

DECEMBER 7, 1990

THE POINTER

*Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year to Y'all!*

 December 25, 1990 



S.S. BLACK POINT

Built 1918, Sunk May 5, 1945

Plaque dedicated November 12, 1990 — Point Judith, Rhode Island

Story to follow in the next edition of "The Pointer."

THE POINTER

Officers for 1990

Charles A. Lloyd, Chairman & Secretary
5712 Partridge Lane
Raleigh, N.C. 27609
1-919-876-5557

Alex and Edith Lombardi
1991 Reunion Hosts
14 Brookfield Road
Montclair, NJ 07043
1-201-783-7578

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ATTENTION

You know where you are.

You know where we are.

We know where we are.

But we don't always know where you are.

Please notify us when you move.

Non-Profit Organization

Tax Exempt No. 74-2316668

AND

THE

PLANE SHOOTER

Our Motto: "We aim- To Deliver" and "We-Did"

USN Armed Guard World War II Veterans

"PLAIN SHOOTING FOR PLANE SHOOTERS"

Dear Armed Guard Veterans, Friends and Families:

December 7, 1990
REMEMBERING PEARL HARBOR

"MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR"!! I hope your THANKSGIVING was a great Holiday, too! I am sure that many thoughts go back to the Armed Guard days of the Christmas away from home. Yes, those were a few Christmas Holidays ago. I hope that each of us will say a little prayer for our servicemen overseas and may Peace come to the Middle East even before you can receive this. If war is the answer, let us pray for a short war and not take many a father or mother's son, or daughter, from them forever.

To Gerald and Lena Greaves from Foster, R.I., hosts for the Point Judith Plaque dedication ceremony and to Alex Lombardi, Chairman of the Northeast Crew, and his wife, Edith, and all the others who assisted, we would like to thank you for your time and effort in planning and carrying out that Historic Ceremony to the S.S. BLACK POINT and her crew. To the Sprague Steamship Company, to the Merchant Seamen, to those in attendance and to those who could not be there, I say thanks from the Lloyd family and the family of others, for making this all happen. And to Mr. Jim Peters of Interpretive Graphics of Salt Lake City, Utah, who was instrumental in working with us and made the Plaque with the picture of the S.S. Black Point embedded with the wordings, we congratulate you for a job well done. They made the first plaque there, established to the Lighthouse which is of the same quality and design. We're proud of it.

We regret the death of Captain Lewis Iselin, formerly of New Rochelle, N.Y. on August 10, 1990, who was the Captain of the USS Atherton DE-169 which sank the U-853 and had planned to attend the ceremony and represent his crew. The crew of Destroyers were represented by Henry Pacheco 69 Foxhill Ave., Bristol, R.I. 02809. Paul Bock of No. Massapequa, NY and others represented the Maritime. I think it was just great that these men gave up of their time, to honor one of our ships and crew that gave their all. Thank all of you for your kind words.

Alex Lombardi has inform me that due to uncertainty of the S.S. JOHN W. BROWN sailing due to the "Middle East Crisis" delaying the drydock time and the Bill HS 4009, passed by the House and signed by President George Bush on 11/19/90, it was impossible to get the exact costs of the meals, tours, etc. by this day of which I had to get the "POINTER" to the Printers. My advice is to go ahead and make your reservation to be sure you will have a room at the "Hyatt-Regency Hotel" which is our headquarters. Alex has the meal prices but Brian Hope, the Chairman of the "PROJECT LIBERTY SHIP", will have to meet with his Board this weekend and agree on prices on sailing. It will be in the February "POINTER". We apologize for this inconvenience. Sometimes things don't come out right. Many have called asking and more would do so, if not advised. Please make your plans for those dates set aside and be with the crew. You'll be glad you did!!!

Many of you have asked for a reasonable priced, yet comfortable Hotel or Motel in our area to stay when coming through to attend our "FIRST SAT. OF THE MONTH 8am-11am BREAKFAST" here. I have one such place on 6401 Capitol Blvd, P.O. Box 11333, Raleigh, 27604, #1 NORTH called "PLANTATION INN" which some of you have stayed previously. The rates are \$31.45 on the weekends "IF YOU ARE A SENIOR CITIZEN". It's clean, accessible and comfortable. 1-800-992-9662 Outside N.C. 1-800-521-1932 inside. (876-1411-local). Call or write them for a brochure. Be sure to tell them-ARMED GUARD!! Yes! there are other places in Raleigh to stay

Officers - Gunners - Signalmen - Radiomen - Medics - Waves - Boatswains - Coxswains - Ship's Company - Radarmen

I would like to explain to you of the small print. I'm sorry, but I have to get more in than I have room to put it in. Get a magnifying glass, or take it to some printer and have it enlarged. Many POINTERS go across our borders to Armed Guard, or friends to our crew who inform people in their countries, and they, inform, inform us. One such episode is the tour in the making to Murmansk by David Squires, 28 WESTBROOK RD., GATEHOUSE, LIVERPOOL, L25 2PX ENGLAND. Write him if interested as to price, dates, etc. Many of you have sent a letter in to me of your voyage to Murmansk and your interest in obtaining the 50th year medal in which you would be entitled, if presented. Inclosed in this "POINTER" is a letter from the Merchant Seamen on this matter. Write to Mr. Paschenko of your desire to be counted in. I will also send him copies of a box full that I have already received from you. I HOPE IT WORKS!!! Please let me know if you send in directly to them so we do not double up on requests. I have two M.C. Senators trying to help us and maybe I can pass this info on to you soon.

I did a 500 overprint of the September "POINTER" and they are almost gone. I will have to do a 1000 overprint this time to carry over enough till I can get enough money to send out another one in February. So I will repeat it for all of you who wish to get a printout of your shipmates from your ships, please send a self-addressed-stamped-envelope to: RALPH LUCAS, 1230 HAWTHORNE ROAD, NAKAHAM, S.C. 29406 or to: PHIL BRADLEY 2107 FOX HUNT DR., MONROE, N.C. 28110. DO NOT SEND TO BOTH AS THEY HAVE THE SAME "BACKUP" OF THE COMPUTER AS I HAVE.

SEND ALL NEW NAMES and the SHIPS to the "RETURN ADDRESS" on the outside of the POINTER. This gets them into the computer the FIRST TIME!!! When you send into someone else, I MAY NEVER RECEIVE IT. If you wait for a newly located Ol'Salt to write me, he may loose the address and how to get back in touch with you. I ask all State hosts to send out the "NAME AND SHIP LIST FORM" with the address that I send out from Raleigh. If you want to send out another from yourself, that's O.K. as long as he can send me one. When you have forms from different ones and I send one again to all "NEW OL'SALTS", it confuses them.

THIS PART IS FOR THE "NEW OL'SALTS" as I failed to notify some in their first package of mail sent to them when first located. Donations keeps the "SHIP" afloat. WE DO NOT CHARGE DUES, NOR DO WE INTEND TO. I do not have time nor do I have the staff to see who has or has not paid. It would cost too much to do out and hire this help. If you enjoy the "POINTER", you will support the cause as others have before we located you. The more donated, the more SALTS we can find and continue to inform them before we are "no more". Many on the mailing list have already gone to join their ancestors and we find this out 2 years or more later. I ask of the "Widows" to advise me as soon as possible and let me know if you would like to continue to receive the "POINTER". As long as we can keep our heads "above water", you will be counted in regardless.

We lost another one of our devoted shipmates in the death of Linwood Taylor of Richmond, Virginia. Lin was the Chairman of the "Virginia Flotilla" and held a luncheon there at Morrison's Cafe, 7035 W. Broad St. on the 2nd Saturday of each month. Clarence Durham has stepped forward to carry on. See REUNIONS. Our sympathy is extended to Linwood's family. Lin, you did a great service to the men in your area and will be missed. Lin had ordered "100" caps especially for the 50th year celebration of the WW II Armed Guard to be held at Norfolk, Va. on October 15, 1991. I will try to fulfill and obtain these caps and get his money back for the family as soon as I can make arrangements. They are to have an embroidered "LIBERTY SHIP" on the front with the wording "U.S.N. ARMED GUARD 1941-1991", or similar to that. A "DONATION" of \$10.00 will get you one until sold out, when available.

Captain Brian Hope of the "PROJECT S.S. JOHN W. BROWN LIBERTY SHIP" informs me that the BROWN'S SHIPSTORE has 2500 Photos of the original 2710 Liberty Ships at the sale price of \$15.00 each and the profit "help support" the ship. They also so have other items to sale, such as; caps, mugs, pins, etc. You can call Charles Crabbin 301-861-1550 for info or write: "PROJECT LIBERTY SHIP", S.S. JOHN W. BROWN, ATT: Charles Crabbin, P.O.Box 8, Long Green, Md., 21092. Hope also sends his regrets that the ship did not sail as previously scheduled, back in September. You will be notified prior to next sailing date. If you have already purchased a ticket and can not sail at that date and would like to exchange it to the date that we will be sailing, it may be that this can be worked out. Our "GROUP" prices will be less when we sail, but you may want to donate the balance to the ship if you can not attend and he can sell it to someone else. intend to sail the "MAIDEN VOYAGE" and our Armed Guard sailing, too.

As a Veteran, if you have problems, call your local Congressman for help, or you may want to contact a Veteran's group in your area, first. They are there to help you. Their input to assist you is free. They are listed in the telephone book. Look up the number, write it down and you'll have it when needed.

Those of you that hold "GIT-TO-GETHERS", "MINI-REUNIONS", "REGIONAL REUNIONS" or "WHATMA-MAT-CALLITE" (a new word for Webster), please call me or write as you need labels for sailings. These are not to be used to call "YOUR WARES". If you do not receive them within 2 weeks, remind me again!!

I have enclosed the PART I story of the "TANKERS" by Ian Miller printed in the July 1990 issue of the SEA CLASSIC magazine in this issue of the "POINTER". I wish to thank them for allowing us to re-print it as many of our deserving men can read such a great article. I have also included an article by one of our Armed Guard, CURTIS ROLLER, which is a dedication to those of you who fought the "ARMED GUARD BATTLE OF THE PACIFIC". I am sure that many of you will feel as if he were talking about you and I thought it was a tribute to all. Now, I hope that Carl Winder knows that I know, and others know, that there was a war in the PACIFIC. If my memory serves me correctly, it started December 7, 1941 at a place known as "PEARL HARBOR", when over 350 Japanese planes unmercifully bombed installations there in a surprise attack killing and wounded over 3700 Army, Navy and civilian personnel, many of their own race. Over 160,000 of the residents of Japanese ancestry lived on the islands at the time with 35,000 of them with dual nationality registration.

For the Merchant Seamen of the unarmed S.S. CYNTHIA OLSON, war started at 1838 OCT officially on December 7, 1941, when they came under attack by a surfaced Japanese submarine as she carried a full load of "Army" supplies enroute from Tacoma, Washington to Honolulu, Hawaii and a complement of 33 Merchant Seamen and 2 Army soldiers passengers. There were no survivors. The first U.S. Seaman to lose his life was when the M/S CITY OF BAYVILLE struck a mine on November 9 1940 while carrying a load of "wool and dried fruit". The 3rd engineer drowned while abandoning ship. The S.S. FORBIN MOOR, S.S. SEAFARER, and S.S. LEHIGH was sunk with no casualties but on December 2, 1941, the unarmed tanker, the S.S. ASTRAL was torpedoed while carrying 73,000 gallons of gasoline and Kerosene. It caught fire immediately and sank within minutes. There were no survivors as the surface was a sea of flames for about an hour. The S.S. SASADANOC was sunk on December 3, 1941 with a lost of one seaman. This was the 6th American Flag-ship sunk prior to Pearl Harbor, according to Captain Art Moore in his book: "A CARELESS WORD-A NEEDLESS SINKING" which can be purchased by sending \$64.95 to him at Rt 1 Box 210, Hallowell, Maine 04347.

FACTS: WW II Allied ships sunk by Subs: German-4695, Italian-59, Japanese-80.

All of you take care and stay healthy. Have an enjoyable Holiday Season. cal

VOYAGE No. 6E.

S/S NATHAN TOWSON

February 13th, 1945.

On February 10th, 1945, while under direct attack by four JU-88's, between the hours of 10.40 a.m. and 11.25 a.m., two of the planes launched torpedoes at us at point blank range; our gun-fire causing them to miss us.

The first attack resulted in our destroying one plane and scoring hits on the other JU-88; we also scored hits on two other attackers, one of which was destroyed by ships astern.

In all, we fired on six JU-88's, destroying one and assisted in downing another, with a probable assist on still another.

THIS WILL CERTIFY that Richard A. Bertrand GW 3/c
was a member of the crew and participated in the above action.


H. W. CHASE, Master.

IN MEMORY OF OUR DEPARTED SHIPMATES
SINCE 9/20/90 "POKTER"
Through 11/22/90

Bass	Peter	Covington	Ey	?	?
Bendekovic	Nicholas	New Brighton	Pa	?	?
Benker	Howard J.	Lafayette	In	Died,	3/21/90
Basdek	Francis H.	Lisbon	Oh	-	9/18/90
Bower	John F.	Findlay	Oh	?	4/15/90
Bretter	William Ralph	Manchester	NH	Ser# 712--79-62	3/7/45
Brown	Floyd (N)	Prescott	Az	?	6/8/88
Cieri	Francis	Endicott	NY	?	9/17/90
Cordrey	James L.	Laurel	De	?	90
Craig	James B.	Fitchburg	Ma	?	6/25/88
Dolan	W. E.	Clinton	Va	?	8/11/90
English	John F.	Westfield	In	?	10/3/89
Fellman	Walter J.	Chicago	Il	?	7/90
Franks	John	Bremen	Okla. City	Ok	-
Frye	Harley D.	Perkins	Oh	Geneva	8/4/89
Garrett	Robert E. (Doc)	Scott Depot	WV	Shirley	9/28/90
Gessinger	Robert W.	Canfield	Oh	Catherine	10/21/90
Hallman	Paul	Tates	Cherryville	NC	Mary
Jackson	Neal (N)	Seattle	Wa	Betty	3/90
Kott	Leonard	Detroit	Mi	Virginia	7/4/90
Kratzer	William A.	Sunbury	Pa	June	1989
Kyc	Charles	E. Hartford	CT	Helena	1989
Lewis	Robert S.	Wallington	NJ	Nancy Lou	10/90
Mauri	Gabriel M.	Montrose	Pa	Sally	9/17/90
McPherson	Frank J.	W. Yarmouth	Ma	Margaret	9/21/90
Merce	Archie Lafayette	Norton	NC	?	1987
Messersoll	David B.	Calais	Me	?	7/17/87
Nginski	John	Time River	NJ	Pila	90
Nolo	Angelo F.	Hempstead	NY	?	4/90
Scaffone	Rinaldo	11 Maple Pl.	NY	?	8/90
Schneider	Bernard S.	Delray Beach	Fl	?	90
Shabovich	Joseph	Little Neck	CT	?	5/85
Sheaffer	John M.	Tall Timbers	MD	Grace	7/31/90
Shields	George A.	Mira Loma	Ca	?	11/90
Shull	Lowell L.	Greenup	Il	?	9/7/90
Soudan	Hoyt	Pittsfield	Pa	Alice	2/24/90
Stickney	William J.	Tekosha	Mi	?	89
Taylor	Linwood E.	Richmond	Va	Florence	11/2/90
Thomas	Alfred M.	Hoover	OK	Daisy	10/90
Tolle	Kendall L.	Lakeland	Fl	Martha	11/11/89
Traver	Arthur E.	Hedford	Or	?	9/22/90
Turner	William (Bill)	New Brighton	Pa	?	?
Vaughan	Walter	New York	NY	(Palm Beach)	9/28/90
Yodde	Russell	Kenneth City	Fl	Cecilia	1/18/90
Waite	LaRoy	Minneapolis	Es	?	10/24/90
Wallace	Raymond E.	Heardsburg	CA	Della Jean	10/22/90
Wash	Frank G.	Dearborn	Mi	Donna	12/11/89
Whelan	James M.	Charleston	WV	Kate	1/11/90
Wheeler	James H.	Jacksonville	Fl	Lois	2/89
Wolf	Sidney	Warwick	Ri	Marcia	3/19/87

*Linwood Taylor was the Chairman of the Virginia Flotilla.
** Killed in action. Sent in by someone from Manchester, NH and failed to sign their name or give address. I need the name of the ship and a little history as this ship was not in Captain Art Moore's book as being sunk on 3/7/45.
***Shipmate of Dean Brinkley from the U.S. COLUMBIA he learned deceased. (call)



oooO ATTENTION ALL MURMANSK RUN VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II Oooo

The Jacksonville Sister Cities has been twinned with the city of Murmansk, Russia since 1975. Over the years we have sponsored a number of exchanges including cultural, educational, and business all to Murmansk. During his last visit to our city, the mayor of Murmansk proposed a reunion in Murmansk of the seamen to coincide with the 50th Anniversary of the beginning of the convoys in 1942. This will take place in May of 1992.

