

LYNN ELLING, LST 172 AND THE BEACHHEAD AT TARAWA

Lynn Elling was proud of his Navy Service as a young officer on LST 172 in the Pacific in WWII, 1944-45. He was recalled to service during the Korea conflict in the early 1950s but the ship to which he was assigned had serious mechanical problems and he spent the recall time in Hawaii, and the LST never left for Korea.

LST 172 (Landing Ship Tank) was a supply and support vessel, 328 feet long (approx. a football field in length), 50 feet wide. Its maximum speed was 11.6 knots and its normal crew was 13 officers and 147 enlisted.

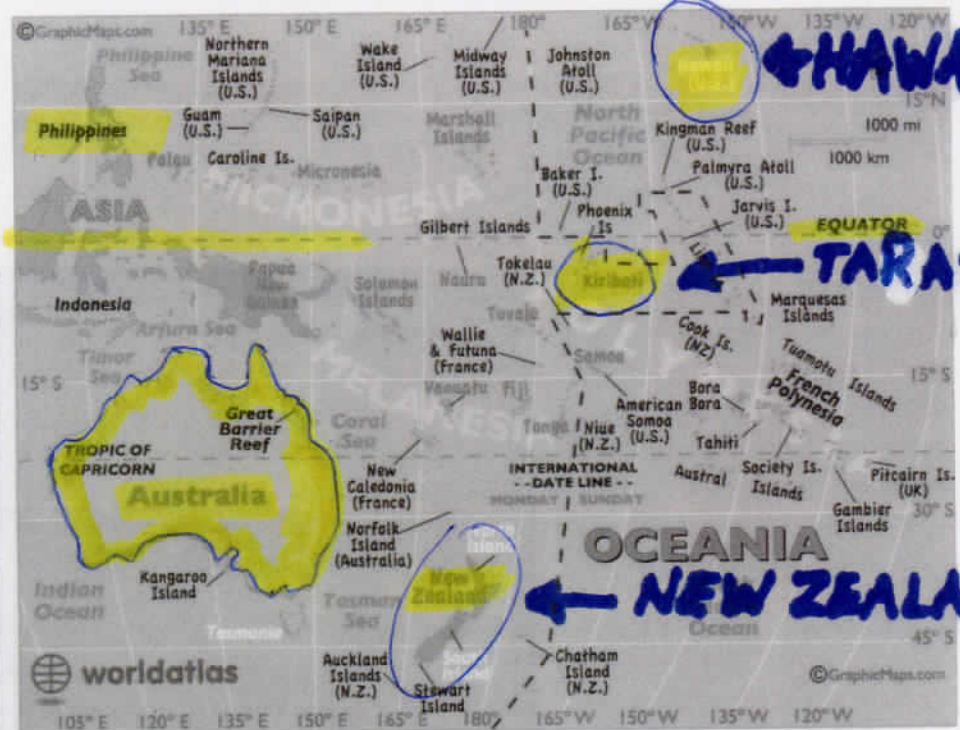
Enter LST 172 in your internet search box for more information.

