

USS Plymouth Rock (LSD29)

Newsletter September - December 2018, 51st Edition

Welcome to the USS Plymouth Rock Newsletter

The USS Plymouth Rock Newsletter is a publication issued every four months by the USS Plymouth Rock Ships Association. If you would like to contribute an article, a piece of Navy or Plymouth Rock history, photo, memory or anything that might be of interest to you or other shipmates, you can send it as an e-mail to:

Bill Provencal, Association Secretary/Newsletter Editor at:

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Newsletter Farewell

December 18, 2018

This being the last issue of the Plymouth Rock newsletter, I thought it might be appropriate to speak my mind. (Newsletter editors have this privilege) First of all a big thank you to Harry Anderson, who was instrumental with Norm Jepson in founding the Association back in 1996. Harry also provided me with an untold number of pictures and naval articles for the newsletter/website. Unfortunately I was unable to use all of these, since he sent me so many. To the many of you who provided me with pictures and background information for insertion in the website and newsletter, I thank you. Without your help I could not have accomplished what I did.

I would be remiss in not thanking Bobby Nichols, Paul Mohawk and David Dortch for their work as, Association Treasurers. You did a fine job in keeping the financial records, tracking paid memberships and reimbursing me for all the costs in putting out the newsletter and maintaining the ship's website. David Dortch has also been my sounding board on the newsletters and was very helpful by listening and advising me on how to solve problems.

Shorty Cyr has done a great job as our Ship's Storekeeper in maintaining a full inventory of hats, sweatshirts, tee shirts, etc. Thank you Shorty.

I do not remember all of the Reunion Coordinators, but I do wish to thank you for all of your efforts. Our reunions have been exciting to attend because of your work in planning.

Tom Wagner, who has served as our Association President for since 1998. He convinced me to put out a newsletter and create a website. Thank you for being a great friend and shipmate all these years, good memories.

Lastly, to my wife Linda, who has listened to all of my complaints. You have helped me fold newsletters, stamp envelopes and place mailing labels on hundreds of envelopes. She also corrected my many misspellings, grammar and syntax errors. I could not have done it without your support. Thank you for all you have done for me and the Association.

I would not be truthful if I did not say, that I did enjoy publishing the newsletter. My wife asked me if I will miss it, "damn right I will". Thanks to all of you for your support.

I will continue working on the website at least until July or August. I will consult with the website host in an attempt to keep it active. I do not wish to loose the website since it houses all of our pictures and newsletters, and it would be terrible to loose all of that history. Maybe one of you will step forward and agree to continue it.

Thanks for putting up with me for the last 18+ years.

Bill Provencal, Secretary
USS Plymouth Rock Assoc.
billinp@metrocast.net



Goerge Kovelsky, BT2, Red Bank, NJ 07701, On board 1954-57, Plank Owner.



[Recent Address/E-Mail/Phone/Numbers/Address Changes to the Ships Muster](#)

Gerald M. Walker, SFP2, New Address: 7241 Highway 992, Cloverport, KY 40111-5021



[Known Deceased Shipmates](#)

For a complete listing of deceased shipmates, visit our Memorial Page in the ships website

Martin Stetter, ET3, 11/54-10/56, Plank Owner, Hamburg, NY. Deceased Jan. 18, 2018	



[Thank You's](#)

We would like to thank the following shipmates/friends/organizations for providing pictures, information and articles to the website, the Ships Association and newsletter.

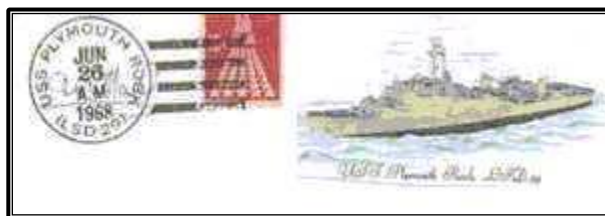
Dennis "Shorty" Cyr, BM3	USS Whetstone LSD-27
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A young Ensign approaches the crusty old Master Chief and asked about the origin of the commissioned officer insignias. "Well," replied the Master Chief, "the insignias for the Navy are steeped in history and tradition. First, we give you a gold bar representing that you are very valuable but also malleable. The silver bar also represents significant value, but is less malleable. Now, when you make Lieutenant, your value doubles, hence the two silver bars. As a Captain, you soar over the military masses, hence the eagle. As an Admiral, you are, obviously, a star. Does that answer your question?" "Yes Master Chief" replied the young Ensign. "But what about Lieutenant Commander and Commander?" "That, sir, goes waaaay back in history - back to the Garden of Eden. You see we've always covered our pricks with leaves."



