

## Taking Aboard British Marines

By Crewman, Bob Gibson, MoMM3c

“In preparation for what appeared to be the “final push into Japan”, the USS Pavlic was assigned the job of taking aboard, and then landing, British Marines. The marines were aboard two British cruisers, the Gambia and the Newfoundland, and were brought aboard the Pavlic right out on the open seas!

Pavlic’s Boat Division consisted of four (4) crews of four (4) men in each crew. The boat crews had been through exhaustive training in how to handle the boats, but until this time had not been involved in an actual troop landing exercise--the real thing!

The day of the troop transfer was a surprise to everyone, I think, at least it was to the members of the boat crews. The weather was not good at all for such an undertaking. While it was not raining, the water was choppy and the surface was made up of rolling swells, very close together.

I don’t recall exactly which cruiser that boat #2 was dispatched to, but I do recall that we made several trips, and all to the same ship, I think. On our first trip out we knew that we were in for a pretty wild ride, out and back. The events that followed proved that we were right—two things in particular (an incident with one of the marines, and damage to our #2 boat hull).

As already mentioned, the water was very rough, and just getting our boats disengaged from the davit hooks to get underway provided us with some excitement in itself. Our coxswains were put to the test in handling the boats under such difficult circumstances. The coxswain of my boat #2 was R. B. Cooke. All of the other coxswains: R. D. Daniels, C. N. Mallard, and J. T. Schmid had their own private struggles going to control the other three boats--#1, #3, and #4, respectively.

Upon nearing the ship to pick up our first load of troops, it appeared that the water took on a new fury, and swells were especially troublesome. We had a problem retrieving the lines thrown to us to tie up, and in keeping the boat close enough to the ship so that the marines clambering down a cargo net could get themselves over the side of our boat and drop into it.

Incident number one occurred about the time we were through loading our first load. The young marines had their rifles and backpacks lashed together as a single unit for easier handling. Just as one of the fellows released his grip on the cargo net to drop into the boat, a large swell caused the boat to heave up very hard, making the young marine lose his footing and almost fall overboard. Naturally, with all of this instability involved, the fellow got his foot caught between the boat and the side of the ship, and he dropped his pack, which went overboard. Immediately the yell from his superior was “Get that rifle”! Obviously,

this person in charge was more concerned about retrieving a rifle than he was about how seriously this man had been injured. I realize that at that time the person in charge of the group of men felt that this man would not be any good to the unit without his rifle. However, I have always felt that that was a pretty callous attitude on the part of the superior, at worst, and a misplacement of values at best. (At that time, none of us knew that the fellow wouldn't need his rifle!) The A-bombs took care of that.

Incident no. 2 occurred back at the Pavlic as we were unloading the men from the boat. I don't recall exactly where we unloaded them onto the Pavlic, but I do recall that our own guys had thrown over some very rigid and thick fenders to keep us from banging against the side of the ship. The swell were still knocking us around pretty bad, and one of them slammed the starboard aft section of the boat into one of these rigid fenders. There was a resounding crack!, and after that I noticed we were taking on water at a fairly heavy rate. Fortunately our bilge pump was working well and we were throwing a solid roll of water straight out from the discharge pipe.

We informed all of the "powers that be" about our predicament, but our orders were to return to the cruiser for another load—which we did. With the men out of the boat (the previous load) the boat wasn't riding so low that the engine was endangered at that point, which was encouraging. Since I was the motor-mac (Motor Machinist's Mate), and the engine was my responsibility, that was a great relief.

We went back for the extra load and got them safely aboard the Pavlic just in the nick of time! By the time we had unloaded our last haul, the water in the bilge had risen up over part of the transmission case and was about to enter the vent hole on top of the transmission! If water had gotten into that transmission we would have certainly stopped then. Those Greymarine transmissions didn't work very well with salt water in them!

I never did compare notes with any of the other boat crews, but I don't think that anyone else experienced any equipment damage during the handling of the troops.

Evidently the planners who specified the various equipments that might be required on an APD, thought that an LCVP might have to have some hull repair done someday. Much to my surprise, our carpenter's mates, John Housby and William "Doc" Burton, were able to secure the necessary plywood (about an inch thick, as I recall) to repair the cracked section, and did an excellent repair job on it.

Old #2 continued to perform very well, even serving as the "captain's gig" after the carpenter's mates made a cover for part of the cargo area of the boat. Other little things happened around the boats and their activities, some amusing, some

not so amusing, but the above related incidents are two that happened during the loading of our British troops, which I will never forget!"

### **Going through a mine field May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1945, Our first day at Okinawa**

By Crewman, Victor Perman, QM3c

About heading out to Radar Picket Station 10, Perman writes, "I remember vividly Chief Rich (Chief Quartermaster Leo Joseph Rychlewski) unrolling charts to give Captain Allen the bearing for the rescue call. The charts were picked up that afternoon with the locations of the mine fields appended but not plotted when the bearing was given. It was about one hour later that I recall Chief Rich saying, "OH Shit! We're in the middle of the mine field." Captain Allen had no alternative but to continue. Lucky Pavlic."

### **Torpedoing of the USS Pennsylvania**

An account described by Crewman Robert D. Daniels, S1c

Daniels, coxswain of our #1 Higgins boat, recalls being on the fantail of our ship where we were setting up to show a movie when he saw a plane come in low to hit the battleship USS Pennsylvania that was also in Buckner Bay (Nakagasuku Wan) with us. It was August 12, 1945 and the battle for Okinawa was essentially over, which is why we might be showing a movie in the evening. The a-bombs had already been dropped on both Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

From the Pennsylvania's records and our ship's log, I know that the Pennsylvania arrived in Buckner Bay on the morning of August 12<sup>th</sup> to join the Tennessee. The Pennsylvania was at anchor at 8:45 p.m. when a Japanese torpedo plane sneaked in and got a torpedo hit on her starboard side toward the stern. It did extensive damage, many compartments were flooded, and the ship settled heavily by the stern. By Herculean efforts of the ship's repair crews and the prompt assistance of two salvage tugs, the flooding was brought under control. The Pennsylvania lost 20 men killed and 10 injured, however, with the war essentially over.

Pavlic, earlier that day, had left Hagushi anchorage on the other side of Okinawa to escort a convoy of three gasoline tankers and a cargo ship around the island and into Buckner Bay, arriving at around 4:30 p.m., and we anchored at berth Love 42. We could well have been setting up for a movie at 8:45 p.m. when the attack came. The log shows that we were at General Quarters from 9:00 to 9:53 p.m. that night, right after the Pennsylvania was hit. Obviously there hadn't been any prior warning of the torpedo plane.

We were still in Buckner Bay at anchor the next evening, August 13<sup>th</sup>, when the Japanese tried again to get the Pennsylvania, this time with a suicide plane. The kamikaze instead crashed in flames on a cargo ship 1,000 yards off the Pennsylvania's starboard beam. Our ship's log shows that we were at General Quarters that night from 7:48 to 9:30 p.m. so we must have had some radar warning beforehand.

The following day, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1945 our whole fast transport division got under way to join Halsey's fleet heading north for the occupation of Japan. Ralph Harris.