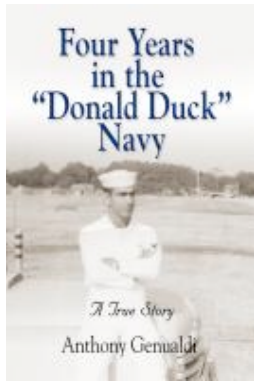


Four Years in the “Donald Duck” Navy

A True Story

Anthony Genualdi



This is the true story of a U.S. Navy enlisted man, who served on an amphibious landing craft during the early part of the Cold War, specifically 1951 to 1955. His adventures are detailed, from his time in basic training, to his joining up with his vessel, and a history of the vessel and her service in WWII is included. We then follow him on his various trips on maneuvers. Some of the lighter moments of his time are included, such as when a family in Naples, Italy tried to get our hero married to their oldest daughter so they could come to the States.

Four Years in the Donald Duck Navy

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To all the members of the Amphibious Forces of the U.S. Navy,
past, present, and future, but especially to the members of the crew of *LSU-815*.

Cover photo and other photos of Tom are from the author's collection.

My special thanks to Richard Fox at www.ww2lct.org for his kind permission
to use
sketches of the deck plan of the LCT, Mark 6

The following is a true account of an American serviceman's time in the
United States Navy from 1951 to 1955. The incidents and people described in
this work are true.

CHAPTER ONE

When people hear the word “navy,” certain images spring to their minds. Some will instantly think of the aircraft carrier, sending her planes aloft to challenge the enemy. Others may get a picture in their minds of the battleship, with her large caliber guns ready to fight on a battle line, or soften up enemy shore positions. Still others may think of the submarine, stealthily prowling the ocean. Perhaps they may think of transports, bringing men and equipment across the waves to bring the fight to the enemy’s front door.

Then, there’s the “other” navy. This navy has the smaller vessels not lauded in movies or books. This navy is comically known as the “Donald Duck Navy,” because they are the *amphibious* forces. This is the branch of the navy that lands the Marines, or army personnel, and their large equipment, such as tanks, trucks, and large artillery, where the enemy is strongest.

One of the sailors of the amphibious forces was my father. Thomas Genualdi, “Tom,” was born in Chicago, Illinois, on March 7th, 1932. He was nineteen years old, when on March 10th, 1951, he got a draft notice. When his father came home, Tom showed him the notice.

His father said, “Well, I know how you hate ties.” The Army makes its people wear ties in their dress uniform. “So, you can go in the Army, live in mud, eat out of a can or a cardboard box. Or, you can join the Navy. You won’t have to wear a tie, you’ll get three square meals a day, sleep in a clean bunk, and not worry about whether the guy behind you will stick a bayonet in your back, ‘cause he’s on *your* side.”

Tom went to the Navy recruiter the next morning. He showed the chief petty officer his draft notice, and said he’d rather be in the Navy. They talked for a little while. He was told by the chief that he could put off his enlistment

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for 30 days, and that the Navy would find out “what you were most fit to do.”

Tom would report to Great Lakes Naval Training Center on May 3rd, 1951.

CHAPTER TWO

On May 3rd, 1951, Tom reported back to the recruiting center. Another chief told him and the other men reporting that day to “form a column of twos” to march to the North Shore Line electric train that would take them to Great Lakes. Tom and some of the others looked at each other.

“What is that?”

Some of the men, however, had ROTC experience, and told everyone, “We have to make two rows, side by side.” Once they did that, they marched to the station and took the hour and a half ride.

When the train got to the station for Great Lakes, the men were put onto half a dozen gray buses for the trip to the base. Tom didn’t recall being scared. He did feel curious about what was to come as he went through the main gate.

He, and the others, went first to “indoctrination.” This was the Receiving Unit. They checked in, and then started to fill out forms about themselves. What did you do in civilian life? What was your occupation? Do you have a police record? Are you married? Do you have children?

Next, came the barber shop. Everyone got the same haircut. Tom remembers it being done in four passes, with the electric clippers. So smooth!