Five pearls of Scottish wisdom to remember. 1. Money cannot buy happiness but somehow, it's more comfortable to cry in a Mercedes Benz than it is on a bicycle. 2. Forgive your enemy but remember the jerk's name. 3. Help a man when he is in trouble and he will remember you when he is in trouble again. 4. Many people are alive only because it's illegal to shoot them. 5. Alcohol does not solve any problem, but then neither does milk.



I recently visited your USS Plymouth Rock (LSD-29) website for the first time. Although I served on board that ship from 1964 - 1967, I did not maintain

contact with any of the crew afterwards nor did I know about the Association. I am very proud and think fondly of my service. This year, however, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. I am interested to know if any members of the Association or other members of the crew experienced any illnesses which could possibly be presumed related to service aboard the USS Plymouth Rock. That is, any illness such as cancer, which could possibly have originated from materials or personnel while serving on board the ship or while at a liberty port, or while in home port at Norfolk Naval Station / Little Creek, VA. I would greatly appreciate your checking into this matter, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Smooth Sailing,

Harris G. Kehrmann

hgkehmann@gmail.com

Received an e-mail from Dan Creamer, E-3, USMC, on board in 1968 "I was aboard with 3rd LAAM BN when the ship hit the dock in Viques PR. It was a great trip from Cherry Point to the Island. Great chow, great weather, and the ships crew were great guys. We had some good times playing acy ducy on the way down and I read the whole Lord of the Rings trilogy on deck in the sun. The hole in the hull from what I remember was either in or just next to an ammo locker and it was a hell of a bang when it hit. Nobody hurt though and I seem to remember we went back north on the same ship. Anyway, thanks for the ride and the memories...."

Received an e-mail from Roger Walling, SFM3, Chicopee, MA, on board 1963-64. "I am making a recreation of the trucks that were aboard the P rock and I wonder if you know if the ships name was stenciled on the truck and what other markings were on them.

Thank you,

Roger Walling PO3 metalsmith 1963/4

PS, I 'm sorry the reunion was canceled in RI. It was the closest one to me ever. I was unable to confirm reservations due to medical problems, but at the last minute I was able to go." atruckcollision@charter.net

Good afternoon Bill! I just wanted to send the Plymouth Rock Ship Association some positive feedback... a student I tutor (Danielle, she's in 5th grade!) was working on a social studies project yesterday and she stumbled onto your webpage (this one here <http://ussplymouthrock.com/page7.html>) She thought we should let you know that we were exploring the links and found some great information :) and we enjoyed learning about the USS Plymouth Rock so thank you!!

And Danielle picked out this to share with you, to return the favor

"Famous Historical Ships: Warships to Cruise Ships" --

<https://libertycruise.nyc/packages/famous-historical-ships-warships-to-cruise-ships->

It has some fun information for kids and students about a few famous ships, so Danielle thought it would be a helpful addition to that links page she found... would you be able to use it on there? She'd be so excited to see her suggestion and I can show her at her next tutoring session next week :) Thanks so much Bill, and happy almost Halloween!!

Sincerely,
Ms. Glenning (with Danielle B.)

E-Mail from Bill Sims, DC3: I would like to thank all the past officers of the association for their great work in running the assoc. for so many years. I am so very sorry to hear it is about to close due to lack of interest. I wish all my shipmates the best of every thing



Take a knee...

**I don't think I've ever read anything more powerful than this piece.
It was written by Ted Nugent**

Take a little trip to Valley Forge in January. Hold a musket ball in your fingers and imagine it piercing your flesh and breaking a bone or two. There won't be a doctor or trainer to assist you until after the battle, so just wait your turn. Take your cleats and socks off to get a real experience.

