

# Ship's History of USS LST #268

Just another scrappy, unsung amphib---veteran of seven major invasions----that's the USS LST #268.

Commissioned in August 1943, one of the first LST's built by the American Bridge Co., at Ambridge, Pa.; the new "flat-bottomed express" proudly rode the crest of the Mississippi to the delta city of New Orleans. Prophesying things to come, the ship battered its way through a storm reaching hurricane proportions to reach Guantanamo, the sole member of the convoy to arrive at her destination. All the rest had been forced to turn back.

Proceeding to Pearl Harbor, the 268 joined a service squadron; spending several months delivering much needed supplies to our outposts at the Ellice Islands, and the helping in the support phases of the invasions of Tarawa and Makin. It was at Makin that the "green ship" saw its first enemy action. Jap bombers, swooping in low, dropped their deadly load on the beach. When they'd been chased from the skies a short while later, it was discovered that bomb craters lay 500 yards to the starboard, 400 yards, 300 yards, 200 yards, and 100 yards----and that the last crater was but 100 yards to port. Fantastic, but true----the ship had been completely straddled but un-hit.

With little rest, the 268 carried a load of Seabees in the invasion of Roi Island. Few on the ship had heard of Roi, and few were to forget it! While communications equipment and machinery vital to the rebuilding of the airfield, were being unloaded from the tank deck, the "Flash Red" sounded. The nip bombers making things tough again. A bomb hit the island fuel dump, and another hit the ammunition dump fifty yards off the ships port bow. With the explosion that followed from the exploding shells caused all hands to take cover (the ship was literally lifted out of the water), but all were not able to make it without help. The fires that covered the main deck were hastily extinguished, but there was seemingly no end to the shell fragments constantly overhead. An ammunition ship beached near the 268 got a direct hit from an incendiary and began exploding all over the nearby landing craft. Impossible to retract at the time,

everyone sat tight and sweated it out. Hours later, the island, a seething mass of flames and destruction, they retracted and anchored in harbor. It was only then that the officers told the crew that the ship beached on their starboard side carried a full load of high octane gasoline, while the one on their port was fully loaded with bombs.

Various supply and logistic missions followed. Elements of the 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force were ferried to Kwajalein, from where they increased their dominance of advanced Jap bases. Tired and in need of repairs, the 268 was ordered to Pearl Harbor for a complete overhaul. The amphibians were on the move, however, and it was not to be.

Saipan was the next on the list and while still in drydock the 268 was ordered to seam at flank speed to catch her convoy. Working day and night, the last bolts were finally put back in the main engines and the anchor ball came down. Working feverishly until they caught the convoy, the men poured over the invasion plans, brought aboard just prior to sailing. The LCVP coxswains were made to memorize the minute details involved in an amphibious landing of this type, and then, D-Day! When the smoke rose, the 268 was acting as an LVT repair ship and everything had gone off without a hitch.

A short month later found the ship discharging a full load of ammunition on Saipan. At dawn of the next day, the 268 was again opening her bow doors to send Marines and amphtracks ashore in the invasion of Tinian.

The invasion of Pelilieu in the Palau Group found the ship again at the fore. An old hand at invasions, the 268 was rapidly becoming a familiar symbol of D-Day. Putting the Marine assault troops ashore, she retired to the outer harbor. Several days passed before the officers and crew learned the troops they'd brought to this far-off island had borne the brunt of a Jap counter attack, and many friends had been lost in turning back the tide of the battle.

Awarded a months' overhaul at Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, ship and crew got a much needed rest. They were to need it!!

After a hurried mission at flank speed to Cape Gloucester to reinforce the garrison there, the ship returned to Bougainville to rehearse the

invasion of Luzon. Christmas Day, and the 268 was at Manus. January 5<sup>th</sup>, the silent LST convoy wound its way through the famed narrow Surigao Straits. January 9<sup>th</sup>, proudly rocking under the concussion of the New Mexico's 16" salvos, the Army tanks rolled off the ramp towards Dagupan. The air attacks encountered underway were minor but the Japs were now pouring it on. The blue sky was fairly blue as ack-ack puffs chartered the course of the planes. After launching the pontoon docks, rapidly becoming standard equipment for the 268, which had adorned the port and starboard sides, the ship retired to the harbor.

