

LST 534

Newsletter

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"Typhoon Louise"

Many of you told of this devastating typhoon that twirled LST 534 around in Buckner Bay in 1945. The following is the actual report from the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet on the specifics of the typhoon we now know as **L o u i s e** (from www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq102-6.htm).

On 4 October a typhoon developed just north of Rota as a result of a barometric depression and the convergent flow of equatorial air and tropical air. Guam Weather Central called the storm of apparently weak intensity "Louise" and put out the first weather advisory on it at 041200Z, with further advisories following at intervals of six hours. Up to that time of the 16th advisory (080600Z), the storm was following a fairly predictable path to the NW, and was expected to pass between Formosa and Okinawa and on into the East China Sea. At this time, however, the storm began to veer sharply to the right and head north for Okinawa. The 17th advisory at 081200Z (081100I) showed this clearly, and units began to be alerted for the storm late in the evening of the 8th. The forecast for Okinawa was for winds of 60 knots, with 90 knot gusts in the early morning of 9 October, and

passage of the center at 1030(I). "Louise", however, failed to conform to pattern, and that evening, as it reached 25° N (directly south of Okinawa) it slowed to six knots and greatly increased in intensity. As a result, the storm which struck in the afternoon of the 9th has seldom been paralleled in fury and violence; the worst storm at Okinawa since our landings in April.

The sudden shift of the storm 12 hours before its expected maximum, from a predicted path 150 miles west of Okinawa to an actual path that brought the center of the storm less than 15 miles east of Okinawa's southeast coast, caught many craft in the supposedly safe shelter of Buckner Bay without time to put to sea far enough to clear the storm. The ninth of October found the Bay jammed with ships ranging in size from Victory ships to LCV(P)s. All units, both afloat and ashore, were hurriedly battening down and securing for the storm.

By 1000 the wind had risen to 40 knots, and the barometer was down to 989 millibars, visibility was less than 800 yards, the seas were rising, and the rain was

coming down in torrents, liberally mixed with salt spray. By 1200, visibility was zero, and the wind was 60 knots from the east and northeast, with tremendous seas breaking over the ships. Small craft were already being torn loose from their anchors, and larger ships were, with difficulty, holding by liberal use of their engines. At 1400 the wind had risen to 80 knots, with gusts of far greater intensity, the rain that drove in horizontally was more salt than fresh, and even the large ships were dragging anchor under the pounding of 30 to 35-foot seas. The bay was now in almost total darkness, and was a scene of utter confusion as ships suddenly loomed in the darkness, collided, or barely escaped colliding by skillful use of engines, and were as quickly separated by the heavy seas. Not all ships were lucky; hundreds were blown ashore, and frequently several were cast on the beach in one general mass of wreckage, while the crews worked desperately to maintain watertight integrity and to fasten a line to anything at hand in order to stop pounding. Many ships had to be abandoned. Sometimes the crews were taken aboard by other ships; more often they made their way ashore, where they spent a miserable night huddled in caves

and fields. A few were lost. By 1600 the typhoon reached its peak, with steady winds of 100 knots and frequent gusts of 120 knots. At this time the barometer dipped to 968.5 millibars. This was the lowest reading that the barometers recorded, and was probably the point of passage of the center of the typhoon, but the maximum winds continued unabated for another two hours, the gusts becoming more fierce, if anything. During this period, the wind shifted to the north, and then to the northwest, and began to blow ships back off the west and north reefs of the Bay and across to the south, sometimes dragging anchor the entire way. These wild voyages by damaged ships caused a nightmare series of collisions and near escapes with other drifting ships and shattered hulks.

A typical experience was that of FLAGLER (AK). Her anchors dragged at 1200, and despite the use of both engines she was blown ashore a mile north of Baten Ko by 1315, colliding with LST 826 on the way. Grounded, she began to pound, and all power was lost. At 1710, as the wind changed, FLAGLER was blown off the reef and back across the bay, grazing a capsized YF and continuing on, with a 13° port list, no power, and the lower spaces and after engine room beginning to flood. One anchor was lost, the other dragged across the bay. By 1800 she had moved two miles across the bay and had grounded on the east side of Baten Ko, alongside a DE hulk. Lines were made fast to the DE, but flooding continued, and AT 0545 ship was abandoned. A small party remained on board, however, and successfully stopped flooding as the typhoon subsided. FLAGLER was later salvaged.

