

# MILITARY SEA SERVICES MUSEUM, INC.



## SEA SERVICES SCUTTLEBUTT

December 2015



**John Cecil**

### A message from the President

Greetings,

We were hoping to get this out before Christmas, but kept holding off in hopes of getting photos of the completed Museum's Front Entrance Renovation Project. The renovations are very close to completion. The remaining items are hand rails on the ramp and steps; new rain gutter and down spout; painting decals or murals on front of building; some landscaping; and reinstalling the Memory Walk. The ramp, porch, and new door are functional and have greatly improved the appearance of the building. Photos are below.

The first person to use the new ramp was Curly Ezell, a World War II Navy hero (how appropriate is that?). See the Highlands Today article on Curly's visit below. We are confident that the renovated front entrance will bring us many visitors who previously did not visit because it was difficult to safely navigate the old entrance.

We are also making some improvements inside. Replacement of a paneled wall with dry wall on the quarterdeck; new window treatments in the library; new windows in bathrooms and gift shop; new fans in library, gift shop, and office; and updated wiring to name a few.

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and that your New Year will be happy, healthy and prosperous.

John

**Military Sea Services Museum**  
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**Hours of Operation**  
Open: Wednesday through Saturday  
Noon to 4:00 p.m.  
Web site: <http://milseasvcmuseum.org/>



**New welcoming entrance almost complete.  
Hand Rails will be installed.**



**This view shows the new ramp which will allow disabled visitors much easier access to the Building.**

## Sentimental journey



Lemoyne "Curly" Ezell looks over model battleships on display at the Military Sea Services Museum on Wednesday. Ezell was a gunner in the Navy during World War II., RYAN PELHAM/STAFF

### World War veteran gets wish to visit Military Sea Services Museum

Paul Catala | Highlands Today Published:  
December 10, 2015

SEBRING — As he rolled past the various exhibits, a floodgate of detailed memories was opened and rolling rapids of reminiscing leapt from his lips.

In constant stream-of-thought verbal refrains, from his wheelchair, Lemoyne "Curly" Ezell recalled manning 20- and 30- millimeter machine

guns from the decks of U.S. Navy destroyers, taking out Japanese ships by machine gun while stationed in ship deck towers, shooting Japanese kamikazes from the sky and, as a marksman, shooting floating mines about 400 meters in front so his ship could make safe passage in the Pacific Ocean and through the Philippine islands.

Wednesday morning, Ezell, had a bucket-list wish fulfilled, as the 86-year-old U.S. Navy veteran was taken on his first tour of the Military Sea Services Museum. Around 11:45 a.m. he was taken to the museum by Charles Domm, 68, a U.S. Army Special Forces veteran, who is currently filming and producing a documentary on Heartland-area military veterans.

Ezell was allowed to travel from his home in Okeechobee, where he is under hospice care, to fulfil his wish to see the museum for the first time. He has severe health issues with his lungs and heart, primarily due to asbestos inhalation during a career as an electrician. Domm used a borrowed disability transport van and borrowed his quadriplegic son's wheelchair for Ezell's use.

As Domm wheeled Ezell through the museum, located at 1402 Roseland Ave. in Sebring, the Okeechobee native seemed mesmerized by the collections, mostly donated from area residents after a family member who was a veteran had died: uniforms, dating back to World War I; of various-sized bullet shells and casings;

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black-and-white pictures of deployed sailors; flags representing all the states and various military sea units.

“I captured a Jap ship and captured 35 Japs; I was the best gunner in the Navy;” Ezell said, who needed a portable respirator carried next to him in order to breathe. “They said they never saw a 17 year old shoot like I did.” Ray Worley, member of the Sons of the American Legion Post 64, Okeechobee, and a family friend, told the museum president, John Cecil, about Ezell’s wish to visit the museum before he died. Domm was also informed and decided, along with assistant producer Raegan Rothchilde, to video record Ezell’s visit and recollections.



Lemoyne “Curly” Ezell is led through the Military Sea Services Museum by Charles Domm on Wednesday. Ezell said he helped sink three Japanese ships while serving as a Naval gunner in World War II., RYAN PELHAM/STAFF

Cecil, a Vietnam veteran who served in the U.S. Navy from 1965 to 1972, said he and the museum’s staff, including treasurer Gene Kissner who was on-hand Wednesday, were “appreciative” of Ezell’s desire to make the effort to visit. He said the museum exists “to tell the stories of World War II men and women that served and lived and sacrificed to help.”