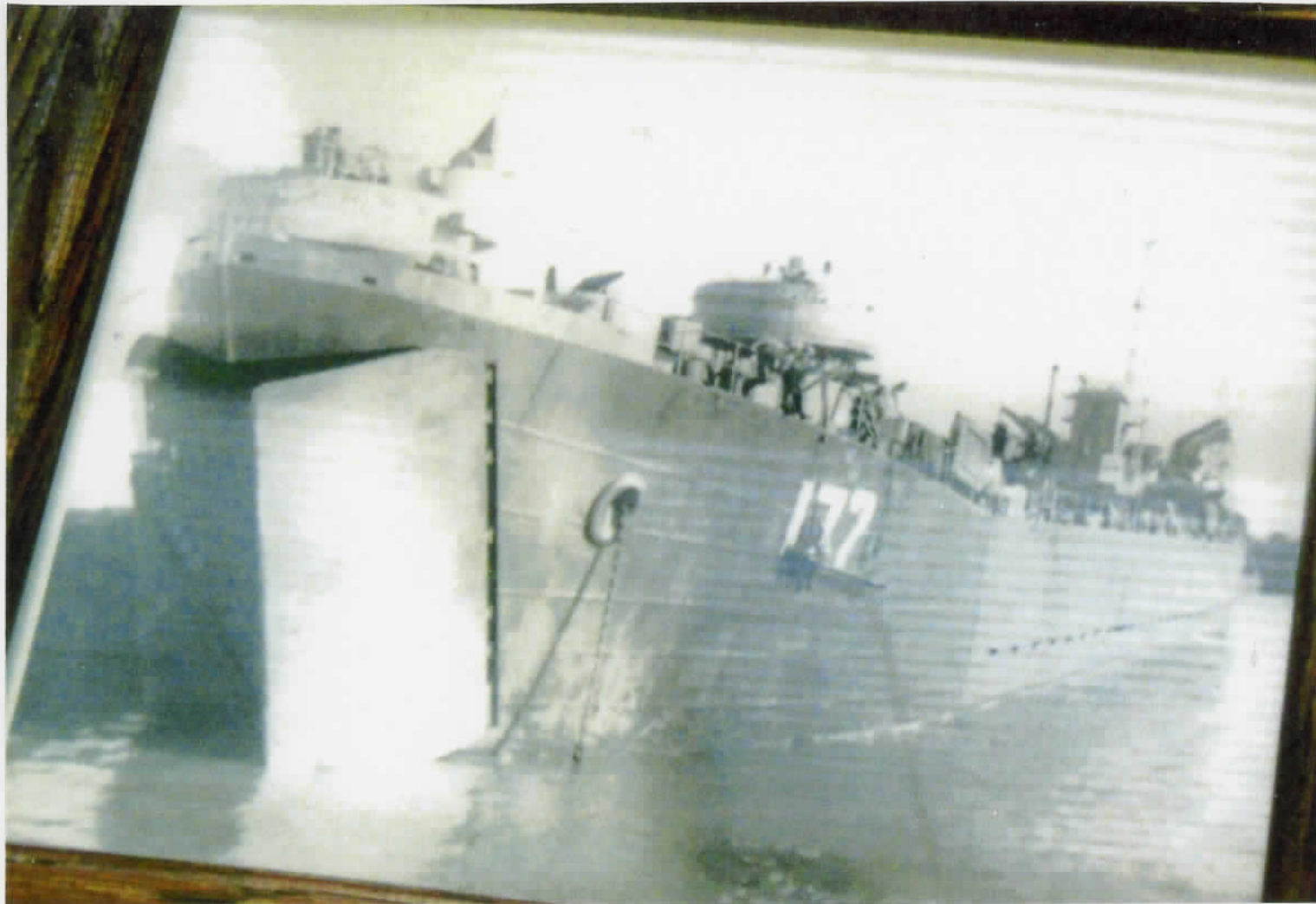
Sometime early in his WWII tour, LST 172 went to Tarawa, perhaps two months after this major and deadly battle which lasted 76 hours Nov. 20-23, 1943. Nearly 6,000 were killed at Tarawa (Betio beachhead) of which 4,700 Japanese and Koreans, and 1,027 U.S. Marines and 29 Naval officers. 2,292 U.S. servicemen were wounded; the attacking force numbered 12,000. 17 Japanese and 129 Koreans surrendered. (I was told by a Korean that the Koreans in such settings were forced labor, after the Japanese took control of the Korean peninsula. They were conscripts.)

June 23, 2009, at the funeral of one of Lynn's LST 172 shipmates, Melvin Simon of Comfrey, Minnesota, and saw a picture of the ship (shown below). Mr. Simon had joined the crew of the LST after the Tarawa visit.

The pages which follow simply give a visual sense to what an LST was, where Tarawa was located, and Mr. Elling in his last three months of life.