Many other ships had similar stories. SOUTHER SEAS (PY) rammed or was rammed by five other ships, before sinking. NESTOR (ARB) was forced to start maneuvering as early as 1020, in order to avoid INCA (IX), which had started to drag at 0950. In dodging INCA, NESTOR slipped nearer to the beach, and was forced to put all engines ahead one third in order to hold position on her anchor. At 1230 NESTOR again had to maneuver to narrowly avoid a collision with LST 826, which was dragging anchor very rapidly; but in so doing, NESTOR nearly ran down ARD 27. Another LST, the 823, was being slowly driven towards NESTOR. While maneuvering clear of 823, NESTOR's anchor chain fouled the buoy to which an LCI was secured, and NESTOR had to slip her anchor chain. Despite the full use of all engines, NESTOR was being driven on shore by the increasing winds. The starboard anchor was let go but would not hold, and in clearing two more ships dragging anchor (ARD 22 and LCI 463), NESTOR moved perilously close to the beach. At this time the winds were constantly rising, seas were breaking clear over the ship, and the conn was being deluged with salt water and torrents of rain.

No sooner had the last two ships been cleared than YP 289 closed dead ahead, and it became necessary to back all engines to avoid a collision, but this put NESTOR so close to the beach that she soon grounded. It was now 1345, only an hour and a quarter after first dodging LST 826. While grounded, NESTOR was struck by YF 1079, was holed, and began to pound badly. At 1420 a sudden shift of wind drove NESTOR off the beach, flipped her around end for end, and drove her back on the

beach alongside OCELOT (IX 110). Breakers 20 to 30 feet high now pounded NESTOR, flooding all starboard compartments aft of frame 25. At 1530 the wind again shifted, driving NESTOR's stern against APL 14, completely crushing the stern, while the bow penetrated the side of OCELOT at frame 10. A few minutes later, NESTOR settled in 24 feet of water. At 1945 all personnel and records were evacuated to APL 14.

Conditions on shore were no better. Twenty hours of torrential rain soaked everything, made quagmires of roads, and ruined virtually all stores. The hurricane winds destroyed from 50% to 95% of all tent camps, and flooded the remainder. Damage to Quonset huts ran from 40% to 99% total destruction. Some of these Quonsets were lifted bodily and moved hundreds of feet; others were torn apart, galvanized iron sheets ripped off, wallboarding shredded, and curved supports torn apart. Driven from their housing, officers and men alike were compelled to take shelter in caves, old tombs, trenches, and ditches in the open fields, and even behind heavy road-building machinery, as the wind swept tents, planks, and sections of galvanized iron through the air.

At the Naval Air Bases some 60 planes of all types were damaged, some of which had been tossed about unmercifully, but most of which were repairable. Installations suffered far more severely. The seas worked under many of the concrete ramps and broke them up into large and small pieces of rubble. All repair installations were either swept away or severely damaged. At Yonobaru, all 40' by 100' buildings were demolished, the same being true at the NATS

terminal. Communication and meteorological services were blown out at most bases by 1900.

The storm center of typhoon "Louise" passed Buckner Bay at about 1600, from which time until 2000 it raged at peak strength. The storm was advancing at the rapid rate of 15 knots in a northerly, then northeasterly, direction, and by 2000 the center was 60 miles away. The winds gradually began to subside. Conditions in Buckner Bay were at this time somewhat improved by the wind's having veered to the northwest across the land mass of Okinawa, which reduced the size of the seas, and probably saved many more damaged ships from being driven off the reefs and sunk in deep water. Nevertheless, the subsidence at 2000 was a relative one, from "super-typhoon" to typhoon conditions, with steady winds of 80 and 60 knots throughout the night, and some gusts of higher velocity. A wild, wet, and dangerous night was spent by all hands, afloat or ashore. It was not until 1000 on the 10th that the winds fell to a steady 40 knots and rains slackened.