Three tedious days of unloading ammunition in heavy swells, she joined a convoy heading back to Leyte. The first morning away from Lingayen, the little convoy was attacked by a group of Kamikazes. One missed a transport, the next nosed into a dive for the 268. With 40mm and 20mm hitting him all the way, the "oscar" crashed into flames a scant twenty feet off the port bow. The plane shot up in the air, pieces landing all over the main deck. Miraculously, none of the men up forward were injured, bending a few longitudinal frames but causing little damages. Two more Japs made passes, only to be driven back by AA fire. Finally one dived only to be shot down by one of our Hellcats, called hurriedly to the scene by escorts. With a last gesture of defiance the Jap tried to crash a PC, but splattered ingloriously into the sea. The last Jap missed his dive on another ship and the convoy continued on its grim way.

The next morning the Samurai boys spotted the convoy again and this time they were not to be denied. One crashed, but the other struck a glancing blow on the LST #700, directly ahead of the 268. Casualties from a dislodged 20mm gun were knocked into the sea, and a "hard left rudder" barely avoided them. The LST #700 was in a bad way; both her engine rooms were being flooded. While the rest of the convoy picked up survivors and steamed towards the shores of Mindoro, the 268 was assigned the task of taking the wounded LST in tow and bringing her to a friendly port. It wasn't a happy sight watching the other ships leave and nobody felt much like talking. Few were able to eat, and dropping a spoon on the deck was taking one's life in his hands. In a heavy sea, 60 miles from Jap-held Manila and Clark field, the towing cable broke three times. With one final effort, after eight hours of trying in broad daylight, the cable was

secured. Men who had been at General Quarters stations for the best part of the day were sent below for chow, new men taking their places. After steaming all night the two ships rendezvoused with a tug, and the 700 was towed into the San Jose Harbor at Mindoro. Rejoining the convoy, the ship reached Leyte completely exhausted.

Expecting the worst, the First Cavalry was loaded and taken back up to Lingayen Gulf. With the exception of several sub scares, the voyage was uneventful. It was five days later that they heard that elements of the First Cavalry had liberated Manila and thousands of Americans, who had been prisoners since the fall of Bataan.

Back to Manus, the Russell Islands and Guadalcanal. After a brief layover, the weary ship was scheduled to head for home and a well-earned rest. But the invasion of Okinawa was on the horizon, and again it was not to be. One LST was unable to make the trip and the 268 was once more called in at the last moment. With top priority, she steamed to the Russell Islands, took on Seabees and pontoon barges, and set the sea determined to catch her convoy. After proceeding at flank speed for eight days, the convoy was sighted as she neared Ulithi.

In rough weather, on the way to Okinawa, the ship was battered from stem to stern. The pontoon barge on the starboard side was torn from its holdings and crashed into the sea. The new men kept pretty much to themselves.

D-Day mornings Easter Sunday, and the 268 was looking straight down the Emperor's throat, putting ashore Marines on the tomb laden Western coast of Okinawa. D-Day was uneventful, except for the fact the Marines from the 268 had secured the Yonton Airstrip within a few hours with practically no casualties.

Filled with a load of tetryl, the 268 remained in the harbor alongside fourteen hundred other ships. At night, they all made smoke, hoping to conceal themselves from the Nip air attacks. Nobody slept for more than a few hours, and the Japs were constantly overhead. Large scale air attacks were the pattern during the day, nuisance bogies at night. The Navy took a beating from the "do and die" of the Jap Air Force, but there was the ever present determination that they could

say and win! Men, supplies, and equipment continued to pour ashore, and soon there were no more enemy planes left in the sky, and the island was ours-----a wonderful homebase from which to strike Japan itself.

After Okinawa, the ship returned to Saipan, Pearl Harbor, and the West Coast. When the Golden Gate Bridge finally hovered in sight, many a tear flowed from the men who had been through seven invasions in the nearly two years since they had left the States. It was truly a gala occasion.

