

5th Transportation Company

The 5th Transportation Company has one of the older lineages of any transportation unit. It first organized as a Mechanical Repair Shop Unit #30 at Newport News, Virginia, as the National Army was expanding for World War I. On 1 September 1918, it was redesignated Motor Repair Unit #306. After the war, it was redesignated again as the 1st Motor Repair Battalion on 22 March 1921.

On 1 May 1939, prior to World War II, the company was redesignated a truck unit, Company E, 23rd Quartermaster Regiment, then on 16 June 1942, the regiment was redesignated the 23rd Quartermaster Truck Regiment. On 20 November 1943, truck companies received their own unit designations independent of their parent battalions and Company E became the 3345th Quartermaster Truck Company. The company participated in the Normandy Campaign as part of the famed Red Ball Express. It continued to deliver supplies to the front during the North France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace and Central Europe Campaigns. It inactivated after the war on 1 June 1946.

While lingering on the inactive list, it like other truck units transferred from the Quartermaster to the Transportation Corps and it became the 3345th Transportation Corps Truck Company on 1 August 1946. Numerical designations for truck units were reduced and it became the 5th Transportation Corps Truck Company on 6 March 1947. Then on 23 July 1947, it just became the 5th Transportation Truck Company.

Finally, on 31 July 1947, the 5th Transportation Truck Company was activated at Fort Richardson, Alaska, but was inactivated a year later on 23 August 1948. The colors went home to Fort Eustis, Virginia where it again reactivated a month later on 14 October 1948. It was redesignated the 5th Transportation Heavy Truck Company on 3 June 1949 then just 5th Transportation Company on 11 June 1953. It went to Germany and inactivated on 25 September 1964.

On 1 March 1966, the 5th Transportation Company was reactivated at Fort Eustis as a heavy boat company. Over the next year it came up to strength with personnel and equipment and trained for service in Vietnam. It received the LCU 1466 series. These were old boats but went to the factory to be rebuilt for Vietnam. They came out looking almost brand new.

The personnel of the company deployed to Vietnam in an advance party and main body. The company arrived in Vietnam on 20 February 1967 and operated out of Vung Tau on the mouth of the Saigon River. Two Norwegian vessels, *Teresa* and *Terra*, transported the 12 LCUs. The vessels arrived at Vung Tau in April. A floating crane came down, lifted the LCUs off the ships, and placed them in the river. Vung Tau became the home base for the 5th Heavy Boat Company.

The LCUs delivered cargo up and down the Saigon and Mekong Rivers. Primary destinations were to the terminals at Newport, Vin Long, Cat Lai Co Ji do, Can To and the 9th Infantry Division at Dong Tam. They also delivered cargo to the island on the southern tip of South Vietnam. On occasions, the LCUs delivered men and tanks on amphibious operations.

On 17 July 1968, LCU 1577 *Sunset Strip* took the wrong turn up the Mekong River into Cambodia. The Cambodian government detained the vessel and its crew for nearly five months. Since Cambodia was neutral, the crew became simply detainees and not prisoners. The Cambodian government treated them very well but detained them longer than any other Americans who had fallen into Cambodian hands. The Cambodians hoped to negotiate a trade for the crew and boat, but the American government would not give in. Consequently, they released the crew but retained the boat.

In 1969, the 5th and 329th Transportation Company headquarters combined at Vung Tau under Captain Murphy. The combined companies had 27 LCUs, two J-boats, four reefer barges and five tugs. In early 1970, the company headquarters moved to Cat Lai.

On 29 April 1972, the 5th Transportation Company returned from Vietnam to Fort Eustis. The company received campaign credits for Counteroffensive, Phase II, Phase III, Phase IV, Phase V, Phase VI, Tet Counteroffensive, Tet/69 Counteroffensive, Sanctuary Counteroffensive and Consolidation I and II.

At Fort Eustis, the 5th Heavy Boat became part of the 10th Transportation Battalion of 7th Transportation Group and had ten LCUs. In the Spring of 1976, the 5th Heavy Boat had received orders to deploy to Hawaii. It arrived in Hawaii in June 1976 and fell under the control of the 45th Support Group. The company was the primary means for shuttling cargo to the other islands. It supported the 25th Infantry Division training on the island of Hawaii, the Navy bombing area on Kohu Lave, and US Marine Corps training on the island of Hawaii.

