

# JOHN E ANDERSON



John Emanuel Anderson (6383008) was born in Willmar MN on 25 September, 1919. He was the youngest of 4 children born to Oscar Emanuel and Anna Marilda Anderson. John's father, Oscar, was a Swedish immigrant who arrived in America in 1910 and became a citizen in 1913. Oscar was born on Christmas Day, 1889 in Saxdalen, Dalarna Sweden.

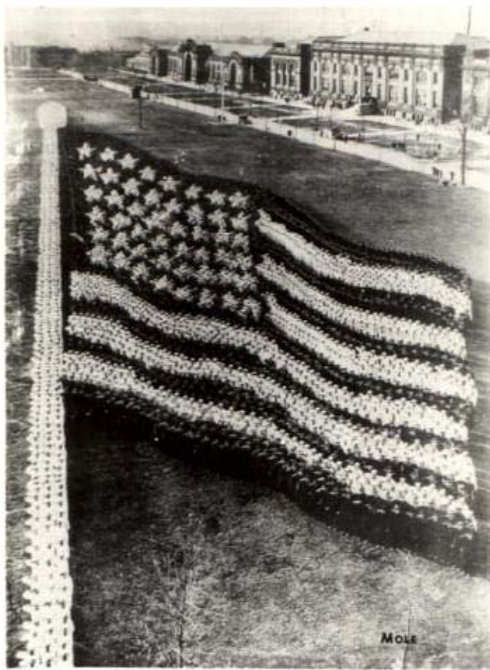
John's mother, Anna, was born to Swedish immigrants in Willmar on 10 January 1891. Oscar and Anna were married on 13 June, 1913. John had three older sisters, Esther, Marian, and Alice.

He was a member of the Willmar Mission Covenant Church. He attended Willmar Schools, and graduated in 1937 from Willmar High School.



John worked as a painter & decorator with his father Oscar. Oscar's business was very successful and he was in great demand in the Willmar area. John helped his father with the many jobs that he had. Oscar fully expected that John would follow in his footsteps and take on the family business.

John as a child, John in his Junior Year, and his Senior Year Photo. (L-R)



*Living Flag*  
U. S. NAVAL TRAINING STATION,  
GREAT LAKES, ILLINOIS  
REAR ADMIRAL, JOHN DOWNES U S NAVY,  
COMMANDING OFFICER

That changed after the Japanese attacks on 7 December 1941. The country changed after Pearl Harbor, and John felt a desire to help in the war effort. On 7 February 1942, John enlisted in the US Navy and was sworn in on 17 March.

Before John left for his service in World War II, he was engaged to be married to Hannah Anderson. Their plan was to be married when he returned from the war. Hannah purchased her wedding dress and a number of household effects including china for their new life together.



John was sent to Great Lakes Illinois for Recruit training (Boot Camp). After being processed in, John began a multi week training regimen of physical training and Navy rules and regulations. Outfitted with uniforms, John and the other recruits were drilled in parade and ceremony rituals, tough physical training activities, and continually taught military discipline. Although many times duties may have seemed ridiculous, the men were taught to follow orders, and do their jobs in an unwavering manner.

On 31 March, John wrote his sister, Esther, that he got into the base at about 6:45am on Thursday 26 March. He had taken a physical examination, and was set to take a mental exam for duty the following day. He notes, "Things aren't so good as I thought they would be." He states that they sleep in hammocks and the stow their clothing in a sack ("or a sea bag is what we call it"). He greeted his young nephew "Donny" in the letter and says, "I'm here to fix things so he won't have to when he grows up".



"We drill a good 6 hours every day marching and using guns". He notes they wash their own clothes at night and clean the barracks morning, noon, and night. He was assigned to Company 199. He closes his letter to sister, Esther by saying, "Well I just as soon be home but I'm willing to stick this out to help protect my country."

In a later letter home to his sister on 1 April 1942 John describes that he has not had much time for writing, and has been on Kitchen Duty. At that point, he expected to be graduating from Boot Camp on 8 May. In a later letter, he found out that his graduation day was moved up, and he was to Graduate on Friday evening, 27 April 1942.





Following graduation from Boot Camp, Anderson was sent to Motor Machinist Mate School at Wahpeton North Dakota. Before reporting at school, he was allowed a short leave at home.

John's nephew, Don Franklin, recalls his mother visiting with John while he was home on furlough. Don doesn't recall if it was this specific instance, but John told his sister, Esther (Don's Mother) that he envied her having children. He noted that he wasn't sure he would live long enough to have any of his own.

After leave, John reported for Machinist Mate school at Wahpeton. Officially, the description of this job included, "Operate machine tools. Operate and maintain internal combustion engines and engine auxiliaries. Knowledge of pressure and air systems. Be familiar with electrical apparatus."

John wrote Esther on 20 May, "I don't mind working in the shop but that studying business at night is terrible along with guard duty." He mentioned that he stayed on three tiered bunks, and his bunk was on the bottom. So all the other men used his bunk to sit on after getting in from the shop. This caused his bunk to always be dirty.

This schooling was more of a classroom setting than the physical aspects of Boot Camp. They were taught and quizzed on almost all possible issues relating to the

machinery they would be exposed to. In a sense, they needed to know how to keep the motors on ship running in some of the worst possible situations.

Tearing apart motors, and putting them back together John and the other members of his class became experts in handling the equipment under their care. Soon, they were set to graduate from Motor Machinist School.

In August he wrote home that he had been working at tool making, machine shop, tin shop, welding and plumbing. They also worked with engines and pumps including steam, car, and diesel engines. He was expecting to graduate and leave on 29 August.

He was allowed some time off while at training, so being so close to Minnesota he would travel home as he was able. For John, this was a great escape and opportunity for him to be training so close to home that he was able to get back to Willmar to see family and friends. Soon enough, his training was over.

**U. S. Naval Training School--Machinist's Mate**  
**NORTH DAKOTA STATE SCHOOL OF SCIENCE**  
**WAHPETON, NORTH DAKOTA**

**T**HIS is to  
 Certify that JOHN E. ANDERSON  
 of WILLMAR, MINNESOTA  
 has successfully completed the requirements of the special  
 16 weeks machinist's mate's shop course at the Naval Training  
 School at Wahpeton, North Dakota.

Signed *E. J. [Signature]* President of School.  
 Signed *Will [Signature]* Commanding Officer.





He was sent to Detroit Michigan for Diesel Motor training. By this time, he knew what kind of ship he would be on. he was to be assigned to LCT's (Landing Craft Tank). There were about 1,00 sailors where John was staying. Their school was about 3 blocks away and they would walk to classes each day.

John noted about the diesel engines that they "tear them down in the day time and also rebuild them again." In the evening they would have "book studies" about the engines they worked on.

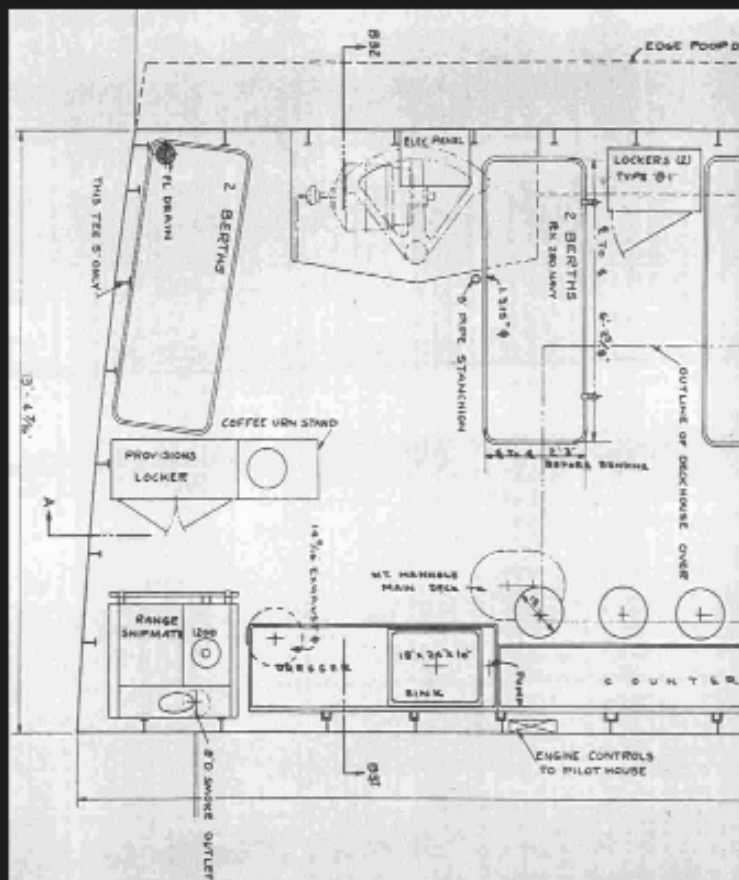
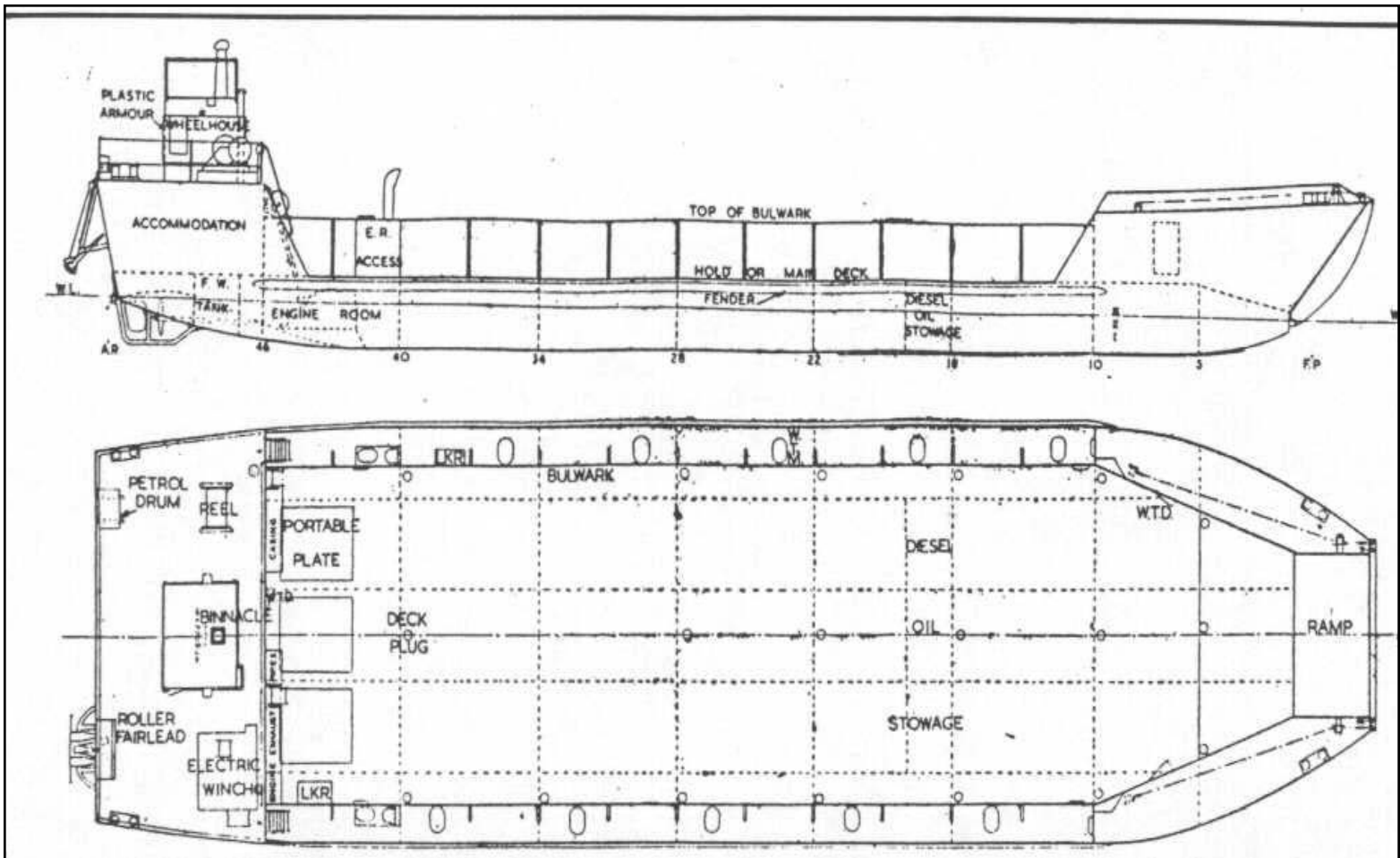


On LCT's he would be aboard ships that brought troops and supplies into hostile areas. They would be hauling men under fire, and had to be able to get out to reload and haul in more troops and equipment.