Then, take a knee on the beach in Normandy where man after American man stormed the beach, even as the one in front of him was shot to pieces, the very sea stained with American blood. The only blockers most had were the dead bodies in front of them, riddled with bullets from enemy fire.

Take a knee in the sweat soaked jungles of Vietnam. From Khe Sanh to Saigon, anywhere will do. Americans died in all those jungles. There was no playbook that told them what was next, but they knew what flag they represented. When they came home, they were protested as well, and spit on for reasons only cowards know.

Take another knee in the blood drenched sands of Fallujah in 110 degree heat. Wear your Kevlar helmet and battle dress. Your number won't be printed on it unless your number is up! You'll need to stay hydrated but there won't be anyone to squirt Gatorade into your mouth. You're on your own.

There are a lot of places to take a knee where Americans have given their lives all over the world. When you use the banner under which they fought as a source for your displeasure, you dishonor the memories of those who bled for the very freedoms you have. That's what the red stripes mean. It represents the blood of those who spilled a sea of it defending your liberty.

While you're on your knee, pray for those that came before you, not on a manicured lawn striped and printed with numbers to announce every inch of ground taken, but on nameless hills and bloodied beaches and sweltering forests and bitter cold mountains, every inch marked by an American life lost serving that flag you protest.

No cheerleaders, no announcers, no coaches, no fans, just American men and women, delivering the real fight against those who chose to harm us, blazing a path so you would have the right to "take a knee." You haven't any inkling of what it took to get you where you are, but your "protest" is duly noted. Not only is it disgraceful to a nation of real heroes, it serves the purpose of pointing to your ingratitude for those who chose to defend you under that banner that will still wave long after your jersey is retired.

If you really feel the need to take a knee, come with me to church on Sunday and we'll both kneel before Almighty God. We'll thank Him for preserving this country for as long as He has. We'll beg forgiveness for our ingratitude for all He has provided us. We'll appeal to Him for understanding and wisdom. We'll pray for liberty and justice for all, because He is the one who provides those things. But there will be no protest. There will only be gratitude for His provision and a plea for His continued grace and mercy on the land of the free and the home of the brave. It goes like this, GOD BLESS AMERICA



U.S. Navy Hymn Lyrics

**Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!**



The first reunion in Waukeegan, IL September 25-27. 1996
Pictures and writeup's of past reunions can be viewed in the ships website
(www.ussplymouthrock.com) under the topic "Pictures of Past Reunions"





USS *Plymouth Rock* (LSD-29), Chesapeake Bay, July 1964.



Photo # USN 1089896 USS Plymouth Rock underway on 8 April 1963



USS Plymouth Rock - St Raphael
Photo Giorgio Arra 1-75



Picture of me, Bill Provencal, PN2, on left, LANTPHIB Exercises in the Caribbean, February 1958. Always wanted my picture in the ships newsletter.



Navy's LSDs Carry a 'Kangaroo Punch' (From All Hands a publication of the Navy -- August 1953)

It was the morning of the invasion. The eastern sky glowed with morning sun and mist as a huge Navy task force lined up off the coast of North Korea. A helicopter spotter had reported that the channel ahead was filled with mines and the ships would not be able to move through it. Then out of the mist it came, an unusual ship-of-war with a blunt, stubby bow, a huge bridge house and weird lines that sloped away to a squared-off stern that looked like the back end of a truck. The strange vessel moved smoothly through the water straight toward the mineinfested channel. Then, all at once, it squatted down in the water like a mother duck covering her brood. When its hull was half submerged the flat stern folded downward into the sea and revealed that the ship's interior was flooded with sea water. A marine with the task force looked at his buddy. "What kind of ship is that?" he asked. "A ship that fills with water but doesn't sink?" Then as if in answer to the question a roar of motors came from the strange vessel. A haze of blue exhaust smoke appeared over its super-structure and through the gaping hole where the stern had been came a bevy of "ducklings" - a small navy of pint-sized minesweepers, LCMs and LCVPs that had been fitted out with special minesweeping gear. As they came out, the "ducklings" circled behind the mother ship. Then they formed a line three abreast, steamed their sweeping gear out behind them and moved through the mine-infested channel. The boats were staggered so that the area covered in their sweep would overlap and no part of the channel would be left un-swept. The path they cleared would allow the bigger ships to move in. When their job was done the "ducklings" steamed back to the mother ship and entered the open stern. The stern gate closed up behind them and the big ship steamed away slowly rising out of the sea as it disappeared back into the mist.