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May 1, 2016





LST 172
WWII



PARKER RANCH & CAMP TARAWA 1943 - 1945

This monument honors the V Amphibious Corps (VAC), and the late Richard Smart, owner of the Parker Ranch during World War II. It also honors the residents of Kamuela and the Big Island of Hawaii, hosts to Soldiers, Sailors, and more than 50,000 U.S. Marines over the duration of the war years. During the months of August and September of 1943, the VAC was organized in California, and then Hawaii, to prepare for joint Army, Navy and Marine Corps amphibious campaigns in the Pacific. By this time, plans were underway to build on Parker Ranch what was to become the largest Marine training facility in the Pacific. It would include extensive training areas, a tent city, and a dam (with reservoirs) above Kamuela. This camp, later known as Camp Tarawa, was built with the assistance of U.S. Engineers, Navy Seabees, Marines and local residents. The public school and local hotel served as an Army hospital. Residents welcomed military personnel into their homes and supported them through Red Cross and USO activities.



Following the successful invasion of Tarawa, the first component of the 2d Marine Division, arrived in early December, 1943. As the 2d Marine Division departed for Saipan in the spring of 1944, following recuperation and refitting, Camp Tarawa then hosted units of the V Amphibious Corps Artillery. Here, these units prepared to support VAC campaigns in the Pacific. During the summer of 1944, the 5th Marine Division, another component of the VAC, arrived to prepare for the assault on Iwo Jima. During September, some units of the VAC Artillery departed for the invasion of Leyte. In early 1945, following the departure of the 5th Marine Division, the remaining units of the Corps Artillery departed for Guam.

Parker Ranch and the residents of the Big Island of Hawaii contributed immeasurably to victory and peace in the Pacific. Camp Tarawa was dismantled in 1946 and 1947.

DEC. 20, 2015 NAIMEA (KAMUELA) HAWAII

2d MARINE DIVISION

This stone honors the heroic Marines and Sailors of the 2d Marine Division, who endured the pioneering amphibious assault on Betio in the Tarawa Atoll, November 20-23, 1943. Tarawa was a savage and bloody battle that tested and shaped amphibious doctrine - doctrine that would ultimately bring victory and peace in the Pacific. Following their success at Tarawa, the Division traveled to an unfinished camp located at Parker Ranch. While refitting and recuperating, the 2d Marine Division completed work on the camp. It was later named Camp Tarawa in their honor. On February 12, 1944, Marines were invited to compete with local paniolos in a grand rodeo. More than 10,000 spectators witnessed the friendly competition. This event lifted the spirit of the U.S. Marines for the duration of their training. The 2d Marine Division departed Camp Tarawa that spring to participate in the invasions of Saipan and Tinian.



...team in history as the beginning of the end of the war against Japan."
General A.A. Vandegrift,
Commandant of the Marine Corps (1944 - 1947)

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5th MARINE DIVISION

This stone honors the heroic Marines and Sailors of the 5th Marine Division, who trained at Camp Tarawa in preparation for the February 19, 1945 assault on the island of Iwo Jima. They arrived at the camp throughout the summer and fall of 1944. The division conducted rehearsals for the assault using the steep volcanic hills located on Parker Ranch, which



simulated Iwo Jima's most significant military feature - Mt. Suribachi. By January 1945, the 5th Marine Division had departed Camp Tarawa for Iwo Jima. The defining moment of that historic 36-day battle occurred February 23rd, when "Old Glory" was raised atop Mt. Suribachi by men of the 28th Regiment. This flag raising was immortalized by Joe Rosenthal's photograph, and later by Felix DeWeldon's Marine Corps War Memorial statue adjacent to Arlington National Cemetery. After Iwo Jima was secured on March 26, 1945, the 5th Marine Division returned to Camp Tarawa in April for additional training while awaiting further orders. They departed Camp Tarawa for Kyushu to serve as an occupation force following Japan's surrender.