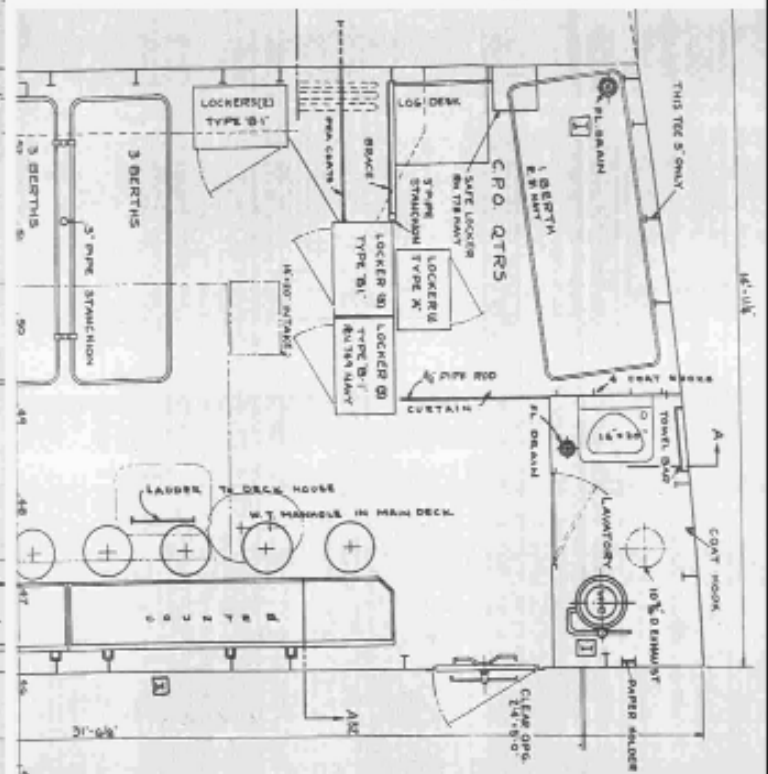
In late September 1942, John graduated from Marine Diesel Operator School in Detroit Michigan.

Upon completion of this training, he was sent to Norfolk Virginia for amphibious training.





## LCT Mk-5 CREWS QUARTERS



Schematic Diagrams of what the type of ship John served on was like. The top shows an overall view of the LCT Mk-5 ship, and the lower drawing shows the living area for the crewmembers. In the living area is where John wrote many of his letters home during his time in the Navy.



In Virginia, John worked with Landing craft and practiced all of the aspects of what he learned. He wasn't very fond of Virginia and described it to his Esther as "Quite a hole, a mud hole in fact." They would spend all day in the boats practicing and going through operations. John noted that some days he'd be on the Ocean from 8am until 11pm. He told his sister in a letter that he had helped as a throttleman in the control house but it was, "Not so easy, especially when docking the boat. The boat is 105 feet long and hauls tanks!"

In letters John sent home, it was apparent that they had no idea for sure where they would be sent after. he had at one point heard rumors that they were headed to California for the Pacific theater. In the end, that wasn't the case and in late November, John left Virginia for New York and the US Navy Receiving Station in Long Beach. Here he waited for orders to head overseas. While there, he attended some other short schools for training. He stayed in a room that overlooked the ocean and described the waves rolling in to his family back home in letters.



John while in Africa

Less than one year from when he was sworn into the US Navy, John was sent overseas. He left the United States on 23 February 1943 and sent to Oran North Africa. Oran, in Algeria, had recently fallen under allied control after Operation Torch; the invasion of Africa to wipe out the Nazi hold.

After John's arrival in Africa, he prepped for Operation Husky: the invasion of Sicily. He was assigned to LCT-30. This ship was a Class 5 Landing craft built at at Manitowoc Shipbuilding Co., Manitowoc Wisconsin beginning in September 1942. Put into service in October 1942, the planned Sicilian invasion would be its first time in combat. It was a part of Flotilla 10, a fleet of around 25 ships.

The ship was commanded by Sidney Brinker. Brinker was a native of Park Ridge Illinois. He was commissioned as an Ensign after completing an Officer school in New York. In December 1942, prior to their departure of the US, he was married. John met Sidney while at training in Virginia.



Lieutenant Sidney Brinker,  
Commander LCT-30

The crew of LCT-30 John is in the middle on the left side.



The crew of LCT-30 was a total of 12 men. They worked together, lived together, and became as close to one another as family.







After weeks of planning, training, and supplying the Allies were soon ready to undertake the Sicilian campaign. In July, the stage was set and the Invasion began. John's ship set out on 10 July and landed along the Sicilian coast; they were fully loaded with men, supplies and equipment. In spite of the enemy arial attacks and mines, all ships in the flotilla but one successfully accomplished their missions of dropping men and supplies in support of the invasion. LCT 30 earned a battle star for their part in the invasion. John's ship landed at Galeta Sicily.



LCT'S UNLOAD AT SGOGLITTI, SICILY.

U S NAVY PHOTO 110-2



US Navy  
Photographs  
of the  
Invasion of  
Sicily.  
Operation  
Husky began  
on 9 July  
1943

After the invasion of Sicily and securing that island from the German and Italian aggressors, the stage was set for the invasion of mainland Italy. Operation Avalanche would be John's next step in the war.

Beginning on 3 September 1943, Allied elements began the process of liberating mainland Italy from the fascist regime. The main body of the allied assault would take place on 9 September.

Unlike most landings, the allies didn't proceed this landings with aerial or naval bombardments in an attempt to surprise. That anticipated surprise, however, was not achieved.

John's ship, LCT 30, departed Sicily bringing supplies and forces to the southern assault beaches of Salerno. The time was 0333 (3:33am). They came under enemy fire regularly during the assault.

Enemy artillery batteries along with aerial attacks were fired on them. In spite of all this, they received no damage from the enemy barrage.

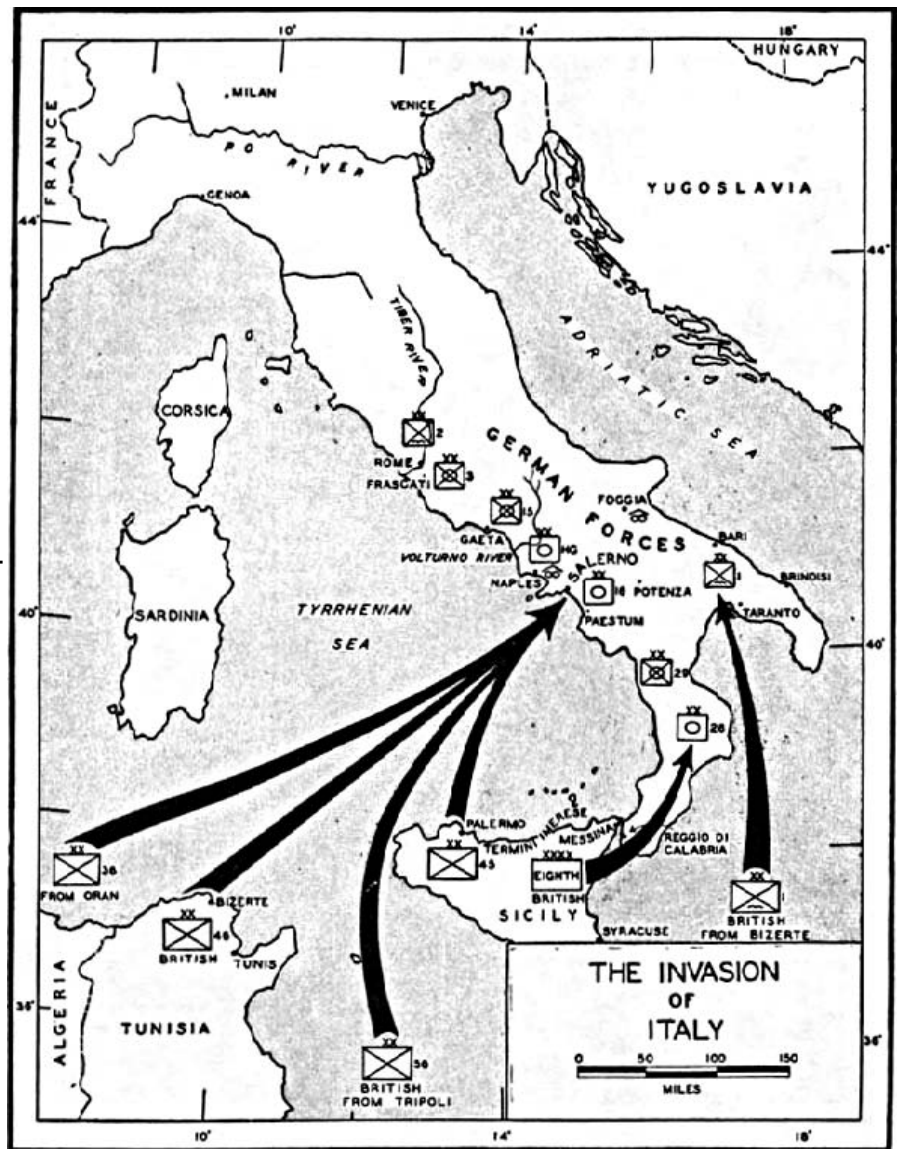
The fighting for control of Italy continued until early October by which time the whole of southern Italy was under allied control. After the beaches had been secured and the allies pushed north, John saw some shore duty while at Italy and North Africa. Christmas 1943, John spent with two other Willmar boys, Don and Doug Langager.

Italy and North Africa became John's homes until preparations for the invasion of France. They traveled back and forth from Italy to North Africa bringing in supplies for the Allied troops. In November John wrote his sister asking her about how Thanksgiving was for her.

For John, it was like pretty much any other day. He wrote, "We didn't know anything about it until dinner, which was very good. Everything you would want and more. All the turkey we could eat and things that go with a meal. The only things I missed was trying to see if the ice on the lake was strong enough to skate on. Ha!" Even while in a war zone, John had his sense of humor, and tried to make sure the family wasn't too concerned about him.

In January 1944, John was sent to England to prepare for the Allied assault on Europe. Shortly after John arrived in England, the Allies assaulted Anzio in Italy to effectively take control of the rest of that country.

His trip to England was relatively peaceful. He wrote home that only three subs were sunk on the way up by airplane carriers. About England he wrote, "at least the people talk our language and you can get something decent to eat when on liberty". John related the sights of England to the northern Minnesota, "with trees and hills, and small rivers". He noted that he thought the old fashioned homes are cute. They reminded him of a photo at home that hung on the wall. He also thanked his nephew, Donny (Don), for the prayers the youngster had for them each night. He replied, "We Sure need it".





In England John and the members of LCT 30 were assigned to Flotilla 18, Group 29. The preparation for the assault on German forces in France was difficult for those involved. They all knew they would be going, but no one but high command knew when or where. Everyone knew that they would meet stiff resistance, and the fight could be the hardest they had seen in the war.

