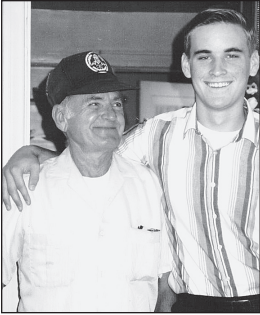

Foreword



Dennis R. Blocker II (right) with his grandfather, Clifford Lemke, S1/c, LCI (G)-449, c. 1991.
(Courtesy Blocker Family)

“In World War II, 16.1 million men and women served in the U.S. Armed Forces. For every *one* who served in combat, *ten* served in a support role.” This is a staggering fact which is not only claimed but proven in this, the final book in William L. McGee’s trilogy, *Amphibious Operations in the South Pacific in World War II*. Such a work is long overdue as the men and women of WWII are passing at a rate of more than 1,000 per day and taking their stories with them. This is why *Pacific Express* is so vitally important to the recorded history of WWII.

Few medals adorn the chests of civilian merchant mariners who crossed the vast Pacific Ocean on a merchant ship. Likewise the “Armed Guard” felt rather unarmed as they defended these ships. Who will tell the stories of the Marine engineers and navy Seabees who built the bases and paved airfields while under sniper fire? Who will tell of the navy amphibious forces that delivered the guns and ammunition, bombs, grenades and rockets, aviation gas and black oil, tanks, trucks, uniforms, medical supplies, construction equipment, food, water, and a million other items that kept the Americans and her Allies fighting? Is it any wonder that the men and women who made this happen are called the “Greatest Generation”?

For me, WWII is all black and white. The troops are all high-glossed and the aircraft fly with bits of lint and dust stuck to them. This is how I know WWII, not because I was born during the Depression (I was born in

1974), but because I am the grandson of three WWII veterans. My great-grandfather, a private in the Army's 30th Infantry Division, died from a German artillery barrage in Holland in October 1944. My two grandfathers both served in the navy's Amphibious Forces. Grandpa Blocker served on an LST in the Atlantic and was torpedoed. Grandpa Lemke served on LCI (G)-449, the subject of a book I am writing titled, *Sitting Ducks*.

There is a picture I have of my arm around Grandpa Lemke's shoulder. I am beaming with happiness and he is looking up at me beaming with pride. I will always treasure that picture because now I know what he went through, and that somehow he managed to come home, raise a family, and provide for them, even though he had seen many of his friends die. Amazing.

Also amazing is the story of the men who delivered the goods to the farthest reaches of the Pacific. In reading this wonderful book, *Pacific Express*, we, the future generations, will gain a true understanding of the Second World War and will know how it was won. And one day we will sit *our* grandchildren on our laps and ask, "Did I ever tell you how World War II was really won?"

—Dennis R. Blocker II
National LCI Association Historian, Pacific War