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[Veteran shares experiences](#)

Port Arthur: The News

Mary Meaux



Photo by MIKE TOBIAS

As flames roared out of control on the Land Ship Tank 884 and the 300 plus men aboard began to abandon ship, a young Coast Guardsman stayed behind a few extra minutes to rescue the American flag.

It was in the early morning hours of April 1, 1945 near Okinawa when a Japanese kamikaze plane attacked the vessel turning it into a curled up bulk of metal.

“When we were hit, it broke our water main and we had no water. We also had 350 barrels of gas and two planes on the deck,” Glenn Cudd said. “As we abandoned ship I looked up on the foscle, everybody else was gone, I just took the flag down and stuffed it in my life jacket.”

At 5:55 a.m. that morning the commanding officer LT Charles Pearson ordered the ship abandoned. The surviving men cleared the ship by 6:10 a.m. and went on board a destroyer, an LST and a Landing Ship Medium.

Nineteen Marines and one Coast Guardsman died in the attack.

The historic flag now has a home at the Coast Guard Station Sabine Pass with a plaque commemorating Cudd’s actions.

Speaking from a large barn on his property in the outskirts of Beaumont, Cudd thinks back to the day 61 years ago.

“I guess it was just a reaction, getting the flag. I was young and feeling patriotic,” he said.

Cudd is still patriotic. Wearing a Coast Guard baseball style cap, the blue-eyed man tells his war stories in front of his wife, Joan, for the first time in their decades old marriage.

While stationed aboard the LST 169, Cudd and the crew survived a typhoon that hit the Okinawa area on Sept. 25, 1945.

“There was 52 foot seas, it blew us 14 miles out to sea,” he said.

The flat bottomed ship fought hard to stay afloat in the horrendous seas, first riding the wave up then slamming back down with the props in the air before leveling out for the next round of waves.

The life jackets were equipped with tiny battery powered flashlights, something helpful in locating men who were washed overboard during the storm.

“That typhoon was more scary then the damn war,” he said.

While speaking, Cudd, 83, paused from time to time reiterating the fact he is not a glory seeker. Like other veterans of WWII, Cudd does not like to dredge up the old memories of war nor does he tell his story often. He lives quietly with his wife, spending much of his day in the spacious barn he built. Joan often drives over to the barn and throws some food on the barbecue pit for the couple to share.

“Listen,” Cudd said as all became quiet at the table under the porch.

Cicadas make their noise from the trees nearby otherwise there is silence. A bobtail cat walked shyly by and an orange cat watched from the distance. There is no sound of traffic here.

Cudd’s story continues to D-Day. The Beaumont native landed on the beach of Iwo Jima at the foot of Mount Suribachi and witnessed close hand the famous raising of the flag that has become a symbol of the war and of the fight for freedom.

The 550-foot volcanic cone mountain was a treacherous spot for the Americans to land, filled with tunnels where the enemy had the vantage point from all directions. During the fighting Cudd learned first hand the sound a shell makes as it whistles past. It was a Marine who told him that whenever he heard that noise “you have to duck.” The next time he heard the noise he ran so fast he was inside a foxhole followed by three Marines.

As with all war, there is death. Japanese swimmers would climb the Jacob’s ladder up the ship in the dark of the night in order to surprise the Americans. In one instance, as the Americans pulled up the Jacob’s ladder they saw two Japanese swimmers. One was killed but the second one killed a man aboard Cudd’s ship. The man had just returned from stateside after seeing his newborn child.

Years later, Cudd and a son-in-law who is with Strategic Air Command, were visiting a museum in Virginia. As Cudd turned the corner he saw a sight that hit his heart, a photo of the LST 884.

Even now the incident still strikes a cord with Cudd.

While telling the story, the former Coast Guardsman became quiet, apologizing for his silence.

“I lost a lot of good buddies,” he said.

- See more at: http://www.panews.com/local/x681421678/Veteran-shares-experiences?zc_p=1#sthash.qM3jwel4.dpuf