They practiced their landings over and over. Trying to become more effective with each trial run. When time allowed, John wrote letters home to family. With the censors in place, he wasn't able to tell much of his situation to them. By late May and early June, John knew they would be going shortly. In a letter dated 2 June, 1944 he told his parents not to worry if they didn't hear from him for a while. It was his way of letting them know that he was going into combat.

Early on the morning of June 6, John and the crew of LCT 30 left England to cross the channel to France. The epic battle we now know as D-Day had begun, and John would be in the leading elements of the battle.

During an enemy Air Raid on 28 May, the ship took a couple of near misses that disabled LCT-30. Immediately put into drydock for repairs, they were able to fix things and get loaded for the invasion.

LCT 30 was fully loaded with the men and supplies of the 467th Anti Aircraft Artillery Battalion. According to the recollection of one man who served in the battalion, members of 2nd platoon were on John's ship. John, being a Motor Machinist Mate, was stationed in the boiler room of the ship during the invasion. From his position, he never would have seen the carnage going on out side.

Lieutenant Brinker's After Action Report details the events of that day. At 0400, they left their buoy in in the Harbor and rendezvoused in the convey position in the bay to proceeded according to plan. Their landing area was Omaha Beach, Normandy. They arrived at Omaha, Easy Green Beach and attempted to land at their designated area but so few gaps had been made through the obstacles and because of heavy shellfire they were forced to wait and search for a turn in landing positions.

One soldier was injured by a distant sniper. The report states, "Small boats with much needed reinforcements were circling off the beach. One load of engineers, approximately fifty men, asked to be transferred to our ship and were quickly taken aboard. Their Boat Captain had orders from his transport skipper not to land but to get his men to LCTs."

"At approximately 0945 we made out the yellow beaching flag on Fox Red, being waved frantically by a man lying down. It was apparent that the concentration of soldiers lying along this embankment with their feet in the water needed help badly. The beach looked clear for a landing, one of the few open places. We proceeded in immediately, passed to the side of a sunken LCV (P) without trouble, made a dry landing and began to unload our engineers and a load of half tracks and an Anti-Aircraft battery. Enemy snipers and machine gun fire strafed the ship. We fired back with both 20mm guns with good results because much of the sniping stopped."

"Snipers forced abandonment of the starboard machine gun. Edward Maloney, GM2c, remained gallantly at his port gun, strafing enemy sniper positions, in the face of their fire until the magazine drum suddenly exploded in his face. By a miracle he escaped serious injury, in fact none whatsoever. The other gunner, Quentin Mooberry, ripped off the burning drum., preventing further trouble to anyone, though burning his own hand. Others in the crew fought back with their rifles. afterwards on a hospital train, i met a Captain Scott of the 7th. Field Artillery who had been wounded and evacuated from that beach. He confirmed my opinion that our guns helped clear FoX Red of snipers."

All of this activity happened within a period of about ten minutes. LCT-30 was able to unload safely all of the vehicles and engineers from the ship onto the beach. Lt. Brinker notes in the After Action Report, "We began to retract at once and all seemed too good to be true." It was. Suddenly a magazine drum exploded aboard the ship. When they reached about 50 feet from shore, a devastating thing happened.

John had gone down below deck, to the engine rooms to check the sand traps on the ship. While he was in the engine room, an enemy shell came and exploded amidships, directly in the engine room, killing John instantly.

All engines were knocked out, and the engine room began to fill with water. Disabled, the ship grounded ashore. Lt. Brinker states in his report that John could never be reached in the engine room but it was apparent to him that John was, "killed outright". He was 24 years old.

The ship began to take further enemy fire and Lt Brinker ordered all men to abandon ship and go to the beach. The crew were ordered to get back out on one of the incoming LCIs. Survivors from other LCTs came aboard the ship hoping to get out with them, but were forced to hit the beach and find a different way out. More than four of the crewmen of LCT-30 received minor shrapnel wounds while on the beach, however, all were finally evacuated to hospitals.

LCT-30		LCT (5) FLOTILLA NINETEEN	
Serial: T-01		21 June 1944.	
O-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L		From: Officer-in-Charge, LCT (5) #30.	
To: Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet.		To: Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet.	
Via: Commander Force 0-2 LCT Commander Force 0-2 Commander Force 0 Commander Task Force 122		Via: Commander Force 0-2 LCT Commander Force 0-2 Commander Force 0 Commander Task Force 122	
Subject: Action Report		Subject: Action Report	
1. During the enemy air raid the night of May 28th., LCT (5) #30, underwent two near misses that disabled the ship. It was put on drydock at once for repairs and when shipped off we were immediately combat loaded for the invasion.		4. Snipers forced abandonment of the starboard machine gun. Edward Maloney, GM2c, remained gallantly at his port gun, strafing enemy sniper positions, in the face of their fire until the magazine drum suddenly exploded in his face. By a miracle he escaped serious injury, in fact none whatever. The other gunner, Quentin Mcberry, ripped off the burning drum, preventing further trouble to anyone, though burning his own hand. Others in the crew fought back with their rifles. Afterwards on a hospital train, I met a Capt. Scott of the 7th. Field Artillery who had been wounded and evacuated from that beach. He confirmed my opinion that our guns helped clear Fox Red of snipers.	
2. At 0400, June 5th., LCT (5) #30 left her buoy in Portland Harbor, rendezvoused in its convoy position in the bay and proceeded according to plan towards the invasion shore of France. Arriving off Omaha Easy Green Beach we attempted to land on time Hplus 120 but so few gaps had been made through obstacles and because of heavy shellfire we were forced to wait and search for a turn in the landing positions, during which one soldier was injured by a distant sniper. Small boats with much needed reinforcements were circling off the beach. One load of engineers, approximately fifty men, asked to be transferred to our ship and were quickly taken aboard. Their boat coxswain had orders from his transport skipper not to land but to get his men to LCTs.		5. Within this period of ten minutes, vehicles and engineers from the small boat were unloaded safely. We began to retract at once and all seemed too good to be true. This is when the magazine drum exploded. Then when fifty feet from shore a shell exploded amidships directly in the engine room. All engines were knocked out, engine rooms filled with water immediately. The ship, disabled grounded ashore John Anderson, MM1c, could never be reached in the engine room where he had dutifully gone to check the sand traps. It was evident that he was killed outright. At the same time more "38" shells straddled the ship along with machine gun fire and I ordered all men to abandon ship and go to the beach, a less obvious target, and told them to get back out on one of the incoming LCIs.	
3. At approximately 0945 we made out the yellow beaching flag on Fox Red, being waved frantically by a man lying down. It was apparent that the concentration of soldiers lying along this embankment with their feet in the water needed help badly. The beach looked clear for a landing, one of the few open places. We proceeded in immediately, passed to the side of a sunken LCT(?) without trouble, made a dry landing and began to unload our engineers and load of half-tracks-an anti-aircraft battery. Enemy snipers and machine gun fire strafed the ship. We fired back with both 20 MM guns with good results because much of the sniping stopped.		6. Other LCT survivors had come aboard hoping to get out on our ship. They reached shore again with us. To the best of my knowledge to date more than four of our men received minor shrapnel wounds, while on the beach, however everyone was finally evacuated to hospitals, expeditiously.	

Lieutenant Sidney W. Brinker's After Action Report

Lt. Brinker's family was initially notified that he was Missing in Action. Upon his return to England, he was eventually able to be "found" and the miscommunication was cleared up to his family. His brother, Robert Brinker, was lost on a sub in the Pacific in December 1943.

John's family was notified by telegram that he was killed in action. His father, Oscar, suffered an "emotional heart attack" of which he never recovered. He had hoped for John to take over the family business upon his return from the war, but this was not to be.

Don Franklin, nephew of John, recalled going to visit his grandparents in June 1944, with his mother not yet knowing of John's death. "Expecting the usual enthusiastic welcome I was greeted instead by silence, and with both my grandparents sitting silently in the dark. They had just been informed of John's death" he said.

Sadness and grief hit the Anderson family with the news of the loss of John. Lt. Brinker, sent a letter to the family expressing his sympathy at the loss of John.



Thursday  
June 29<sup>th</sup>

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Anderson;

You do not know me but I feel that I have met you, because for a very long time I've lived with Johnny and heard him speak so often about you.

When the war started and as we passed through one invasion to another, I have always hoped and prayed that I would not have to write a letter containing dreadful news as this. By now you have heard from the Navy and know the terrible thing that has happened to your fine son. Believe me when I say I know how you must feel over this. It has made every one of us sad. Just this last Christmas our family received the terse announcement that my brother on a submarine in the Pacific was missing. In this war-torn world there is yet much fighting for us to do, — at least Johnny is in place.

Writing this letter I feel that you want to know as much as possible but at the same time I don't mean to over-do it and make you feel too bad.

Johnny always carried the happiest disposition of anyone in the crew. Just prior to the invasion he had passed his No. 1 physical examination. When finally on the way across after waiting and practicing so long, we knew it was not to be easy but were going to come through. Remember Johnny was one of the most optimistic and the boys remember him saying "we'll get through alright."

Our particular beach was a fine one. We landed in the middle of the morning, unloaded all our vehicles and it was while we were retreating from the beach that enemy shellfire hit us. Before going into the beach Johnny had been lying on his bunk reading the bible and from there he voluntarily and dutifully went down into the engine room to make sure the engines were in order.



The above photo was taken by a reporter in the days after the assault on Normandy. In the background LCT-30 can be seen along the beach. Inside the hull of the ship lies John Emanuel Anderson, 24 year old navy veteran from Willmar Minnesota.

Although the assault took out the ship, in the photo graph it remains intact and relatively undamaged. The direct hit on the ship killed Anderson.

Around the photograph is a letter Sidney Brinker wrote to the family of John Anderson. Excerpts of this letter were used on the memorial card for the services for John in Willmar.

In talking with the chaplain later about it he said Johnny was one of the few that was prepared to die.

The rest of us have been living ashore the past few days, — having lost everything or it would be possible to send you some of John's belongings.

In addition to my many addresses I'll enclose my home address, and should you want to write me, the latter would be best to use. And please let me know if there's anything I could do for you.

This has been a hard letter to write. In time of sorrow I wish I could be of more comfort to you. I do hope you are bearing up through this tragic happening. Johnny was such a fine boy — he did die courageously and while I know that doesn't bring him back to you, ... I shall always remember him.

Very sincerely,  
Sid. Brinker



# Participated in Three Invasions

## Mo. M. M. 1-c John E. Anderson Killed in Normandy

Motor Machinists Mate 1/C John E. Anderson, who was killed in action with the American forces during the invasion of Normandy, was born in Willmar September 25, 1919.

He attended school here and was a member of the Willmar high school class of 1937. From that time until his enlistment in the Navy, he worked with his father, Oscar E. Anderson, as a painter.



Mo. M. M. 1/C JOHN E. ANDERSON

He enlisted in the Navy here and was sworn in on March 17, 1942 in Minneapolis. He was sent to Great Lakes for his boot training, and upon completion of that training, returned here for a leave. He then returned to Great Lakes and was sent to Machinist Mate school at Wahpeton, North Dakota.

From there he went to Detroit, Michigan for his LCT (Landing Craft Tank) training and then was sent to Norfolk, Va., for amphibious training. He left there for overseas service on February 22, 1943, landing at Oran, North Africa.

Taking part in the Sicilian and Salerno invasions, he saw much action. His craft landed at Galeta, Sicily, and after the landing at Salerno, he saw some service on shore duty.

Last Christmas he spent with Don and Doug Langager at Oran, North Africa.

In January John was sent to England where he remained until the invasion of Normandy. The last letter received by his parents was written on June 2, and he told them not to worry if they did not hear from him for awhile. He operated an LCT boat in the Normandy invasion.

John was a member of the Mission Covenant church, joining upon confirmation. He was a member of the Sunday School, the choir and the young peoples organizations in the church.