This unique ship made its initial appearance in World War II. She was name “LSD” (for landing ship dock) and her function was to carry and launch landing craft with amphibious task forces in the Pacific. However, it wasn’t long before she was doing all sorts of odd jobs for the fleet. She’s a ship with a “kangaroo punch.” Her ability to take aboard small boats and ships made her an ideal dry-dock repair ship. Her huge docking-well enabled her to carry tremendous cargoes of invasion equipment. She was an important cog in the amphibious wheel. Now in Korea she has added another job to her list of duties-- that of a mother to minesweepers. She steams along in convoy with her docking-well filled with little minesweepers ready to be turned loose at any spot they’re needed to clear a path for the task force. Where combat forces were previously hampered by having to move slowly so that the regular-type minesweepers could keep up with them they are now able to steam along on their missions at full tilt. At first glance an LSD looks like something that got away from its builders before it was finished. It has a tremendous shell of a hull and a docking-well 396 feet long and 44 feet wide which tunnels from the stern clear up under the bridge to the bow. The vast docking-well is only 60 feet short of the entire length of the LSD. In it will fit 27 LCVPs, 18 LCMs with one LCVP in each, 3 LCUs, 1 LM or anything narrow enough to get through the stern gate. An LSD has a “superdeck” of steel grating that covers the top of her water-garage. On this grating go 350 tons of invasion cargo which may include tanks, cars, trucks, jeeps or other vehicles. The “superdeck” comes in six-ton sections and has a six-ton traveling bridge crane that rides tracks along the top of the wing-walls. This crane can lift the deck sections overboard when they are not needed.

The average LSD has a crew of 330 men and 18 officers. Her big 7000-horsepower reciprocating engines enable her to steam along at 16 knots. It takes about an hour and a half to ballast her down until there’s enough water in the docking-well to float the small craft. In order to save time, ballasting is usually started while still underway.

Men with telephone gear stand at 6 different stations around the ship to report ballast progress as the ship takes on water. Each phone connects with the ballast control center—a tiny shelter on the starboard wing-wall lined with huge panels of wavering dial needles that gauge the ballasting. Crewmen are careful to see that there are no half-full tanks with “free surface” where water can slosh around. If the ship is rolling in a heavy swell, free surface water will slosh steeper than the roll and tend to keep the roll going. If the roll is big enough it could cause a lot of damage. Here is a “blow-by-blow” account of a typical LSD minefield operation: When approaching the mine field the engineering officer orders the stern gate to open slightly. Slowly the ship starts to settle in the sea and the docking-well fills like a big washbowl. By the time the destination is reached, 7,000 tons of salt water have flooded the dockingwell to a depth of six feet or more.

Arriving at the mine field, the engines stop and the LSD turns into the wind. Gears groan, and now the stern gate goes down, folding neatly in half and doubling back under the stern. Inside, the noise of the boat engines fills the well. Three at a time, the little sweepers emerge from the cloud of fumes to circle the mother ship like a young brood enjoying their freedom for the first time and excited by the unfamiliar surroundings. Now they form groups and proceed to carve a path for the bigger sweeps that will follow later. Because of their small draft, mine-sweeping small craft can penetrate shallow areas without danger of running aground and can clear places that the standard sized minesweepers cannot reach. With their part in the sweeping operation completed, the mine craft head back to the LSD, which is standing by. The boats form 2 circles off each quarter of the ship’s stern while they wait to be “called in.” Upon on the after-end of the port wing-wall stands the docking officer with a power megaphone giving the signals. Like the Landing Signal Officer on an aircraft carrier directing flight landings, he is responsible in bringing each of the boats back aboard safe. A typical command goes like this: “No 6 aboard center -7 and 8