The Murmansk 50th Anniversary Reunion Committee would like to get in touch with men who made those convoy runs during the Second World War. For further information please write directly to:

Ms. Lesley A. Newman, Assistant Chairman
Murmansk 50th Anniversary Reunion Committee
Room 1400, City Hall
Jacksonville, FL 32202
(904) 630-1776
FAX (904) 630-2910

Most sincerely

Ian A. Millar
Ian A. Millar, Curator

TRIDENT ARCHIVES
Ian A. Millar, Curator
1806 Bantry Trail
Kernersville, NC 27284

A Note To Murmansk Run Vets

Mr. Paul Doell, Editor
The AMERICAN MARITIME OFFICER
Marine Engineers Beneficial
Association - District 2 (AFL-CIO)
650 Fourth Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11232

Dear Mr. Doell:

The Maritime Administration was contacted recently by Mr. Nickolay Parshenko, First Secretary and Consul, U.S.S.R. Embassy, Consular Division in Washington, D.C., regarding the hundreds of letters from World War II merchant marine veterans who have requested the Soviet commemorative medal for their participation in the convoy runs to Murmansk.

Due to the overwhelming response for this medal, the Embassy has decided to forward all of these requests for the medal to the Soviet Union in the coming months. I would advise any eligible members of your organization to submit their requests for the medal as soon as possible so that their requests can be processed in this batch. Please advise those members of your organization who have already applied for the medal not to send additional letters to the Embassy inquiring on the status of their application. These additional letters only add to the current workload and slow the process considerably. Mr. Parshenko has assured us that if the applicant's service is determined to be eligible for the medal, the medal will be forwarded by mail to the applicant.

We are asking your membership's cooperation and patience in this matter. Processing of requests will take quite a few months. I am again enclosing a copy of the instructions for applying for the Soviet commemorative medal. Please stress to your membership that only those who are eligible should apply and to provide the proper documentation as explained in the enclosure.

I trust this information will be of interest to your membership. If I can assist you with any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

BRUCE J. CARLTON
Director, Office of Maritime Labor
and Training

How To Apply For Murmansk Medal

A Soviet Commemorative medal is available to merchant marine veterans who participated in convoys to Murmansk.

To apply for this medal, the merchant marine veteran must submit a written request to the Soviet Consulate Office in Washington, DC. In this request he must provide documentation of service in the Second World War and, specifically, evidence of having sailed on vessels engaged in the convoy(s) to Murmansk.

In order to enable the Soviet Consulate to begin processing a request for this commemorative medal, the following information is required -

1. The merchant marine veteran's full name and current mailing address.
2. A full copy of the merchant marine veteran's DD Form 214, "Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty." If he has not applied with the appropriate agency for a DD Form 214, it is advised that he do so. The DD Form 214 is required to verify merchant marine service on vessels that were involved in the convoys. PLEASE DO NOT SUBMIT A REQUEST FOR THIS MEDAL UNTIL A DD FORM 214 IS ISSUED.
3. Additionally, indicate the name(s) of the vessel(s) that the merchant marine veteran sailed on during the convoys to Murmansk.

Please submit your written request along with the information listed above to the following -

Mr. Nickolay Parshenko
First Secretary and Consul
U.S.S.R. Embassy Consular Division
1825 Phelps Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008

The Consulate Office has advised the Maritime Administration of the above application procedure to enable their processing of applications. The Consulate Office will also accept applications along with the appropriate information for this medal from the next of kin of deceased merchant marine veterans. Any questions concerning the applications should also be directed to the above address.

Office of Maritime Labor & Training
Maritime Administration
May 1990

UPCOMING "GIT-TO-GETHERS", "MINIS and REGIONAL REUNIONS."

The South Carolina Flotilla will hold quarterly meetings according to their newly elected Secretary Jeff Haselden 120 Richardson Blvd., Lugoff, S.C. 29078 603-438-1491. Contact Jeff for time, date and place. Their Oct. 20, '90 meeting in Charleston was enjoyed by all who attended.

The OREGON-WASH-AK-NORTHWEST MINI-REUNION will be held April 2-4, 1991 at the NICHOLS INN, 3540 GATEWAY RD., SPRINGFIELD, ORE. 97477 503-726-1212 with LESTER and MARY LOUISE P.O. BOX 546, Springfield, Oregon 97478 1-503-747-2956 as HOSTS Co-Hosts are Glen and Louise Williamson 12263 S. Hwy 211, Molalla, Or. 97038.

I was informed by Billie and Dick Kohse 2304 Lister Road, Olympe, Wa. 98506 (206)456-1946 to remind you that the ARMED GUARD JACKET with the EAGLE INSIGNIA on the back can still be ordered by sending \$30.00 to them. She has some EXTRA LARGE on hand that they need to sell to replace with others. They still hold "Git-to-Gethers". These jackets are of good quality.

Nilan and Dot LeMarche 2170 Lakeshore Drive, Sagie, Idaho 83860 206-263-4271 will continue to get Ol' Sails and their ladies together in his area.

Carl Winder 1734 Pilgrim Ave., Min. View, Ca. 94040 415-967-6493 has several functions set for the West Coast Armed Guard. Contact him for info.

Saxpeon, N.Y. "BOOT CAMP" Reunions are being held. Contact: Thomas S. Forcino, Saxpeon WW II Veterans, 1 Magic Dr., Kingston N.Y. 12401 for information.

Pittsburgh, Pa. crew meet for a third Sat. of the month MOON LUNCHEON at the Greentree Marriott. Contact Jack Cross, 119 Lycoming DR., Coraopolis, Pa. 15108 412-264-8058; or Hilary and Dot Makowski, 202 Wedgewood Court, Carnegie, Pa. 15106 412-429-8510. Their plans are to host the NORTHEAST (N.J.) Reunion in Pittsburgh, Pa. in the Fall of 1991. Date and place Pending.

Richmond, Va. Crew meets at 1 P.M. for a Luncheon at Morrison's Cafe, 7035 W. Broad St., Richmond, Va. on the 2nd Sat. and hosted by Linwood E. Taylor, 7212 Alycia Ave., Richmond, Va. 23222 804-266-2309. DIRECTIONS!! 1-84 at BRAD and GLENSIDE EXIT-TURN LEFT ON BROAD-2 BLKS ON LEFT. THE LADIES ARE INVITED, TOO!

Norfolk, Va. Crew meets at Morrison's at Virginia Beach on each 4th Saturday at 1 P.M. Contact Robert Burrill, 5320 Bucockie St., Virginia Beach, Va. 23464 1-804-478-4608. "GIT-TO-GETHERS" can visit the MacArthur's Museum downtown.

Destroyer Escort Association's 16th National Reunion will be held in Las Vegas Nevada 8/25-29, 1991 Contact: Don Glaser, P.O. Box 880065 Orlando FL 32868-0065 (407) 877-7671. FAX-(407) 877-7641 for more input. I would like to thank Don for the nice writeup by Captain Alvin P. Chester, USNR(R), in the promotion of the book, "UNUSING SAILORS-U.S. NAVAL ARMED GUARD" authored by: Justin Gleichauf and published by the NAVAL INSTITUTE PRESS. Captain Chester was C.O. on the U.S. Matconia December, 1941 till sometimes in 1943 when he boarded OEA for duty.

LST ASSC National Reunion will be held SEPT. 2-9, 1991 at the CLARION HOTEL in New Orleans, La. Contact Mike and Linda Gungak, P.O. Box 167438, Toledo, Ohio 43616-7438 1-800-228-5870. They have a great LST Newspaper.

Patrol Crafts Sailor's Assoc., Contact: Joe Kelliher, P.O. Box 232, Cambridge, NY 12816-0232. Many Armed Guard served with this Unit and they have a paper. They will hold their 4th National Reunion 4/18-21, 1991 at the LANDMARK HOTEL in Metairie, La. This outfit was like the Armed Guard, Merchant Marine and the LST Crews, they participated in EVERY invasion made in WW II.

Army Armed Guard Gunners should contact CSM Claude J. Barnes, 622 Teton Crt., Livermore, Ca. 94550. He is seeking all Army Personnel who served as gunners until the U.S.N. Armed Guard crew came onboard. Claude, we welcome you and the crew to join us in Baltimore, Md. for our 1991 National Reunion.

The "San Antonio, Texas Breakfast Club" will hold a quarterly meeting at 8:15 A.M. Dec. 8, 1990 at Wyatt's Cafeteria, Loop 410 N.E. and Tesoro Dr. They may have something planned for evening of "PEARL HARBOR DAY" December 7, 1990 and for those who would come over and spend the night and be with them, "BUNK-OUT" at the "TOWNHOUSE WESTERN HOTEL" 942 Loop 410 N.E. S.A., Tex. 1-800-268-0165. Be sure to tell them ARMED GUARD!! The Hosts are George and Francis Hastings 2611 Woodbury, S.A. 78217 1-512-824-2636 and Lloyd and Marilyn Tholen 6007 Archwood Dr., S.A. Texas 78239 1-512-657-2706. REMEMBER PEARL WHO??

Jimmy and Marie Rogers 3405 Lariat La, Corpus Christi, Tx 78415 512-652-3429 reports that their MINI-REUNION was successful. Contact him for info on the next one in his area of Texas.

Kansas Mini-Reunion host, Don Gleason, 227 North Knox, Topeka, Ks. 66606 913-234-6087 ask that you call him for time and place. They had a great time at the last reunion, I'm told.

Oklahoma Mini will be hosted by Olan and Lillian Mitchell 3628 S. Parkview Ave Oklahoma City, Okla. 73119 405-682-1869 at the Southgate Motel, SE-51st-1-35 in Oklahoma City. He has 39 in town who should attend and talk ARMED GUARD!!

Paul Hirsch 4917 Evergreen Glen Drive, Las Vegas, Nv. 89130 702-658-6959 called to inform me that due to reasons beyond his control, he could not host the Nevada crew. I am looking for a volunteer.

NEBRASKA CREW will hold another "BULLSESSION" in the future, so call Moe and Jean Carlton, 6801 Benton St. Lincoln, Nebr. 68507 402-688-1058 if you are in the area. They can you bring you up-to-date.

T.C. Beatty 40 Teach Rd., Lake Park, Fl. 33410 407-626-0438 wants to get those in a 50 radius together for a "BULLSESSION". His area code has been changed from what appeared in the last "POINTER". He will hold a "LUNCHEON" but the date, etc. is pending at this time so contact him.

George Milk 449 St. James St., Fort Charlotte, Fl. 33952 813-627-6759 really has a ball with those in his area and visitors. They meet 7 PM, 2nd Friday of the month at 1st Federal Bank Bldg., Virginia and Taylor Rd. Punta Gorda, FL. They also "GIT-TO-GETHER" for dinners at other times so contact him!!

Leo Gullage 5709 Crafton Dr., Lakeland, Florida 33809 813-858-1126 will hold a STEAK DINNER at the Lone Palm Country Club on Jan. 25, 1991 at 6:30 P.M. and those who will be in the area and would like to join in, you are in for some 40 and 50s music and a special hog calling contest for Bill Pippin.

Rudy and Eleanor Kosak of 4950 Dory Dr., (Gulf Harbor) New Port Richey, Florida 34652 (813) 847-4038 will host a meeting in Springhill, Fl. in January and one in New Port Richey, Fl. in March. Wm. T. Young (904) 683-9333 and Charles E. Kaval (813) 845-0991 will assist them. T'all have fun, T'hear!!

Marshall Murray, Rt-1 Box 82, Richland Springs, Texas 76871 (915) 623-5533 will host a Mini-Reunion in Brownwood, Tx. at the Holiday Inn. (915) 646-2551 FAX-915-646-0921 on April, 4-6, 1991. Everyone welcomed!!

If you would like your "UNUSING SAILORS" book signed by the Author, send it to: JUSTIN GLEICHAUF, 222 Shadow Mountain Dr., El Paso, Tx 79912 and he will sign and return it. His telephone is 1-915-584-6290

National Assoc. "FLEET TUGS SAILORS", Robert L. Yates, Sec. Treas., 782 Mendocino Ave. #15, Santa Rosa, Ca. 95401 (707) 523-4415 is in search for all the crew. They held their "FIRST" Reunion this year. Contact him for the location and date for the 1991 event. He also edits a paper, "THE TUGLINE". (Includes-ATP, ATA, ATR, ASR, TTB, SO) -Other words, "TUGBOAT SAILORS"

Merchant Marine Radiomen Veterans of WW II has invited all ARMED GUARD SPARKS to their 1991 National Reunion in Minneapolis, Mn. Contact: Tom Cruise, Editor Gullage Island Radio Assoc. P.O. Box 397, Newington, Va. 22122 (703) 971-8421.

Merchant Marine Veterans of WW II will hold their National Reunion at the City of Las Vegas, NV in 1991. Contact: Joseph P. Bracken, ME Regional AMOV, 127 Fifth Ave., Calverton, NY 11933 for more info. Armed Guard Welcomed!!

