

# Community Central

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## Okinawa invasion Pacific's largest

By MARVIN BLACK  
as told to ABBY WEINGARTEN

The tears come every time Marvin Black recounts his tales of Okinawa — his visions of the ships massing toward the beach, the Japanese kamikaze pilots and all the American casualties. Sometimes it's too much for the 83-year-old Longboat Key resident to discuss, but he recently worked up the courage to write memoirs for his family. As a Navy radioman, Black, a Philadelphia native, sent Morse code on an LCT during the invasion. He remained in the service until 1946 and later pioneered Pine Forest Camp, a children's camp in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains. He and his wife of 56 years, Annette, still run the camp every summer.

I was proudly drafted in 1944 when I was 18, along with my eight cousins. We were all in different branches of the service and we all came back home safely.

I hardly ever talk about my experiences in the service. I decided to write down something for my family recently about what happened to me on April 1, 1945. That was the day of the invasion of Okinawa.

I was a radioman on a landing craft called an LCT. There were 12 of us on the ship. My ship was so small that it was carried on top of a bigger landing craft called an LCI. When my ship got to the China Sea, they tipped over the big boat and my little boat slid in the water. We had to go under the ship with wrenches the size of your arm to make sure the bolts were in place. We did that underwater.

The idea was to invade Okinawa because of the landing field. It would have been a perfect spot to land and bomb Japan. On April 1 at 7 o'clock in the morning (I get emotional), there were eight miles of ships. Can you imagine eight miles of ships from every country in perfect formation heading for this beach? I knew that I was involved in something very historic. It was the largest invasion in the South Pacific during World War II.

We were in this formation and the battleships started firing first. We took in the 1st Marine Division, and



Marvin Black served as a Navy radioman on an LCT during the invasion of Okinawa in World War II.

CORRESPONDENT PHOTOS / KATHRYN BRASS

these were guys from Iwo Jima and Guadalcanal. They were war-weary. We took them in, and three days later, all hell broke out. There were trenches underground just waiting for our troops to arrive. So many died as they went to the hills of Okinawa.

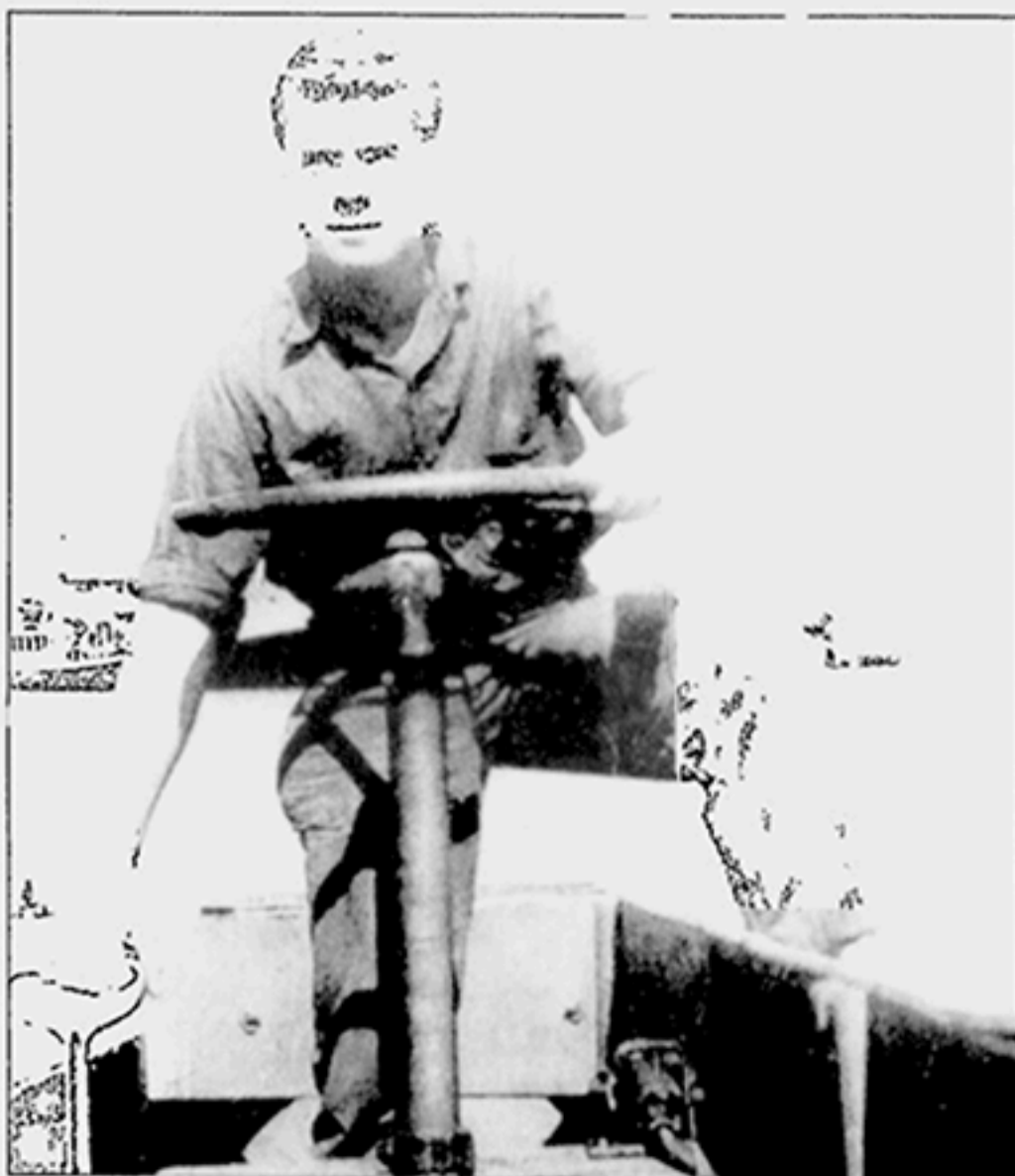
We just went back and forth, bringing troops and bringing tanks into the beach. I did that for four months until the Japanese finally surrendered. I must have seen 40 or 50 kamikaze planes.

One pilot came so close to our ship. We were looking at each other, and he crashed in the water 30 or 40 feet from us. Pieces of his flesh, pieces of his plane went all over our ship. There were also Japanese suicide swimmers.

We had a routine of four hours sleep and four hours duty for about a month. During the fight, there was a typhoon with 200 mph winds. It was unbelievable. The next morning, I looked out at the China Sea and the typhoon had turned over 10 or 12 big ships, just turned them over.

While I was in Okinawa, the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The war ended. I had trained for two years for that landing. When I got out of the service in 1946, I had the feeling I wanted to go back to Okinawa for the 50th anniversary in 1995. So my wife and I did, and it all came back to me."

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Enduring alternating shifts of four hours of sleep and four hours of duty, kamikaze pilots and a typhoon with 200 mph winds, Marvin Black helped U.S. forces invade Okinawa.