Then, came the physicals. One of their crowd was something of a comic. They had to stand at a door and read from the eye chart. He was told to read the smallest print he could. The man squinted for a moment, and then said, “Printed by Ajax Printing Company.” The attendant waved him away, “You pass! Get outta here!”

The recruits were then given a cardboard box that measured 14 by 14 by 14 inches. They were told to put all of their civilian clothes into it, and put

their home address on it. The only thing they could keep was their wallets. Everything else went back home.

Then they got a complete physical. They got checked from toenails to hairline. The comedy continued, but from different guys, since once one guy made a cute remark, he was told, "Stop that!"

"You've got two fillings."

"Yeah. I know."

"Stop that!"

Another man was told, "Bend over and spread your cheeks."

"OK." Then the man bent over and grabbed the corners of his mouth.

"Your other cheeks!"

"Oh. Sorry."

"Stop that!"

Then they got inoculations. They took a shot in each arm, stepped forward, then got another shot in each arm, stepped forward, and got another shot. Altogether, six shots.

When that was through, a corpsman measured a man's head, waist, and feet. This was written down and handed to the man. That was for the next stop. That stop was "stores." This is where Tom and the others got their uniforms. They each got: two blue trousers, a blue dress jumper and a blue undress jumper, three white jumpers and three white trousers, one pair of dress shoes and one pair of work shoes, six pairs of skivvies and six skivvy shirts, and six pairs of black socks.

They had to stencil their names into all of the items, except for the shoes and socks. They were given a black ink pad and a brush to do this. After stenciling, the men put on a set of whites, and a tailor would mark them, and alter everything right away, so the men could use them, except the work pants, which were blue jeans.

From there, the men were brought to their barracks. With each barrack filled, they became a company. Tom's company was Company 479. It occupied the second floor of a building, and the men on the first floor were Company 480. Each company had 75 men.

CHAPTER THREE

Boot camp lasted for twelve weeks. In that time, Tom and the other recruits learned about the Navy and each other. They learned how to handle firearms. They learned how to make bends in a line, not knots in a rope. They did their own laundry, and went through inspections.

They also learned how to roll up their clothes to fit in a sea bag. They had a guide book called *The Bluejackets' Manual*, which showed them, not only how to fold the items, but their order of stowage in the sea bag, with dress shoes and flat hat on the bottom, to the watch cap and belt, dungarees, dress jumper, trousers and neckerchief, blue trousers and jumpers, mattress cover and pillow case, underwear and socks, towels, jersey and white hats, then white jumpers and trousers, finally topped off by their soiled clothes. This book also had information on the ribbons a sailor could earn in the service, but also had chapters on discipline and drills, marching in formation, tips on handling and cleaning of pistols and rifles, ship organization, watch standing, and many other things a sailor would need to remember.

Tom got a turn at KP, or Kitchen Police. He, and the others, learned about kitchen duties as part of their training. The boys were told to make a Waldorf salad to feed the men. They made it using a "punt." This was a small boat, about six or eight feet long, and four feet wide, with the ends turned up. This boat would be used while going around a ship to remove barnacles.

At any rate, Tom and his fellow trainees would chop up heads of lettuce and put them in the punt, then put in gallons of mayonnaise. They would carve and cut up apples, then dump them in, and use a garden hoe to mix it all up to feed the men.

They also stood four hour watches, challenging anyone who entered the barracks. The company also learned how to row as a team on a "pulling boat." There were five men on each side of the boat, plus one at the till.

The men were also shown how to load and operate naval guns, from 20 millimeters to five inchers. They didn't actually fire these weapons, they just learned how to service them. There was also the loading, firing and cleaning of small arms; pistol and rifles. Tom wasn't the best with the small arms, but he didn't scare when it came to shooting the .45 caliber pistol, unlike some of his fellow recruits.

When it came to rifle shooting, a recruit was graded as either "good," "poor," or "failing." Tom was one of the "good" shooters, which was about 1/4th of the company. This determined his fate as far as going to the amphibious forces.