THE "BURMA STAR ASSOCIATION" REUNION WILL BE HELD AUGUST 10-15, 1991. Contact: W.R. Chieribus 1389 Chartwell Dr., W. Vancouver, B.C. Canada V7s 2R8. Contact them for details and they will end up with a V-J Day parade on Aug. 15. and a dance to follow. All Armed Guard are welcomed.

ver, We still hold our 1st Sat. of each month breakfast at GRIFFIN'S 1604 North Market Dr., Raleigh, N.C. Tel-878-0125 (off 4500 Block-Old Wake Forest Road). You're invited to be with us for "GRITS, HAM, GRAVY and NO'GRITS!!" I recommend highly the "PLANTATION INN" 6401 Capital Blvd 1-800-992-9662 Out-of-State or 1-800-521-1932 in state or 878-1411 local. Be sure to let them know that you are "ARMED GUARD" for a "\$31.45" weekend rate, or \$25.95 weekly. Call us when you arrive. LET THE PHONE RING!! Also listed in tele. book our local number.

SPECIAL NOTICE
"UNUSING SAILORS-U.S.N. NAVAL ARMED GUARD" by Justin Gleichauf can be purchased by sending CHECK or MONEY ORDER for \$29.95 to, and made out to: "UNUSING WW II VETERANS" 5712 Partridge Lane, Raleigh, N.C. 27609. On the check at: "MEMO" or "FOR" please write in "DONATION: UNUSING SAILOR". We'll have these books on consignment and any donation over our actual costs, will go towards postage. My wife, Rilda, has agreed to package and return your books. A "TOTAL" number of books delivered will be given in the next "POINTER". These books can also be purchased at the U.S. JOHN W. BROWN and local book stores. She'll send them out as fast as you order and we can get them, so allow a few days, please. We have over 150 in your hands now and more to come. I understand that 4000 were printed and 4000 are in circulation somewhere and they are printing more. It has been very successful! WE ARE BEING RECOGNIZED AT LAST!! THANKS TO JUSTIN.

NAVAL INSTITUTE PRESS 2082 Generals Highway, Annapolis, Md. 21401 800-233-8764 has many WW II books they may be of interest to you or your friends. Peter Gookin, Sales Rep. says for you to call for a listing. Tell them-Armed Guard.

WAYNES NATIONAL California Director Mary M. Bauer, 1220 Johnson Dr., Sp. 152, Ventura, Ca. 93003 805-644-2483 is in search for all the WW II WAVES, so if you know the whereabouts of these wonderful ladies, please contact her. Mary was an ARMED GUARD WAVE and her husband, Cyril, was a PMIC of the A.G. crew.

If you have ordered the book, "Unusing Sailors" from me and have not received it, please remind me. I have ordered 10,000 each of bumper stickers and decals, so send a self-addressed-stamped-envelope and get one FREE. NO GOOD UNDER GARAGE. We locate over 30 per month with them and they are happy to see them!!

Attend the Mini of your choice. Go while you can and enjoy the brotherly love and friendship among the best crew who ever sailed the waters. The ladies are to encourage him to take part!! You've carried him this far!! GET HIM TO THE REUNIONS!! If I have left out anyone who holds meeting with the crew, let me know and you will be counted in the next time. Give me place, date and how to get there!! I can send to you addressed labels of those in your area desired at your request if you'd like to get them together. PLEASE! DO NOT MAKE PLANS FOR A REUNION THE WEEKENDS OF OCTOBER 12th, OR; 19th 1991 on the "EAST COAST" AS THIS WOULD INTERFERE WITH THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF WW II ARMED GUARD. (CAL)

ATTENTION: 110 BRONZE BELT BUCKLES WITH THE "EAGLE INSIGNIA" HAVE BEEN MADE ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE ASKED FOR THEM IN THE PAST. THEY ARE \$10. EACH WHICH INCLUDES PACKAGING AND POSTAGE WHICH IS THE COST. I ASK YOU TO MAKE CHECK OR M.O. MEMO OUT SAME AS FOR BOOKS. O.S.N. ARMED GUARD WW II VETERANS MEMO (BUCKLE-DONATION)



Max Leonardson from Wolcott, N.Y. called to inform me that it was he who gave the key ring, key and tag marked "RADIO OPERATOR" and "RADIO ROOM" for the Museum on the U.S. JOHN W. BROWN. N O W!! I REMEMBER!!

U.S. NAVY ARMED GUARD WW I AND WW II VETERANS

10TH NATIONAL REUNION

MAY 24 TO 28, 1991

HYATT REGENCY, ON THE INNER HARBOR 300 LIGHT STREET

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21202 1-301-528-1234 OR 1-800-332-1234

DEAR MEMBERS OF OUR ARMED GUARD "FAMILY":

WE ARE VERY SORRY TO BE LATE IN GETTING THE INFORMATION OF PRICES ON MEALS, CRUISE, ETC. TO YOU. DUE TO THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE S.S. JOHN W. BROWN WAS TAKEN OUT OF DRYDOCK BEFORE COMPLETION WHEREBY ANOTHER SHIP COULD BE PREPARED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. HOPEFULLY, IT WILL RETURN SOON. PRESIDENT BUSH SIGNED THE BILL NOV. 19th WHICH HAD A LOT TO DO WITH THE BROWN HAVING PERMIT TO SAIL. NOW, BRIAN HOPE, PROJECT CHAIRMAN, CAN MEET WITH HIS COMMITTEE AND COME UP WITH SOME PRICES AND THEY WILL BE POSTED IN THE NEXT "POINTER" WHICH WILL FOLLOW UP SOON AFTER THIS ONE.

AS YOU ALL KNOW, THE S.S. JOHN W. BROWN HAS THE ONLY "ARMED GUARD MUSEUM" FOR US TO CHERISH. SO, I ASK YOU TO BEAR WITH US AND WE WILL FORWARD ALL THE INFORMATION TO YOU AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. WE CAN NOT WAIT TO SHOW OFF THE "AFT" QUARTERS, ALL THE GUNS, MESS HALL, ETC., TO THOSE WHO WILL BE VISITING FOR THE FIRST TIME. IT'S A FEELING YOU WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER.

WHAT I SUGGEST AT THIS TIME IS FOR EVERYONE TO MAKE THEIR RESERVATIONS AT THE "REGENCY" AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. WE HAVE 400 ROOMS BLOCKED AND THEY ARE ON A "FIRST COME" BASIC. WE HAVE RESEARCHED OTHER HOTELS IN THE "INNER HARBOR" AREA AND FOUND THEM TO BE THE SAME \$89.00, PER DAY, PLUS TAX, OR EVEN HIGHER. WE REGRET THAT WE COULD NOT GET LOWER RATES AS WE HAVE BEEN NEGOTIATING SINCE FEB. 1988. THE REGULAR ROOM RATES ARE \$185-\$195. PER DAY FOR THAT WEEKEND. WE FEEL THAT THE "HYATT-REGENCY" HAS BEEN FAIR WITH OUR "GROUP RATES".

IF YOU CAN POSSIBLY DO IT, PLEASE PAMPER YOURSELF, AS WE ARE GETTING INTO THE SENIOR YEARS OF OUR LIFE.

PLEASE STAY IN GOOD HEALTH AND HAVE A WONDERFUL HOLIDAY SEASON.

SINCERELY,

YOUR 1991 BALTIMORE NATIONAL REUNION CHAIRMAN

Alex Lombardi

ALEX P. LOMBARDI
14 BROOKFIELD ROAD
UPPER MONTCLAIR, N.J. 07043
1-201-783-7578

TANKERS AT WAR!

By IAN A. MILLAR

The men who crewed the petroleum- and gasoline-filled tankers of World War Two knew they faced special hazards in the event they were torpedoed or bombed. But despite the risk of a flaming death on a freezing sea they manned the fuel carrying tankers that were the life blood of the Allied cause and did more than their share in the long road to victory

United States Coast Guard publication number 173. "WAR ACTION CASUALTIES INVOLVING MERCHANT TANK VESSELS" carried a well-earned tribute to those who manned tankers during World War Two.

"It is to the valiant men of the Merchant Marine who manned these tankships in the face of tremendous odds, especially in the early months of the submarine warfare, that the thanks of the nation and of our Armed Forces and those of our Allies are due, for keeping the petroleum products flowing to strategic points where they could most effectively and promptly be used to crush the enemy. Men of the tanker fleet, the nation salutes you."

J.F. Farley, Admiral
Commandant - U.S. Coast Guard

It was going to be a long and dreary war for the men who sailed in harms way aboard the tankers. At least forty tankers were to be lost to enemy action while sailing unarmed and seven were lost with all hands. The men of the tankers and their comrades in the Naval Armed Guard were to sail all the seas and oceans of the world and they were going to share the terror and horror of exploding bombs and torpedoes. Many would be cremated alive in burning tankers while others would slowly freeze to death in open boats.

For far too many years the war at sea, from the perspective of those who manned merchant ships, has been given short shrift by historians who are content with the non-ending glory of the part played by the U.S. Navy in World War Two. I trust if all else fails that the following accounts of tankers at war will serve to introduce to the Naval and Maritime historian to an aspect of the war at sea that is for the most part glossed over and forgotten. Thousands of merchant seamen and men of the Naval Armed Guard manned our merchant ships and theirs was an extremely heroic unsung effort. Often they quietly vanished from view of their fellow man between the crests of the rolling sea. Although this article deals with those who served in American flag tankers, with a few exceptions, the service and suffering was universal to the seafarers of all nations who manned tankers at war. To the memory of them all, this article is humbly dedicated.

There was no waiting for December 7, 1941 for the crew of the Socony-Vacuum Oil Company's tanker SS *Astral*. On December 2, 1941 she was sailing alone and unarmed with a cargo of 73,000 barrels of gasoline and kerosene. The huge American flag painted on her sides told that she was a neutral vessel. Despite her neutrality, the

German submarine U-43 picked up the *Astral* and followed her throughout the night. The next morning at 0724 a torpedo from U-43 tore into the *Astral* causing her to catch fire and sink quickly. Captain Alsager and 36 men of his crew had no chance for survival as the flaming sea consumed them. War had officially come to the proud men of America's tanker fleet.

Second Officer William J. Atkinson was nearing the end of his watch aboard the little tanker M/T *William C. McTarnahan*. Bill thought he had seen a flash of light off the starboard bow and aimed his glasses for a closer look which failed to reveal any suspicious object. A short time later, he turned the watch over to Chief Officer George O.C. Midgett. His watch over, Bill went below to his room and had just started to undress when the first torpedo struck. In a few moments a second torpedo struck. Unknown to the crew of the *McTarnahan*, they had crossed the path of the U-506. As the second torpedo exploded, the ship took a heavy list to starboard and all lights and power went out. Bill ran to his lifeboat station aft, but the force of the torpedo explosion had carried away the after falls of both lifeboats which had been swung out prior to the attack. Both boats were hanging from the forward falls.

The after part of the ship was a blazing inferno. Bosun Thomas W. Murray came to the boat deck and Bill asked him: "Are you O.K. Boats?" to which his reply was, "Look at this," and held up his arms. The skin of his arms and hands had peeled off like a long pair of gloves and was hanging from his fingertips, a sight one does not soon forget. Although the Bosun made it ashore, he later succumbed to his terrible wounds. John F. Jenkins A.B., who was on Bill's watch, also later died from severe burns.

As soon as some of the men arrived aft, Bill had the forward falls of the starboard boat slack off and had two men slide down the falls into the boat, while he had some others go forward to haul the boat amidships. The ship's list brought the main deck to about eight feet above the water so the injured men could embark easily. When his boat was filled, Captain John G. Leech ordered Bill to cast off. Before they could get clear of the ship, the U-506 opened fire and some rounds landed close by but did no personal damage.

Several of the men in Bill's boat were severely burned. From what the men could recall, a flash of flame swept through the passageway and quarters searing everything and everyone in its path. Second Assistant Virgil J. Meroney had undressed to his shorts and was about to get into bed when this flame hit him. He died ashore later that afternoon. The second cook, Ora Ellis, also perished from severe burns. The Naval Armed Guard was not spared its share of pain either as one of the gunners was very badly burned on his back, which later caused his release from the service.

The pumpman, Jack J. Murray, had a narrow escape. The door to his room, although left open, had been blown shut by the explosion. Murray badly burned his hands trying to open the door, which, fortunately for him, was jammed tight. Being a small slender man, he managed to squeeze through his porthole and dropped overboard landing by almost unbelievable chance on the starboard life raft which had broken adrift and at that moment was just below his port. At daybreak Bill and the others in the starboard boat could see him off in the distance waving his arms to attract attention.

Relieving Chief Engineer, Troy Lambert, who was aboard to become familiar with the plant before taking over, was a fine engineer and the sort with whom it was a pleasure to sail. He was cremated alive by the fire. Later, it was the duty of Chief Mate Midgett and Second Officer Atkinson to go through the quarters and try to identify the dead. They could only do so by their knowledge of who occupied which bunk space. There were no remains to identify of those on watch in the engine room; all there were torched in the blink of an eye.

Later the survivors were picked up

by some fishing vessels and taken into the port of Houma, Louisiana and thence to hospitals for treatment. The tanker did not sink and was towed into port and in spite of the massive damage was later repaired and sent to sea again as the SS *St. James*.

The SS *John D. Gill*, a tanker of the Atlantic Refining Co. was on her second voyage having been built in 1942. It was March 12, 1942 when the tanker sailed the war-torn Atlantic, it was winter and all too often what enemy torpedoes and bombs did not accomplish, the unforgiving elements did. Survival from a sinking ship did not mean salvation by any means. Crews went from the blistering heat of a floating crematorium to the freezing cold of the dead of winter at sea. More often than not, these men had no time to put on protective clothing and they went over the side in whatever they wore at the time.

As the *Gill* was making her way about 25 miles east of Cape Fear, North Carolina, she had some unwelcome company in the German submarine U-158, under the command of Knight's Cross holder Lieutenant Erich Rostin. As the torpedo sped toward the *Gill*, Edward F. Cheney Jr., a 25-year-old seaman from Pennsylvania, was at the wheel. As the tin fish hit the *Gill*, Cheney was knocked from the wheel to the deck. The torpedo struck the *Gill* in number seven tank on the starboard side, which in turn caused hundreds of gallons of crude oil to escape into the sea. At first there was no fire, but in the excitement of the explosion, a life ring which had a self igniting carbide light attached was tossed into the sea. This in turn ignited the oil and this ship was soon covered in flames. After the ship had been abandoned, the other tanks blew up one after the other and the ship slid beneath the wintry sea at 0900 EWT on March 13.

As with all actions at sea involving merchant shipping during the war, very little was or has been said of the incident. As a matter of course it was duly reported as another of many similar ship losses off the Carolina Coast. But there was connected to this sinking a story of personal courage and heroism that bears telling even at this late date.

Cheney and the others on the bridge knew the ship was doomed. The oil, which the torpedo explosion caused to escape, was boiling up in a thick mass which started to fill the lifeboats that remained intact on the side of the ship where the torpedo hit. Captain Allen D. Tucker gave the order to abandon ship. Cheney headed off for his boat station aft on the starboard side. As he made his way along the catwalk, the flames licked at him from the burning oil. In short order the fire had in-

creased to such magnitude that the men aft were cut off from the boats. The only means of survival left were the life rafts. Cheney did not hesitate as he knocked the steel ring from the pelican hook that held the raft in place. The raft bounded down its steel frame into the sea and ended up about 200 feet away from the burning tanker. The sea was afire and the little raft could be seen in between the soaring walls of flame. There was little time and any hope of survival meant a swim in the cold sea under the burning oil. It should be noted that swimming in these conditions were greatly hampered due to the oil which burned the eyes and, if swallowed, could choke a man to death, add to this the fact that it was afire and the outlook was bleak indeed. It was an aspect of service that most tankermen were well aware of.

