

Quarterly Newsletter 1st Qtr 2022

2022 Reunion Update. Save the dates! Since last Fall David and Roz Vicknair have been working on the 2022 Reunion. The initial plan to locate in the Williamsburg VA area did not work out due to pricing issues. David and Roz now report that they have identified the Courtyard Marriott in Norfolk VA. It is downtown on Plume Street. Near the Naval Museum and the pier where battleship ex-USS Wisconsin (floating museum) is moored. Hotel agreement details forthcoming. The reunion dates are now set for Monday Sept 26 – Friday Sept 30. Additional details being worked include shuttle van transport to/from Norfolk Airport and a potential group day trip up to Williamsburg. Stay tuned as planning kicks in.

Annual Dues. Reminder, our annual dues are to be paid during March. The amount remains at \$25, payment of which qualifies one to be a Regular Member. Only Regular Members are allowed to vote during the association's Business Meetings.

Checks are to be made out to Washtenaw County Veterans Association, and mailed to our Treasurer – David Vicknair, 42472 Evangeline Drive, Hammond, LA 70403.

Trivia – Call Signs. Commissioned ships traditionally receive a four-letter “international call sign” and a US military unclassified call sign consisting of a word or words. Washtenaw County was no exception. Her international call sign was **N L F X**. Used with radio communications and as a vertical signal flag hoist, top to bottom. The military call sign was “**Trident Lima**”, used with voice radio communications “in the clear” (not coded/encrypted).

Amphibious Activity. Our Amphibious Fleet is currently dealing with two important programs involving the “ship-to-shore movement”.

First of these is the “**Amphibious Combat Vehicle**” (“ACV 1.1”). These ACV's are the latest generation of the famous “Amtrac's”, the Amphibious Tractors.

First introduced at the beginning of WWII, the Amtrac's were modeled off of south-eastern USA “swamp rescue vehicles”. Thousands were built and employed throughout the war theaters, both with the USMC and the US Army. These vehicles were designed to offload directly into the water perhaps as much as a mile from the assault beach. LST's were a common mother ship with the Amtracs splashing off the bow ramp. Once on the beach, an Amtrac could continue maneuvering on or off roads. From a modest unarmed, lightly armored, cargo-oriented vehicle (the “Alligator”) - as the war unfolded several improved variants were developed. Weapons such as machine guns and cannon, more armor plating, and combat troop capacity were added. While Alligators ran at 12 mph on land, and 6 kts in water, the later “Water Buffaloes” saw increased speeds.

WWII Amtracs were also employed during the Korean War and throughout the 1950's. Now an exclusively USMC vehicle, periodic upgrades led to improved models for the Vietnam conflict. Washtenaw County periodically worked with Amtrac training in the waters off Okinawa.

The current version, the “**Amphibious Assault Vehicle**” (**AAV**) dates from 1972. The USMC operates some 900 vehicles. It is showing its age.

Thus the **Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV)** is rapidly approaching final approvals. A few prototypes are already working with USMC units, with final operational approvals and procurement in numbers slated for 2023. These ACV's will continue to be employed off of the fleet's well-deck-capable amphibious ships providing an effective combat push onto the beach.

The other "ship-to-shore" program at present is the "**Ship-to-Shore Connector**" (SSC), also known as the "**LCAC 100 Project**". An updated term for the Landing Craft Air Cushioned (LCAC). The latter have been in service since 1986 and are in line for an upgrade.

Textron Inc has the contract for these new SSC's. They closely resemble the LCAC in size and fundamentals. We do see modernized operator controls, improved engines, better underbody skirts, and generally corrosion-resistant materials throughout.

The initial program called for year 2022 initial procurement, 4 per year going forward. There has been a delay. The first two out of the factory started testing in 2020. Two more were added in 2021. These, of course, are propelled by the two huge rotary fans. The fans experienced microscopic blade cracking, a potentially serious problem. The Navy and Textron have studied and developed fixes both with engine operating software and blade reinforcement. Now the four units will be further tested under fleet conditions for reliability, maintainability, and sustainability.

With successful testing, the production lines will begin in earnest. Ultimately the Navy plans to buy seventy-three.

Taps. LtJg Gary Williamson, Wilmington DE, passed on November 19, 2021. He served aboard 1971 – 1973 first as the Asst First Lieutenant/Deck Officer and then First Lieutenant. A frequent attendee at our reunions.

We also learned, belatedly, of two passings:

- Boiler Tech Everett L. Warren, Southern California. January 31, 2019. He served 1959 – 1963.
- Bosun Mate Ed Forrester, during 2019. Ed was from Missouri, and served aboard 1969 – 1971.

More Trivia. Anyone remember the abbreviation "**B & P on the BR**"? The initials stood for Beer and Pizza on the Bow Ramp. Periodically during the offshore Vietnam Market Time patrols, the ship would safely anchor in calm waters. The bow doors would open, and the ramp would lower down towards the waterline. One of the LCVP "Papa Boats" would be launched for safety.

One could argue that the ramp was not technically "onboard" the ship, thus the infamous Vietnam theater "near beer" could be rationed out at two per person. Had to be consumed on the ramp. Along with all the pizza one could eat. A certain safe number of crewmembers rotated onto and off the ramp. It was super fun and relaxing for all!

The next quarterly newsletter will be published during May. Sincerely, Chris Nintzel, Secretary.

