

Leonard Charles Eddy
Narrator

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MR: Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth, please.

LCE: Leonard Charles Eddy. I was born on July 11, 1920. I was born here in Saratoga Springs.

MR: OK. What was your educational background before you went into the service?

LCE: I graduated from Saratoga High School in 1937 and then I went to Bentley College. And I graduated from Bentley College in 1942. I signed up before graduation for the Naval Air Corps. and there was a period of time before I was called for instruction. Which began fifteenth of January 1943.

MR: I'm going to go back a second before that. Where were you when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

LCE: Actually, I had briefly attended Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and I was there at the time the Japanese attacked us.

MR: Do you remember how you heard about it and your reaction?

LCE: Well, I suppose like most people, it was very unsettling to get the news, and I was probably on the campus somewhere that night.

MR: Did you know where Pearl Harbor was?

LCE: Yes.

MR: Most people weren't even aware where it was at the time. OK, now why did you decide to volunteer for the Naval Air program?

LCE: Well, the program they offered us seemed to appeal to most of us young students at the time.

MR: Where did you go for the program?

LCE: Well, on January 1943 I joined a group of cadets in New York City. And we were assigned for training at New Paltz, NY. We had both classroom and flight training there.

MR: Well, this was the V6 program? Where else did you go? Anywhere else besides new Paltz, or was that were?

LCE: Yes, New Paltz was only a brief stay, and I went to Chapel Hill, NC. There was no flying at Chapel Hill but there was a lot of training there.

MR: But did you fly in New Paltz when you were at New Paltz? What kind of planes did you fly?

LCE: Well, it's just a small Aeronca tandem. There was a 2-seater, one right in front of the other. And when that was completed as they say we went to Chapel Hill. Then, after Chapel Hill, we went to Glenview, IL. That was the next step in the flight training. Then we flew what they call the yellow perils; they were a biplane, an open cockpit biplane. I had several hours of experience there, but I had some difficulty with the maneuvers, and it was just a case, I presume at the time, of some instability with different flight patterns, and you had to learn from the aeronautics booklet. So, rather than take the chance and maybe feeling the instability in some point in time, I transferred to the amphibious force, with the training station at Solomons, Maryland and we trained in the Chesapeake Bay. It was different, landing crafts were available for training there and when that training was completed, we went to Orange, Texas to pick up our ship which was the LCI 948 which was one of the landing crafts which carry troops into the beaches.

MR: Now how long were you in the V6 program approximately?

LCE: If you count from the time I signed up, to the time that I transferred to the amphibious force, it was probably around eight months.

MR: How long were you at the amphibious for school?

LCE: I went there in the early fall and then Solomons we picked up the ship it was probably early in 1944 no...

MR: Were you there several months?

LCE: I was there several months. And then we went to Texas and where that type of ship was being constructed, this was a ship that had ramps for accommodations for several troops. And we would go into the beach, drop the ramps, and then the troops would go off the ramps. After we got our ship, after a shakedown cruise near Houston, TX we went to Norfolk Virginia. And then we sailed for the Mediterranean.

MR: Now, how big of a crew is in the LCI?

LCE: Well, it varied a little bit, but generally speaking in the neighborhood of 15 to 16.

MR: Now, what were your duty assignments?

LCE: I went in as a bosun. I don't really recall but I got to a point where I was elevated to bosun first class and more or less in charge of the deck crew as far as the maintenance of the painting and whatever had to be done on the ship. And there were three officers and as I say about anywhere between 15 16 a crew that were not officers.

MR: This ship sailed across the Atlantic then?

LCE: Well, we went over to North Africa, that was the first stop

MR: How does a ship that small handle in the way.

LCE: They don't draw much water. They're 150 feet long, roughly. And would draw maybe at most 10 feet of water. They were not very stable. It took us 2 weeks to get over to North Africa and. Then after we were more or less shuttled around the Mediterranean. We went to Cecily Italy in June of 44. And then in August of 44, we made the invasion of southern France. And more or less the Riviera coast in a town called Saint Maxine.

MR: Now were you under fire when you went in?

LCE: We were firing, but it wasn't much of any return fire that I recall because after a period of time and the troops had gone ashore and started following up after the enemy, we were able to travel around the Mediterranean and expedite the unloading on supplies and so forth.

MR: How many troops were at, and did you land, how many could it carry?

LCE: I think that each LCI could carry around 100 troops.

MR: So, you spent time then going cruising around the Mediterranean, delivering supplies?

LCE: And also, some troop transport from North Africa to the North Coast of France and Italy but we were there until December of 44. We were actually leaving at the time of the Allied troops were faced against the last big shot by the Germans.

MR: The Battle of the Bulge?

LCE: The Battle of the Bulge yeah. Then we went back to Florida. It took three weeks to go back because we're heading into the wind most of the time which was very rough. We were in Florida with a change of half of the crew and the other half were reassigned. So, we had a month's time off at that point and then we were assigned to the Pacific, so we went through the Panama Canal which was quite an experience.

MR: In what way?

LCE: Well, I mean the fact that this canal of the size and different sections had been built under very bad conditions, and we also passed one large battleship coming back to the Atlantic

MR: It must have been quite a contrast between your LCI and the battleship.

LCE: Yes, there was, particularly size wise. When we got to San Diego, it was in March of '45 and we were there to have heavier firepower put onto our LCI, expecting the invasion of Japan at some point.

MR: Now, what did you do between December and March when you were out in the Pacific? How were your duties?

LCE: Well, we were just more or less at the naval base at San Diego. Because of this change of firepower is going to take quite a while. We were just about ready to take off when the Japanese surrendered, which was in August of '45.

