

A DAUGHTER'S LOVE, A STORY OF WAR: "ONTO RUGGED SHORES: THE VOYAGE OF LST534"

When Linda Alvers' father was stricken with Alzheimer's Disease, his past disappeared. As a way to repair this loss, and to understand her father better, Alvers turned detective, ransacking military archives and painstakingly locating the men with whom he had served in the navy. The resulting tale is a saga of bravery and camaraderie that took her father and his fellow crew members from the D-Day invasion of Normandy to the kamikaze attacks of the Pacific, aboard the broad-beamed, ungraceful — but indispensable — landing ship with the unromantic name LST534.

The film Alvers made from this story, **ONTO RUGGED SHORES: THE VOYAGE OF LST534**, airs on *D-Day, June 6, 7-8:00 PM* on the History Channel.

Veteran journalist Howard K. Smith hosts and narrates. At a time, at the close of the century, when many look back with gratitude on the men and women who fought the second World War, **ONTO RUGGED SHORES** offers a glimpse of an unsung kind of heroism — the daily grind of the men who served on the war's most unglamorous ships, the sturdy, flat-bottomed landing ships that sailed into withering fire, delivering Allied troops to the some of the war's most fiercely pitched battles.

The story of LST534 is told through rare archival footage and the vivid memories of the men who sailed aboard her — Alvers' father's fellow crew members. For a ship that saw action in battle theaters separated by tens of thousands of miles, LST534's origins were homely enough; it was built in Evansville, Indiana and then wallowed through a stormy Atlantic crossing before ferrying wave after wave of troops into the blistering hell of the Normandy beaches of D-DAY. After the European victory, LST534 and her men re-crossed the Atlantic for a long and memorable leave in New York before setting off for the Pacific.

She campaigned in the long war against the Japanese before being severely damaged by a kamikaze attack off Okinawa just days before the war ended. Unrepairable, she was finally towed to sea and sunk.

The spirit of her crew lives on, though. The men Alvers interviewed, more than 50 years after the scuttling of their ship, vividly remember her — and each other. They demonstrate the kind of bravery — understated, matter-of-fact, unself-conscious — that was one of America's secret weapons in that long and terrible war. They make the point, rarely celebrated in films and books, that real heroism is often unremarkable.

During the research and filming Alvers often visited her father to tell him what she had learned, who she had located, what they had told her. He seemed not to follow what she was saying, she says, but she felt closer to him just because she had learned so much about him. Before the film was complete, he died, and three of the men who are interviewed in it have also passed away. This film is the record of their valor.

At a reunion party at which she showed them the film, the surviving crew of LST534 made Alvers an honorary member of the crew. They presented her with a plaque, part of which reads:

IN OUR MEMORIES, SHE SAILS FOREVER
WITH OUR GALLANT CREW.

Now, thanks to **ONTO RUGGED SHORES: THE VOYAGE OF LST534**, she will sail in the memories of many others, too.

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"I'M PROUD THAT I WENT AND DONE WHAT I COULD"

MEMORIES OF THE CREW OF LST534

The crew members of LST 534 represent hundreds of thousands of American fighting men and women whose lives were changed by their experiences in the second World War. Their memories enrich the narrative of "Onto Rugged Shores: The Voyage of LST534," airing on the History Channel, D-Day, June 6, 1999,

7-8:00 PM. Here are excerpts from their recollections:

(Larry A. Gray, MoMM3c - Motor Machinist Mate, LST 534)

LARRY: It was a growing up experience. I wouldn't take a million dollars for it; I wouldn't want to do it again for a million dollars, but I wouldn't take a million dollars for my experiences in there.

(John V. Medeiros, BM2c - Boatswain Mate, LST 534)

JOHN M. It was fun for me to know that I was on a big ship when I first saw it but then I realized it was a floating bathtub.

(Oscar Cress, GMC3c - Gunners Mate, LST 534)

OSCAR: You had to strap yourself in bed at night if the sea was rough and I remember one time we had a rough one. And that time we were flopping like a fish and you could hear the seams squeak on that thing.

(Angelo Cumella, S1c (sk) - Storekeeper, LST 534)

ANGELO: The storms were terrible. I mean in a little thing like that we were just bouncing around like crazy.

MEMORIES OF D-DAY

(Lt. (jg) Louis R. Stockdale, - First Lt. Deck Division, LST 534)

LOUIS: I think at that time the psychological effect it had on me if I ever get through this I will never worry about things again.

(Joseph E. Szymanski, BM1c - Boatswain Mate, LST 534)

JOE: The ship that was next to us, we were all supposed to be blackout. They were showing a light and we heard German planes coming over and I got so angry about it that I got behind my gun and I shouted over "Put them lights out of I'll shoot them out!"

