

Thank you to John Wandres for submitting his story and experience with a long-time St. Johns business, Ace Typewriter.

## A Mill for "Elsie Item"

By J. Wandres

The other day I dropped in to see Matt McCormack at Ace Typewriter in St. Johns. I wanted to get a quote to clean and restore my antique 1912 Model 5 Oliver Portable Typewriter. Wait! In this nimble digit mobile mania we live in, did someone say "typewriter?" Yes! Ace Typewriter Equipment Repair on North Lombard at Buchanan. It is one of the last place in Portland, (maybe even Oregon,) to repair electro-mechanical devices such as IBM Selectrics as well as old fashioned typewriters, electric and hand-crank calculators. Matt and I had met a year before when he responded to my email: "LOOKING FOR WORLD WAR II U.S. NAVY RADIO OPERATOR 'MILL' TYPEWRITER."

As a volunteer crewmember of a World War II Landing Craft Infantry LCI-713, (also known as an "Elsie Item,") I was in charge of locating such a 'mill' for the LCI's radio room. I knew what a 'mill'

was; as a Navy radioman in the 1950s I learned to type out messages that came through my headphones as Morse Code. Today, the navy's communications specialists no longer use Morse code; in fact, the Radioman rating no longer exists.

My email had gone out to typewriter museums and repair shops all over the country. The responses came back – no surprise – "Sorry, not here." "Nope." "Nothing like it, but good luck." Oh Well, I said to myself. Then came the email from Ace: "We have two mills."

When I stepped into the shop that day a year ago I was warmly met by Matt and his father, Dennis. The senior McCormack had been a Navy radioman during World War II. As we chatted we became like two kids speaking the secret "dah-dit-dah" language of Morse code. Dennis felt that the old Mill should be back on board a Navy vessel instead of sitting on



J. Wandres is a retired U.S. Navy Chief Journalist. He serves as public affairs officer for the non-profit Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum. AFMM owns the LCI-713.

The Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum (AFMM) is an Oregon based 501c3 charitable non-profit organization dedicated to the restoration and preservation of the USS LCI 713. Their Mission is to preserve the history of the Amphibious Forces in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam, to educate the public on the rich naval maritime heritage that the Amphibious Forces have played in our nation's history, and the importance of preserving historic naval ships for future generations. The USS LCI (L) 713 is a World War II era Landing Craft Infantry. Its mission was to place up to 200 soldiers onto almost any beach in the world. The LCI was a joint British-American design of a new type of ship that would be capable of landing soldiers on hostile enemy shores. Within a 2 ½ year period, 951 LCIs were constructed in ten small shipyards in the United States. Two of those shipyards, Albina Engine and Machine and Commercial Iron Works were in Portland, Oregon. The LCI 713 is on the National Parks Service National Register as a historic vessel. At the end of World War II the Navy had over 5,500 commissioned ships in service. Of that total, over half of those ships were amphibious warfare vessels. Today, out of the many WWII Navy ships listed in the National Register, the LCI 713 is the sole representative of that half of the fleet. They have a dedicated volunteer crew that spends each and every Saturday working on the restoration effort.



a shelf. The nonprofit Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum, which owns the LCI, agreed to have the mill cleaned and restored. Shortly after we installed the mill in the LCI's radio room, we got word from Matt McCormack that his father had died.

For about a year the Infantry Landing Craft was tied up by the St. John's Bridge. We have since moved to the lagoon at Swan Island, to Port of Portland Berth 308, next to PT-658. Restoration continues every weekend.

Recently we hosted a division of Sea Cadets. As I was explaining

the radio room, one boy leaned in close, aimed his iPhone at the mill, and pushed the button. The device made a shutter-clicking sound. Then, with thumbs tapping across the iPhone's keypad the boy texted the image to a friend. "Cool," he said to no one. "This is way super cool!"

LCI-713 is open for visiting, by appointment, on Saturdays from 10am to 4pm. Visits and tours are free; donations are always welcome. For information, visit the LCI's website: [www.amphibious-forces.org](http://www.amphibious-forces.org), or find us on Facebook. [com/lci713](https://www.facebook.com/lci713).

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### Celebrate North Portland Registration

(\*Please do not complete this form if you also registered online with Eventbrite. Thank you!)  
We hope you can join us March 12th at The University of Portland, Baccio Commons. Doors open at 5pm, Dinner starts at 6:15pm, and program starts at 7pm. Celebrate North Portland is an event to appreciate and recognize the many people that have dedicated their time and energies to making our community such a great corner of the world. Our theme for this, our 6th annual event is "The Oscars".

FINAL REGISTRATION DEADLINE - Friday, March 4th, 2016 at 4pm Pacific  
Please mail or drop off this form and your check to: Celebrate North Portland, Attn. Joanna Lawler,  
6600 N. Baltimore Ave, Portland, OR 97203

Refunds cannot be granted once registration is completed and payment has been accepted.

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# Tickets \_\_\_\_\_ Price: \$35.00/ticket  
Attendee 1 Name (don't forget to include yourself): \_\_\_\_\_  
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(additional single tickets are available. Names may be written on a separate piece of paper.)

##### Table for 10:

# of tables of 10 \_\_\_\_\_ Price: \$350

##### Table for 8:

# of tables of 8 \_\_\_\_\_ Price: \$280

##### Optional - SPONSORSHIP

# of tickets \_\_\_\_\_ \$35/ticket # of tables \_\_\_\_\_ \$280/table

##### Optional - DONATION

We are accepting donations for the Celebrate North Portland Recognition Fund, to recognize individuals this year and at future events. Donation amount: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\* For individuals purchasing tables: We will need your guest names no later than March 4th. This is very important to ensure we have name tags made for all guests in attendance, and that registration proceeds smoothly for everyone.