Surviving are his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar E. Anderson and three sisters, Esther (Mrs. Robert Franklin) of Minneapolis; Marion at home and Alice (Mrs. Sidney Johnson) of Willmar.

The message received on Saturday did not state the date on which he met his death, saying that he had been killed in the service of his country and the body has been interred in an allied grave, until cessation of hostilities.

West Central  
Tribune  
Newspaper  
reports on  
the death of  
John  
Anderson.

## John E. Anderson Killed in Action

### Sgt. Truman Lanager Wounded on June 6th

The sad news arrived this morning that Motor Machinist's Mate 1/c John E. Anderson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Oscar E. Anderson, of 925 West 6th street, was killed in action during the invasion of Normandy.

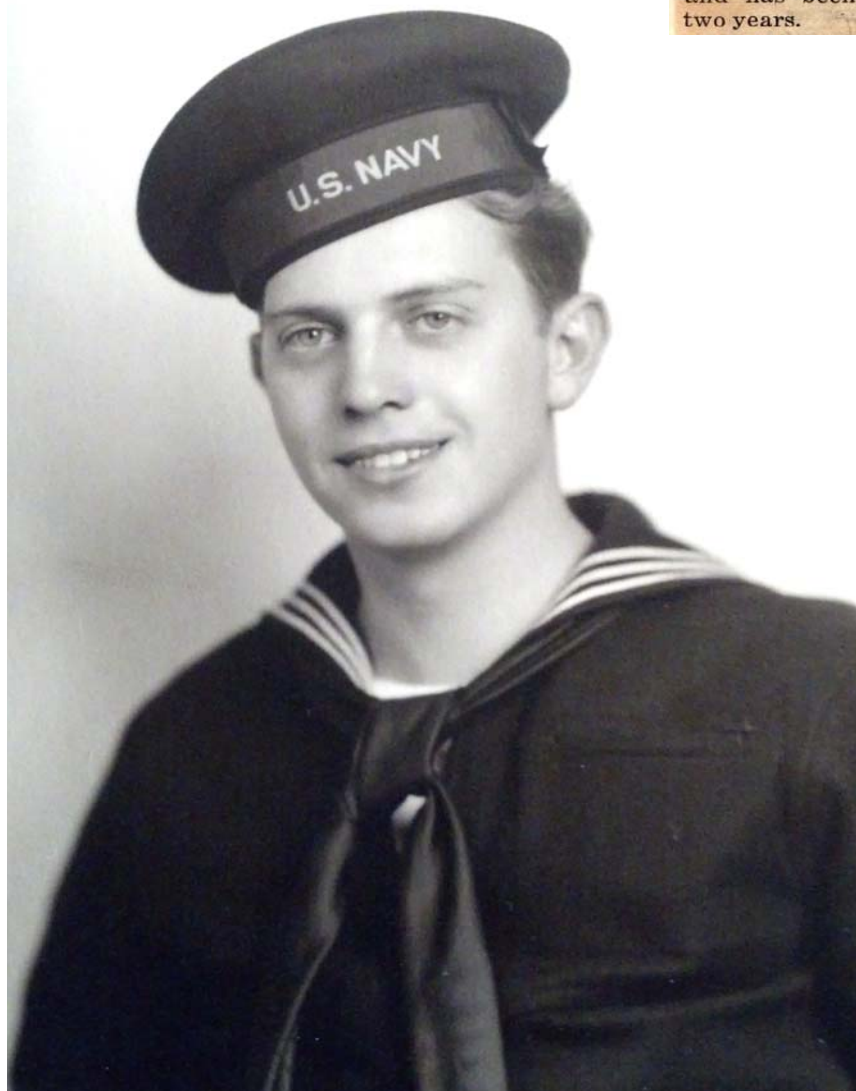
He ran an LCT (Landing Craft Tank) and took part in the invasions of Sicily, Salerno and Normandy.

He was 24 years of age, and enlisted in the Navy in February, 1942. He went overseas about a year later, having been overseas about 18 months.

Word was also received this morning that Sgt. Truman Langager, son of Mr. and Mrs. Simon Langager, was wounded in action on June 6.

The last known of Sgt. Langager, he was in New Guinea.

He entered the service three years ago next month and has been overseas for two years.

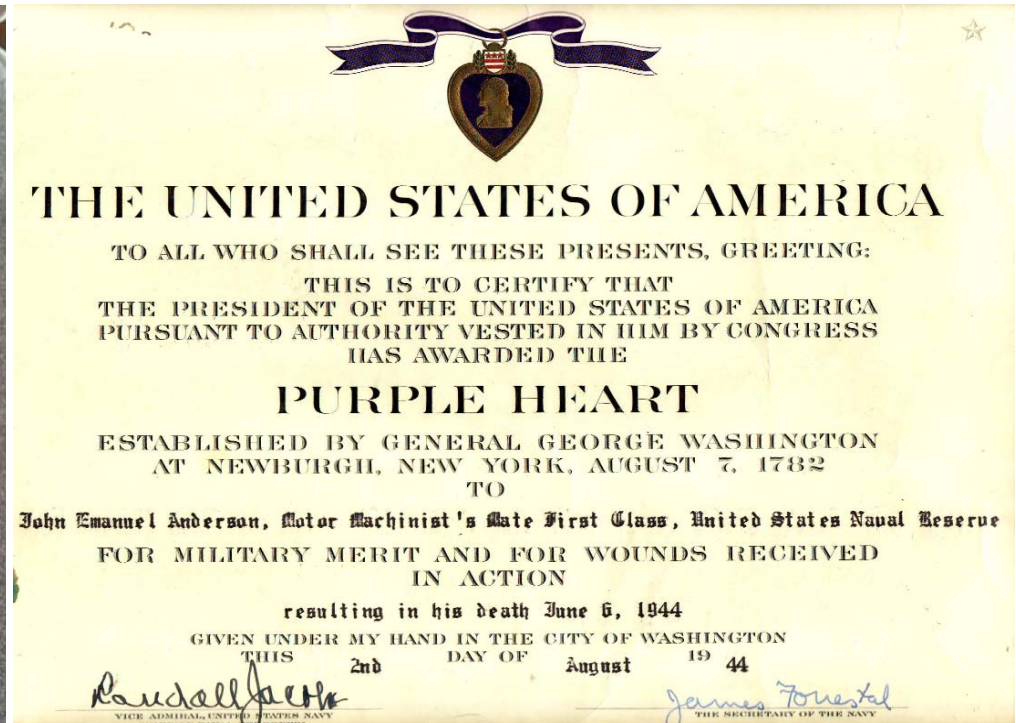


John Emanuel  
Anderson.

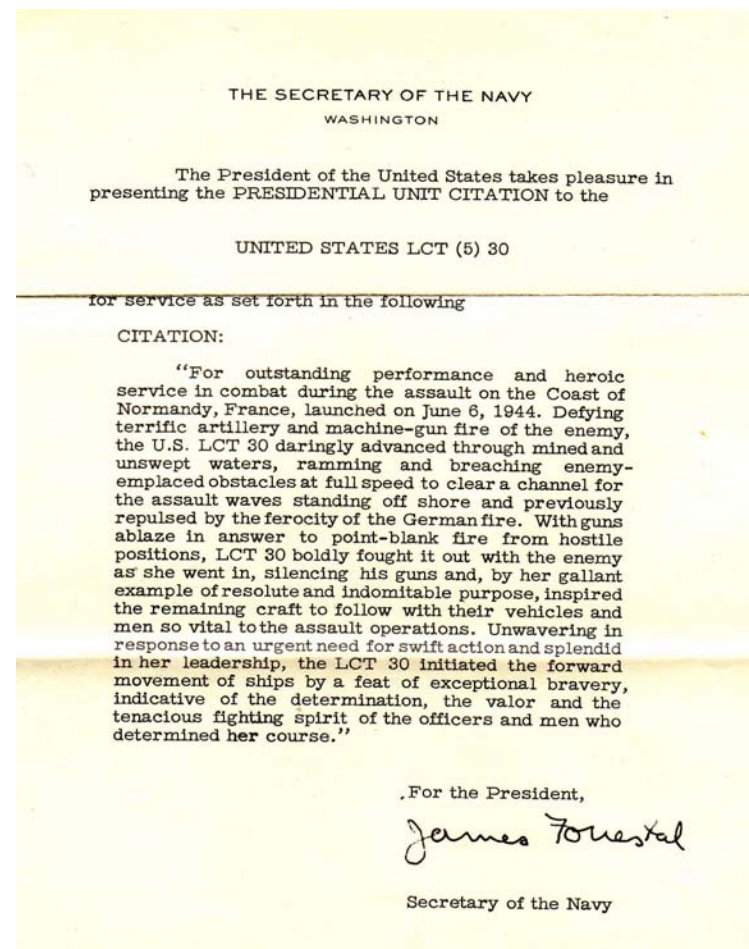
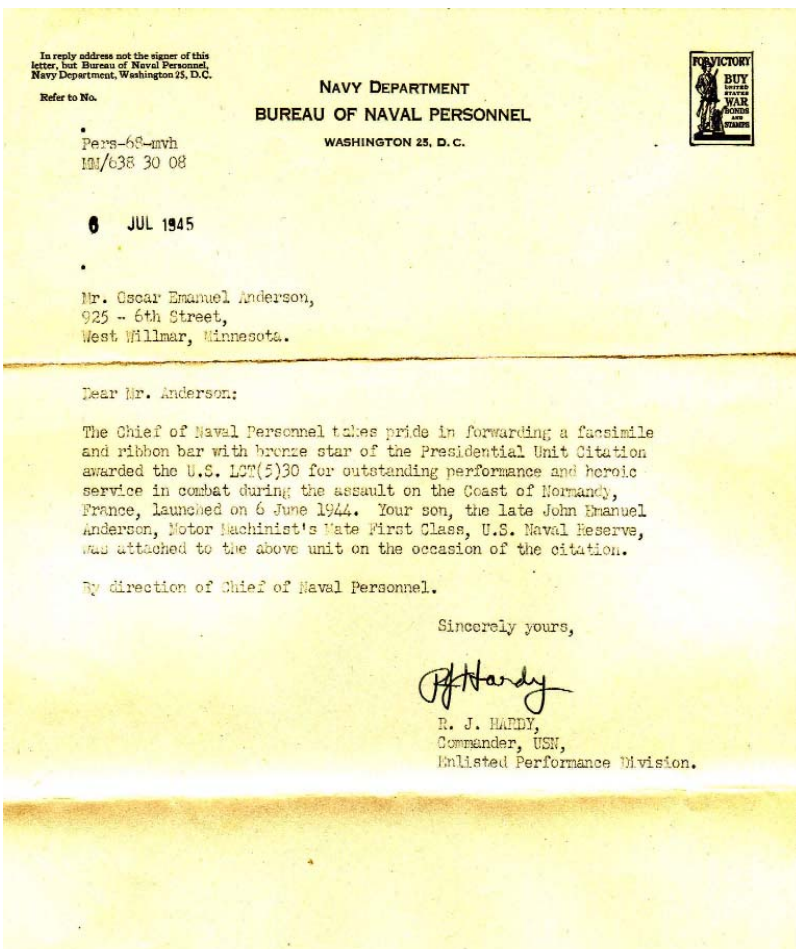
25 September  
1919

6 June 1945





John was awarded the Purple Heart posthumously, along with the American Campaign Medal, European, Italian, North African Campaign Medal, the Presidential Unit Citation, the Combat Action Ribbon, and World War II Victory medal.



Letters and certificates for John's medals. At bottom right is the ribbon rack representing the awards earned by John.