“I hope he comes away from his visit with a sense he’s not forgotten. We want others to come and tell their stories, too. We’re here to tell the stories as it really was,” he said.

Ezell’s tour was sponsored by the Military Sea Services Museum Committee and was attended by other invited guest veterans who would be filmed for the documentary: John Lane, 69, a U.S. Army Vietnam; veteran Dan Hunt, of the Okeechobee Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1086; and Marvin Dressel, Highlands County Vietnam veterans chapter president. They walked as Ezell was strolled through the exhibits and listened as Ezell, in a sometimes garbled speech, recalled active service encounters aboard four different Naval ships, including shooting and taking out four Japanese ships.

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“We emptied 60 rounds into the bridge from there,” Ezell said, pointing at a model of the USS Gendreau, a ship he was aboard. “Their (Japanese) ship stopped; it quit running. I captured 39 Japs.” During a pause, Domm said he met Ezell at the Avon Park National Guard Armory when Gov. Rick Scott presented veterans with service medals. Ezell proudly wore his during the museum tour.

The tour concluded with a display that for once, caught Ezell off-guard. “What do you think of that?” Domm asked him, pointing at a display. It was a collection of photos and memorabilia — pictures and newspaper clippings — honoring Ezell and his service, which would become part of the museum.

“Hah! That’s me!,” is all Ezell could muster to say when he saw the exhibit. Soon, his eyes welled a bit with tears.



Lemoyne “Curly” Ezell looks over a display of articles and photos of himself at the Military Sea Services Museum on Wednesday. RYAN PELHAM/STAFF

“I’m so honored to be part of all of this,” he said, overcome with emotion from his visit. “I’m just so honored, so proud to be here.”

Ezell lives in Okeechobee with his wife, Barbara, and has a son, Gary.

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**Thank you to the “Highlands Today” for their permission to print the above article.**

### Stories Wanted

We would like to publish in the Scuttlebutt short stories of Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard personal experiences, and/or short stories of sea services historical events. We are sure there are plenty of stories out there that would be of interest to Scuttlebutt readers. Please email your stories to [navmargrd@gmail.com](mailto:navmargrd@gmail.com) or mail to the Museum.

## Museum Participates in Veterans Day

On Veterans' Day, Roy Fairfield took numerous Museum artifacts to Fred Wild Elementary School's Veteran's Day ceremony. The display and information provided by Roy were a big hit with students, teachers, and other guests at the ceremony. Roy came up with the great idea to have students write patriotic essays and have teachers judge the essays. Roy, out of his pocket, awarded the writer of the top essay \$50.00, first runner \$25.00, second runner up \$15.00, and the third runner up \$10.00. At the December Museum's Board of Director's meeting, several Board Members dug in their pockets and reimbursed Roy. Hopefully, the Board Members will make this a tradition.

Also on Veteran's Day, Fred Carino decorated his boat with Military Sea Services Museum banners, flags, and other patriotic decor for the Sebring Veteran's Day parade. Fred, his wife Pat, their dog were in the truck pulling the boat, and Gene Kissner rode in the boat. There was a lot of cheering and waving from the spectators as the boat passed by.



## Welcome Aboard New Members

On 8 October 2015, John "Jack" and Elizabeth "Beth" Sayre became Museum members, signing up as annual members. Jack and Beth are retired and living in Avon Park, FL.

On 7 December 2015, Charles Wiggins became an annual member of the Museum. Charles is a Hydrographic Surveyor. Charles lives in Sebring, FL.

A very hearty welcome aboard to our newest members! A sincere thank you to all our members for their continued support. Without member support, the Museum would not be able to pay its bills and would have to close the doors.

## Anniversaries

21 Dec 1861. Congress created Navy Medal of Honor for Sailors and Marines.

13 Dec 1936. U.S. National Guard established.

07 Dec 1941. "A date which will live in infamy." 0748 Hawaii time, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor killing 2,403 U.S. citizens.

