance engineer and composer*

A N.Y. cab driver and a Priest arrive at the Pearly Gates at the same time: The priest is given an old torn up cloak while the cab driver is given a beautiful golden robe to wear.

The priest asks St. Peter why his status isn't at least as good as the cab driver, whereupon St. Peter responds that "we are now basing everything on direct results and when you preached, people fell asleep. When the cab driver drove, people prayed.

I guess you already know what happens when you mix Rogaine and Viagra?

You end up with hair like Don King.

NAUTICAL TERMS

*In memory of James Richard Drew who
contributed to this column until his passing.*

Following Sea:

An overtaking sea that comes from astern.