



plies among island bases in their capacity as cargo ships.

The first two, the *USS Aquarius* and *Centaurus*, began together at Kwajalein; the latter then helped to seize Aitape in New Guinea, while the *Aquarius* transported garrison troops in the Southwest Pacific.

Both took part in the Saipan, Guam and Pelelieu invasions, and while the *Centaurus* returned to the United States for overhaul, the *Aquarius* went on to Leyte and Lingayen Gulf.

Both the *Aquarius* and the *Centaurus* were in the Okinawa assault force, as were their sisters: the *USS Cepheus* — a veteran of the Southern France invasion — and the *USSs Sheelah* and *Theeman*, for both of which Okinawa was the first combat operation.

LANDING CRAFT

While attack transports and attack cargo ships could carry troops to the invasion beaches, they had to debark them into small landing craft to be ferried ashore.

By early 1943, ocean-going vessels capa-



Above: Twenty Coast Guardsmen and many others died in a blaze aboard the *USS Callaway* following repeated kamikaze attacks where one Japanese plane crashed into the ship.

Left: American troops crowd into landing craft awaiting transportation to larger ships during pre-invasion loading in an English port in 1944.

ble of beaching themselves and retracting after landing troops and equipment were leaving builders' yards in sufficient number that the Navy sought Coast Guard assistance in manning units of the two most important, and most numerous, types.

These were the LST — landing ship, tank — and the LCI(L) — landing craft, infantry, large.

Unlike the larger amphibious-force ships, these unglamorous vessels did not receive names, but their contribution to the Allied offensives in almost every theater of operations was invaluable.

And while the larger ships were exposed to enemy bomber and kamikaze attacks, oc-