follow port and starboard.” Immediately No 6 roars through the stern gate right down the center of the forward end of the docking-well. No 7 and No 8 follow, flanking No. 6 until they are finally made fast with chain lashings. The loading proceeds three at a time until the last of the little craft are safely back to roost. Then the stern gate closes part way to allow the ocean inside to spill back out. Deballasting begins and the ship gets underway in short order. All this is a pretty smooth operation in a calm sea. But when “mama” LSD is heaving and rolling in rough weather it’s another story. Only a highly skilled crew can handle the bounding small crafts they enter the heaving docking-well. The little boats whirl and spin, knock against the bulkheads and crash against each other like carnival cars.

On icy mornings in cold weather, steam lines have to be rigged to unfreeze the ballast valves so that the docking well can be flooded and the stern gate lowered. Steam is also often applied to boat engines to warm them after a frozen night. The LCVP crews have the most rugged job of all. The constant spray forms an icy film on their boats and although the men wear foul-weather clothing suitable for the arctic, long hours of rough-water, open-boat sweeping mean tough work in winter weather. To make matters tougher, in combat areas boats must be backed into the well so they can be launched faster. Everything is timed to the last instant. As the boats start coming aboard after a sweeping operation, the mother ship begins deballasting at once, forward tanks first. If the engineers are on the ball, the forward end of the docking-well will be tipped up and dry and the first boats will be grounded seconds after they’re lashed into place. Deballasting proceeds sternward so that as each threesome of boats is tied up they will be high and dry almost immediately.

Partial ballasting, so that only the after end of the docking wall is flooded, has other advantages. It enables the LSD to become a launching beach for amphibious craft. LVTs (amphibious tanks) for instance can be lowered from the super deck to the bow end of the docking-well by crane. When ready to launch, the stern ballast tanks

are filled and the after end of the well sinks into the ocean. The amphibians sitting high and dry in the bow end simply rumble down the sloping deck as though they were taking off from a beach. Going into the water halfway down they are afloat by the time they pass the stern gate. As each group of amphibians takes off others are lowered to the "beach" by the crane. LSDs are versatile ships. For example, when a U>S> Air Force amphibious plane on a rescue mission landed at sea and was unable to take off again when it developed engine trouble, a request was radioed to Commander Sixth Fleet for help. Immediately US Swan Marcos LSD 25 was dispatched to render aid to the stricken plane. Following its arrival at the scene of the downed plane, San Marcos hoisted the huge aircraft aboard with its powerful cranes. The plane, weighing 14 tons and with a wing span of 80 feet and an over-all length of 61 feet, would have posed a spectacular problem for other types of ships. Hoisting it aboard was a praiseworthy feat for the LSD which accomplished the job without difficulty.

So that they will be able to do even more "odd jobs," 2 LSDs (USS Lindenwald LSD-6 and USS Gunston Hall LSD-5) have now been "winterized" for Arctic work. Their hulls have been strengthened and insulated to resist the pressing ice pack. Crane controls and deck equipment have been placed under shelter. The bridge is housed and there are steel shacks for bow and gun lookouts. New reciprocating engines will give the ships fast, sudden back-down power in ice flow regions.

Their availability for all types of tasks has earned the LSDs the respect of all Navy men and a prominent place in the fleet of tomorrow, Why not? What other ship can do a day's work and end up with a deck full of fresh fish? That's no fish story...it is not at all unusual for an LSD to find after deballasting that her docking-well is covered with a good sized "catch" of flopping fish



Images of Past Reunions



The infamous duo - Shorty and Jim, 2008 reunion



Rhonda and Dave checking shipmates in – 2010 reunion



Group picture 2006 reunion



Business Meeting, 2003 reunion



Reunion Banquet, Jim and Cindy, David Dortch, Joyce Cyr, 2012 reunion



President Tom Wagner reading names of deceased shipmates, 2004 reunion



Questionnaire – Results

by David Dortch

12-6-2018

Continue Association- Yes (7) No (25) Blank (1)

Continue Newsletter- Yes (10) No (21) Blank (1)

Money- WWP-(17) Other-(10) Blank-(5)

Partner with Another- Yes (13) Yes & Attend (13) No (17)

Continue Website- Yes (12) No (19) Blank (1)

Note: Did not have anyone who volunteered to be an Officer. One member has agreed to “help” someone with the newsletter, webpage or as President

Other Comments On What To Do With The Funds

Don't know if WWP would be a good choice. They have been criticized on their expenditures

Anything for veterans

Return to members or donate to a vet organization (V.F.W. or American Legion)

Saint Jude Hospital

Veterans flight to D.C.