When you stand on that beach when I first got there and I seen the wounded and evacuated I cried - "What in the heck am I doing here? Why am I here? We don't need this."

(Angelo Cumella, S1c (sk) - Storekeeper, LST 534)

ANGELO: I don't know I just couldn't take it. Most of the fellas couldn't take it because it was terrible. I mean they were by the hundreds. It wasn't one here, one there, it was...so many, so many. Boy that's the only thing that sticks in my mind.

You can't imagine the thousand and thousands of soldiers and marines coming aboard, dumping them off, go back, pick up another bunch.

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THE WAR'S END

(Angelo Cumella, S1c (sk) - Storekeeper, LST 534)

ANGELO: When we heard the final word that the war was over, I mean everybody just went crazy. Everybody was running around, hugging each other, just having a great time.

The day that ship was pulled off the beach and I had to get off of it, I stood on the dock and just looked -- kept looking, kept looking -- and I'm saying, "My God, there goes my baby." Just slowly, slowly being pulled off, and seeing it go out to sea. And all I get looking at was the number 534... 534... 534...

(Luther Curtis Lyles, S2c - Seaman, LST 534)

LUTHER: Well I'm proud of what I done. I mean, as much as I done. I don't figure I'm no hero or anything liken to that, but I'm proud that I went and done what I could.

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"ONTO RUGGED SHORES: VOYAGE OF LST 534" BIOGRAPHIES

HOWARD K. SMITH

It characterizes Howard K. Smith's stature as a journalist that he was chosen above all his colleagues to moderate two television debates that are widely thought to have been decisive in two Presidential elections: the first Kennedy-Nixon debate in 1960, and the Carter-Reagan "Great Debate" in 1980. Also, he is the only newsman ever to be invited to address the House of Representatives, on Flag Day in 1975.

Howard K. Smith has won every important award given for excellence in broadcasting. He received the Peabody Award and an "Emmy" for the documentary program "The Population Explosion." He is the only journalist who has been awarded the DuPont Commentary Award twice. He has won the Overseas Press Club Award for reporting and interpreting foreign affairs six times, more than any other commentator. He was the first working newsman to receive the "Paul White Memorial Award," which up to that time had been given only to Presidents of the United States, and to one network president. When the Friars' Club presented its "Oscar" to the three "outstanding American broadcast journalists," they were: Walter Cronkite, David Brinkley and Howard K. Smith. Outside the field of broadcasting, Howard K. Smith has received 18 honorary degrees of doctorates from American Universities. As a public speaker, he was given the prestigious Lowell Thomas Award by the International Platform Association.

A native of Ferriday, Louisiana, Howard K. Smith graduated from Tulane University, then won a Rhodes Scholarship and attended Oxford University in England. He began his career as a newspaperman, first on the *New Orleans Item*, then with the United Press, and later with the *New York Times*. In 1941 he joined the Columbia Broadcasting System as its wartime Berlin correspondent, and remained with the network for 20 years. In 1961, he

switched to the American Broadcasting Company where he reported for 17 years.

As a CBS war correspondent he was expelled from Nazi Germany late in 1941, and authored the best selling book "Last Train from Berlin." Throughout World War II, he covered four different areas. He followed the Nazi Wehrmacht in its conquest of France. He covered the French underground army in its re-conquest of France. He was assigned to the U.S. First and Ninth Armies in their drive through Belgium, Holland and West Germany. And he covered the surrender of the Germans to the Soviet Red Army in Marshall Zhoukov's headquarters outside Berlin. At the end of the war, he reported on the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials. In 1946, Edward R. Murrow appointed Smith to be his successor as CBS's Chief European Correspondent. From his London base, he traveled in and reported from all the nations of Western Europe and Communist Europe. He summarized the effects of war on Europe in his second book, "The State of Europe." Gradually his beat was extended to the Middle East and Africa. In 1957, he was transferred to Washington, where he became CBS's chief Washington Correspondent, and Manager of CBS's Washington Bureau.

In 1961 Howard K. Smith joined the American Broadcasting Company to write, edit and narrate a prime time weekly television program on current affairs titled "News and Comment." Later he was assigned to fifty-two weekly programs devoted entirely to the Vietnam War. He was chosen by ABC to conduct the first one-on-one television interview with a president, Richard M. Nixon. For seven years he served as co-anchorman and commentator of the network's main news program, the "ABC Evening News." In that period he wrote a third book, "Washington, DC," a history of the nation's capital.

A fair comment on Mr. Smith's career is that of *Current Biography*: "Perhaps the most outspoken and uncompromising of the network news commentators is Howard K. Smith, the scholarly resident pundit of ABC's nightly newscasts who has over the years, confounded his critics and admirers with his unpredictable commentaries..."