Cheney spoke with his shipmates and told them they would have to go over the side and swim under the burning oil. Then, as if setting an example, he went himself. He dove deep into the sea and swam underwater toward the raft until his lungs felt as though they would burst. Coming to the surface, he was quickly met with the blazing inferno which seared his face, hands and arms. He again went under and this time made it to the now burning raft. Once aboard, he splashed sea water over the raft to wash off the burning oil. Cheney then looked back to his shipmates who had followed him and shouted at them to give them direction in the poor visibility in the burning sea. He spotted one of the messboys in the water who was badly burned and near exhaustion and helplessness in the water. Without aid he was certain to slip beneath the waves, another victim of the Battle of the Atlantic. Cheney did not hesitate as he dove back into the water, swam through the burning oil and pulled the messboy to and up on the liferaft. Then he spotted yet another man who was at his last stroke and again left the safety of the liferaft and dove back into the sea bringing that man to safety. All this he did in spite of his badly burned hands and seared body. He then shouted directions to another half dozen of his shipmates guiding them to the safety of the raft.

Now another peril was at hand as the raft was starting to drift back toward the center of the fire and the tanker which could have exploded at any moment. In the sheer desperation of doomed men, the survivors searched in vain for the row locks for the raft. Seeing they were gone, they looked at each other in horror. But again Cheney prevailed and showed the men how to make row locks with their hands. All of the men had badly burned hands but the desire for survival soon had some of them down with their hands cupped at the sides of the raft while others put the oars through them. The pain was extreme for all involved but ever so slowly they inched away from the inferno and made their way to the open cold and unforgiving sea.

Cheney's ordeal was not through. The survivors did not know how long it would be before help would come, or if it ever would. Goading the men on,

he kept their spirits up and ten hours later they were pulled from their little raft. Mr. Cheney was some three weeks in the hospital recovering from the burns he suffered. He had some time with his wife and family, then sailed again in another tanker which was also torpedoed. Not one easily dismayed, Mr. Cheney was on his way to yet another ship outward bound when he received word that the President had requested him to come to Washington to receive the newly created Merchant Marine Distinguished Service Medal.

During the war the Merchant Marine had its own distinctive set of awards and the Distinguished Service Medal was the merchant seaman's Medal of Honor. During the entire war it was to be awarded only 133 times, often posthumously. Mr. Cheney's award was the very first one of this decoration for heroism beyond the call of duty. The medal was pinned on Mr. Cheney by the President in whose name it was awarded. The citation bears repeating here as in its wording can be found a reflection of the overall service of our merchant seamen at war.

CITATION:

"For heroism above and beyond the call of duty during an enemy attack when he released a launched liferaft from a sinking and burning ship and maneuvered it through a pool of burning oil to clear water by swimming underwater, coming up only to breathe. Although he had incurred severe burns about the face and arms in this action, he then guided four of his shipmates to the raft, and swam to and rescued two others who were injured and unable to help themselves. His extraordinary courage and disregard of his own safety in thus rescuing his shipmates will be an enduring inspiration to seamen of the United States Merchant Marine everywhere." (signed) Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President

Thus ends yet another vignette of courage and service of those of our tanker fleet during the Second World War.

Aside from the ever-constant threat of attack by enemy submarine, there was also another fear to reckon with, this being the armed raider. They were far fewer in number, but when they attacked few merchant ships were fortunate enough to escape. Although various German raiders made an effort to keep the loss of life down and seamen were taken prisoner, a merchant ship using its radio or manning its guns met with murderous gunfire. It was war and men had their duty regardless of the flag they sailed under.

The 21-year-old tanker *S/S William F. Humphrey*, of Tidewater Oil Company, was bound for Trinidad in ballast from Cape Town and sailing some 800 miles off the mouth of the Congo River. Third Engineer William N. Wallace was on duty in the engine room busy-ing himself in general duties. Elsewhere aboard the ship, Bosun Jack Bennett was tending to the duties as commander of the Naval Armed Guard gun crew aboard the *Humphrey*. Not far off, but out of sight, the German raider *Michel* was preparing to do bat-

tle. Hellmuth von Ruckteschell in command of *Michel* had all in order for a double header. While *Michel* was to attack the *Humphrey*, an additional attack was to take place on the Norwegian tanker *Aramis* by *Michel's* MTB *Esau*. Under the cover of night the first round whistled across the sea hitting the *Humphrey*. Bill Wallace was on duty in the engine room and remembers the attack vividly to this day. When the attack started the call came from the bridge for full astern, which was done. The second salvo from the *Michel* landed in the boiler room as well as in the engine room. In the meantime on deck the Navy lads and merchant seamen went to battle stations. Young Jack Bennett had just come off watch and was sitting on the side of his bunk removing his shoes when the first shells struck. As he got to the deck he found his gunners had already sent a return volley back at the *Michel*. Although gallant and courageous, it was the return fire that sealed their fate. *Michel* had no choice but to return fire with a full broadside of her five-inch guns. One of the shells struck near Bennett and the exploding shrapnel sent metal shards into Bennett's legs, left elbow and tore off the third finger on his left hand. The same shell killed one of Bennett's gun crewmen and put the gun out of action. Despite his wounds, Bennett obtained life jackets for the remaining members of his gun crew and helped them to the rail and overboard. He then went back and obtained about a dozen more life jackets and threw them over the rail to fellow seamen struggling in the water below. Remembering the confidential papers that were in his cabin which had to be destroyed, he made his way below and put the documents in a weighted bag. Just as he was leaving his cabin, another shell struck the ship's bridge and Bennett barely escaped being trapped by the collapse of the overhead of his quarters. Reaching the deck again, the ship still under very heavy fire, he made his way to the rail and tossed the bag over the side. Before jumping into the sea, Bennett noticed another member of the Armed Guard crew and one of the merchant seamen attempting to lower the port lifeboat aft. Rather than going over the side Bennett elected to assist them. As

he was helping the duo, another shell exploded killing the Naval gunner beside him and mortally wounded the merchant seaman. One large piece of shrapnel went through Bennett's already injured left arm. When he attempted to get up Bennett found that the piece of hot metal had pinned his arm to the deck. As he tried to jerk his arm loose from the deck plate, another shell landed nearby and jarred his flesh clear. He staggered to the stern and rolled off into the sea. Wounded as he was, he somehow managed to swim toward a raft. Two torpedoes ran past him on their way to the *Humphrey*. For his heroism in action, Jennings Jack Bennett was recommended for the Congressional Medal of Honor, but was awarded the Silver Star medal.

Meanwhile, below deck Wallace was having problems of his own. Wallace stood amid the wreckage of the engine room, the light out, he tried to make it to the ladder in order to reach the upper deck. Already injured from shrapnel, ammonia gas and live steam made the effort all the more difficult and in the confusion Bill forgot about his flashlight. In the dark he found he could not proceed any further. With the thought of a slow death ahead, Bill wandered over to the refrigeration flat, but was almost overcome by the escaping ammonia gas. About this time he remembered the flashlight in his back pocket. Playing the beam of light about the engine room, Bill could see that the engine room ladder had been shot away at his level. In desperation he made a jump for the ladder and it held. Gaining the top rung and still in a stupor, Bill made his way to his room and was again struck by flying debris. He recalls that the urge to lie down in his bunk was great, but had he done so he surely would have perished there. Soon another shell exploded and blew in the panels of his room. Wandering from the wreckage to the after deck, Bill observed the shelling. He also spotted the crew's three pet monkeys and considered setting them free. Looking up he could see that the five-inch stern mount was knocked askew and the gun crew either dead or gone. Deciding that the ship was doomed and that everyone had abandoned her, Bill went over the side and swam away from the ship. While in the water



The *S/S Pennsylvania Sun* burns fiercely after a German torpedo found its mark. In spite of the inferno, the crew stayed aboard and fought the fire saving the ship. (Photo: US Navy)

something sped by him and plunged deep into the hull of the mortally wounded *Humphrey*. The torpedo exploded causing more damage and general confusion. Swimming in the oil-covered water was no easy task and with his throat burning from the ammonia gas, Bill decided to take a gulp of water to soothe the pain. To his dismay he got a mouthful of fuel oil which caused considerable retching. Luckily, the firing stopped and Michel soon made her rounds to pick up survivors. For Bill Wallace, Jennings Bennett and the few others in their lifeboat, the decision to evade capture was one that took great courage. They were not captured and later were picked up by the Norwegian vessel *Triton*. *Esau* was not successful with her attack on *Armadis* but Michel gave chase and overhauled her and sent her to the bottom.

Captain E. Tholven, Master of the *Triton* made note of the rescue of the *Humphrey* survivors in his log. He tells that the survivors of the *William F. Humphrey* were in very bad shape, some with serious shrapnel wounds that were so infested that his crew had to wear nosecovers to stand the smell. One of the *Triton*'s crew, galleyboy Wilhelm Aasberg, was very apt at handling the wounded and without his care many of the survivors would not have made it. Bill and others were put ashore at Freetown on July 27 and all were taken to a hospital for further treatment. Sadly, the rescuers of the *Humphrey*'s crew were later torpedoed on the 17 of August. All of the crew were saved.

William F. Humphrey was not the only tanker to be the subject of Michel's wrath. The *SS Connecticut* was on a voyage from Port Arthur, Texas to Capetown, South Africa with a cargo of high octane gasoline. As the *Connecticut* proceeded alone, another ship was sighted just before dusk on the 22nd of April, 1942. Unknown to anyone aboard the *Connecticut*, the commander of Michel was up to his old tricks. He was shadowing the tanker awaiting the cover of darkness to attack. Galen McCray, former Chief Engineer of *Connecticut*, recalls that "We thought from her lines that she was one of the Scandinavian passenger-freighters." Indeed, for those who would survive, the loss of the *Connecticut*, it was going to be a very long voyage home.

Just after 2:00 am a torpedo launched from Michel's MTB *Esau* crashed in the tanker. Chief McCray, who was off duty, was awakened by a loud crash and much shaking and jolting. Mr. McCray remembers what followed well and he relates, "I jumped out of bed, room completely dark, found my pants and shirt and put them on." He then went to the engine room where he found lights on and all of the machinery in working order. The Second Assistant and his watch were on duty. The Third Assistant, one fireman and an oiler also came below. Chief McCray ordered the Second Assistant to change to the largest burner tips and all stops opened full on the turbines. After about ten minutes he sent the off-duty fireman to find the Captain and ask for orders as all commu-

nication with the bridge had been knocked out.

It took the fireman a good 15 minutes to make his way forward, find the Captain and return with the order to abandon ship. High octane aviation fuel was dripping everywhere and the ship was in danger of exploding at any moment, even the smallest spark would have done the job. Elsewhere, in spite of the Master's order to abandon ship, the commander of the Naval Armed Guard ordered his gunners to remain aboard. All those brave men perished in the hellfire that followed.

Before leaving the engine room, McCray reversed the engines and got the ship stopped in the water which took a full ten minutes. At the same time he ordered everyone else out of the engine room. He actually had to shove the Second Assistant and the off-duty fireman to the ladder as they did not want to leave him alone. They were both fine and brave men who bare minutes later would lose their lives. Due to the fact that the steering gear had been damaged, the *Connecticut* had actually been going around in a circle.

Three lifeboats managed to get away from the now floating bomb. The Master's boat headed south with the wind, McCray's boat, with Chief Officer Bill Carroll in command, rounded the stern and headed northward into the wind, the last boat under command of the Third Officer followed closely behind McCray's boat. It was rough going and the heat was intense. As they had reached a point about 300 yards from the tanker, another torpedo struck the *Connecticut* causing her to explode in a great ball of fire. Now all around the boats were walls of fire some 40-50 feet high which extended a good half mile downwind. McCray's boat was still so close that when Bill Carroll looked back he lost his eyebrows, all his hair, and had one water blister clear across his face. The second lifeboat, only one boat length behind, did not get clear of the fire and all aboard were lost. The Captain's boat was also consumed by the conflagration. As already mentioned, the entire Naval Armed Guard detachment went down with the tanker.

The only survivors were those in McCray's boat and they set a course for Brazil, but had only started when the Michel came upon them. They were ordered to come aboard the raider. After they were captured, the *Connecticut* survivors were told that they would be treated as officers and gentlemen just as long as they behaved as such. McCray recalls that at no time were they ever ill-treated and they ate exactly the same food as everyone else on board. When possible, they were permitted on deck for exercise. The Michel roamed the wind-swept and lonely waters of the Antarctic allowing time for the Allied ships hunting her to lose interest. Although in time a number of P.O.W.s were transferred from Michel, Chief McCray and Chief Officer Carroll, as well as two English officers of the *SS Patella* were kept aboard.

For a time the only prisoners aboard the Michel were these four

officers. Every Sunday they were invited at noon to the Captain's quarters for drinks and lunch. It is noted that quite a dent was put in Captain Ruckteschell's scotch supply. Then in turn it became their turn to depart Michel. Before leaving, Captain Ruckteschell made a brief farewell speech. The speech concluded with "This is not what I wish but it is my orders and I must obey... and who knows your fate may be better than mine." With that he walked over and gave Galen McCray a fraternal handshake which took him by surprise.

Whatever kindness was shown the prisoners by the Germans was soon a memory exchanged for the unrelenting brutality of the Japanese who took more than a passing delight in the inhumane treatment of P.O.W.s. First they were taken to Batavia, which was at the time held by the Japanese and they refused to allow the Germans to keep Galen and the others under their own guards. The Captain told the Japanese no dice and took them on to Tokyo. For a time they were kept as German prisoners aboard a captured British passenger ship, the *SS Nanking*, at a Tokyo dock. On September 22, 1942 they ran out of food and had to turn McCray and the others over to the Japanese due to the fact that the Japanese would not sell them food for prisoners who were not working.

As with many P.O.W.s of the Japanese, what followed has been forever etched in the minds of men like Chief McCray. He and the others were sent by rail from Tokyo to Yawata, Kyushu via the New Railroad tunnel at Shimeno Seka. On the 29th of October, 1943, Galen was sent to Tokyo to take part in a program for a propaganda radio station. All of the P.O.W.s refused to take part and were then put to work building an airfield at Tokyo Bay. On July 21, 1944, McCray was sent to another P.O.W. camp at Sumi Da Gawa, a suburb of Tokyo. He recalls that while there he saw a total of 553 air raids and had a grand stand seat on March 9-10 and on April 13 when Allied bombers burned Tokyo to the ground. Rest assured this was no pleasant interlude for McCray and his fellow P.O.W.s. The war and suffering came to an end when he was released by the U.S. Navy and sent home in September of 1945. Little thought has been given to the final fate of so many who sailed in the tankers, but they too had been the involuntary "guests" of the Germans and Japanese. Needless to say, the Naval gunners who shared their ships also shared in their captivity.

(To Be Continued)

Reprinted from "Sea Classics," Volume 23, Number 7, July 1990. For Part One, see the September issue of the *Pointer*.

