



Above: Crewmembers lower a jeep from a Coast Guard-manned transport into an LCM from the USS Joseph T. Dickman in June 1944.

Center: Marines from the 1st Division debark and off-load equipment from the USS Aquarius onto a floating dock at the Russell Islands in 1944.



Following shakedown cruises and anti-submarine-warfare training, all were assigned to transatlantic-escort duty, taking convoys from the American East Coast to ports in the United Kingdom and to the Mediterranean.

While the threat of U-boats and, to a lesser degree, German air attack posed the greatest danger, the sea itself could also be considered an enemy.

Sea conditions in the North Atlantic during the winter were among the most severe encountered anywhere, and the DEs were notoriously lively in a seaway.

"I never questioned the seaworthiness of those ships (after the first winter storm)," said the *USS Pettit's* commanding officer. "I think everyone on board, however, wondered if they could hang in, or literally hold on, for the 14-day trips."

Hold on they did, while their ship escorted 24 convoys across the Atlantic.

One of the Coast Guard-manned DEs, the *USS Leopold*, was lost, sunk by an acoustic torpedo while it was attacking a submarine 400 miles south of Iceland during the night of March 9, 1944.

Despite heavy seas, the *USS Joyce* closed its stricken sister, but it had to turn away repeatedly to elude torpedoes. The *Joyce* fi-

1943. All were principally employed escorting coastal convoys between New York and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

It was rather monotonous duty enlivened by an occasional sonar contact and more frequently by rough weather, in which the little ships justified their reputation for seaworthiness — and for lack of sea kindliness.

Meanwhile, the Navy had begun a major program of destroyer-escort building, which ultimately produced some 500 ships. Thirty of these DEs, all of the 306-foot-long, Fairbanks Morse-diesel type with reduction gears, were commissioned by Coast Guard crews during the autumn of 1943.