Since leaving ABC, Howard K. Smith has been writing and lecturing and accepting selected assignments. In 1980, in addition to moderating the final Carter-Reagan television debate he moderated all the debates in the primaries. And he broadcasted a study of the modern presidency entitled "Every Four Years," a series of one-hour television programs during which Mr. Smith interviewed all living presidents. He was the spokesman-on-the-air for the National Association of Broadcasters' Campaign To Improve The Productivity of

American Industries. His public service messages were shown regularly on over 600 television stations and 3500 radio stations.

Howard K. Smith has played in many movies, including "The Best Man" with Henry Fonda, "The Candidate" with Robert Redford, and "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," and more recently the movie and NBC television series, "V." He is married to Benedicte Traberg of Copenhagen, a former correspondent for a Danish newspaper. They have two children, Jack and Catherine. Both are working as journalists.

In 1996 Mr. Smith published his autobiography, interwoven with a commentary on the twentieth century, titled "Events Leading Up To My Death." Reviews were uniformly favorable. "USA Today" commented, "Smith's voice is distinctive, his vocabulary charmingly idiosyncratic. World events, world figures: The man has seen it all and lived to tell us about it."

LINDA K. ALVERS, RN, MSN

Linda Alvers produced "Onto Rugged Shores: The Voyage of LST 534" as a tribute to her father, who served aboard the landing ship at Normandy and later in the Pacific. Alvers received her Masters Degree in Nursing in 1979 at the University of Evansville, Indiana where she subsequently taught Maternal Child Health Care to student nurses. She was recruited by National Audio Video in 1981 to create a subsidiary company to focus on developing educational programs for nurses and moved to New York City. The new company was given the name National Nursing Network and Linda assumed the role of President. The company continues to provide diversified educational services to practicing nurses in every specialty.

With a flair for management and operations she was eventually named Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of National Audio Video. As new related businesses were designed, Linda took an active part in their development and today serves as partner and Chief Financial Officer for the Audio Visual Management Group in Dallas, Texas, and a partner and Chief Operating Officer of the Dannemiller Foundation in San Antonio, Texas. She oversees an annual budget in excess of twenty-one million dollars.

Linda currently serves on the 1999 Nominating Committee for the Professional Convention Management Association, is an active member of the Alumni Association and Presidents Club at the University of Evansville and received the Alumni Achievement Award. She is also a member of Who's Who of American Women.

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"ONTO RUGGED SHORES: VOYAGE OF LST 534"

PRODUCTION CREDITS

The following are production credits for **ONTO RUGGED SHORES: VOYAGE OF LST 534**, airing *Sunday, June 6, 7-8:00 PM (D-Day)* on the History Channel. Howard K. Smith, hosts and narrates. When producer Linda Alvers' father was stricken with Alzheimer's disease, his past disappeared. To repair this loss, Alvers located the men with whom he had served in the Navy. The resulting tale is a saga of bravery and camaraderie aboard the broad-beamed, ungraceful — but indispensable — landing ship with the unromantic name LST534.

Executive Producer:	LINDA ALVERS
Written and Produced by:	LINDA ALVERS & MICHAEL WILSON
Director of Photography:	MATTHEW WACHSMAN
Edited by:	MICHAEL WILSON
Original Music Score:	UNICORN PRODUCTIONS
Associate Producer:	TOM CUMMINGS
Opening and Closing Remarks Written by:	HOWARD K. SMITH
Transcription:	EDIE HUTCHINS

ALLEN MERRITT

Script Consultant:	MARSHALL RIGGAN
Additional Camera:	DANIEL WELCH
Okinawa Unit:	CRAZY TV
Promoting Services:	JOHN

Steven Sills

KINNEY

Capital Prompting

Make-Up:
YORK

BARBARA

Archival Research:
BROWN

ONITA

SUSAN
CHURCH

Archival Stills and Footage:
EVANSVILLE MUSEUM OF ART AND SCIENCE

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Model of LST 542:
SEA SYSTEMS COMMAND

NAVAL

Washington, D.C.

Original Footage of LST 534:
QM2c

NORRIS C. LONG,

Original photos and memorabilia
provided by the officers and crew
of LST 534

Special Thanks:

CINDY ALVERS

JAMES R. DREW, SC3c

KELLY KISSEL

THOMAS R. LONNBERG, Evansville Museum

WILLIAM G. MITCHELL, Retired Veterans Memorial Club of
Vanderburgh County

JENNIFER ROBERTS

MRS. HOWARD K. SMITH

KANDY STEINFURTH

SUNSET MEMORIAL PARK CEMETERY

UNITED STATES LST ASSOCIATION

The producers wish to thank the officers and crew
of LST 534 for sharing their stories with us.

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