Website to keep it open

Salvation Army

Navy veterans group in the Norfolk/Little Creek area

D.A.V.

Navy Relief

General Comments

Thanks to us for our services as Association Officers

I attended a honor flight to D.C. It was one of my highlights in my eighty four years

Sorry Bill I don't have the knowledge of doing the great job that you do.

Hopefully we will find someone. It is still great to have some contact with shipmates while we are still around. It was a pleasure to have served with you on the P Rock.

The time has come to retire. Good job with the new letter.

I'm sorry to see the assoc. head down the tubes. The 1st. and only reunion I went to was the last one in Norfolk, had a great time and met some great people. I personally don't have time to be a board member, I'm no computer wiz. I retire in

five years, I feel I will have more time to contribute then. I was planning on Newport, sorry many did not sign up.

Having been decommissioned since 1983 suggest that the youngest members of the ship's crew are getting older. It is unfortunate that shipmates from the last few years, like the eighties are not interested. Thanks to all you guys that had the foresight to create the PRock Association.

A lot of time has passed and I guess people gradually loose interest. I had hoped to find everyone with whom I had worked on the PRock here and we'd reminisce and catch up with how our lives had developed. But of course that didn't happen. Too many years, too many deaths and people didn't seem to look back on those times to such fervor as I did. I know it has been hard herding all of us all, Thank You. I wish you fair seas & following winds.

Hold reunion only every 2 or 3 years. I recommended this when Chief Anderson got the first reunion organized. Once every year is too frequent.

So Sad

Could have a 1 day reunion, get together and visit and eat a meal. We all can pay for own meals. Not necessary to have 3 days and have all kinds of tours.

The Plymouth Rock posters that the members signed. Give them to members that want them. If too many want them, put their names in a hat and draw names to give to winners.

I truly appreciate the effort and time you and other leaders have contributed over the years.

I wouldn't mind paying dues to hire someone to maintain the website. I hate to lose touch with this important time in my life. I would attend a general "gator navy" reunion in the Little Creek area

I think you all did a great job, but now it's time to let it go.

I am so sorry to see the web site close, but if no one is willing to take over then you must do whatever it takes. I have enjoyed it very much over the years.

Will stay on the website at least until late summer

First get 3 or 4 members together and come up with officers and plan a reunion for the spring. Communicate to all that a reunion will be organized and dues are overdue.

Please allow me to convey my utmost respect and admiration for those of you who have kept our association in operation for so many years. You all have done an outstanding job and are to be commended for your fine efforts.

I retired off the P Rock almost 40 years ago. I have attended one reunion and sorry I have not made more. As time waits on no one and I'm slowly coming to a point as I don't have many cruises left.

We had a great run. Thank you

Thank you for good job all of you have done for the association while in office. The ship has faded into history and so have the members. Nothing last forever. We had a good run but it is over.

I have kept every newsletter. I would like to thank everyone involved with the PR Association

Members that have returned Questionnaires

Jepson Whitlock Hickson Sims Macomber Caldwell Kane Clark Larson
Freeman Kotowski Watts Nicoll Bild Dussault Gilpatrick Joyce LaMay
Peraino Hyatt Wagner Pawlak Dortch Provencal Cooke Smith Brusky
Dailey Hopper Robertson Ziemba Lillig



50% Liquidation Sale on Ship Store Items Inventory as of 12/14/18

Shorty Cyr, our Storekeeper is liquidating the Association's inventory. All items have been discounted by 50%. Once items have been sold, we will not restock, so that T-Shirt you have been thinking about, buy it now, you will not find it cheaper elsewhere.