One thing Tom recalls about the men was how, on Saturdays, they would have to cut the grass on the grounds, and sweep up clippings. They were brought to and from this task, and to the mess hall, in little pickup trucks. One day, a chief came into the barracks and told the men who had drivers' licenses to line up. Only one of them, though many of them could drive, actually possessed a license. The man, Dave Riel, eagerly stepped up. Was he given a truck?

No. He had to push a lawn mower. The men never let him forget.

"Hey, Dave, got your license? What to drive something?"

"Oh, shut up!"

The reader will recall that the U.S. military had only recently been integrated, in 1948. There were black men in Tom's company. One of them was named Jackson. He had aspirations of being a boxer after being in the service. He would "shadowbox" along the quarterdeck, the aisle between the bunks. Jackson would make a lot of noise while he moved, and his fellow recruits asked him to stop it. "Who's gonna make me," he asked. The master-at-arms, whose job it was to keep order, was a big fellow named Hunsche. One day, Hunsche decided to do something. When Jackson asked, "Who's gonna make me," Hunsche stood up and put his hand on Jackson's chest. "Maybe I will," he said.

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Jackson swung at Hunsche, but Jackson couldn't touch him, since the big man's arm was so long. Hunsche slapped Jackson in the face, not very hard, but enough. Jackson never shadowboxed again.

In the photo taken of the members of Tom's company, the three black men can be seen. However, in the yearbook the men got, with the individual pictures of the men of Company 479, the three black men are not shown.

CHAPTER FOUR

The recruits, after dealing with shooting and KP, next took up the Fire Fighters Training Unit. Fire is the greatest enemy sailors have to deal with, for their ship could easily be lost due to out of control flames. They learned how to use the “handy-billy,” a gasoline powered pump, to spray water from the hoses onto fires. They also learned how to use rescue breathing gear, and got a taste of tear gas to help them learn how to use the gear properly. Tom and the other recruits also learned how to apply foam to smother flames.

Tom recalled how the building used for this training was a large, stand alone room, which had grating for a deck, just as a real ships compartment would. Kerosene was poured in, and set off with a match. The instructor told the men what was expected of them, while the fire inside built up to a rage. Then the men were thrust into the inferno with all their gear and the hose turned on to make a fan shaped spray. The men with the hose went in and sprayed in front of them, while the teams with the foam pumps moved in on either side to smother the flames.

On Sundays, those who wanted to went to religious services, or they would go on “holiday routine.” That meant they could relax, go to the hobby shop and get something to build, or do some reading at the library, or shoot some pool or play ping pong.

The tenth week of training saw the parents and families of the recruits being allowed to visit. Tom recalled someone taking a picture of him with his mother, father, and his brother Sam. As of this writing, he’s still trying to locate it.

Tom also recalled that Great Lakes was home to WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) recruit training. Of course, they and the WAVES never got together, according to Tom. No hijinks as one would see in comedies. They were kept in another compound. He did recall seeing, when the WAVES were kept standing at attention, that one of the WAVES had collapsed from the summer heat, and standing with her knees locked up. Someone who was passing by noticed this, and two corpsmen were called in with a stretcher to take her to sick bay.

After twelve weeks of training, inspections, and work learning the “Navy way,” the men of Company 479 graduated at the end of July, 1951. The men were then sent to the OGU, the Outgoing Unit. They stayed there until they were assigned to their next station.

Each morning, they would go to the bulletin board and look for their names. On the third day, Tom found his name, and behind his name was “COMLSURONTWO.” He scratched his head. What’s a COMLSURON, he wondered. Other men were finding out their assignments, which were sometimes ship names, but COMLSURON?

Tom found out it stood for “Command, LSU Squadron Two.” He was to report in his undress whites, since it was summertime. He went with other men that day to the train station, bound for Norfolk, Virginia.

They put their sea bags into the overhead racks in their coach cars, and spent two days and two nights going to Norfolk. They breathed the smoke from the engine, since having the windows open on their car was the only way to circulate the air. This also meant getting cinders on their uniforms, which they couldn’t change since they were in a coach car, and their other uniforms were up on the rack.