Having left Okinawa, the storm proceeded NNE on a curving track. Ships of occupation groups anchored in Amami O Shima anchorage had a rough time, with winds over 70 knots; and Japan, from Nagasaki to Tokyo, was alerted for the storm. On the night of 10-11 October, "Louise" ran into cold air from over Japan; as a result the center of the typhoon occluded, moved aloft to the north, and eventually dissipated. Our forces from Nagasaki to Wakayama experienced winds of 40 to nearly 60 knots on the 11th and 12th. Ships at sea were enabled to maneuver clear of the worst of the storm, and sustained only

minor damage, despite heavy seas. This ended typhoon "Louise", but the damage it left behind on Okinawa was tremendous. Approximately 80% of all housing and buildings were destroyed or made unusable. Very little tentage was salvageable, and little was on hand as a result of previous storms. Food stocks were left for only 10 days. Medical facilities were so destroyed that an immediate request had to be made for a hospital ship to support the shore activities on the island.

Casualties were low, considering the great numbers of people concerned and the extreme violence of the storm. This was very largely due to the active and well directed efforts of all hands in assisting one another, particularly in evacuation of grounded and sinking ships. By 18 October, reports had been sifted and it was found that there were 36 dead and 47 missing, with approximately 100 receiving fairly serious injuries.

The casualty list of ships was far greater (see insert). A total of 12 ships were sunk, 222 grounded, and 32 damaged beyond the ability of ships' companies to repair. ComServDiv 104 under Commodore T.J. Keliher, was assigned to the salvage work. By 19 November, 79 ships had been refloated, and 132 were under repair. The remaining 53 badly damaged vessels still afloat had been, or were being, decommissioned, stripped, and abandoned. On 14 November, ComServPac, (Vice Admiral W. W. Smith) inspected the damage, and decided that only 10 ships were worth complete salvage, out of some 90 ships with major work to be done on them. This decision was made chiefly because similar types of ships were rapidly being

decommissioned in the United States, and the cost of salvage would have been excessive for unneeded ships.

Repair work went on rapidly ashore. As a result of the experience in the earlier typhoon in September, extra stocks of food and tentage were to be stored on Okinawa. These were en route on 9 October, and in less than a week after the storm, supplies were fairly well built up; emergency mess halls and sleeping quarters had been erected for all hands, and 7500 men had been processed for return to the United States.

~~~~GET WELL WISHES~~~~

Oscar Cress—Oscar suffered a stroke on April 11th and was hospitalized for one month. He is home taking physical therapy several times a week. We hope Oscar is feeling up to coming to our last reunion.

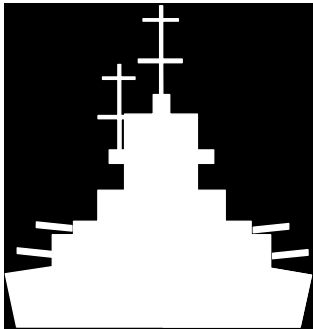
Helen Cress—Helen ended up in the hospital at the same time as Oscar with double pneumonia. She won't tell me if there was any hospital "hanky panky"! We wish them both a speedy recovery.

Norris Long—Norris also suffered from pneumonia and was hospitalized for four days. He went home on antibiotics and portable oxygen. He is learning to adapt to his new sidekick.



Even though we didn't have room to list birthdays, we haven't forgotten you all! **Happy Birthday!!**
Let's all remember to send out birthday cards.

LST534 Newsletter
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LST534

LST534 Newsletter

NEWS:

Reunion—Good Byes and Time Capsule

2005 will be the last reunion for LST 534. We will be in historic Norfolk, where many U.S. Navy ships come and go every year. Let's make this our biggest party ever with as many shipmates as possible. When we blow out our candle this year, I'd like to put it in a collection basket for the LST 534 Time Capsule. Let's write a message, a story, a farewell or hello to put into the time capsule for history, to be opened in the year 2100. I'd like us all to bring copies of pictures and anything else you want to include, and I'll contribute copies of everyone's interviews.

Why, you ask? Because it's getting harder and harder for some to get to the reunion. We'll continue to participate in the US LST Association's reunion but I am retiring our decorations to put in the time capsule. But don't worry, the newsletter

will continue to serve as a way to keep in touch with the LST 534 family. See you in Norfolk!

Bobbie Eakes

Bobbie Eakes, best known for her roles on *The Bold and the Beautiful* and *All My Children*, has recorded her first solo CD. See insert for details.

Calendars

Reggie and Cindy are producing our 2006 calendars. There will be a men's calendar and a women's calendar. See the men and women of LST 534 as you've never seen them before! Available at the reunion, then on www.LST534.com.

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