A request was made in 2012 asking for a listing of all of John's medals & ribbons. This is when it was discovered the award of the Combat Action Ribbon. The set at right was constructed by the United States Military Historical Collection (USMHC)





The following letter of tribute to John was received by the family from his officer, Lt. Sid Brinker, and is a beautiful testimony to John's faith in God. It was written from Normandy after John had been reported killed in action.

★ ★ ★

Thursday, June 29

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Anderson:

You do not know me but I feel that I have met you, because for a very long time I've lived with Johnny and heard him speak so often about you.

When the war started and as we passed through one invasion to another, I have always hoped and prayed that I would not have to write a letter containing dreadful news as this. By now you have heard from the Navy and know the terrible thing that has happened to your fine son. Believe me when I say I know how you must feel over this. It has made everyone of us sad. Just this last Christmas, our family received the terse announcement that my brother on a submarine in the Pacific was missing. In this war-torn world, there is yet much fighting for us to do,—at least Johnny is in peace.

Writing this letter I feel that you want to know as much as possible but at the same time I don't mean to over-do it and make you feel too bad.

Johnny always carried the happiest disposition of anyone in the crew. Just prior to the invasion he had passed his Mo.MM1/c examination. When finally on the way across after waiting and practicing so long, we knew it was not to be easy but were going to come through. I remember Johnny was one of the most optimistic and the boys remember him saying, "We'll get through alright".

Our particular beach was a fierce one. We landed in the middle of the morning, unloaded all our vehicles and it was while we were retracting from the beach that enemy shellfire hit us. Before going into the beach, Johnny had been lying on his bunk reading the Bible and from there he voluntarily and dutifully went down into the engine-room to make sure the engines were in order.

In talking with the chaplain later about it he said Johnny was one of the few that was prepared to die.

The rest of us have been living ashore the past few days,—having lost everything or it would be possible to send you some of John's belongings.

In addition to my navy address, I'll enclose my home address, and should you want to write me, the latter would be the best to use. And please let me know if there's anything I could do for you.

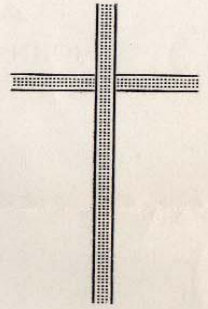
This has been a hard letter to write. In time of sorrow I wish I could be of more comfort to you. I do hope you are bearing up through this tragic happening. Johnny was such a fine boy—he did die courageously and while I know that doesn't bring him back to you . . . I shall always remember him.

Very sincerely,

Sid Brinker

Lt. (jg) S. W. Brinker,  
526 No. Washington St.,  
Park Ridge, Illinois.

"I have fought the  
good fight, I have  
kept the faith; hence-  
forth there is laid  
up for me a crown . . ."



## Memorial Service

FOR

JOHN E. ANDERSON

Mo. M. M. 1-c U. S. N. R.

July 30, 1944

7:45 P. M.



Mission Covenant Church

WILLMAR, MINNESOTA

## In Sacred Memory of JOHN EMANUEL ANDERSON

Motor Machinist Mate First Class,  
United States Navy



Born at Willmar, Minnesota, September 25, 1919

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Oscar E. Anderson

Resided with parents to 1942

Confirmed and received as member of Willmar Mission Covenant Church 1933

Attended Willmar Public Schools

Member of Class of 1937, Willmar High School

Inducted into armed forces of our country, March 17, 1942

Went overseas February 22, 1943 and landed in North Africa, participating in the invasions of Sicily, Italy, and from there to England,

Killed in Action in Normandy Invasion, June 6, 1944

## Order of Service

### Organ Prelude:

We Wait for a Great and Glorious Day - - - - - Skoog  
What a Friend We Have In Jesus - - - - - Converse  
The Old Rugged Cross - - - - - Bennard

Mrs. Erick Elkjer

Anthem: "Rock of Ages" - - - - - Hastings  
Church Choir

Vocal Solo: "Some Day, He'll Make It Plain To Me" - Geibel  
Mrs. Nathan Sundberg

Reading of the Scripture and Prayer  
Reuben Bengtson

Selection: "We Shall Meet But We Shall Miss Him"  
Male Quartette

Reading of Greetings, Letters and Memorials

Memorial Tribute:  
Rev. Nathaniel Franklin

Presentation of American Legion Gold Star Citation  
A. F. Feilzer, Commander, American Legion Post

Presentation of United States Flag  
Honorable Harry L. Wahlstrand

Selection: "More Secure Is No One Ever" - - - - Sandell  
Girls Trio

Memorial Message:  
Rev. Nathan Sundberg

Anthem: "When They Ring the Golden Bells" - - DeMarbelle  
Church Choir

The Placing of the Gold Star  
Sidney Johnson

Vocal Solo: "When the Blue Star Turns to Gold" - - - Reitz  
Marjorie Hedin

Taps

Silent Prayer

Selection: "God Bless Our Lads" - - Words by E. Sparrow  
Church Choir

Benediction

Postlude: "In the Sweet By and By"

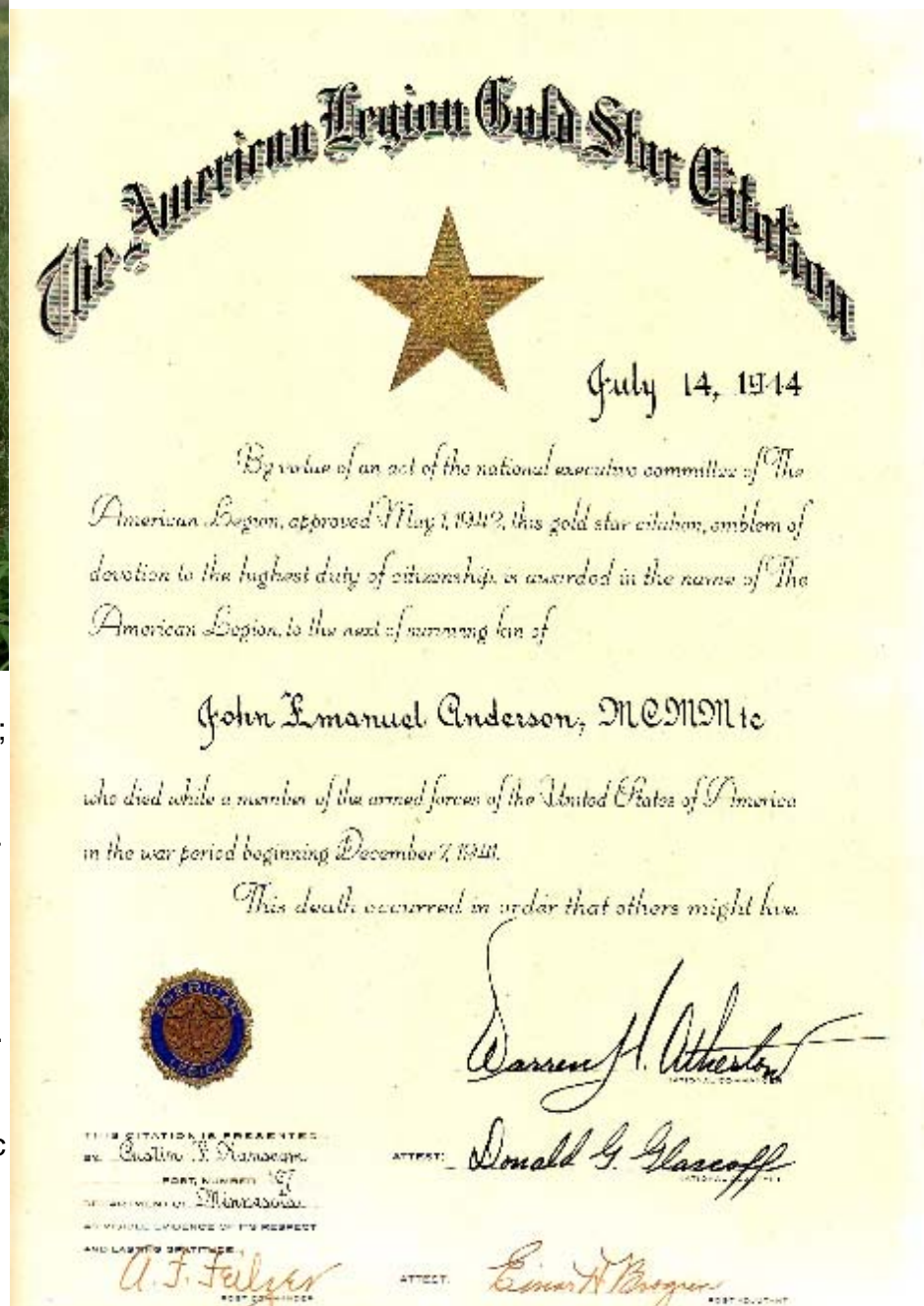
★

The floral tributes in the church are given in loving remembrance of John by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Anderson, and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Franklin, Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Johnson, Marian Anderson, Hannah Johnson.





In reports given to the family after his death, it was reported that John's body was recovered and turned over to Graves registration for burial overseas until after secession of hostilities in Europe. After the war, however, the family was informed that the original report was inaccurate, and that John was not recovered and lost at sea.



This information is what the family went on; that John was another lost casualty in the War. They placed a "memorial" stone at Fairview Cemetery in Willmar in his memory.

When the US Military Cemetery was created in Normandy, John was listed as one of the Missing in Action on the Memorial Wall.

John's loss hit the family hard. His father, Oscar, never fully recovered from the tragic loss and passed away of heart failure in 1956 at the age of 67. John's mother died in 1969 at the age of 79. Both passed believing their only son was lost at sea at Normandy.



At top left, the memorial stone placed at Fairview Cemetery in Willmar. Above, the Gold Star Citation given to John's parents. At right, a Gold Star pin, given to those who lost a family member in the military. At left, John's name on the wall at the Normandy, St. Laurent cemetery in France as Missing in Action.









That changed in 2009, when John's surviving sisters learned of the possibility that his remains were recovered and buried in the American Cemetery in Normandy. Two independent researchers, Ted Darcy and Brian Siddall, had made it their mission to try to find the identities of the "unknown" fallen in military cemeteries. Their research pointed to the possibility that John was recovered and buried in an unknown grave, "X-91". The research they did showed that the remains interred in that grave were recovered from the boiler room of LCT-30. They believe that John rests in Plot H, Row 11, Grave 14.

They proceeded to contact the remaining family to pass along their findings.

The researchers contacted the Kandiyohi County Historical Society to find out any next of kin that could provide an DNA sample for the identification. Family members were tracked down, and notified of the possibility that John may have been found.

The researchers report notes, "A Navy salvage party later recovered bodies and turned them over to the Army Graves Registration personnel for burial. John Anderson was buried in the St. Laurent Cemetery overlooking Omaha Beach. Anderson's identity was lost during the processing of his remains and he was buried as Unknown X-91 St. Laurent. The St. Laurent Cemetery was later design-

ated the Normandy American Military Cemetery."

John's sister, Esther, supplied a Mitochondrial DNA sample to the Joint POW/MIA Accountability Command (JPAC) in Hawaii for testing. The hope was that JPAC would receive the sample, and the investigation information and tests would be run to try to identify if the remains were in fact John.

The documentation shows that the remains recovered would support the possibility that they could be John. Recovered from the Boiler Room of the ship, the remains are only partial, and identification of them during the 1940's & 1950's would have been impossible. With the new technology of DNA, it is now possible to test those remains for proper identification.

The researchers sent their findings to JPAC in Hawaii, waiting to hear a response. Time passed, and nothing was heard from the inquiry. John's remaining sisters, Esther and Marian, have both passed away since the DNA sample was submitted and the possibility of "finding him" came about.

The process stalled, with no answers as to "if" the remains in Grave X-91 were in fact those of John Anderson. The remaining family members patiently waited to hear something about the case.

After years had passed with no word, they decided to become more pro active on the situation and began to explore ways of finding out just what was going on with the process.



