



**Wheeler  
Cornwell**

*Navy*

## **Wheeler Cornwell**

**Jul 28, 1920 - Jan 15, 2009**

**BIRTHPLACE: Crocker, South Dakota**

---

### **SOLDIER DETAILS**

**HIGHEST RANK: Momm 2/C**

**DIVISION: Navy, Flotilla II - Landing Craft Infantry (Large) 219. LCIL 219 Commissioned 20 November 1942 - Lost through enemy action 11 June 1944.**

**THEATER OF OPERATION: European**

**SERVED: 1942 - 1945**

**BATTLE: North African occupation: Tunisian operations , 27 Mach - 9 July 1943 Sicilian occupation 9-15 July 1943 North Coast Sicily 28 July -17 Aug. 1943, West Coast of Italy operations - 1944: Anzio-Nettuno advanced landings -22 January -29 February 1944. Invasion of Normandy 6-11 June 1944.**

**MILITARY HONORS: Commendation for Good Work 11/20/1942. Commendation for Meritorious Duty 01/22/1943 European African Middle Eastern Campaign Ribbon and 4 Stars American Campaign Ribbon, Asiatic Pacific Campaign Ribbon Purple Heart and Good Conduct Medal.**

**HONORED BY: His children: Larry Cornwell, Carl Cornwell II, Bill Cornwell, Corliss Fulton, Scott Cornwell, Kellee Thiessen, Casey Cornwell, Holly Fries**

---

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Wheeler Cornwell was born 7/28/1920 in Crocker, SD, to Carl and Mabel (Burgess) Cornwell. In 1939 they moved to Ellsworth, KS. Wheeler took up his father's trade, welding, and was in Kansas City for a job opportunity when he received a draft notice to report to the Army. Cornwell told the story of heading to the Navy recruiter in stead, and enlisting because the Army life did not appeal to him. After basic training at Great Lakes Naval Station he was assigned to Landing Craft Infantry (Large) 219.

The 219 was docked in Norfolk, VA. After a few weeks of training the craft left the States for Africa. Among his many experiences aboard this LCI, Cornwell saw action in three major battles in the Mediterranean area: first during the North African campaign with the landing of troops at Bizerte, Tunisia, then Sicily and finally on to Sassari, Sardinia. In March of 1944, after repair work on ship, engines, and men, they left Africa for the United Kingdom. It took 12 days to arrive in England, they stayed in Cardiff for about two weeks, then went to Plymouth where they made ready for the big invasion of Normandy. On June 5th, the LCI(L) 219 left Plymouth for the invasion of Normandy. They arrived on the 6th of June and went in on the 17th wave, about 10:00 in the morning, unloading the troops to an LCM. Cornwell and his unit were to take care of barges and Rhino ferries in the area which was to take 1 day, but it ended up taking 5 days. Up to June 11th, Cornwell's unit had been in five invasions with no scratches or man injured. On the morning of D-Day plus five, June 11th, they were at OMAHA Beach. About 3:45 in the morning, they had an air raid. A German bomber dropped a bomb that landed about ten feet from the side of the LCI(L) 219. Cornwell was in a berth with five sailors. The five sailors, his captain and many more were killed. Cornwell was rescued by another smaller ship, bleeding heavily from shrapnel in his head and leg. He was hospitalized for 30 days in Glasgow, Scotland. Combat duty ended for Cornwell when he was handed \$20.00 and told to head to London. Cornwell knew if he could get to London he could find the Navy, so he started out, walking and hitchhiking until he reached London. Cornwell sailed from Liverpool on the Queen Mary (then a converted troop carrier) to Norfolk. He then was on 30 days leave, visiting family in Kansas, a published notice in the Wichita Beacon dated August 22, 1944 stated. Following his leave Cornwell reported to Norfolk, VA. He was sent to the New Orleans district to be discharged from the Navy and while there, met his future wife Lena Landry. They married on January 15, 1946. The couple eventually moved back to Ellsworth, Kansas. Cornwell became owner of the A-1 Welding Shop, sold the business in 1968, and he and Lee became co-owners of the Coach and Four Bowling Lanes. Wheeler and Lee raised 8 children. See more information in the attached narrative document from Lt. William Becker, whom Cornwell served under and information about the final resting of the LCI (L) 219.