## Anniversaries continued

08 Dec 1941. The Japanese begin the invasion of the Philippines by destroying U.S. aircraft at Clark Field.

08 Dec 1941. The U.S. and Allied countries, except the USSR, declared war on Japan.

11 Dec 1941. Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

18 Dec 1965. U.S. Navy River Patrol Force, Operation Game Warden, began in Vietnam.

08 Dec 1967. U.S. Navy Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps established.

23 Dec 1968. Eighty-two USS PUEBLO crew members released after 11 month imprisonment and torture by the North Koreans.

20 Dec 1989. U.S. invaded Panama in Operation Just Cause.

15 Dec 2011. Iraq War ended.

06 Jan 1942. Eleven U.S. Navy nurses captured when Manila fell to the Japanese. Sixty-seven U.S. Army nurses were captured when Corregidor fell to the Japanese in May 1942. The Navy nurses were liberated on 23 Feb 1945. The Army nurses were liberated on 3 Feb 1945.

25 Jan 1943. The Pentagon is dedicated, becoming the world's largest office building at the time.

27 Jan 1943. American bombers mount the first all-American air raid against Germany when they bomb Wilhelmshaven.

23 Jan 1968. USS PUEBLO (AGER-2) captured by North Koreans in international waters in the Sea of Japan. One PUEBLO crew member was killed and seven others sustained shrapnel wounds. The 82 surviving crew members were imprisoned in North Korea.

29 Jan 1980. USCG BLACKTHORN, following an overhaul, was leaving Tampa Bay for her homeport in Galveston, TX, when she collided with the tanker SS CAPRICOM near the Tampa Bay Sunshine Skyway bridge. Shortly after the collision, BLACKTHORN capsized and sank killing 23 crew members. Twenty-seven crew members survived. BLACKTHORN was raised for investigation, but was scuttled after completion of the investigation. USCG BLACKTHORN now serves as an artificial reef for recreational fishing and diving in the Gulf of Mexico.

17 Jan 1991. Persian Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm) began.

18 Jan 1991. USS NICHOLAS (FFG-47) working with Kuwaiti fast attack craft ISTIQLAL found that nine of the 11 oil platforms in Kuwait's Dorrah oil field about 40 miles off Kuwait's coast were occupied by Iraqi soldiers. Army AHIP Helicopters and Navy SH-60 Helicopters from NICHOLAS, firing guided missiles, neutralized two of the platforms. Shipboard firing from NICHOLAS and ISTIQLAL neutralized the other seven platforms. Teams from NICHOLAS boarded the platforms and destroyed the Iraqi fortifications. Five Iraqi soldiers were killed and 23 were taken prisoner. No U.S. or Kuwait casualties.

## Quotable Quotes

Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence.

---Vince Lombardi

Put your heart, mind, and soul into even your smallest acts. This is the secret of success.

---Swami Sivananda

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart. --- Helen Keller

Nothing is impossible, the word itself says "I'm possible"! --- Audrey Hepburn

Change your thoughts and you change your world. --- Norman Vincent Peale

## A Mill for the Elsie Item

By John "J." Wandres  
JOC, USNR (Ret)

It was your typical November Saturday at the Port of Portland, Oregon: Hazy and gray. At its berth in the Swan Island lagoon the squat warship chafed at its mooring lines. On board, the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum was holding its monthly board meeting. Dave McKay, the AFMM's historian, brought up his want list for the radio room of the World War II Infantry Landing Craft, the former USS LCI-713. The AFMM owns the ship and is restoring it to operational status as a floating naval museum.

"For the ship's radio room we need an authentic "mill" - the typewriter used by World War II radio operators." On his laptop McKay brought up an image he retrieved from the National Archives. The device looked clunky and massive. The navy used a telegraphic model typewriter. It had all CAPITAL letters, and the key for the number ZERO had a line through it.