Dear Chuck,
I have been wanting to get this to you since I last saw you in New Orleans. I was unlike that of 99.9 per cent of the Armed Guard or Navy men in WW II. You see, I was in a special force. I had 3 years of college prior to Navy life and 3 weeks of "BOOTS" at Great Lakes and then into the Fleet. Since I was an old "COUNTRY BOY" from North Carolina and because I had kept a good record and did well on my test, they put me in this special service group. There were not many enlisted men in it, or this what we were told. What we were trained to do was to "LISTEN, TALK, LEARN and REPORT" on any subversive "SAILOR, MERCHANT SEAMAN or CIVILIAN" that were listed with Naval Intelligence. We did most of our "dirty work" around "Sea Port" bars and aboard ships of foreign registry because these ships had crews from all nations.

A Cuban ship that I was on carried nothing but bananas from ports in the Caribbean Sea. It was leased by the FRUIT GROWERS ASSOCIATION. The ship's name was the *S.S. SANTA DE LACRO*. Being of Cuban registry, the crew was from all over the islands in the Caribbean. We had one heck of a communication problem plus we had rotten food! The time period was from 12/43 to 7/44 and we spent time in ports of ENGLAND, SPAIN and PORTUGAL. After that, I was put back in the ARMED GUARD on the *S.S. TILLOMAN* and from this ship, I was transferred back to the Fleet on SPECIAL DUTY with other Armed Guard men. We toured the Pacific! We ended up in Manila in the Philippines. You would not believe what we did. I was in and out of the Fleet, ARMED GUARD and Special Services. I had the worst kept records of any one.

I just got my complete set of medical and service records several months ago and you would not believe how much of my records were missing. Nothing of my ASIAN-PACIFIC time other than other than Shoemaker, California and that had my ASIAN-Pacific ribbon. There were no ships listed and no medical records. I am working with my Congressman, trying to get them corrected. I even spent 3 days on the USS NEWTON, listening and talking; talking and listening. Like I say, it's a duty I would not sell for anything if I could. My friends nor my family knew anything about it. As a matter of fact, I still have a coded phone number in New York City that we would call after we reported in after a trip. They would advise us where to pick up our extra pay! You never knew any other people that you had this duty with. You were either listening or some one was listening to you. It was sort of a "SPT" vs "SPT". While on Shore Duty, you had seaman duties most of the time. It was "soft Duty" as you would be a runner for some Captain, doing filing, etc. Then go out when you could and listen, then every two weeks, you would make a report to someone on a phone to someone. There were not many people who knew what I did for they don't believe you. The last ship that I was on was a Canadian hospital ship with an English crew. A very clean ship but the worst food in the world. We had "GOAT" twice a day.

Chuck, I would like to make that breakfast that you hold in Raleigh someday. Take care and regards from Helen and I and say hello to your bride. Have a nice 1990 Christmas Day.

Bill S. Miller 157 Houston Ave. N.E., Roanoke, Virginia 24012

Curtis Holler
1580 Granite Dr.
Reno, Nevada 89509

NAVAL SERVICE HISTORY
AUGUST 16, 1943 to MARCH 25, 1946

On Monday morning at the Federal Building in downtown Los Angeles, I took the oath and was sworn into the United States Navy Reserve. (I had several choices, but I chose the normal entry at the time, which was the duration of the war, plus six months.)

After swearing in, we were given a chit for lunch at a downtown restaurant and told to report back to the same area for transportation to the U.S. Naval Training Station in San Diego. There were no freeways in those days and the trip down on a chartered Greyhound bus took over seven hours. When we arrived at the Recruit Receiving Building, we were told to unload what little baggage we had and were taken to the Recruit Receiving Mess Hall which stayed open 24 hours a day as new recruits arrived at all times of the day and night.

After chow we were taken to the Receiving Barracks where we would spend one night. The following day the recruits were formed into companies of 100 men each. My company was #43-342. (43 for 1943 and the 342nd company to be formed in that year.) In other words, this would mean that with our company it would make up 34,200 men to pass through for training. There were other training stations around the United States besides San Diego. (The Navy was getting its share of men without the draft which the Army had to rely on.) Every person entering the military service of the United States is given a service serial number which follows you into civilian life after discharge. My number is #565-44-63.

The next day after breakfast our company was formed. We signed the papers for that company and marched to the hospital where Medical Corpsmen gave us our shots, which included cowpox, typhoid, paratyphoid, tetanus toxoid and yellow fever. Also, our blood was typed, mine being Type "A", and stamped on our "dog tags" (identification, name, blood type and service serial number). Then, after lunch, we went to the Naval Supply Section to receive our new Naval military clothing and toilet articles.

After trying on either very small or very large clothes and shoes, we marched to our barracks which was to be our new home for the next six weeks. Luckily for us we got the downstairs section. Another company of 100 men was housed upstairs.

We spent the first week getting the men into some sort of military fashion with marching, barracks inspection, proper clothing care, etc. From then on we were up at 4:00 a.m. and didn't stop until lights out and taps at 9:00 p.m.

Every week took us through more advanced training. At about the fifth week we were given a general aptitude test to see where we could qualify for the various schools. Those that flunked were shipped out to "fighting fleet" and immediately to sea duty.

After evaluation, as I remember, I qualified for Signalman School, Submarine School in New London, Connecticut and Gunnery School in San Diego.

I just want to say a word about Submarine School. Although I chose Gunnery School, I was proud of the fact that I had qualified for

subs. Quite a few of the guys in my company were hoping they could qualify, but only a few did.

This wasn't something I really wanted to do. As I look back, I'm not sorry I chose Gunnery School. I just didn't want to be underwater and confined in a tight space. As for Signalman School, while we were in training the Navy tried to teach every company some basic Morse Code, but I never caught on.

At the end of our six weeks of training, one morning after breakfast on October 1, 1943, we were lined up in front of our barracks. In front were a number of troop trucks waiting to take us away. The company officer read out our names and the school we qualified for, and pointed to the truck we were to take. Gunnery School was just across San Diego Bay at the old destroyer base. We were housed in a much finer barracks than the one at the training station, with more room and much larger lockers for our clothes, etc. Another factor was a nicer mess hall with much better food and quite plentiful. We also had access to a large PX where we could buy sundries, and a swell but small restaurant serving all the things hungry sailors like to eat.

Here we were to go through another month of intensive gunnery training, learning to shoot everything from a 45-caliber automatic pistol to a 5"-38-caliber antiaircraft deck gun. I would be a member of the 5"-38-caliber gun crew on a later ship, one of three to which I was eventually assigned. We finished our training by going out overnight on a training mission on the old Naval gunboat, U.S.S. Sacramento. Most of the "greenhorn" sailors got seasick, but somehow I survived and was able to stand my normal assigned watch. When we arrived back at the San Diego Destroyer Base, it was really funny to see the men go ashore. Our inner ears had not had enough time to become accustomed to the pitch and roll of the ship. Some of the guys weaved back and forth going down the dock just as if they were drunk and even more so. We finished Gunnery School on October 28, 1943. We were then taken to the San Diego train station and shipped up to San Francisco, California, to the Armed Guard Center, Pacific, where we would await our orders to be assigned as Naval gun crews aboard the then armed merchant ships. This was to prove to have been a good selection on my part. This was excellent and envied sea duty.

On our arrival in San Francisco we were stationed on Treasure Island, in San Francisco Bay, which was home to the 1938-1939 World's Fair.

On November 11, 1943, I received orders for the gun crew of the S.S. Keith Vawter, a Liberty ship, which was built by the Kaiser Shipyards in Alameda across the Bay. This was a freighter of approximately 10,400 dwt., built to meet the critical war needs of the U.S. during World War II. We were taken by Navy truck over to the docks along the Embarcadero in San Francisco. We met our gunnery officer (his name I long ago forgot), who assigned us to our quarters aboard ship and the gun we were to be on. I was assigned to a 20-mm antiaircraft gun on the back starboard side of the ship's bridge. This was an excellent location to be in as we were high up and had a good view from which to observe. Also, being on the bridge gave me an opportunity to know everything that was going on. Standing my regular duty watch there, I would assist the Signalman in taking down messages meant for the ship's Captain.

Approximately one week later we cast off on my first ship for Noumea, New Caledonia, in the South Pacific. Noumea was one of the backwater areas of the Pacific War. COMSOPAC (Commander South Pacific), moved to Noumea from Pearl Harbor to be nearer the war area. Admiral William F. (Bill) (Bull) Halsey, Jr., had moved down just a month before we arrived. Our troops had steadily moved up

the island chain from Guadalcanal to New Georgia and Bougainville pushing the Japs back to Rabaul, on New Britain.

On the trip down to New Caledonia my watch happened to be the 12-4, (midnight to four), both a.m. and p.m. The 12-4 was called the Night Watch. It was on the Night Watch that I had my first psychic experience. My Grandfather Gleesing appeared one night alongside the gun tub where I was standing watch. He came to live with us when he was 69 years old. I only knew him as a very old man, somewhat hunched over and carrying a cane for support when walking.

This night he was standing very erect and looked much younger than I had ever seen him, and he carried the cane more as a prop than anything else. He only appeared for a minute or so but long enough to tell me that I would be all right, that no harm would come to any ship that I was on, and that I would return home safely. There was a slight glow around him, and I was afraid that other watch stations would see this light and report it to the bridge. When he was gone, the O.D. (Officer of the Deck) came racing up the ladder next to the tub and wanted to know who I was talking to. I was so taken aback that I said nobody. He looked around the top of the flying bridge to see if anyone was there. He even asked my buddy, Les Howell, who was standing watch on the port side, if he heard or saw anybody on the bridge. He said no, that he hadn't heard anybody or seen anyone. He smelled something, like after-shave lotion, and came near me to smell my face and asked me if I had left my gun station to go down and shave. My grandfather always came back from the barber shop with the smell of flowers, a popular after-shave lotion of the day, and it lingered in the air.

Later on you will read about the sub attack and later the Jap-bomber run over our ship at Saipan.

We arrived in Noumea slightly before Christmas of 1943. After a few days in port, our gunnery officer received orders to send one-half of the gun crew at a time to the Naval Gun Range over on the east side of the island to practice at towed air-sleeve targets, both on the 20mm and the 5"-38-caliber dual-purpose gun and also on the 3"-50-caliber dual-purpose gun. This meant we would be off the ship for Christmas.

I will never forget the Christmas of 1943 as long as I live. On Christmas Day the Navy gave us fried canned meat (Spam) for dinner and a pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes, whether you smoked or not. This range was on part of a swamp, and the mosquitos were so thick that the swarms formed a black cloud. Every one of us were so bitten that there was hardly a place on our bodies that didn't have a bite.

When we arrived back aboard ship, the Captain heard about our experience and ordered the Chief Cook to prepare a special Christmas dinner for those of us who spent Christmas Day on the range. The dinner consisted of turkey and ham with all the fixings, and it was served to us in the Officers' Mess with white tablecloths. This alleviated some of the hardship which we had suffered. When we came aboard, the Gunnery Officer was standing at the rail to welcome us back to the ship. He couldn't believe his eyes. Some of the crew members were so badly bitten and red that they were hard to recognize. This didn't make it easy for the second group going down the gangway after we came aboard.

Sometime after the middle of January, 1944, we unloaded the ship of the cargo we brought from Frisco and reloaded the ship with supplies for the old aircraft carrier, U.S.S. Saragota, which had caught a "fish" (torpedo) and was in anchorage at Big Bay, Espiritu Santo, in the New Hebrides Islands (Main Rear Area Headquarters).

We went up through an area of ocean from Noumea known in those days as "Torpedo Junction". Earlier in the war the Jap subs would lay in wait in this area and had sunk a few ships. We traveled in a group of around six to eight ships with a D.E. (Destroyer Escort) and two S.C.'s (Sub Chasers), one on each side. The D.E. led the way ahead of us. About halfway on a beautiful sunny afternoon, I was off duty and was just stepping into the shower when General Quarters sounded, "Every man to his battle station." I only had my towel and life preserver with me, so I wrapped the towel around me and off I ran to my gun station. Arriving ahead of the others, I strapped myself into the 20mm. The D.E. had flashed submarine warning and was "zigzagging" back and forth in front of our ship, dropping depth charges. Whether or not she ever got the sub, we never knew, but in the meantime a sudden gust of breeze came up and swished away my towel. There I was on the bridge, next to the Captain, naked as a jaybird for all to see.

That night, after evening mess, an order was posted on both the officers' and crews' bulletin boards that, "In the future ALL crew members shall take a pair of trousers with them when showering." My name wasn't mentioned as the guilty party, but everyone knew it was meant for me.

While waiting in the harbor in Espiritu Santo I was standing watch on the signal bridge. All ships posted a signal watch in harbor in case of a message from the Port Director's Office. It was a hot and sultry day. I was just up from noon mess and was a little groggy. Then out of the sky dove a pair of Army Air Corps P-38 twin-engine fighters. They dove at the Marine Corps fighter strip just across from where our ship was riding anchor. The then famous Jolly Roger Squadron (Skull & Crossbones) was down for R&R from Ondongo. These two P-38's came across the deck at over 400 mph. I'll never forget the high-pitched sound of those Allison engines. They came in so low that they raised a coral dust cloud, and as quickly as they came across the field they departed straight upstairs on their tails to about 10,000 feet and then circled the field.

I could hear the sound of those P4-U Corsair fighters cranking up with those Pratt & Whitney R-2800 2,000-HP engines swinging a four-bladed prop. These fighters were giving the Jap Zero plenty of trouble up in the "slot". They could do nearly 450 mph straight ahead. The P-38's could do over 400 mph also, but that was on straight and level flight, if they even turned slightly the P4-U could turn inside. As soon as they took off I yelled down to the radio shack for the radoman to tune in on the fighters' frequency, which he was able to do. For machine guns, the pilots would flick the sending button on the microphone and click it to simulate fire.

What a dogfight! In less than 30 minutes it was all over as the Marines had no problem.

The ship received orders to stand by to unload. A barge came alongside, and after a week we left Espiritu Santo and set a course for Antofagasto, Chile. On this leg we passed near Pitcairn Island.

In Antofagasto our ship loaded copper ingots from the Anaconda Copper Company docks for transport to the U.S. The ship settled to the Plimsoll line very quickly. This is a mark on all freighters of not to exceed. Here we had almost three stories of empty space and only about four to five feet deep of copper. What to do?

The War Shipping Administration, which controlled all maritime shipping, advised our ship via radio to proceed to Puna, Ecuador, to load balsa wood and quinine bark. Balsa wood was used in the

aircraft and shipbuilding industry to make large-scale models of future assemblies and quinine bark in the control of malaria. This was supposedly to balance the load.

When we arrived in Puna, Ecuador, the inner harbor was too shallow for the low draft of our ship because of the copper; consequently, we had to drop anchor out in the outer harbor and load from barges that came alongside.

The natives came out to trade in their little canoes loaded with stalks of bananas. Every crew member, officers included, wanted to trade. Everyone wanted his own stalk. They were trading for around three to four cigarettes per stalk. Even the Chief Cook took on a load for the galley.

On the trip to Panama we had banana pie, banana bread, banana cake, banana fritters and baked bananas, for dessert, with a caramel sauce. Everyone got bananaed out.