A Willmar family believed their loved one was buried at sea during World War II, but recently learned his body may lie in a military cemetery

## COULD IT BE?



Submitted photo

Oscar E. and Anna Anderson of Willmar died believing that their only son had been buried at sea after being killed in action during the D-Day Invasion of Normandy, France, on June 6, 1944.

Now, surviving family members hope to learn whether the remains of U.S. Navy Motor Machinist Mate 1st Class John E. Anderson were interred in the Saint Laurent Cemetery, Baveux, France, as an unknown American casualty of World War II. The cemetery overlooking Omaha Beach has since been designated as the Normandy American Military Cemetery. His name is

listed there as among the "Missing In Action" from the conflict.

Don Franklin knows that much for a fact, having visited the cemetery during a trip to Europe. Franklin is a Willmar High School alumni and music professor emeritus at the University of Pittsburgh.

His mother, Esther, a longtime Willmar resident now age 95 and living in Minneapolis, is the eldest surviving sister of John E. Anderson. Franklin said he never had any reason to suspect that one of the many unmarked graves could hold the remains of his late uncle.

John/ Page A2

BY TOM CHERVENY • WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE

After combining the information from the researchers, and information and letters they had in regards to John's death from the family, a file was sent to the Navy POW/MIA division who reviewed the case.

This article ran in the West Central Tribune in October 2009 talking about John Anderson's case, and the possibility of the location of his remains.

The United States Military Historical Collection (USMHC), being located in the Willmar area knew of John Anderson and that he was lost in action on D-Day. While working on the Honor Wreath Project, John's stone at Fairview was one of the ones the project makes a point to place a wreath at for the holidays.



On 7 June 2012, the family of John Anderson contacted USMHC to discuss ideas on how to find out the status of the information that was sent to JPAC.

They forwarded the information provided to them by the independent researchers, and USMHC reviewed the evidence and began to proceed with the best course of action for inquiry.

USMHC poured over the information after receiving it in July 2012, Putting the information in order and preparing for submittal.

### John

Continued from A1

Everything changed a few days ago, when the Rev. Mark Bengston Calcedonia, son of Marian and the late Reuben Bengston of Willmar, called with news.

There is very good reason to believe that the remains of John E. Anderson are those listed in military records as "Unknown X-91" and buried in the cemetery in France. Bengston told his brother-in-law, His mother Marian, 93, and Esther are the surviving sisters of John E. Anderson. A DNA swab from family members would make it possible to positively identify whether the remains are those of their brother and bring closure for the family.

It is a closure that the family would very much appreciate, according to Bengston. He said he believes it always troubled John Anderson's parents that their son was buried or lost at sea and could not be returned home.

If closure is made possible in this case, the credit will belong to Ted Darcy of Milton, Mass., and Brian Siddall of Ithaca, N.Y.

A 30-year veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, Darcy has made it his mission with the WFI Research Group of Fall River, Mass., to help families whose loved ones were recorded as missing in action by the U.S. military.

Darcy has helped solve many MIA cases from World War II battles in the Pacific theatre, and is now turning his attention to Europe. Siddall was poring through U.S. Navy records and passed on this information to him: The transport ship USS LST-30 had successfully discharged members of the 467th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion on the French coast near Colleville on D-Day. During its retraction it was struck by German artillery and small arms fire and its engine room was flooded.

Two members of the crew were reported killed in action: Richard Jared Taylor of Taunton, Mass., and John Emanuel Anderson of Willmar.

Their bodies were recovered and turned over to the Army. Both bodies were buried in the Saint Laurent Cemetery, but only Ensign Taylor's grave was identified. Anderson's body was declared Unknown-91, said Darcy.

He believes that the Army had lost the records and consequently Anderson's body was wrongly interred as that of an unknown casualty.

Darcy said he realized that tracking down an Anderson six decades after his death in the Scandinavian community of Willmar would be no sure thing. He contacted this newspaper for help in finding surviving family members. Kandiyohi County Historical Society Director Jill Wonnoutka searched through the files to not only identify the family, but to uncover West Central Tribune newspaper accounts of John Anderson's death on D-Day as a crew member of the LST-30.

Anderson had enlisted in the Navy on March 17, 1942, and took part in the Sicilian and Salerno invasions before his death at Normandy at age 24, according to those accounts.

Given the information that can be documented in this case, Darcy said he is confident that the military will approve moving ahead with the process of making a positive identification of the remains.

However, he warned that it could be several months or more before the family

learns for certain whether or not the remains belong to their loved one.

If the remains are confirmed as those of Anderson, the family has the option of seeing that his grave is properly marked with his name or having the remains returned to Willmar as his final resting place.

Bengston and Franklin said the family has not made any decisions. The two surviving sisters initially expressed some sentiments towards leaving his remains with the other young men he fought alongside. But Bengston, whose late father Reuben, was the Tribune "Man About Town" columnist, is a Methodist minister. He said he can't help but think of the Biblical story of Joseph in Egypt and Jacob's promise to return his bones home.

Darcy said his only concern is that surviving family members know the fate of their loved ones who died in the service of their country. There are more than 8,900 other MIA cases like this that he believes can be resolved.

To learn more about the WFI Research Group, see their web site: <http://www.wfirg.org>



Initial information from JPAC and the Navy stated that there was no record of having been sent any information on John Anderson other than the DNA sample in 2009. The information being sent to the Navy POW/MIA division was new to them and to JPAC's files.

After an extensive review of the materials sent to the Navy, they responded on 25 September (John's birthday) that they had reviewed the information and were hand delivering the file to JPAC for their review. In October 2012, a JPAC correspondence on the case stated that there was enough evidence to support a deeper review of the information to determine if it could be determined that John Anderson was, in fact, the person laid to rest in grave X-91.

There were concerns on this case, especially given the small amount of remains that were recovered in 1944. USMHC and the Navy POW/MIA were hopeful, but there was no certainty on what would be found.

In April 2013, correspondence from JPAC was received stating that although it is possible that the remains are John Anderson there was not enough conclusive proof to proceed with a disinterment to test and be sure.

The JPAC report stated multiple concerns for this case, including the small amount of remains recovered. Because of the small amount of remains that were recovered, there was no possibility of measuring or finding any way of identification in the 1940's and 1950's when they were processed. That leaves them no leads on the height of the person they came from.

Also, although there is a document stating that the body was recovered from LCT-30 boiler room, that is the only documentation in regards to this set of remains that connects John to this grave. They feel it is entirely possible that this could be in error given the vast number of casualties that were handled in the time following the Normandy campaign.

Unfortunately, after all this time, it appeared that JPAC was not able to proceed with an identification process at this time. USMHC has been continuing to look into information and records to find further evidence to support that the remains are John Anderson. It has been in contact with the family of Sidney W. Brinker, the Commanding Officer of LCT-30 and has acquired copies of the after action report and other personal photos that have been passed along to the family.



Tailor Made Uniform John had made for him, but it was so far our of code that he wasn't ever able to wear it.

In August 2013, a letter was drafted in response to the JPAC report to not proceed with a disinterment. It was sent to JPAC and to MN Senator Al Franken. The letter addressed the concerns of JPAC on a possible disinterment, and was accompanied with the After Action Report from LT Brinker, and photo graphs of the ship following the invasion. The hope was to prove that the condition of the ship was good enough for recovery personnel to have made a positive identification of where the remains were recovered. The After Action Report also fully states the location of John at the time of the shell explosion.

In November 2013, JPAC's response to Sen Franken's office again stated they didn't plan to proceed with disinterment.



On 6 June 2014 a special memorial program in Memory of John and all other World War II veterans was held at John's home church, First Covenant (Formerly Mission Covenant) in Willmar. The program talked about John, and his service and sacrifice along with honoring all veterans of the Second World War. Members of the Patriot Guard attended standing a flag line. In all, around 100 people attended the event honoring one of the community's fallen 70 years after his death.



REUTERS/Christian Hartmann/Files

A man walks between tombstones March 29 as he visits the World War II Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial at Colleville-sur-Mer, situated above Omaha Beach, in the Normandy region. Family members believe that John E. Anderson (pictured at right) of Willmar, who died in the D-Day Invasion when his ship was struck by artillery, is buried in a grave in this area of France. His survivors were told Anderson lost at sea.



# Family still waits for closure

## D-Day veterans will not be forgotten

By Tom Cherveney  
tcherveney@wctrib.com

WILLMAR — U.S. Navy Motor Machinist Mate 1st Class John E. Anderson of Willmar fought in the battles of North Africa, Sicily and Italy before giving his life for country at age 24 in the D-Day Invasion of Normandy.

Seventy years later, a community and family will remember his sacrifice and that of all those from the area who had served in World War II.

The public is welcome to join the memorial service on the 70th Anniversary of the D-Day Invasion at 7 p.m. on Friday at An-

derson's former church, the First Covenant Church, 801 Willmar Avenue Southwest, Willmar.

Anderson's surviving family members will bring with them not only the memory of their lost one, but also the hope they hold for closure in his loss.

Family members had originally been told that Anderson's remains had been buried at sea. Just five years ago they learned there is good reason to believe otherwise.

Jon Lindstrand of Kandiyohi has continued to work with the family in an effort to convince the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command to disinter the remains of a serviceman in the Saint Laurent Cemetery.

France. To date, JPAC has declined to do so. Lindstrand said it replied to requests by stating it did not believe there was sufficient evidence to support the effort.

Family members believe that Anderson's remains are buried in a site identified as Unknown-91. Just over five years ago, Ted Darcy of Milton, Mass., and Brian Siddall of Ithaca, N.Y., had researched Anderson's records as part of their mission with the WFI Research Group of Fall River, Mass., to help families locate the remains of family members recorded as missing in action.

In the case of John E. Anderson, it is believed that a mix up of records following the D-Day Invasion led to his remains being interred as Unknown-91.

**D-Day/ Page A2**

## D-Day

*Continued from A1*

The records show that Anderson was in the engine room of the transport ship USS LST-30 when it took an artillery strike after having discharged troops with the 467th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion on the French coast near Colleville on D-Day.

The records mix-up had led the military to inform John E. Anderson's parents,

Oscar E. and Anna Anderson of Willmar, that their son had been buried at sea. The research by WFT indicates that the remains of Anderson and another crew member killed in the strike, Richard Jared Taylor of Taunton, Mass., were recovered and turned over to the Army. Both bodies were buried in the Saint Laurent Cemetery, but only Taylor's grave was identified.

Surviving family members believe it always troubled Anderson's parents that his remains may have

been lost at sea and could not be returned home.

Kandiyohi County lost about 100 veterans in World War II, according to Lindstrand. Even before he graduated from the Willmar High School in 1997, Lindstrand has been collecting the stories of veterans from the area, along with uniforms and memorabilia. Today he offers the stories on his website, and he holds an annual display of the uniforms and artifacts.

He has researched the

records of John Anderson and continues to press the military to identify the remains in France, convinced that Anderson's remains are in the site Unknown-91. Lindstrand said he has come to think of Anderson as family, and has no intentions of stopping his efforts to see that the family has closure.

He hopes that this Friday, community members will join to show the families of all who lost veterans in World War II that they are not forgotten.