MR: Now. What changes did they do to the firepower? What did you have initially and what did they change?

LCE: We had all 20mm initially and they were installing some higher caliber guns, that was the main reason that we were there. After that we still had work to do with some troop transport from the U.S. to actually it was the Marines that we transferred out to Guam with a stop at Hawaii on the way out and then we went to the Philippines, and we did some carrying of troops that had been there back to the base at Samar where they would go home. Then it was my turn to go home for discharge and the captain of our ship made me chief Bosun mate - temporary and that was the rank that I held when I was discharged. I went back on another amphib ship from the Philippines to the U.S. and it was a larger landing craft called LST .

MR: Go back a little bit. What was daily life like on the on that landing craft?

LCE: There was always something to do in the way of general maintenance around the ship and we were underway a lot, so we had different watches that we had to stand. Watches usually were four-hour watches and the crew got along together very well.

MR: Must have been pretty cramped quarters, though. What were quarters like?

LCE: Well, the sleeping quarters were cramped. It had sometimes four sometimes three most of the time there were bunks on top of one another, the same as you would find in a submarine I imagine, but you were able to be on deck when we were underway and except when we were at a specific base, we were always served meals in a couple of seconds.

MR: And you would have had to have a galley. Did you have to eat in shifts because of the size?

LCE: Well, actually because of different watches there were some.

MR: Now, what kind of food did you have while you were at sea.

LCE: What were over the Mediterranean, because we had some days off over there, we would trade some cigarettes for fresh vegetables and sometimes fresh bread but otherwise we had canned eggs, and a lot of packaged and canned food, but it wasn't all that bad.

MR: Now you wrote down here a little story about in Italy, a young boy saying to you?

LCE: Oh yes. He would come around the dock where we were tied up singing o solo Mio. He was there to get some food. He was a nice little kid, and we also were able when we were in Italy to take a day trip up to Rome. We were excited to get up there at least for the one day to look around. Out in the Philippines, some of the soldiers that have been there for months. When we got them on board, they had been camping out on the island of [?] and just waiting for the word to have transportation back to the States, but

they were a little unwieldy sometimes. Their officers had to lay down the law if they were getting into arguments or things like that. But that was the farthest point we went, the Philippines.

MR: Did you ever have to carry any Japanese POWs?

LCE: No, no. The only time we encountered POWs was after the invasion of Southern France at St. Maxine. They had a bunch of Germans that were put in a compound right after the invasion there and since we had time going around the Mediterranean, we were able to talk to some of them and exchange cigarettes for belt buckles and things of that nature.

MR: Now you said they have performed an unusual duty. You said you carried the guidelines for troops from the ship ramp to the beach. Could you describe that elaborate on that a little bit?

LCE: Well, at the end of the ramp, the line was attached and then I carried in a small anchor type to the beach so that the troops could use that line for stability in going through the water which was probably a couple feet deep. That was part of the deal that I mentioned that to my wife when she wrote that down.

MR: Did you ever see a USO shows at all?

LCE: No, we didn't, we were able to do quite a bit of sightseeing in Hawaii. I met somebody there who was a Saratoga lad who was with a USO show but we didn't actually see the show.

MR: Did you go to see Pearl Harbor while you were there?

LCE: I didn't get to see Pearl Harbor. I wanted to go there sometimes you know but I still haven't made it yet.

MR: When were you discharged?

LCE: That was January 28, 1946. I've got I can leave a couple of things. This is a front; well, I'll show you the original. That's the original and then on the back it tells the different places, it doesn't mention all that I've mentioned, but places we were actually logged in for a while and that's on the back there but it's also on the second sheet.

MR: OK, I'll put that in your folder. OK. Now, after you were discharged, did you ever make use of the GI Bill?

LCE: I did, yeah. For real estate I got an authorization.

MR: Did you ever make use of the 52 20 club?

LCE: No, I didn't

MR: Most guys maxed it out. Did you go right to work?

LCE: I did. My father was in the insurance business in Saratoga Springs. After a couple of weeks, I went to work there for 43 years. The agency has since been sold to another agency, but on the back of this it shows the amount.

MR: \$6,300. Now did you join a veteran's organization at all?

LCE: I didn't join the VFW. I know I used to go to the American legion home but then I was not military, but I was with the elks club for awhile and I decided I was involved with too much night activity and the family was growing up and I remember retiring from the elks. I think maybe at the same time I discontinued going to the American Legion. We had four children and there seemed to be so much to do between the business and the family that I didn't involve myself with too much extracurricular activity.

MR: Did you ever stay in contact with anyone that was in service with you?

LCE: Yea I did. Two fellows from the LCI and we still exchange Christmas cards. I had a sad experience years ago with my youngest child John, he had died of cancer when he was 23 years old, and I might of became closer, actually I was always close to the children, but I became even closer after we lost him. And I can't think of too much else after that as far as the military goes.

MR: Well, how do you think your time in the service had an effect on your life.

LCE: I didn't think much of it at the time. I didn't have any ill feeling as to what are those 3, 3 and a half years, as long as it accomplished what the United States was set to accomplish.

MR: Do you think you would have traveled as much, because you have got to see the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Pacific, which mostly is just one theater.

LCE: I got the American theater ribbon, European theater ribbon with one star for that invasion, the Victory Medal and then since the victory came prior to my Pacific duty, the Asiatic Pacific Theater ribbon and then good conduct medal.

MR: Now, if you hold these up to the camera. Eric can focus on these. And just tell us a little bit about these photographs. If you just hold it in front of you like this. He can focus in on that now. And about when was that? I think it said it on the back.

LCE: This was 1943.

MR: All right well, thank you very much for your interview.