Everything went fine for the first hour or so. Each crew member took his stalk and tied it to the end of his bunk. Then we heard the most god-awful scream come from the forward port-side crew quarters. One crew member hadn't checked his stalk very carefully, and a big black spider the size of a tarantula came out of the stalk. He threw his stalk over the side of the ship, but everybody got the word and made a very careful inspection of each stalk.

After loading, we thought the ship would ride better through the water, but the copper caused a snap-roll. In a storm off Cape Hatteras, N.C., it virtually eliminated pitch. Because of the heavy weight we didn't have pitch. All ships, as they travel through the sea, have pitch (up-and-down motion) and roll (side-to-side motion). This created a snap-roll effect, whereby the ship would snap-roll to one side for a minute or so and then snap-roll to the other side. The ship was then to proceed up to Panama and transit to the Atlantic side at Colon and pick up a convoy for New York.

Just off Cape Hatteras, in March of 1944, we ran into a hurricane. The ship began taking green water over the bow and the waves began crashing into the forward gun tub. The gun tub had armor-steel plate at a half-inch thickness. This was pushed in and squared off the front ring of the tub about one foot.

Standing watch on the bridge, which was 75 feet to the waterline, we estimated the waves between 55 to 75 feet from trough to crest. The ship arrived in New York Harbor safely enough, but we lost a lifeboat in the storm.

I was assigned first gangway watch after tying up to the pier on the middle of the Manhattan side. A Coast Guard Officer asked to come aboard. He asked me what ship this was, and I told him the S.S. Keith Vawter. He said his report showed out of convoy number such and such that one ship was lost in the hurricane, and they found a lifeboat drifting alone without survivors. He couldn't believe it.

The ship was in New York about two weeks unloading the copper, which all of us were glad to get rid of, and then reloading for the next trip. During this time the entire Naval gun crew, along with our gunnery officer, was taken out to the Naval Gun Range on Long Island on a lonely stretch of beach which was the training station for Armed Guard, Atlantic.

In addition to live gunnery practice at towed air-sleeve targets, we had some new training devices that had just been put into use that we didn't have at San Diego. They are listed below along with my score:

Subject	Grade	
1. Deflection Trainer	2.7	
2. Multiple Aim-Off Trainer	4.0	
3. Night Vision and Recognition	2.7	
4. Jim Handy Trainer	3.9	
5. Aircraft Recognition	0.6	
6. Shooting Range (Towed Air Sleeve)	3.4	
7. Waller Trainer	4.0	
TOTAL FOR EXAM		3.0

As you can see, I did pretty well over all except for Aircraft Recognition. This was the East Coast Training Center, and the planes that they flashed on the screen were all of the European Theater of Operation-German, Italian, French and British. Not one Japanese aircraft was shown; however, in San Diego all we had were Jap aircraft. The highest grade in our group was 1.2. Most everybody had about my score and less.

Except for the gunnery range, all these other training devices were all indoors in a large-type theater with the seats removed. Finally we were taken back to the ship after a couple of days and continued on shore leave.

Somehow the crew always seemed to have a source of "scuttlebutt" where the ship's next destination would be, and this was while we were still in port, even though this was secret information. The crew said we were going to Capetown, South Africa. Sure enough, after we dropped the pilot off at Ambrose Lightship, the Captain opened the sealed orders and announced that our destination was Capetown.

The ship went by convoy from New York to Trinidad, B.W.I. We then picked up another convoy which headed down the East Coast of South America. Then somewhere off the coast of Brazil one dark night we turned out of the convoy and proceeded southeast on a direct line to Capetown.

Our arrival in Trinidad was April 15, 1944, and we arrived in Capetown a month later on May 16th.

Capetown is a beautiful city down at the very southeast toe of Africa, where the Atlantic and Indian oceans meet. The Union of South Africa in those years was still part of the British Commonwealth.

The traffic in the town drove on the wrong side of the street or road (left) just like in England. We all had a hard time adjusting. Several times we yanked shipmates back onto the curb as they were looking the other way.

The people were very friendly and the restaurants were very good. There was no food rationing here like in England. We were in port over two weeks. We had plenty of daytime leave, but because of inter-service rivalries we could only go ashore in groups of six or more. We only had one incident. Outside a restaurant a bunch of "Limey" sailors tried to corner us; but some South Africans, who hated England, came to our rescue.

The ship received orders to proceed alone across the South Atlantic to Buenos Aires, Argentina. We arrived on June 17, 1944.

Buenos Aires is truly a delightful city. It is the same distance south of the equator as Los Angeles is north, only the seasons are in reverse.

This was a great city for American sailors. We were the first ship to arrive in over eight months, and everywhere we went the town was ours. We spent a lot of time at the American Club on Avenida de Florida. Everything here was free. We couldn't spend any money.

During this particular time the Argentine peso was trading four to our American dollar. The best meals in the finest restaurants were no more than a dollar, even less.

We left Buenos Aires on June 26th, after more than ten days in port, with a full load of corn grain. Our next destination was Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Entering the beautiful harbor of Rio by ship is really something to see. Off to the left is the high granite dome of Sugarloaf, and on a hill in back of the city is the tall statue of Christ with his outstretched arms, a sort of welcome to a strange land.

We were only in port four days, but we really made use of the leave time to visit and meet the very warm and friendly people. Sugarloaf became our favorite spot with a terrific restaurant on top overlooking Rio Harbor. At night it was even more spectacular.

The ship then raised anchor and departed on July 5th for Port of Spain, Trinidad. It took us 14 days steaming at just a little over 11 knots to reach Trinidad. Here we picked up another convoy on July 22nd for New Orleans, Louisiana, arriving up the Mississippi River on July 31, 1944. The entire Naval gun crew was detached on August 3rd and sent to the U.S. Naval Station, New Orleans, just long enough to have our orders cut and processed for leave. We were all given 21 days plus travel time.

First time home in almost a year. We all had to report back to Treasure Island by September 1st. On September 4th I put in for tankers, knowing that most all of them operated out of San Pedro, California, my home port. My application was approved and turned out to be the real plum in sea duty. Most all tankers for the Pacific Theater of War operated from either San Pedro or San Francisco. I was assigned to the S.S. Tillamook, which was tied up to the Mobil Oil refinery dock on Terminal Island, San Pedro. We met our new Gunnery Officer, Lt. Hal Hammons, who was formerly the D.A. of Ventura County, California. He chose the Navy and, after going through Officers' Training School, he was assigned to the Judge Advocate's Staff in Washington, D.C. His primary responsibility was defending Naval personnel charged with general displeasure of the Admiral, and was reassigned to Gunnery School in San Diego, too. This was his first ship and after being assigned to our gun stations and quarters he called a meeting of the entire Naval gun crew on the aft 5-inch .38-gun tub. (This was my assigned gun, and on tankers most everything was aft including the mess rooms.)

Instead of reading the Naval Regulation Manual to us as he was supposed to do for all first-time crew members, he told us about his previous "war" at the Judge Advocate's Office and told us not to be afraid to come to him with any problem, particularly if we got into trouble. He said he could probably get it straightened out.

When we went aboard ship we all noticed that the tanker was riding high in the water, completely empty, and no hoses were over the

side indicating either discharge or loading of fuel. Then after Lt. Hammons finished, he informed us that the ship was being sent to the Bethlehem Steel Company dry dock, just down the channel from our ship, to have the tubes in the condenser replaced and we would all be given two weeks leave as all quarters on the ship had to be secured while in dry dock.

Just having come off of leave this was too good to be true, and it didn't count on our record. Lt. Hammons issued us all passes with the return date left open. He said that he would be in touch with the Captain as to how progress of the work was proceeding and gave us his home telephone number and told us to call him on a certain date.

I returned the call on the date assigned and he informed me it would be another week at least as the shipyard workers were not on schedule. (Three weeks! Wow!) Sometime along about the 1st of October, 1944, our ship floated free from dry dock and went back up channel to the Shell Oil Refinery dock to load high-test aviation gasoline. This surely meant we were going where the action was.

After dropping the pilot off at the entrance to Los Angeles Harbor in San Pedro, the Captain informed the ship's company that we were going to Eniwetok, Marshall Islands, in the Central Pacific. We left Eniwetok sometime around October 25th with a D.E. and two S.C.'s all by our lonesome. We then knew we were a very high priority cargo. After we were at sea a few hours out of Eniwetok, the D.E. flashed by blinker light that our destination was Saipan Island in the Marianas.

Our arrival was November 6, 1944, at Tanapag Harbor on the upper west side of the island. For all of us aboard, this was our really first entrance into an active theater of war. Even "Tokyo Rose," a wartime propaganda radio announcer in Japan, called attention to our ship. We all wondered how she knew we had arrived. Certainly a sub or plane couldn't have made identification that easily. Later in the week we found out. After the invasion by the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions the Naval bombardment leveled everything on the island; however, the old sugar-mill stack somehow escaped shelling. The Japs had a spotter up on top. When the Marines discovered his presence, they placed demolition charges around the base of the stack and watched old "slant eyes" take a fall. I now include, at this point, my daily diary account of our stay at Saipan. This was the only day-by-day account I managed to record. On November 6, 1944, we received orders to proceed to the east side of the island to unload at Magicienne Bay, which is between the East Field (fighter strip) and Aslito Field, the B-29 base.

SAIPAN

November 6-7, 1944

We arrived in the bay opposite the East Field at about 1400 in the afternoon. Our ship proceeded to unload to a small oil barge which came alongside. By 2000 the barge was loaded and headed for another part of the bay. At 0100, on the morning of November 7th, the man on watch came into our quarters and told us that the air-raid siren had sounded and that the entire island was blacked out. Everyone immediately went to their gun station where we waited for further orders and watched the searchlights scanning the sky.

Approximately 15 minutes later, one of the shore batteries and nearby 40-mm ack-ack guns opened up on a target moving across the sky toward our ship. As the guns are fired by radar and radio control we were unable to see whether it was a plane or not. Large bursts of light flashed near the extreme end of the island as might indicate bombs.

Some minutes later a Jap twin-engine bomber, "Betty," flew across the East Field, very low, and directly over our ship. Reports later given out by the men stationed at the East Field said it was a "recon" plane trying to hunt out the B-29 strip to take pictures. It was my first experience of a real air raid and my first look at a Jap plane, and rather extremely close at that. The next morning we found that several Jap planes (Betties) had slipped through our outer defenses and had gotten past our P-61 "Black Widows," which are the only planes sent up for night fighting. Other reports said that they had fired one of our ships in the outer harbor, but outside of that no other damage was suffered.

November 8, 1944

Being anxious to get ashore to look around, our officer armed with a .45 pistol (this is the only way groups can go ashore as there are still loose Japs on the island) took a group of us ashore in the ship's launch.

We inspected Jap pillboxes, guns still in them, knocked out by our troops when we invaded the island. They were similar to our 4"-50-caliber guns which are in use in the Navy today.

We also found a cave with food and supplies, untouched by our troops and unused by the Japs. Everyone found a few souvenirs. The beachhead was especially littered with Jap and American equipment. Some of the fellows in the pillboxes, where we were, found a powder magazine with powder still in it and in good condition. They were straw fuses used for shells. After Lt. Hammons (our Commanding Officer) and some of the other fellows got a considerable distance away some of our group, not realizing the combustion that it would make, set it off. It blew up with considerable force. The Gunner's Mate and the two fellows with him covered considerable distance while the blowing-up was in progress. We ran back thinking someone might be killed or seriously injured, but when we got back to the pillbox they were standing around laughing at what had happened.

Of course, Lt. Hammons at the minute couldn't see what was so funny and gave them a bawling out. After sitting down and talking it over with them, we decided that it really was funny and got a kick out of it, too. Upon questioning our gunner's mate on what had happened, he explained that he had only lit one straw to see what could happen and before he knew it the whole damn works had gone off. The flames we saw from where we were shot up at least 30 to 40 feet. We hoped that no one around had seen the explosion, but a few minutes later a jeep pulled up with an Army Sergeant to find out what had happened as there was a high-octane-gasoline line not 20 yards away through which our ship was unloading its high-test gas for the airfield. The Sergeant thought that this line had blown. Our old man (Lt. Hammons) told the Sergeant that everything was okay and told our Gunner's Mate to get the hell out of there before he blew up the whole works.

We explored a few more caves where the Japs had been, and we could see and tell our men had a tough fight in trying to clean out these places as they were blown apart by hand grenades and finished off with flame throwers.

There are still 500, or around that many, Japs still loose on the island. They live back in the caves, which they say run for miles up and down like mine shafts, and are almost impossible to find or get at. They are in bands, not larger than 20 to 30 men, and every now and then when Marines go out to patrol they run across a few and usually get them. Everyone still goes around armed when walking, except on the roads, where it is pretty safe in the daytime.

The Marines get the credit for taking and fighting on Saipan, but the Army 27th Division had the toughest time and sustained the most casualties. The censor, back in the States, estimated and told the people we suffered four to 6,000 men dead or wounded; but the graveyard on the island has over 10,000 graves, not counting wounded.

The Marines established the beachheads and drove the Japs to the hills where the Army 27th had the hardest part of clearing them out. There is one place not far from the East Field, which I saw, called "Bloody Gulch," where the Army boys were trapped and lost most of their men. Around the 15th of the month the Marines are going out to clear out the Japs for the last time. I wouldn't be surprised that a few more are not killed.

November 9, 1944

In the morning I came ashore with one other fellow who took me up to the Army 537th Quartermaster Salvage Repair Company, where we had been the day before. There he introduced me to a bunch of boys who were veterans of the Saipan Campaign. I met one Joe in particular whose name is Hamer. He told me that his mother had come from Germany. We struck up quite a friendship and we spent the remainder of the day together. He asked his corporal if it was all right if he didn't come to work that afternoon as he wanted to show me around the island. Well, the "Non Com," being a nice guy, said he wouldn't say yes or no, but if he took off right after dinner he would not, naturally, know where he was. Of course, that was all Hamer wanted to know. I had dinner with the Army boys, and being my first meal at an Army post and Army chow, I had a good time. The poor guys had really pretty bum chow, but being a change from the ship and eating out of Army mess gear I liked it a lot. One Joe, at the other end of the table, asked me, "How in hell can you eat that stuff?" After chow we set off on our tour of sightseeing of the island of Saipan.

We, or rather he, showed me the East Field first, where the Army fighter strip is. Based there are "Republic P-47's," "Thunderbolt" fighters and one night-fighter squadron of P-61's (Black Widows). These P-61's are flown by radar. They carry crews of three men and look something like a P-38. A crew chief let me sit in the cockpit of both. The "Thunderbolt" I sat in was flown by Lt. Babcock, who had his name on the left side of the fuselage, and was serviced by Staff Sgt. Powell who let me sit inside the plane. He also had his name on the plane, on the right side. Up on the cowl, on each side of the engine, was painted a big blue circle and inside was the picture of a little baby tiptoeing on a cloud like he was sneaking up on another plane, probably a Jap. It was called "My Baby".

From the East Field we went down to Charan Kanoa, where the B-29's are based that bombed Japan. I asked the Staff Sergeant if I could see inside one. He told me that I could look in through the open bomb bays, but that the rest of the ship was restricted. It is one of the most beautiful I have ever seen. It can outrun a Jap Zero and fly further with a full bomb load than any other plane in the world.