On the morning of the third day, when the train pulled into Norfolk, Tom and the others got off of the train and formed up in front of three Navy buses. As their names were read, the men got into their assigned bus. After a ride of some forty-five minutes, Tom’s bus pulled into the base at Little Creek, Virginia, the home of LSU Squadron Two.

CHAPTER FIVE

The sailors were called on, and when they answered, they were told to get off the bus at the building the bus had stopped in front of. After stopping at two other buildings, there were only three other men with Tom. They stopped and the driver called, "Genald."

"It's 'Genualdi!' There's an 'l' on the end."

"Uh-huh. In that building there."

Tom threw his sea bag over his shoulder, got off the bus and went around the front, stopping at the door of the building marked, "COMLSURON 2."

He opened the screen door and went in. He stopped at the desk, where a yeoman, first class, sat. Tom dropped his sea bag and handed over his orders. The yeoman opened and read the orders. He shuffled the papers, taking what he needed for his files, and wrote "815" on the envelope. "Go to the 600 for transportation to the 815. Walk down to the seawall and down to Pier 3."

"Yes, sir."

"I'm a yeoman. You don't 'sir' me."

"Yes, sir."

Tom went down the pier and asked the sentry for the 600. The sentry pointed and said, "Second boat in line." Tom went to the *LSU-600*, and when he reported aboard, the man he met pointed him to the chief's quarters. The skipper of the 600, Chief Boatswain's Mate Fleming, looked at Tom's orders, and the number "815" on the sleeve, and told him, "We'll be going in about an hour to meet the 815 in the bay. We're waiting for more stores to be loaded, then we'll go out and you can transfer over."

At the appointed time, *LSU-600* shoved off and headed out into Chesapeake Bay. A strong wind, about 30-35 miles an hour was blowing, and was pushing the *LSU-600* on an oblique line to starboard. An hour out from Little Creek, they saw an LST (Landing Ship, Tank) with her bow doors open and her ramp extended a foot into the water. Chief Fleming had misjudged how close his vessel was, and Tom could see they were about to collide. He held onto the "lifeline," a pipe that was used for a railing, and braced himself.

The *600* struck the ramp, and a tear was made in her hull some fifteen feet long by four feet high. The smaller vessel was pushed away from the LST. Chief Fleming, a couple of men on the *600*, and doubtless some men on the LST saw it coming, but there was no time to sound an alarm. The *600's* engines had stopped, since they had sucked in water.

Two other *LSU's* were following the *600*, and their crews hurried to pass lines to the stricken boat. As the lines were tightened, Tom could hear them squeaking as they took up the load. The *600* was brought back to base by the other two "U boats" and brought up to the drydock. The drydock was flooded, and the two rescue boats brought the *600* up to it.

Wire ropes were passed from the drydock and tied to the forward bitts of the vessel. The other ends of those lines were connected to winches on the drydock. Those winches pulled in the *600*, and the other "U boats" untied their lines and pulled away. As the *600* was pulled into the cradle of the drydock, Tom could feel the stern of the boat hit the cradle. They pumped out the drydock, and the full extent of the damage was revealed.

Tom recalled thinking, "Someone was looking out for us."

It took four or five weeks to repair the damage. Civilian workers did the repairs, so Tom and the other sailors had nothing to do. The *815* was on her operation, meaning maneuvers, and completed them while Tom waited.

When the *815* came back, Tom was waiting. Tom picked up his sea bag and went aboard. He again got the word, "Chief is in there."

Chief Boatswain's Mate Pease assigned Tom his bunk and locker, and introduced him to the crew, told what the routine was, and what his duties were.

LSU-815 was of the type of landing craft called LCT, Mark 6. LCT stood for Landing Craft, Tank, and the type was renamed Landing Ship, Utility, after

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World War II. She was 120 feet long, and 35 feet across. She drew four feet of water, meaning her keel was five feet under the ocean's surface, and had a displacement of 500 tons. The type is listed as having a crew of twelve, but when Tom served aboard her, the crew of the boat was nine (two chiefs and seven enlisted men).