Overhauled at Alameda, Calif., the 268 was converted into a hospital evacuation ship, in preparation for the invasion of Japanese homeland. It would have fitted the pattern of the ship to have been in the front row for the big show, but Nippon had enough. V-J Day found the 268 in the San Francisco Harbor, tooting her whistle and shouting along with the rest.

Refreshed from leaves at home, the men were eager to see new places. Few of the veterans from the original crew remained, and again a "green" bunch had to be trained. Pearl Harbor, Maui, and Eniwetok followed. On the outside of the big typhoon, the 268 sailed into Buckner Bay, Okinawa feeling right at home. Assigned to garrison duty with the Fifth Fleet, she is biding her time, waiting for the word to return to the States for decommissioning, knowing that, like all amphibs, she has done her job well.

LST-268

Bldg. - American Bridge Co., Ambridge, Pa.  
Keel laid - Nov. 26, 1942 American Bridge Co., Ambridge, Pa.  
Launched - June 18, 1943.  
Accepted and placed in reduced commission 9 August 1943. Ref. SupShips  
Ambridge dispatch 100830 of August.  
Departed Ambridge 10 August 1943. Ref. Sup Ships Neville Island Dispatch  
101425 of August.  
Arrived New Orleans 18 Aug. 1943. Ref. NavSta NOLA dispatch 191684 of August.  
Placed in full commission 19 Aug. 1943. Ref. Com 9 dispatch 201447 of August.  
LCT 279 loaded on board 25 Aug. 1943. Ref. Com 9 dispatch 262349 of August.  
Reported for duty and shakedown to Cominch and Cinclant 29 Aug. 1943. Ref.  
LST 268 dispatch 251434 of Aug.  
Sailed 29 Sept. 1943. Ref. Port Dir. New Orleans dispatch 292033 of Sept.

*Stricken by Dept. 70641 Com. 180100004* **STRICKEN 31 OCT 1947**

ASSIGNED - by VCNO conf. serial 0316523 of 26 July 1943 to ComPhibPac,  
Flotilla THREE, Group 9, Division 17.  
*Flot 13, Div 38, Div 76. Cominch.*  
2 LCVPs shipped direct from contractors. Ref. memo from Lt. Williamson  
dated 7 Aug.

LST(H)-268

*Scrap 2*  
Reduced Comm: 9 Aug 43.  
Full Comm: 19 Aug 43.  
Reclassified to LST(H)-268 15 Sept 45.  
Decommissioned 16 Feb 46, LST-268 Pl 161200 Feb 46. // Arrived Bremerton  
for disposal 22 Sept 47, Com 13 Pl 221958 Sept 47 // Stripping completed  
7 Oct. '47. Fm Navshipyd Pug pl 080104 Oct. '47 // Not essential to defense  
of US. Auth. granted by SecNav to dispose of vessel, CNO ltr ser. 2907P414  
dtd 8 Oct 47 // Surplus to Navy needs and made available for disposal to US  
MC, CNO ltr ser. 2954P414 dtd 13 Oct 47 // Sold to Consolidated Bldrs.Inc. NavSta  
Seattle delivery receipt dated 24 March 1948 //

LST(H)-268

**Stricken 31 OCT 1947 Naval Register**

LST-268

Landing Ship, Tank

CLASSIFICATION

ASSIGNMENT

NO

BUILT BY American Bridge Co. ACQUIRED FROM

ITEM	DATA	SOURCE	ITEM	DATA	SOURCE
1. Material of Hull			15. ACCEPTANCE	Aug. 9, '43	C-65T268/14
2. Length			16. <del>PRE</del> COMMISSION	Aug. 9, '43	C-65T268/14
3. Breadth			17. Full Commission	Aug. 19, '43	LST 268/14
4. Draft			18.		
5. Displacement			19.		
6. Capacity			20. LST(H) 268	9-15-45	
7.			21.		
8. Propulsion			22.		
9.			23.		
10.			24.		
11. Keel Laid	11/26/42	PR	25.		
12. Launched			26.		
13. Delivered			27.		
14. In Service			28.		

LST-268

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