

BUILDING THE HIGGINS LCVP



Andrew Higgins (center) at a ceremony celebrating the 10,000th Higgins Boat, Lake Pontchartrain, 1944. (*The National WWII Museum, 2000.428.035*)

During World War II, Andrew Higgins's company made more than 20,000 boats for the military. Over 12,000 of these wooden boats were landing crafts like those used on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day.

In 1938, Higgins was a confident and ambitious owner of a small boat company in New Orleans. His 75 employees working at just one boatyard made boats for Louisiana fishermen. As war approached, the military was looking for a company to design and build boats that could transport troops from large ships onto beaches, reefs, and rocky coasts.

At first, they looked to large shipbuilders on the East Coast. These companies had been making boats for the military and industry for quite a while. The landing craft that these companies made did not do well when tested by the military. They fell apart when traveling

fast on waves, or they were stopped by submerged logs and sand bars.

The military then came to New Orleans to see Higgins. He quickly assembled a landing craft for them, modifying the design of his fishing boats which performed well in the shallow waters of swamps and marshes. Higgins took the boats to Lake Pontchartrain and ran them up the seawall to show how well they worked.

Later in the war, Higgins designed a different version of the landing craft with a ramp on the front. Not only did this unique design allow soldiers on and off more easily, but jeeps and small tanks could also be moved to shore from larger ships. These landing craft were built quickly, efficiently, and inexpensively.



LCVP's loading before going ashore in Guadalcanal, March 1944. (*The National WWII Museum, 2008.354.070*)



LEFT: A full LCVP in training maneuvers at Morro Bay, California, January 1944. (*The National WWII Museum, 2011.065.068*)
RIGHT: LCPL, LCVP, and barrage balloon on Lake Pontchartrain, July 1944. (*The National WWII Museum, 2008.379.019*)

Andrew Higgins shows all four of the important characteristics of people who solve problems:

- + **He had knowledge** — he knew how to make boats that did well in shallow waters, and he knew how to make them quickly and inexpensively.
- + **He was persistent** — when he couldn't get the military to consider his boats, he kept trying. When he didn't have enough space or material, he found ways to get them.
- + **He was creative** — he put a door on the front of a boat. He adapted a fishing boat into a landing craft.
- + **He was a team builder** — his company grew, employing 25,000 workers by 1943. Men and women of different races, different ages, and different abilities worked for Higgins.

At The National WWII Museum, there is a replica of one of the landing craft that took men and vehicles ashore on D-Day. This plywood boat, with a big door on the front, is called an LCVP (Landing Craft for Vehicles and Personnel). It is the boat which General Eisenhower said “won the war for us.” The LCVPs came to be called “Higgins Boats” by soldiers and the Marines who rode to battle in them. There is also an authentic LCP (Landing Craft for Personnel) from the war. This is the first version of a Higgins Boat.

Today we face many big problems, and we can solve them in the same way as Higgins did—with knowledge, persistence, creativity, and collaboration.

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(CONTINUED)

Describe a problem today that you think could be solved using the same sort of approach Higgins used.

How have you used knowledge, persistence, creativity, and collaboration to solve a problem in your own life?



Supplies being dropped from a C-47 to troops in Bataan, Philippines, February 1945. (*The National WWII Museum*, 2008.354.487)