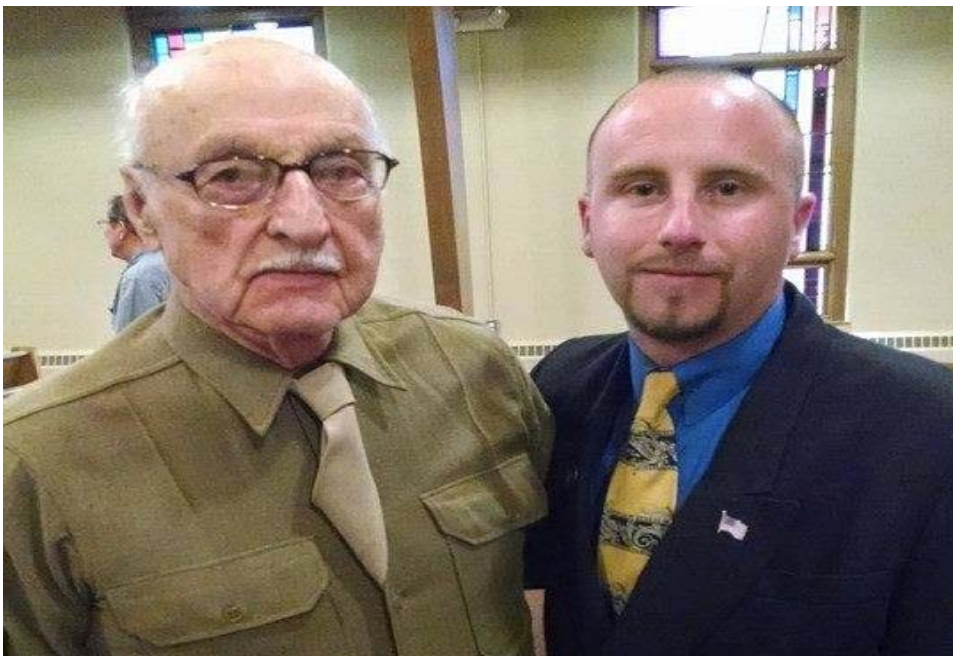


The program was coordinated by USMHC & Navy Lieutenant Commander Mitch Schueler (a member of the congregation) in conjunction with John's remaining family members.

The Hymn, "Rock of Ages" was sung in honor of its use in John's original memorial service. Blue Star Mothers of MN Chapter 1 performed the "Blue to Gold" ceremony for the family and presented them with Gold Star Blankets. A message from the family, and messages of remembrance of John, and all WWII veterans were also a part of the program. Following a Roll Call of the fallen from Kandiyohi County in World War II, the congregation joined in singing, "God Bless America".

Members of First Covenant Church helped make a fitting tribute to one of their own. Pastor Dan Johnson opened and closed the service with remarks. The night was a nice tribute to a man and a generation who gave so much to ensure the freedom of the United States.

USMHC founder Jon Lindstrand (left) and Lieutenant Commander Mitch Schueler holding a shadow box in honor of John at the June 6th 70th Anniversary Event.



Jon Lindstrand with WWII Veteran Alfred Marcus at the 70th Anniversary Event. Alfred was a Tanker in WWII and entered Europe through Omaha Beach. He is dressed in his original uniform.





In 2014, the Military Accountability Command tasked with the recovery and identification of POW/MIA personnel from all eras was the center of a number of bad publicity stories. Following the stories, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel announced a restructuring plan for the agencies.

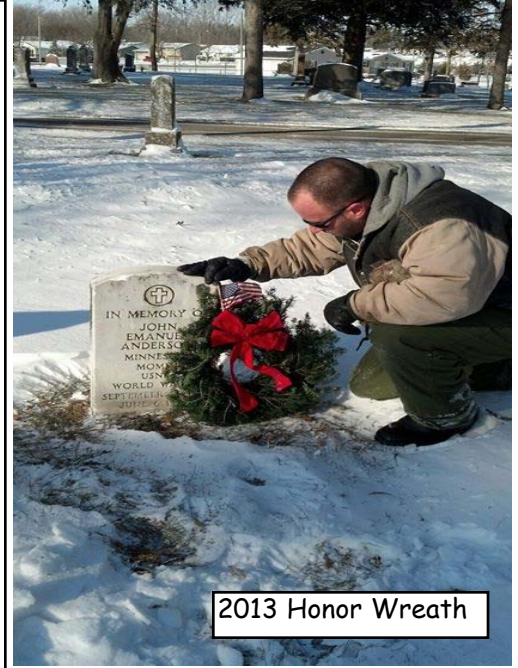
Beginning in 2105, the agencies tasked with this mission would be combined into one agency with the hopes of making a more streamlined approach to fulfilling the mission of recovering those lost in combat. The agency is designed to work better with outside sources to be more effective in their recovery operations and offer more transparency and better communication with families of the lost.



2012 Honor Wreath

For USMHC, John Anderson has become a part of the family. Although he was never met, USMHC is dedicated to the memory of his service and sacrifice.

Every year a wreath is placed at John's Memorial Stone Over the holidays. A flag is also placed at the Stone for Memorial Day.



2013 Honor Wreath



2013 Memorial Day

USMHC never intended to “give up” on this, and hoped that in the near future it would be able to find a way to determine for sure if John Anderson is in fact lying in X-91, or is lost at sea. After 70 years John is not forgotten, nor is his service and sacrifice to our country.

In January 2015, John's case was resubmitted for evaluation under the new process in hopes that the evidence would support a disinterment and DNA test under the new structure. It is also hoped that the efforts of civilian parties in the recovery of PFC Lawrence Gordon, a WWII Soldier Missing in Action, has helped establish a precedent for the accountability commands to work on cases such as these.

The case went in for review with the accountability command, with hopes by family and USMHC for a response which would be favorable to bringing closure to John's case. In one of John's last letters home to his sister he wrote, “If I ever get back and become a civilian again I really don't know what I'll do.” John seemed to know that death was always a possibility in war, but he probably never thought he would be missing or unknown. The hope is that through this process, he won't and John will finally be identified and his grave will be known to the world.



Placing the 2014 Honor Wreath



The waiting process for a response seemed to take an eternity. Having gone down this path before, the family was fully prepared for the possibility that the request would be turned down once again. In February 2015, KMSP 9 Fox News Affiliate from the Minneapolis/St Paul area broadcast a story about John and the search to have him identified. The report caught the attention of many in Minnesota and MN Senator Amy Klobuchar contacted the family to offer help in the matter. In late May 2015, Senator Klobuchar issued a letter of support for the disinterment on behalf of the Anderson family.

On 19 June 2015, Mr. Michael Linnington was named as the director for the newly formed Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA). It seemed that very little time was wasted before Director Linnington weighed in on John's case. On 30 June 2015 a letter was sent from DPAA stating their intention to proceed with a disinterment directive to perform DNA testing on X-91 to determine if the remains were John E. Anderson.

The news was a joyous surprise to the Anderson Family, and to USMHC. Finally it was hoped that an answer would be known. Following DPAA's approval, the case would be turned over to the Navy for approval. The Navy signed off on the proposal on 29 July 2015. It was now up to the Army to approve as they were the custodians of all military remains. The Army approval arrived on 19 August 2015. The final approval was needed from the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) which was signed on 25 August 2015.

With approvals in hand, coordination began on scheduling the disinterment. The process included coordination with the Normandy cemetery, military personnel, and French and German authorities to transport the remains once exhumed. They would return to the US and DNA testing would take place at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska.

On 8 October 2015 Grave X-91 at the American Military Cemetery in Normandy was disinterred. After the close of the Cemetery for the day, a small crew went in and performed the exhumation process. The process was reported to have gone well, with no issues. Shortly after completion of the exhumation, the leader of the crew was in contact with the Navy Casualty office to pass the word onto the Family that this part of the process was completed. The plan would be for them to leave France and travel to Landstuhl Germany to the US Army Mortuary.

On 26 October the remains departed Landstuhl for Atlanta, and then on to Omaha Nebraska where they would be DNA tested for a match. If this was John, it would be the first time in over 70 years since he was in the United States. A military escort was assigned to travel to the United States with the remains. They were to depart France at 10:15am (French time) and arrive at Omaha Nebraska at 10:47pm Central Time. After years of waiting, it was hoped that soon the answer would be known about John E Anderson.



DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY  
2200 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2300

JUN 30 2015

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator  
1200 Washington Avenue South, #250  
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Dear Senator Klobuchar:

Thank you for your May 22, 2015, letter to the United States Navy on behalf of Don Franklin. Mr. Franklin believes that a service member buried as Unknown X-91 at the Normandy American Military Cemetery in France may be his uncle, Navy Motor Machinist's Mate First Class John Emmanuel Anderson, who was killed in 1944 near Omaha Beach in France. Mr. Franklin is requesting that Unknown X-91 be disinterred and identified and because I am responsible within the Department of Defense for the POW/MIA issue, I have been asked to respond.

In April, Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert O. Work established a new policy regarding disinterment of unidentified remains interred in permanent U.S. military cemeteries. The policy states that to disinter individual remains buried as unknowns, there must be at least a 50 percent likelihood the remains can be identified. To satisfy this standard, we conduct the research necessary to determine the list of possible missing service members who could be among the unknowns, collect the relevant family reference samples for comparison with any DNA obtained from the remains, obtain the necessary *ante mortem* medical and dental records, and ensure that we possess the scientific, technological ability and capacity to identify the remains in a timely manner.

In light of this standard, the research conducted in this case, and DNA Family Reference Samples provided by Petty Officer Anderson's sisters, we feel the 50 percent threshold has been met, even though Unknown X-91 may be the remains of someone other than Petty Officer Anderson. Accordingly we will recommend to the responsible Department of Defense authorities that the remains designated X-91 be disinterred for forensic analysis. Upon approval, my agency will initiate the process of disinterment and attempt the identification.

It is important to understand that there is no guarantee of a successful identification. Due to the documented condition of the remains in this specific case, we will be unable to utilize dental and forensic anthropology methods to identify Unknown X-91; we will be limited to using mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) only. If we are unable to obtain mtDNA data from the remains, identification cannot be made.

I understand how deeply families care about learning the fate of their loved ones and greatly appreciate your strong support of our service members and their families. We remain committed to fulfilling our sacred obligation to achieve the fullest possible accounting for our personnel lost in past conflicts.

Sincerely,

Michael S. Linnington  
Director

cc:  
Navy Casualty Office

DPAA Letter authorizing the plan for disinterment and DNA testing for the grave believed to be John Anderson.



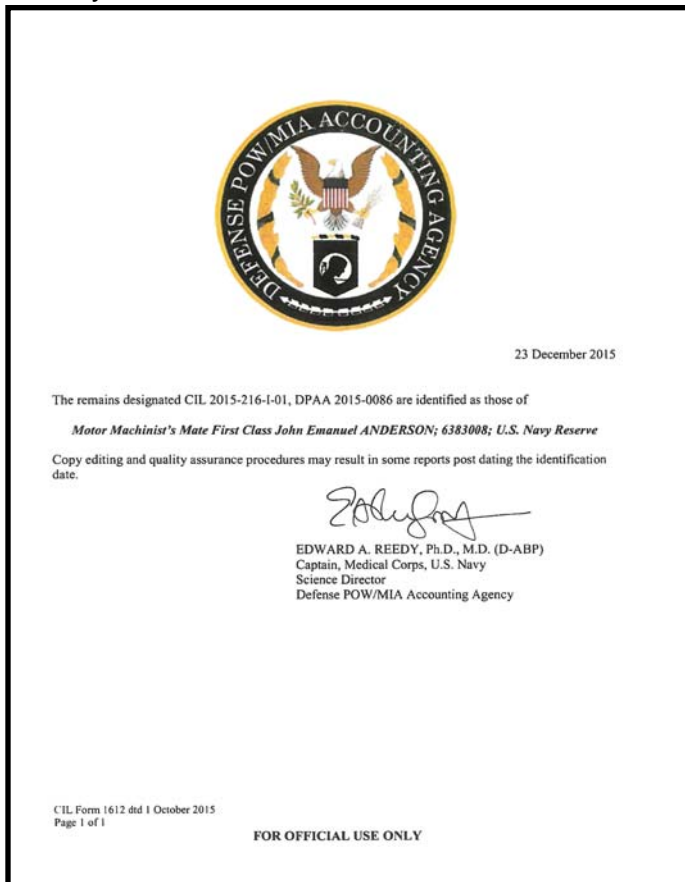
Once the remains were brought to Offut Air Force base, the process of DNA testing began. Researchers on the matter are given no information on the case. They are presented the remains and the Anthropologists began the process of determining as much information as possible from the remains. Samples are taken from the remains to perform Mitochondrial DNA testing.