Then we walked down to the edge of the field where a Jap bomber, "Betty," like the one that flew over us, was shot down. It had landed in a hospital tent and killed six of our men. They never knew what hit them. We could still see the beds ripped and torn apart, with some of their clothes strewn all over the beds. I got two pieces of metal off the "Rising Sun" for souvenirs.

Again we proceeded to Garapan where the Japs had their little village or town. There were quite a few homes, and nice-looking ones too, but every house was bombed and strafed by our fighters as Jap snipers lived in them long after the main body had surrendered the town. I saw the internment camp where the Japs that were captured are kept. It is guarded by Marine Special Police with submachine guns. The "Sons of the Rising Sun" are now living a better life than they ever knew before in their whole lives. We give them better food than they have ever had before.

The Jap soldier hates the Marine and the Marine hates the Jap soldier, which is only natural. The Jap will talk with Army or Navy men through the fence, but the minute a Marine comes up he will walk away. The Marines would like to kill every one of them, and the Japs know it and are scared. The Japs that were on Saipan were of the Imperial Forces, which are considered a higher class than we have run across thus far. They are well-educated and many can speak perfect English.

We went down to the beach where the Marines made their landing and saw both ours and the enemy's tanks "shot to hell". There must have been around 500 of them. Many of ours are being repaired for further use, but they are a scant few. I noticed throughout the whole island that the Jap equipment was much more inferior to ours. Their tanks, so the Marines say, never saw action as they were quickly knocked out by light fire from our .50's and hand grenades. On the whole island, with all the men and supplies they had, they didn't have over ten trucks and these were early models of Ford make. Now, with forty to 42,000 troops of our own on the island we have thousands, and every one has a particular use. Our troops are much better equipped than the Japs. We have everything from "Jeeps" to "Semis". The Army Engineers have built large and wonderful roads that are as fine as any in the States, and have lengthened and paved the airstrips which the Japs had. The defenses are profound and potent to any Jap plane which flies near it.

Coming back I saw Jap tanks and climbed inside one. The motor had been blown back into the driver's seat and the tracks had been ripped off. The progress of our touring consisted of hitchhiking, which is very fast on the island. It is a law with the truck drivers (Army and Navy) to pick up all men.

All the time the Japs knew that this was a strategic base. Why it wasn't more fortified than it was is something we may never know. It is right in the Japs' backyard, and they will feel the effects of the bombings more and more as the planes are shifted from the European area.

It was one of the most interesting times I have ever spent, and I think I can safely say I have seen as much as anyone, except for actual fighting, as anyone who is stationed there himself.

The Jap civilians that were on the island when we came in are much more friendly than the Jap soldiers who were captured. They can leave the internment during the daytime, under armed guards, to work with the soldiers at the different camps. Our men call them "gooks". We pay them 35 cents a day. Some are allowed to farm and use very primitive means still. Since the Japs refuse to work for the Marines, they have to do all of their own work themselves and have done a very fine job of everything they have done.

In coming back to the beach, where our launch was, an Army truck stopped to pick us up. It was full of Jap prisoners. I can see now why the Marines would like to kill every damn one of them. It is the closest I have ever been to them and I hope, if I ever do

again, the circumstances will be the same. A Marine told me that when his outfit landed that the companies with the most prisoners were considered the softest bunch of fighters.

It was estimated that after the island was taken that twice as much ammunition was used as in any comparable campaign so far. When the Japs knew that they were beaten, they headed for the cliffs where many committed suicide. On one occasion a platoon of Marines had quite a few Japs surrounded. They came out with their hands up and stripped. (Incidentally, this is the only way the Marines will take prisoners.) When they reached open ground they opened up on them with machine-gun fire and killed every Jap while the officer was shouting orders, but (funny thing) later they said that they did not hear him at all. Another incident happened when a Marine was detailed to go to a forward element and bring back two Jap prisoners that were wanted at headquarters for questioning. Later the same Marine, upon reporting back empty-handed, was asked why. He said, "One Jap ran for it. So I shot the one next to me so he couldn't jump me while I shot the other one." Many other such incidents have happened, such as these, and the motto of many platoons is: "No prisoners." In France the case was just reversed, where individual men competed with one another to see who could get the most German prisoners. In some cases this ran very high.

I am glad to say that I have been here, and to have seen how we took the island and just how we have had to fight the "sons of guns" on their home ground.

Our ship brought 130-octane-aviation gasoline for the B-29's which required this higher-octane fuel. We were told that our ship brought fuel for the first 100-plane raid on Tokyo, Japan. Years later, 42 to be exact, in a book given to me by my attorney, I read in "A Torch to the Enemy," by Martin Caidin, on Page 45, last paragraph, quote: "On November 24, 1944, 100 B-29 bombers took off from Saipan to launch the first heavy-bomber attack against the City of Tokyo." I now feel that our ship really contributed to the fall of Japan even in a small way. Also, on further, "On November 7, nine twin-engine Japanese bombers - 'Betties' - came in on the deck to strike at the East Field fighter strip and Aslito Field. Little damage was done and the enemy lost three planes."

Thirty-four years later, to almost the day, Gloria and I toured the Central Pacific in 1978; and on Saipan, at Magicienne Bay, I sat on the beach and looked out at about the spot where our ship anchored. The gun emplacements were still there, but the guns were gone. Except for Magicienne Bay, everything had changed. The old B-29 strip at Aslito Field was now paved to 12,000 feet in length. Japan Air Lines was now flying DC-10 and 747 Super Air Transports in with full plane loads of people.

We drove over to the old East Field which was 5,000 feet in length, but now only had about 3,000 feet of usable strip due to the brush growing up through the cracks in the pavement. If you leave something alone long enough, nature takes over and will eventually return it to its natural setting.

After discharging our fuel, we pulled up anchor for San Pedro for another load. On the way back we stopped off for two days at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. This was a welcome sight after Saipan. We had plenty of leave, but we had to be back aboard ship by 1800 due to wartime restrictions and curfew.

We left after several days and arrived in San Pedro in early December, 1944. The ship loaded very fast, in 36 hours, and off again to Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, in the South Pacific. (Not

enough time in port to make Christmas.) After dropping the pilot outside L.A. Harbor, a message appeared on the ship's bulletin board. (I saved some of these messages, which I have placed in my Navy album.) It reads: "NOTICE: Vessel is bound for Lunga Point, Guadalcanal Island, in the Solomons. Expected time of arrival is 0900, Sunday, December 31, 1944."

Later in the trip, another message appeared: "NOTICE: This vessel will cross the Equator in Longitude 172°-25' West at 1700 on Wednesday, December 20, 1944." All pollywogs (those who have never crossed the Equator) are initiated into the Ancient Order of the Deep. Plans were made, and by seafaring tradition everybody from the Captain on down the line to the ordinary Seaman must go through this ceremony if they can't prove they are members. Davy Jones and King Neptune Rex, Rulers of the Ragging Main, are selected. They can be officers and crew alike, although every time our ship "crossed the line," the Members of the Court were always enlisted men. Probably because we had the most votes. Having completed a very humiliating ordeal, you then become a Shellback and are given a card to signify you are a member. You must present this card or some written proof that you are a member or otherwise you must submit to re-initiation. You guard this card with your life.

Again on December 22nd another notice appeared: "This vessel will cross the 180th Meridian - International Date Line - at 1200 today. Consequently, Saturday will be omitted and tomorrow will be Sunday, December 24th." Christmas at sea, but much different than the year before. Tankers are and were noted for their good food, and our ship was no exception. The Christmas menu on board the S.S. Tillamook of 1944 included fresh turkey with all the trimmings, ham with glaze sauce and for those who wanted neither of these items there were top sirloin steaks cooked to order. There was an Admiralty Sea Law that no liquor was allowed aboard any U.S. seagoing ship; however, our Captain waived this rule and gave every officer and crew member a bottle of whiskey as his Christmas gift to the crew. Strangely, not one single member of the ship's company made the Captain sorry he did this. We had great loyalty toward him and for this we never betrayed his trust in us.

After Christmas at sea our arrival at Guadalcanal was New Year's Eve day, 1944 (December 31st).

We anchored off Lunga Point for a few days until the Port Director's Office decided where we were to unload. Finally, they decided to have us proceed across "Iron Bottom Sound" to Tulagi on Florida Island.

Here we heard about a native village up a freshwater river right near where our ship anchored.

A bunch of us asked for the ship's launch and went up the river to the village. We met the Chief and the villagers, who were very friendly. (I have a picture of us, along with the Chief, in my Navy Service Album.)

The Chief took all of us out through the jungle to a clearing where the village grew some crops and pineapples. Using a machete, they sliced pineapple for us right off the stalk. It was sultry and hot and the pineapple tasted very nice.

The Chief told us the Japs were very cruel, but the natives knew the jungle better than the Japs did and occasionally would find a straggler and kill him and strip him of his gun, ammo and equipment.

Eventually, they all became well-equipped and gave the Japs a rough time. They even saw to it that any downed U.S. Naval pilots were returned to our subs offshore.

Our ship unloaded onto a Naval Oiler and then proceeded back to San Pedro for more "liquid cargo". Our arrival at San Pedro was January 20, 1945.

When we arrived back at San Pedro, the ship had some mechanical problems that had to be taken care of by the shipyard before we could continue our travels. We were given passes for usually two days at a time. Then one day, on February 3, 1945, as we reported back at 12 noon, an officer was talking to our Gunnery Officer on the bridge deck. We knew something was up. After all hands had reported aboard, Lt. Hammons read orders of detachment for one-half of the gun crew. My name was included. The Navy now reached the conclusion that only one-half of the guns needed to be manned with only half the men. If this makes sense, then that meant that the ship, if ever under attack, would have less to fight back with than before. To show you how crazy the Navy was, we were taken off the ship on February 4, 1945, transported by Navy personnel truck to the Naval Station on Terminal Island, only two miles down the channel from our ship. We were told not to unpack as we would be reassigned to another ship the following morning. After breakfast we assembled in front of our barracks (these were newly built and very comfortable) and taken to another tanker tied up right behind the ship we had just come from. Our new ship was another T-2 Tanker, the S.S. Ticonderoga. These new T-2 tankers were 56,000-bbl. capacity with the new General Electric steam turbine engines. We would cruise -- fully loaded -- at 19 knots, which was quite a fair speed in those war years.

Anyway, here we were behind the ship we had just left, with a full gun crew. Why they took us ashore for one night and then took us back, only the Navy knew. We were lucky in this respect. Going aboard the Ticonderoga all the Naval gun crew had been changed, even our gunnery officer. We didn't have to "war" with "old salts".

We had another good Naval Officer, Lt. Floyd Stevenson. After reporting aboard ship we were given our gun assignments. The next day our Gunnery Officer held gun inspection. This was always done to see what condition they were in and also so we could draw on parts from the Naval Station before we sailed.

Our ship somehow fell through the "crack" so to speak. The aft gun stations were normally fitted with the 5"-38-caliber gun. They were electrically operated for fast action and could be manually operated also in case of power failure. (Aboard fleet ships they were radar-operated.) They are known as dual-purpose guns, surface and air. They can be elevated from -15 deg. to +85 deg.

The gun on our ship was a 5"-50-caliber deck gun only (no aircraft capability) of pre-World War I vintage. It could only elevate from 0 deg. to +45 deg.

When the inspection was made on our gun, the entire 5" gun crew stood by. The recoil cylinder was leaking fluid, which indicated a "shot" recoil mechanism. The gun was completely torn down in the breech and recoil cylinder. The gun was determined to be unsafe for firing. If the recoil cylinder doesn't work right, the barrel cannot return to battery. In other words, when the gun is fired, the barrel recoils due to the explosive charge of the powder. The shock is taken up by the recoil cylinder, which in turn allows the barrel to return to the proper position for firing. In the case of our gun, if it was fired, it could conceivably not return to battery but linger in the rear position. Our officer put in for new parts and new recoil cylinder fluid (a mixture of two different types of oil). He also wrote a report and sent it off to the Head Gunnery Officer at the Terminal Island Naval Station. He was afraid that this gun, if fired, could cause injuries or even death of a crew member or even the entire 5" gun crew.

All ships were given an allowance of expendable practice ammunition. Most gunnery officers tended to save this monthly allowance until we entered a War Zone, thereby giving us fresh and longer practice, sometimes carried out over a week of practice.

Lt. Stevenson told us that the Captain was continually on him to fire the aft gun. All the other gun positions on the ship had some practice, including the 3"-50-caliber gun on the bow. Finally, Lt. Stevenson gave in. He told the Captain that the only way to fire the gun would be from broadside, not dead astern. The reason being that the gun was so rigid. It was mounted on the deck plates and welded. In addition, it was mounted on supporting "I" steel cross-beams underneath the gun.

The Captain reasoned, quite logically, that if a sub was surfaced at night and was following us on the surface, we should be able to defend the ship from that quarter.

The Captain had the ship's carpenter shop make us a raft approximately 10 feet by 5 feet with a high-canvas-type sail painted in zinc chromate yellow for a bull's-eye. This would stand out and make an excellent target to shoot at.

The day arrived. It was determined that this action would start sometime around 1000 so as to be finished before noon Mess. We were all at our gun positions, even the rest of the gun crew, even though they would not participate in the gunnery practice of the aft 5" gun.

The Captain slowed the ship down until we were almost dead in the water, then the deck crew, very carefully, lowered the target into the sea until it floated free of the ship. Then the ship revved up to cruise speed (approximately 19 knots) and when the target was 1,500 - 2,000 yards aft, we were to fire.

The Gunnery Officer took his position on the rear side of the flying bridge along with the Captain and a "Talker". Our officer had the long-range (high-powered) binoculars, and he clearly estimated range and elevation. Wind this day was not a factor. This information was relayed by the "Talker" on the bridge to the "Talker" in our gun tub, who in turn called out the numbers loud and strong to the "Pointer" and "Trainer" on the gun. The Petty Officer gave the word to load and "Stand by" to fire. Finally when the target was at proper range, the word was given to "fire." The person on "fire control" pulled the trigger on the firing mechanism. A 30-caliber cartridge is used to activate the powder charge (without a bullet). The concussion was terrific. All members were seen standing with backs to the gun and with their fingers in their ears. This was just like a Laurel and Hardy movie. We looked and acted very unprofessional. Actually it was a good thing we did this. The blast outside near the muzzle of the gun blasted all the asbestos off all the steam pipes in the vicinity and broke some of the machinery loose on the aft deck below the gun tub that is used in docking the ship. Inside, and directly underneath the gun tub was the Officers' Mess and next to it was the Merchant Crews' Mess. It looked like the ship had been hit with a direct hit. The two mess rooms were fitted with wood paneling on all bulkheads and overheads. These rooms were in a real mess. All of the paneling was down on top of the tables, which had been set for the noon meal. The Mess Stewards were trying to extricate themselves from the rubble.

The Navy Mess was not affected because it was well ahead of the gun tub and forward of the Merchant Mess on the port side of the ship. When the Gunnery Officer and the Captain were informed of the damage, they went racing back aft to survey the damage and the whole situation. When the Captain saw the condition of the aft

decks and the Officers' and Merchant Mess rooms, all he could say was, "I'll be damned." "I'll be a son-of-a-bitch." "Jesus Christ." "What a son-of-a-bitch," etc. The deck crew got to work and had both Mess rooms cleared of debris in an hour or so.