MELVIN SIMON
LYNN ELLING

1955

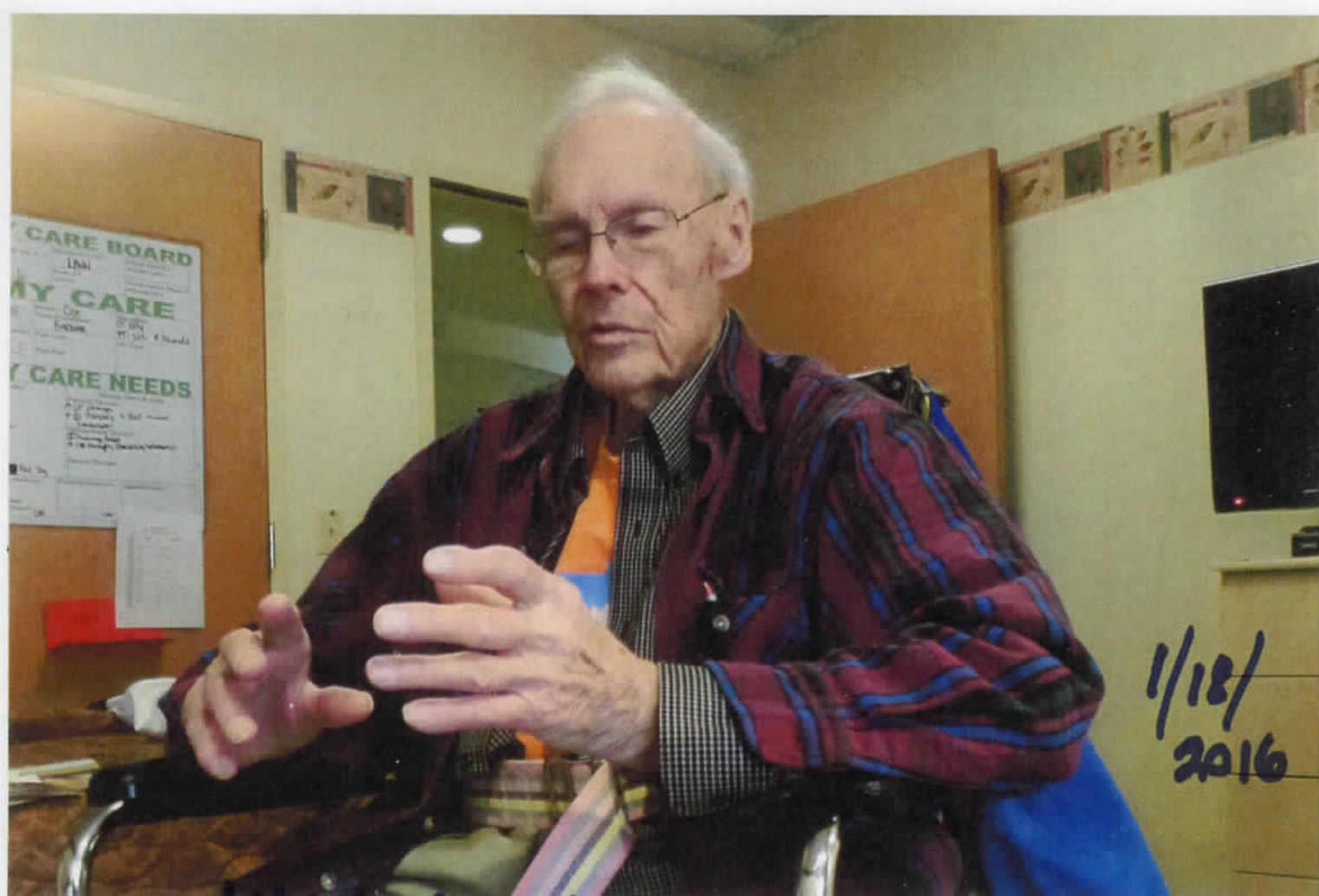
COMFREY MN.



MAVIS
MELVIN
LYNN

PHOTO BY: DOWNA ELLING

CA 1980,



LYNN ELLING