In their analysis, it was determined that “The overall appearances, patterning, and pervasiveness of the fractures in these remains are consistent with, but not exclusive to, perimortem trauma sustained in at least one anterior to posterior blast event.” They were also able to estimate the gender (male), approximate age (23-39), and estimated height (67.5” +/- 4.5”) of the individual whose remains they were.

Based on Lt Sidney Brinker's after action report, John was killed in a blast from an incoming enemy shell. This is consistent with the Anthropologist's findings of the remains. John's height was 65.5” and he was 24 years old at the time of his death. The basic anthropologist report looked consistent with John.

The DNA testing was done by a different individual, who tested the 4 samples and compared them to the samples submitted by John's sister, Esther, and nephew Don. They compared the sequences in the DNA samples to determine if a match could be made. Their analysis concluded that the remains were in fact, John E. Anderson.

On 23 December 2015, the initial determination was made that the Remains that had laid in the grave X-91 for 70 years were identified as Motor Machinist Mate John E Anderson of Willmar MN. Prior to notifying the family, DPAA proceeded to double check all reports and information to ensure accuracy and make sure any information presented was correct and true.



In mid January 2016, the family was notified that the analysis was completed and that the remains of John had been recovered after all these years. A Casualty Officer would make a site visit to Don, the primary next of kin, to go over the findings and discuss the next steps.

The family began discussions about where to permanently lay John to rest. The options were discussed with them; return him to Normandy, Arlington National Cemetery, Fort Snelling National Cemetery, or return to Willmar and lay him to rest near his parents at Fairview Cemetery. In the end, it was determined that it was best to bring John home to Willmar.

Along with coordinating John's homecoming, and planning a remembrance service in his honor, a military escort would have to be assigned. Lieutenant Commander Mitch Schueler from the Willmar Area offered to be the escort to the family. Mitch attended the same church that John did,

and had been serving in the Navy since 1999. He was instrumental in helping with the 70th anniversary ceremony which was held at the Covenant Church in 2014. Although he was a reservist and an officer, but it was thought that his inclusion in the process would be a great addition to John's homecoming. Mitch made his formal request to the Navy, which was accepted and he prepared for the trip to Omaha to return with John.

On 17 March 2016, Casualty Officers met with Don to present the formal findings, and help prepare the plans for John's homecoming. It was determined that the timing would be late May or early June for the service. Once a date could be coordinated, then the final steps would take place.



28 May 2015 was picked for the date of John's memorial service in Willmar. It would take place at the War Memorial Auditorium in downtown Willmar. It was the home of where John's High School Graduation ceremony took place in 1937. Naval Personnel were coordinated for the casketbearers and Army Personnel set up for the rifle volley salute. Peterson Brothers Funeral Home in Willmar was set to take over the service plans.

LCDR Schueler departed MN to travel to Omaha for the escort duties In late May. Although the service would be taking place in May, and whites would be the typical uniform, military escorts wear the uniform of the individual they are escorting. As John was being laid to rest in a Dress Blue Uniform, Mitch wore his dress blue uniform for escort duty. On 26 May 2015, John would return to Minnesota at the Minneapolis Airport for a dignified transfer of remains on the tarmac. He would be transferred to the Funeral Director who would travel with the casket to Willmar for the service. USMHC was asked to be a part of this procession, and help coordinate the welcome home for John along the route.

Through social media and television, radio, and print medias the route of the procession was published for those wishing to pay their respects to line the road in honor of John.

On the afternoon of 26 May, a contingent of Military Personnel and delegates for the family traveled to the airport to pick up John. After meeting at the firehouse to gather for the escort onto the tarmac, we traveled out to where the plane would taxi to.

Soon the plane was in sight, and Airport Fire Department members sprayed the plane in salute to the fallen hero onboard.

The contingent who met John at the tarmac: back row l-r, Harvey Lindstrand (US Army Veteran), Ron Mackedanz (US Army Veteran), Dave Winkler (US Air Force Veteran) & Quentin Lindstrand (Boy Scout). Front row, L-R: Savannah Lindstrand (Girl Scout), Jeff Seeber (US Navy Veteran), & Jon Lindstrand (USMHC founder).



Naval Personnel and the delegates for the family lined up outside along with personnel from the airline and airport police to pay tribute to John's homecoming.





On the plane, LCDR Schueler was taken from the plane and escorted onto the flightline. Airline personnel went into the plane to place the flag over John's casket, and begin the process of unloading him for the plane. Military Personnel, Veterans, Police, Fire Department members, and airline personnel saluted at the first sights of John emerging from the aircraft.



A remarkable sight, everyone standing in honor and remembrance of John and his service and sacrifice.

As a delagate on the tarmac, it was hard not to get chiked up witnessing this moving and touching moment.



Photos by Lt Michael Sheehan, US Navy Photographer





Photo by Lt Michael Sheehan, US Navy Photographer

LCDR Schueler held his salute while watching John being unloaded. The photo of him was on the front page of the West Central Tribune in Willmar.



Photo by Lt Michael Sheehan, US Navy Photographer

Once John was unloaded, and positioned the Naval Honor Guard stepped forward and picked up John to carry him to the waiting hearse. The dignified transfer is a special procedure that military personnel do not take lightly. With crisp movements, and unified rythem, they carried John to the hearse and in a fluid movement loaded his casket.





Passengers on the flight were informed of what was happening, and many took photos from the plane and shared them on social media. A couple of those photos were shared back to USMHC.

Once loaded, the group prepared for the journey to Willmar.



After a brief stop at the Airport Firehouse, the procession to bring John home began.



Just outside of the gate of the Airport was the first few people seen standing along the street and honoring John. Once the procession hit the freeway, there were a few people seen on overpasses with flags. While in the Twin cities metro area, a few people were seen out paying respects to John, but no one in the procession was prepared for what was witnessed once we hit US Highway 12 on the western side of the cities.



Once the procession reached Delano, west of Minneapolis/St. Paul, large groups of people were lining the streets to welcome the fallen sailor home. It was the beginning of witnessing over 1000 people out on the streets waving flags and hands over their hearts to witness the homecoming nearly 72 years after his death.

Many communities met the procession at the edge of town with emergency vehicles, and lead the way through the communities.



Photo of the crowds from the procession.

Continuing, town after town, citizens gathered to show their respect for John, his service, his sacrifice, and the journey to finding him and returning him home after all these years. People of all ages, young and old, and all backgrounds, civilian and veteran, felt compelled to be out and witness this historic event. Through social media, updates were made along the route to prepare those in the next town when the procession would arrive.









Atwater, MN



Kandiyohi MN





Willmar, MN



The procession arrived in Willmar around 8:30 pm on 26 May 2016. Through the numerous towns traveled through, over 1,000 people had lined the streets to welcome Motor Machinist Mate 1st Class John E Anderson home after 72 years.

Throughout the town 100s watched as John was returned home. Traveling through town on Highway 12, the Willmar Fire Department had a ladder truck out and many gathered by the VFW Post 1639. Police escorts brought the hearse with Anderson to Peterson Brothers Funeral Home in downtown Willamar.

It was one of the most remarkable experiences to witness. Hundreds of people who never knew John, waiting to welcome him home.





Photos of procession courtesy of Greg Harp.







On 28 May 2016 a memorial service was held in John's honor at the War Memorial Auditorium in downtown Willmar. The location was chosen in part because it was the same building that John's graduation ceremony was held nearly 80 years prior.



Retired Army Brigadiere General, Army Chaplain, and Pastor Dean Elton Johnson officiated the service.

Over 100 people attended including John's nephews and other remaining family.

Remarks were given by John's Nephew, Don, along with Jon Lindstrand of USMHC, and Senator Amy Klobuchar. A brass quintet played music during the service, and Naval Personnel acted as Honor Guard.





John's nephew, Don, talked about his memories of his Uncle. Although young when John left, he recalled the feeling in the family when he was lost. He noted the feeling of closure for his uncle after all these years.

After a brief service, John was to be laid to rest at Fairview Cemetery in Willmar near his parents.



The day was humid, with a light rain as John was escorted from the building to the awaiting hearse.

The crowd left the Auditorium for the internment about a mile away. The weather didn't hinder those who wanted to pay their respects to the fallen sailor.

Members of the American Legion Post 167 presented Honors along with the Navy Honor Guard.



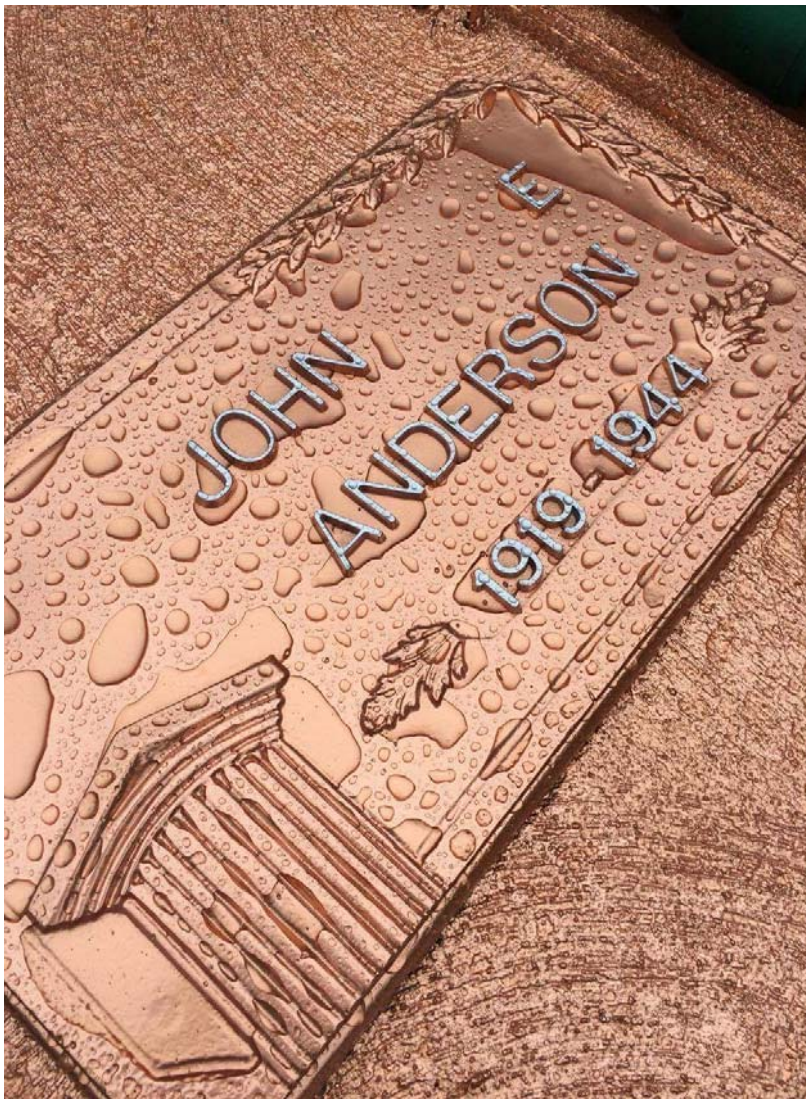












Following the internment service at the grave, everyone was invited back to the Auditorium for refreshments and fellowship. The service became the closure needed for a family and a community marked with a mystery for so many years.

A few months after John's return and burial in Willmar, a new headstone was received and installed. In France, John is remembered on the tablet of the missing, but now has a rosette by his name denoting he has been found and identified.

For 72 years a family mourned and remembered their loved one who sacrificed their all in combat in a foreign land. Although missing, John was never forgotten.

John's story of identification after so many years gives hope to many thousands of families with loved ones missing.