Now for the "shot heard round the world." The shell went over the target about 50 yards (very close for that range). If we could have had a second shot, we probably could have hit it, but that was not to be. Later, we all wondered what some other ship would think coming that way, sighting the "unidentified target two points off the starboard bow."

O.D. (Officer of the Deck): "Captain, unidentified object ahead. Can't make it out, Sir."

CAPTAIN: "Let me have a look. Can't make it out either."

O.D.: "Sir, could it be a sub running partially submerged?"

CAPTAIN: "Quartermaster, steer 180 deg. left."

O.D.: "Crow's nest, can you make recognition?"

CROW'S NEST: "Negative, Sir. Still unidentifiable."

CAPTAIN (2 hours later): "Secure from General Quarters, but keep a sharp lookout."

Anyway, two days later, on February 6, 1945, we sailed for Eniwetok, Marshall Islands. We stopped over in Pearl Harbor for a day to pick up a D.E. escort, this time minus the two sub chasers. (War was coming along real fine by now, but not over by a long shot.)

From Pearl, we headed on to the Marshalls. We arrived at Eniwetok on February 21st and dropped anchor in the very large atoll, the third largest in the Pacific. The ship then received orders to proceed with D.E. escort and two sub chasers to Ulithi Atoll in the Western Caroline Islands, arriving on March 3rd. We unloaded our fuel alongside an English aircraft carrier and then on March 6th set sail again back to the States, supposedly for San Pedro, but between Hawaii and the Mainland we received a radio change of orders to change course for San Francisco.

Arrival was March 23rd. We tied up across the Bay, in Vallejo, at the Union Oil Refinery. Again, only a few days in port and set course for Ulithi Atoll on March 28th. We thought we were now going to make "milk runs," but at Ulithi Atoll on April 15th we only dropped anchor for an hour while we picked up another tanker, a D.E. escort and two S.C.'s, destination Palau. While at Palau, we didn't unload but were told to stand by for new orders. These came on April 18th. And again with the same escorts, we were told we were headed for Leyte Gulf to support air operations at Tacloban, Leyte Gulf, Philippine Islands.

Now it was becoming very boring. When we arrived in Leyte, we anchored out a mile or more from shore. There were already 50 or more ships ahead of us, tankers and freighters. We had to take our turn. The weather was very hot, over 90 deg. F during the day and 87 deg. F at night, with occasional rain squalls and humidity of almost 100 percent.

Now an incident occurred which really shook us up somewhat. A launch pulled alongside our ship one day and a Navy Chief Petty Officer came aboard and asked to see our Gunnery Officer. He told Lt. Stevenson he was authorized to relieve the ship of around half the Navy crew. Lt. Stevenson asked to see his authority and the

chief backed down. The "old man" got really mad, we had never seen him like this before, and said only the Commanding Officer, Armed Guard Center, Pacific, had such authority and that he was jeopardizing the safety of the ship; and told him to get his "ass" off the ship. After the chief left, our officer thought he might come back and authorized the breaking out of 30-caliber rifles, loaded, and had our Navy crew stand guard at the ladder. Luckily, the next day we received orders to discharge cargo and left Leyte on May 6th for San Pedro, California.

Later, out of Leyte a few days, we were talking with Lt. Stevenson about the incident and wondered how many young Naval gunnery officers this Chief was able to con out of ship's personnel to man his "ballistic" or his special domain. We now knew we had an officer who would stick up for the crew.

The ship arrived back in San Pedro on May 25th and was only in port four days. This time we tied up at the Union Oil Terminal, which made it very easy for me to go out the Main Gate of the Terminal and hitch a ride up to Los Angeles.

We sailed at midnight of May 29th and again headed for Ulithi, Caroline Islands. Arrived back at the atoll on June 17th. The war was now drawing to a close, although we didn't know how soon. We discharged cargo into another empty T-2 Tanker and set sail across the Pacific for Balboa, Panama Canal Zone.

Arrived at entrance of Panama Canal on July 17th, and the next morning transited the Canal to Colon. Here we were told that since the war was over in Europe we could travel unescorted with running lights at night. Our destination - Chester, Pennsylvania and dry dock.

Well, after exiting the Canal, we sailed on alone up through the Windward Passage with Cuba off to port and Puerto Rico off to starboard. We arrived in Chester, Pennsylvania on July 27, 1945, and were then taken by tugs over to the Sun Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Company for dry dock. We were relieved by another complete gun crew on August 8, 1945. This was the last time I would ever go to sea in the Navy. We were taken by truck to the B & O Station and went up to New York, where we were met by another Navy truck and taken to the U.S. Naval Armed Guard Center (New York) at the old Brooklyn Navy Yard and held overnight while our orders were cut for leave. This time a full 30 days plus 6 days travel time.

The next day the crew went off in different directions; however, six of us were heading back to our homes on the West Coast. Included was our Gunnery Officer, Lt. Stevenson. We were able to make connection on the then swift and beautiful streamliner of the New York Central Railroad, the "Pathfinder," to Chicago.

After settling down in our assigned coach car, we began drifting to the parlor car or bar. Along came all the "gang" and our officer. We placed two tables together and had ourselves one hell of a party. We closed the bar that night. We all said "goodbye and smooth sailing" and this and that. The next morning we arrived at Union Station, Chicago. I proceeded to make reservations for the connecting streamliner to Los Angeles on the City of Los Angeles, a deluxe train on the Union Pacific RR.

I was informed that it was all sold out. I called Mother at home in L.A. and told her of my predicament. She told me to call her back in one hour. In the meantime, while I was away at war, an officer of Union Pacific had rented one of my folks' studio apartments and was in charge of Passenger Traffic for the railroad. I called back, and Mother had caught him at his office in L.A. He told her to have me call the U.P. Station Superintendent, at Union Station, and that a ticket would be waiting. This I did, and boarded the train that afternoon for home.

Now for another "sea story," this time aboard the City of Los Angeles streamliner. While on the train, August 9, 1945 was a day to be long remembered. This was the second atomic bomb dropped on the City of Nagasaki, Japan. Word came over the radio in the

parlor car that the war in the Pacific was just days away from being over; not only the Pacific war, but the whole World War II. Coincidentally, the Prohibition Party Candidate from the last election was riding on the train and was also in the parlor car when the word was flashed over the radio. He immediately ordered a round of drinks for everyone in the car. We all thought this was very amusing.

Home again for a month. What a time it was to be home when the war ended. I had picked up my date out in the San Fernando Valley early, around 6:00 p.m., and by the time we got to Hollywood Boulevard the traffic was in complete gridlock. Knowing my way around the area, I was able to dodge around side streets and make it over to our home.

By now I had accumulated enough points that I didn't have to go overseas again, but not enough to be discharged. I reported back to Treasure Island around the 10th of September and on September 14, 1945, I was assigned to shore duty and to the Naval Post Office on Treasure Island.

This was soft duty. I only had one duty night every 30 days. While at the N.P.O. we had an "old salt" of a Chief in charge. We had a Commanding Officer who had never shown up, not even once. Well, one day the Chief yelled out to everyone to shut down the P.O., the C.O. was paying a visit in one hour. We hurried around cleaning up what we could. When the C.O. walked in, we couldn't believe our eyes. Here was the most beautiful gal we thought we had ever seen. Her name was Lt. Barbara Corkern, an ex-Powers model. She wanted to know how we were doing and if we had any "bitches" - Naval slang for complaints. Most of us just sat around with our mouths open.

We didn't see the C.O. again until about sometime around the 1st of March, 1946. We shut the post office down completely for the visit. She had a roster of all personnel. She then told us the Navy was shutting down this P.O. and moving everything over to the Main Fleet Post Office in San Francisco. She asked each and every one of us how many service points we had. When she got to me, I was lacking just a half a point for discharge. She said she would talk to the Captain and see if she could get me the half point. (We all asked for her picture, which I have in my service photograph album). A couple of days later the Chief came up to me and told me to report to the Administration Office on the double and report to Lt. Goldsmith. Upon reporting, the Lieutenant informed me that the Commanding Officer, Captain C.B. Castello, had authorized my discharge and that I was being sent home on 17 days leave and to keep in touch with the Records Section of the U.S. Naval Separation Center, Terminal Island, California. They gave me the person's name and telephone number to call.

After arriving home, I was only there a few days when I was informed that my records had arrived from Treasure Island and to report for discharge immediately.

Discharge was to take three days. Upon reporting, I was assigned to Group #2936. We were placed in a former B.O.Q. (Bachelor Officers' Quarters). Very nice after barracks. We were told that we would be there three days and there would be NO LEAVE. Funny thing, as I was walking down the hallway I passed in front of the office for the discharges. Who should be sitting at one of the desks but an old classmate of mine from Harvard School, Pat O'Melveney. We exchanged the usual pleasantries and then he asked when I got in. I told him. He then said, "Would you like a pass to leave the base?" I had to be back by 0800 the next morning for processing. Again the next evening I went home, and on the following day I walked through the Main Gate a civilian.

The Navy is required to give you enough money to your home from the base. My travel allowance was \$1.75, just enough if I had to take the bus up to L.A. I was Honorably Discharged March 25, 1946, thus ending an important chapter in my life thus far.

He knows Mideast

'Worst place I've ever been,' says ex-seaman

By Franklin Scarborough
THE SALISBURY POST

To most people, Iraq and Kuwait may just be some small countries outlined on a world map in the Middle East.

But to Everett G. Harrison the two countries, along with others, stand out vividly. He was there several times during World War II as a member of the U.S. Navy's Armed Guard aboard merchant ships.

"I didn't like it over there then, and I don't think I'd like it much better now," he says.

It was during those war years that his ships touched about all of the ports that border the Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and other waters in that part of the world. Harrison, who lives at 3040 Statesville Blvd., is not alone in his memories of the days when slow, pitching merchantmen, loaded with war materials crossed the seas in convoy, many times zigzagging to make it harder for enemy submarines to line up their sights.

The ninth annual reunion of Armed Guard members held in Chicago this past June 10 drew more than 800 of the sailors who manned the guns aboard the vessels.

"We now have over 7,200 names of former Armed Guard members on computerized lists," Harrison said. The men also have helped retired merchant seamen restore two Liberty ships as memorials to the craft that hauled the cargoes during the war. The SS Jeremiah O'Brien is docked in San Francisco and the S.S. John Brown is in Baltimore. The Brown is scheduled for her annual run down the Chesapeake Bay in the near future.

Harrison had planned to make the trip and had purchased the \$150 ticket, but will probably be unable to go because of a conflict, he said.

A 'green' sailor

After taking boot training at Norfolk, Va., Harrison went to gunnery school for two weeks. Then he was sent to the Armed Guard Center on 32nd Street and 1st Avenue in New York, where he found 100 or so more Armed Guard members.

He had never been to sea before in his life when he went aboard the S.S. Mormacutan in Staten Island, N.Y. "I was as green a sailor as a man ever was," he said. That was in March 1942. The gun crew consisted of six men and an officer, who stayed with them for three days. Then the officer left and they were on their own.

"For guns," the veteran sailor said, "we had an old 4-inch, 50 Spanish American War gun on the stern and two 50-caliber, water-cooled machine guns on the flying bridge. And that was all!"

The ship left port and went to Cape Town, South Africa, and back up the Indian Ocean through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal.

"We saw lots of wreckage from ships that had been hit," he said, "and we heard lots of reports of submarine warfare, but we were lucky. We didn't run into any confrontations with the enemy on this trip."

He credits that partly because the ship was a C-2 type and had a good speed of 15 or 16 knots. "And with a good tail wind we could probably do 18," he added.

Air raids

In the Suez they had some air raids but escaped uninjured. This time they came around the Cape of Good Hope again, through a storm and back up the South Atlantic and into Baltimore.

The second ship he was on was the Col. Fred C. Johnson, a small transport. There was a full gun crew on this one of 28 men and an officer. "We had a five-inch, 50 on the stern, a three-inch, 50 on the bow and eight 20-millimeter antiaircraft guns," he said. We also had volunteer help from the merchant crew to pass ammunition and so on."

They went aboard the ship in New York, went down the coast to Charleston, S.C., and to Bermuda and back to Norfolk. From there they went to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Jamaica and through the Panama Canal to Panama City, where the ship took on a load of troops and carried them south of the equator to some islands off Ecuador. They made 13 trips doing this.

"We didn't see any real action down there because it was too far away from the war," Harrison said. "But we were always ready because we never knew when we might run into a Japanese submarine."

Harrison stayed on the ship 14 or 15 months. When he left the vessel, he came back through the Panama Canal on a navy transport that took him back to Boston, Mass. From there he went to New York and got a leave to go home. That was in 1943.

While on leave that November he married his high school sweetheart, Rachel Cashion. And following that leave he reported back to New York and went aboard the SS Eli Whitney, a Liberty ship. It was on this vessel that he made four runs to the Middle East, with three trips into the Persian Gulf.

"That's the worst place I've ever been in my life," he said. "I've seen temperatures of 130 degrees. One trip, however, was in February, and it was cold."

"One of the so-called waterways they have now was nothing more than a river at that time," he said. The ship grounded on a sandbar there and had to discharge some cargo to get off the ground. Then they went on to Basra, Iraq. "And that place was just absolutely awful," he declared.

Following those trips, the ship came back to New Orleans. He was leading petty officer and elected to stay with the vessel, which immediately went to Panama again, riding out a hurricane that lasted three or four days.

Back through the Canal, the ship steamed toward the South Pacific to New Guinea, where they waited 72 days for the invasion of the Philippines.

The cargo was unloaded and the ship headed toward the Philippines and straight to Layte Island.

"I thought we were going to Okinawa, but instead we came back to Hawaii and from there to San Francisco."

That was in 1945, and he left the ship there. Germany had surrendered, and Japan was well on

its way to defeat, he explained.

He recalls many times when his convoy was attacked by 20 to 30 German planes. "With 60- to 100-ship convoys, we had pretty good air coverage," he said. "We could send up a pretty good barrage."

He recalls one time, however, his ship was 5 miles from another boat that got hit. The vessel was loaded with ammunition and bombs and went up in "a ball of fire and smoke." There were no survivors, he said. He felt the shock waves from the blast, he said, even at that distance.

Retired for the past six years, he says he works harder now than he did before. There's always something to do, especially in his large

garden on the back of his spacious lot.

His daughter, Patricia, is a teacher at East Montgomery High School, and his other daughter, Cathy Cable, is an animal control officer. Son Michael and his family live in the Spring Hills section, and Tim and his family live up near the proposed hazardous waste site. "Which shows why I have a sign in my yard," Harrison said. There are also seven grandchildren.

He had been looking forward to this upcoming trip on the S.S. John Brown down Chesapeake Bay. And even though he might not get to make that, he has plans to attend the May 1991 reunion of Armed Guard members in Baltimore.



Harrison says he didn't like the Persian Gulf when he was there in World War II.

Everett G. Harrison, 3040 Statesville Blvd., Salisbury, NC 28144



Lone Sailor

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