She could carry 320 tons of material, such as five M-4 Sherman tanks, or two M-47 Patton tanks and two M-4's, or large artillery. She had three Gray Marine (GMC 6-71) Diesels, with three propellers, with horsepower rated at 225 horsepower per shaft. The two generators were GM 271, with outputs of 220 volts and 300 amps. They would run one of the generators for 24 hours, then switch to the other one for the next 24 hours.

Her defensive armament was two 20mm anti-aircraft cannons, which were mounted at the top front of the deckhouses, one on each side.

The boat had been laid down, that is, started to be built, on Dec. 30th, 1943, at Kansas City Structural Steel Company, at Kansas City, MO. She was launched on Jan. 21st, 1944, and delivered to the U.S. Navy on Feb. 6th. She was assigned to LCT Flotilla 26, and was used in the Normandy invasion, specifically at Omaha Beach, on June 6th, 1944. Because of this action, Tom was mandated, as part of the crew, to wear the ribbons for the American Campaign Medal, the Europe-Africa-Middle East Campaign Medal, with battle star, and the World War II Victory Medal.

LSU-815 was stricken from the navy list in 1956, and sold for scrap.

Tom was on the *815* for about a month, going through his daily jobs, when a letter came down from the office saying that he was qualified for engineman's school, if he was interested. So he asked, "What's engineman's school, and where is it?" He thought it might be on the base.

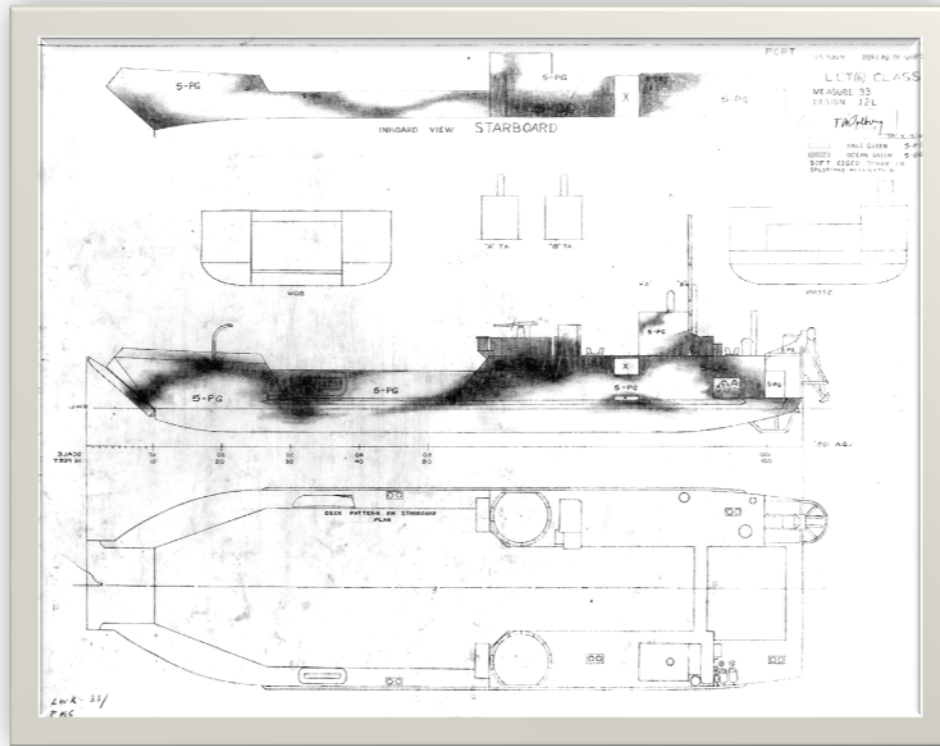
It wasn't. It was at Great Lakes.

"You mean I have to back to Illinois?"

"Yes, and you'll be able to go home every weekend." He could leave about 5 P.M. Friday, and wouldn't have to be back until 7 A.M. Monday.