In 1979, the 5th Heavy Boat turned in four of its LCU 1466s to the dead fleet to free up enough crew billets to crew the *BDL John U. D. Page*. This was the largest vessel in the US Army that had also seen service in Vietnam. The *Page* arrived in August 1979 and made regular runs to Johnson Island. By that time the 5th Boat had the *Page* and six LCUs: 1525, 1526, 1527, 1534, 1549, and 1563.

On 11 June 1986, the 124th Transportation “Make A Way” Battalion reactivated at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, under the command of LTC Kindred as part of the Army Chief of Staff’s initiative to convert the 24th Infantry Division to a light division. The battalion assumed command of the combat service support elements of the 45th Support Group to include the 5th Heavy Boat.

In 1987, 5th Boat received instructions to decommission the *Page*. The *Page*, skippered by CW4 Gerald Gaskill, set sail for its last voyage on 13 October 1987 enroute for Charleston, South Carolina, by way of San Diego, California and the Panama Canal. It arrived at its final destination in November and turned in at the Army depot. The crew then went to Pascagoula, Mississippi, on the operation of the LSV. Gaskill’s crew picked up LSV-2 *CW3 Harold C. Clinger*. It self deployed to Hawaii in April 1988 and was the first ocean going voyage of an LSV. The crew, by authorization of the Army, was to be designated a detachment but the 45th Support Group commander did not want a warrant officer to have UCMJ authority. It was later designated 605th Detachment on 16 April 1988. The detachment, originally activated during World War II on 10 November 1942, earned honors for participation in the Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland and Central Europe Campaigns. It inactivated in January 1945, then reactivated from 1948 to 1950, again from 1952 to 1957 and then again in Vietnam from 1965 to 1972 earning credit for all the campaigns during that period.

In September 1988, LSV-2 sailed to Funafuni Island in the Tufalu island chain. The Soviet Union had their eyes on this island and the United States Department of State decided to send in a humanitarian aid package. LSV-2 with Gaskill at the helm delivered engineering equipment to build roads and ten prefabricated tanks to catch rainwater. While there, a flu epidemic broke out on one of the islands. The inter-island vessel was broken, so the *Clinger* hauled the medical supplies to the island at night. On their return to Hawaii, LSV-2 stopped by Samoa for food, fuel and water. A hurricane developed between the *Clinger* and Hawaii. They sailed under the control of the Maritime Sealift

Command, but by the time, US Coast Guard instructed them to navigate around it, they had already plotted their new course. Upon their return in October, Admiral Crowe, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent a letter of congratulations to the crew.

The LSV-2 also sailed to Guadalcanal, the site of heavy fighting on the Solomon Islands during World War II. The Army had the task to clean up unexploded ordnance from the island. The *Clinger* had to haul that cargo back to Johnson Island.

Since Pacific Command had responsibility for all US military operations in the Pacific Rim, the commander wanted to use Army watercraft for missions beyond the islands of Hawaii. The plan was for the 5th Heavy Boat to trade in its LCU 1466s for the newer LCU 2000s. However, the Chief of Transportation felt that the LCU 2000 was not safe to sail solo in the open ocean. He decided to send an LSV instead. In 1990, the 5th Boat turned in the remainder of its LCUs to have enough men to crew the LSV-5, *Major General Charles P. Gross*. It arrived on 11 July 1990. CW4 Michael Spiro was its first skipper. The *Gross* operated out of Ford Island, Pearl Harbor. The crew became 163rd Detachment on 10 December 1990. This detachment, originally activated on 4 December 1944 and inactivated in January 1946, earned credit for the Japan Air War. It reactivated in Vietnam in August 1967 and served until June 1970.

The 5th Transportation Company (Heavy Boat) became redesignated the 5th Transportation Company (LSV Support) in December 1990. By that time, the company headquarters was a TDA organization performing the function of a harbor craft detachment. In October 1999, the 5th Transportation Company was reflagged the 545th Transportation Detachment (Harbormaster). Since its attachment to the 17th Corps Support Battalion, 45th Corps Support Group, it hoped to preserve the connection of the 5th Heavy Boat and the 45th Group with the combination of the two numbers. However, no lineage or honors could be carried over to the new detachment as the 5th Transportation Company was inactivated. CPT Darrel G. Harris was the last company commander of the 5th Transportation Company.