HATS 5 in stock \$7.50

SWEAT SHIRTS 11 in stock 0M \$15.00, 2L #15.00 7XL \$15.00

SHIP PATCHES 30 in stock \$4.35

MUGS 26 in stock \$15.00

HAT PINS 155 in stock \$2.00

T SHIRTS 10 in stock 3 M, 8 L, 0 XL, 1 XXL, 3 XXXL All sizes \$11.00

BUMPER STICKER 13 in stock

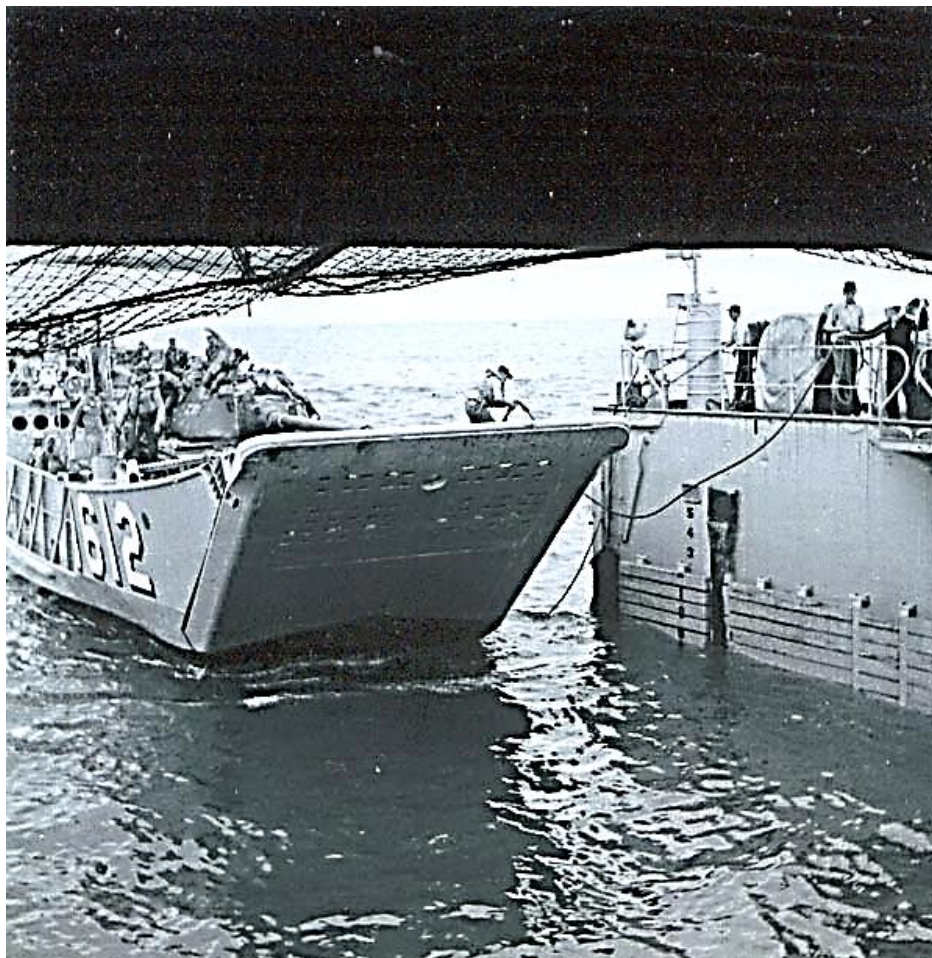
SHOULDER PATCH 10 in stock, \$7.50

T--SHIRT WITH FLAG & SAYING ON BACK 10 in stock 2 L, 2 XL, 6 XXL 1 XXXL All sizes \$11.00

NOTE: All prices include shipping, price shown reflects 50% discount.

To purchase items, send check made out to USS Plymouth Rock Association, include list of what you want, size if applicable and your name and address. Mail to Dennis O. Cyr, 119 Pinecrest Drive, Waterbury, CT 06708. Dennis phone number is 203-753-6220, shortybm3@yahoo.com

To view all of the items in the Ship Store go to the ships website at ussplymouthrock.com



LCVP entering the welldeck, photo contributed by Walt Hyatt, MM3