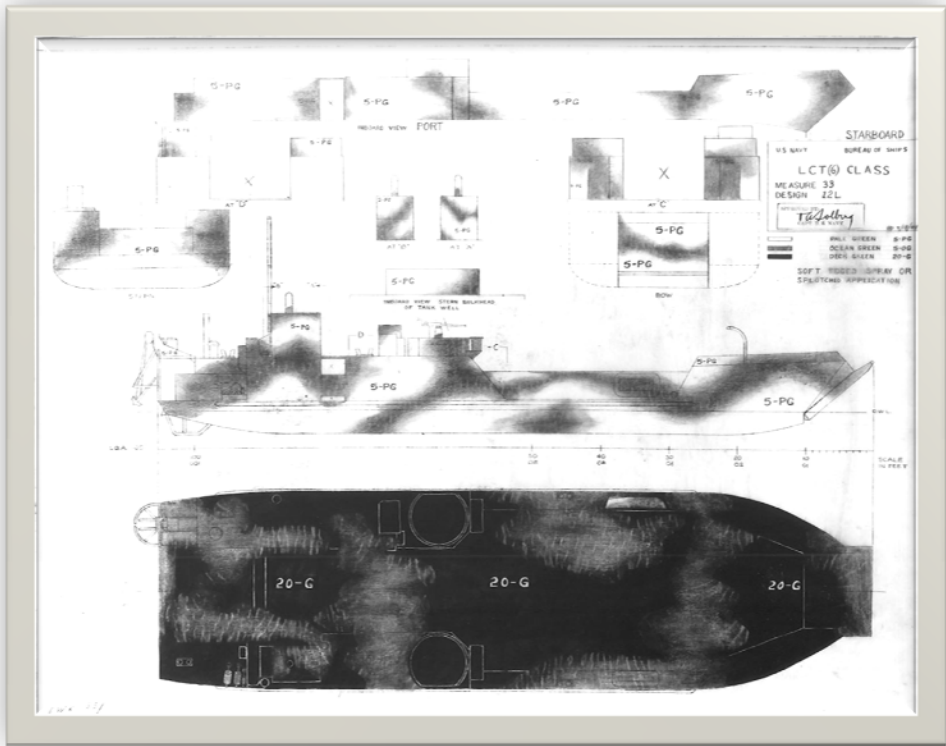
Tom decided to do it, so he packed his sea bag again, went to the office, got his travelling orders, got on the bus, and back to the train station.

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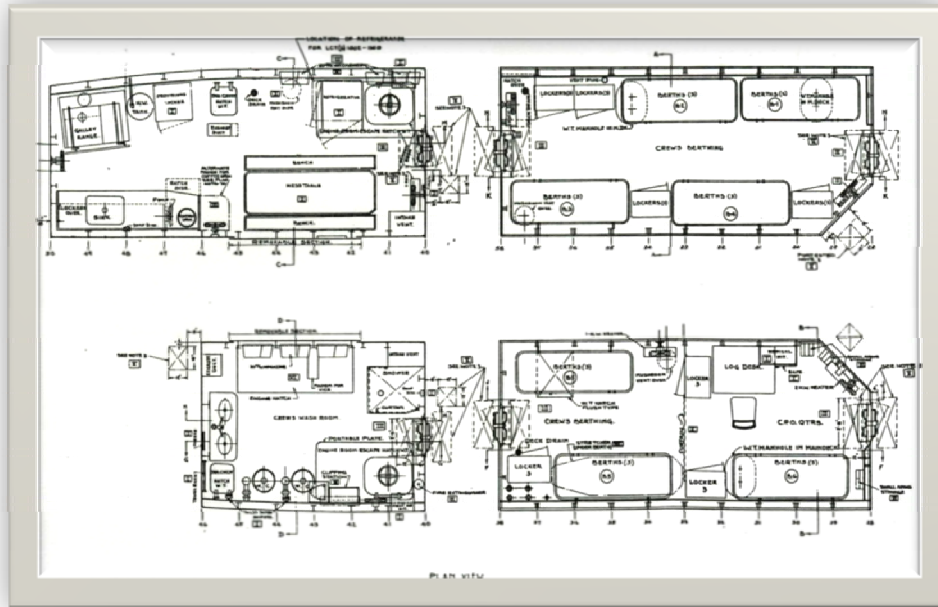
Port side and top view of LCT, Mark 6, the type of vessel to which the *LSU-815* belonged. Tom's gun position can be seen clearly here, just in front of the anchor engine.