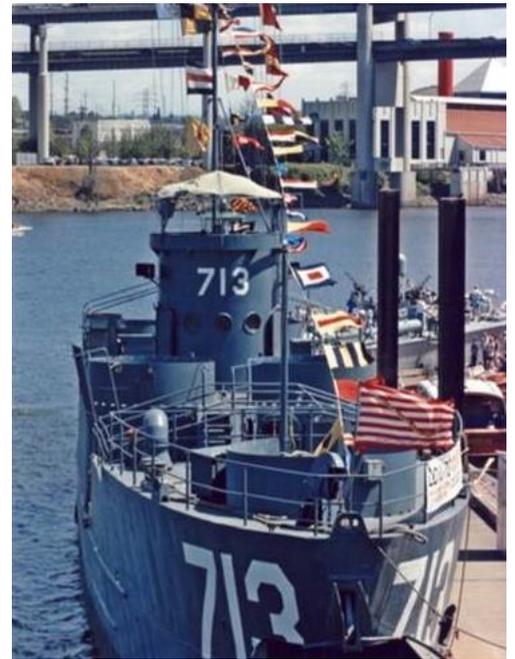
The machines were made by Underwood and Remington.

I knew exactly what McKay wanted. It was the same kind of 'mill' I used when I was on active duty as a radio operator on board the USS Windham County, LST-1170.

The next day I Googled "antique typewriters" and found a dozen museums that displayed or repaired antique typewriters. My email to each got the expected response: "Sorry, Not here." "Nope." "Nothing like it, but Good Luck!" Then, a one-line response came from a typewriter repair shop in Portland: "We have two of those mills." I arranged to visit the Ace Typewriter Repair in North Portland and meet with Matt McCormack and his father, Dennis. Opened in 1960, ACE is the last place in town that repairs typewriters. Shop windows and shelves are jammed with machines that range from 1960 IBM Selectrics to an 1895 Blickenderfer *electric*! Matt's father, Dennis, and I discovered that way back when, each of us had been radio operators - "sparks" - in the U.S. Navy. I explained what the nonprofit Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum was looking for. We agreed on a price for the 'mill' and restoration. Soon the clunky, 33-pound typing machine that Matt McCormack restored will sit in the LCI-713's radio room, as if ready to receive a string of dots and dashed from long ago.

## Elsie Item 713

LCI-713 was one of nearly a thousand Infantry Landing Craft built during World War II. "Elsie" stands for the letters "L" and "C"-- Landing Craft. "Item" is what the letter "I" was called before the Navy shifted to the International Phonetic Alphabet in 1949. This ship is 158 feet long with a beam of 23 feet. With its flat bottom hull the LCI was the largest landing craft capable of landing its troops ashore. There were several versions. As a troop carrier it could deploy up to 200 soldiers via side ramps or through four the LCI's open bow doors. The ship had two propulsion shafts powered by twin banks of four Detroit diesel 6-71 "Quad" engines. If one engine failed it could be taken offline via its clutch and repaired. Each shaft had a reversible pitch propeller. The Landing Craft would drop a stern anchor hooked to a cable winch. With the propellers spinning in reverse and spooling in the anchor cable the LCI could back off the landing beach. The LCI had a crew of four officers and 25 enlisted specialists. LCI-713 took part in operations at Mindanao and Borneo islands.



After the war the 713 was one of the lucky LCIs. Instead of being sold to a foreign navy or being cut up for scrap the 713 was sold to an Oregon timber company and used to haul logs to the mill. Ten years later the ship was left to rust along the banks of the Columbia River. The nonprofit Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum purchased the LCI in 2003 and began its restoration. Navy guys like to boast about their ship as being "haze gray," that is, squared away, and ready to go to sea. Today the LCI 713's volunteer crew is proud and their ship is "haze gray." As soon as the AFMM can raise about \$1 million bucks the ship will go into dry dock to get a new hull bottom and engines. Someday soon, its volunteer crew hopes, LCI 713 will get "underway."

For information about and photos of LCI 713, search <http://amphibiousforces.org>

J. Wandres served from 1955 to 1959 as a radio operator. After earning a B.A. degree in English in 1964 from San Francisco State College he began publishing articles as a freelance writer. Nineteen years after his active service he joined the U.S. Naval Reserve, as a public affairs specialist. He is the author of *THE ABLEST NAVIGATOR*; Lieutenant Paul N. Shulman, USN, Israel's Volunteer Admiral (Annapolis, Naval Institute Press; ISBN 978-1-59114-952-1).

Contributed by JOC Wandres.

Thank you Chief Wandres