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Starboard view of LCT, Mark 6, the type to which *LSU-815* belonged.

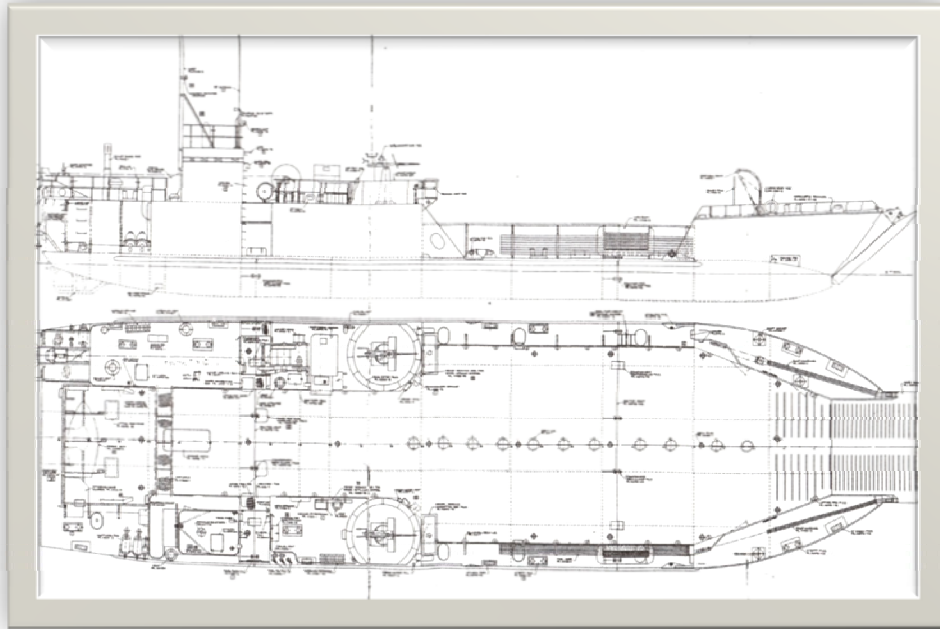
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Deck plan of *LSU-815* inside the cabins.

Tom slept in the lower bunk of the starboard cabin, in the upper right portion of this diagram

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Clearer deck plan drawing of the LCT Mark 6. The engine hatch Tom had to use is shown just under the catwalk that ran between the compartments. The holes shown in the deck were for tying down vehicles. The space below the holes in the deck came into play during the “Applejack incident.”

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Tom, just after he had made fireman, first class, at Christmastime, 1951.

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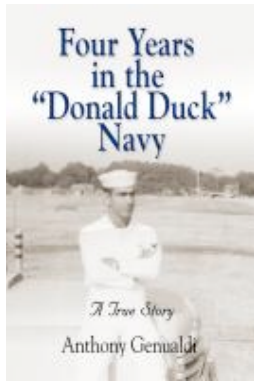


**Here, Tom is shown in the fall of 1953, after making
engineman's mate, third class.**

Anthony Genualdi



Tom in the fall of 1953.



This is the true story of a U.S. Navy enlisted man, who served on an amphibious landing craft during the early part of the Cold War, specifically 1951 to 1955. His adventures are detailed, from his time in basic training, to his joining up with his vessel, and a history of the vessel and her service in WWII is included. We then follow him on his various trips on maneuvers. Some of the lighter moments of his time are included, such as when a family in Naples, Italy tried to get our hero married to their oldest daughter so they could come to the States.

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