MY DISSERTATION

ARIE KORPORAAL

DEDICATION

IF TEARS COULD BUILD A STAIRWAY

AND MEMORIES A LANE,

I'D WALK RIGHT UP TO HEAVEN

AND BRING YOU HOME AGAIN!

* * *

(JEG ELSKER DEG!)

Arie Korporaal

February 13, 1916 – August 7, 2007

FORWARD

That was the way it was with my Dad and I when it came to things related to war. "His" war, World War II or "mine", the Vietnam War. As my brother, sister and I were growing up I remember few details of his career except the times we met his ships returning from sea. We spoke little about details of his time in the service.

I was a college student, a child of the 60s , and the Vietnam War was in full swing. I was classified 1A several times and each time received a deferment. Admittedly, I wasn't too interested at the time in talking about any war, present or past.

Every word in this dissertation is my Dad's own … it has been edited only for punctuation, typographical errors, and for a few sentences that were garbled in the original document file. This version of the document has been published in Apple Inc.'s .ibooks format for viewing on an iPad. In addition, a PDF version is available. Both versions are available on the Internet.

In 1987 the United States Navy Memorial was dedicated to preserve the rich tradition and heritage that parallel the history of the Navy and the history of the United States. The Memorial proposed a Navy Log that would list every navy man or woman who served. Each person's record could include a picture, dates of service and rank attained.

The original log was stored on then-new technology, an array of laser discs. Individual records could be retrieved in a matter of seconds. Because the database was accessible by anyone with a connection to the Internet, the data could be viewed nearly anywhere in the world with an Internet connection.

The Navy Log was able to hold additional data about a sailor's career: significant duty stations and significant medals or ribbons. Some years back I had asked my Dad to give me his five most significant assignments while he was in the U.S. Navy. I also asked if he would give me five of his most significant ribbons that he earned after a naval career of 25 years. I told him no more and we spoke very little about it afterwards. I mentioned little because I wanted to sponsor an entry into the Navy Log and make it a surprise gift on Christmas.

I never received the duty stations and ribbons I asked for until many years later. That request resulted in *My Dissertation*, which you are about to read. It took my Dad

several years to complete this work–nearly 20 years, in fact, and certainly long after I requested the information.

Nonetheless, I submitted the information I could get from my Mom and most of those duty stations, significant sea battles, and medals or ribbons were details she couldn't remember.

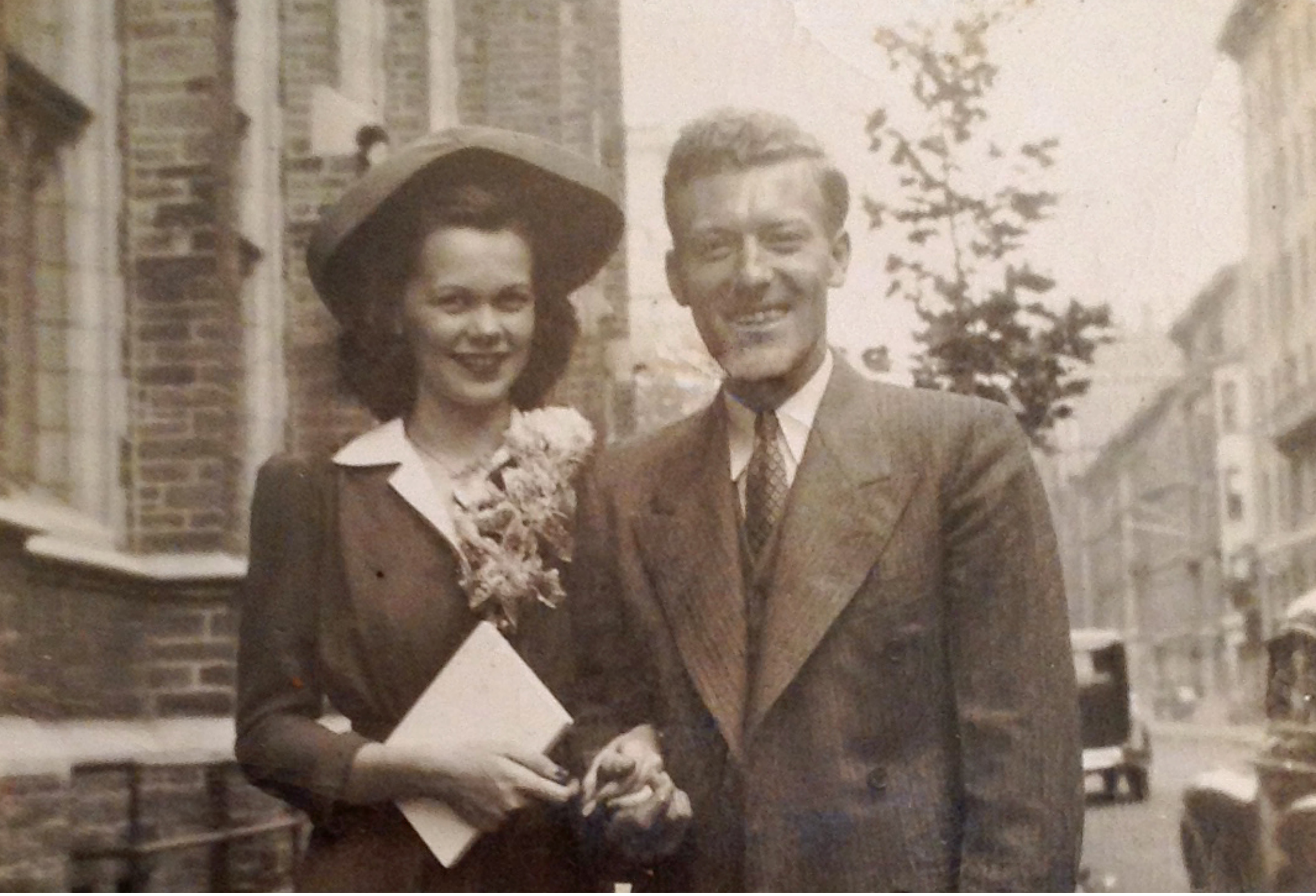
As a consequence, his online log includes precious little information: name, rank, dates of service.

He finished his work. I'll have to finish mine.

Arie "Skip" Korporaal

You can visit his Navy Log online at:
http://www.navymemorial.org/NavyLog/LogView/tabid/127/Default.aspx?&navy_log_id=325672

This dissertation is available in iBook format at:
http://beyondautomaticmode.com



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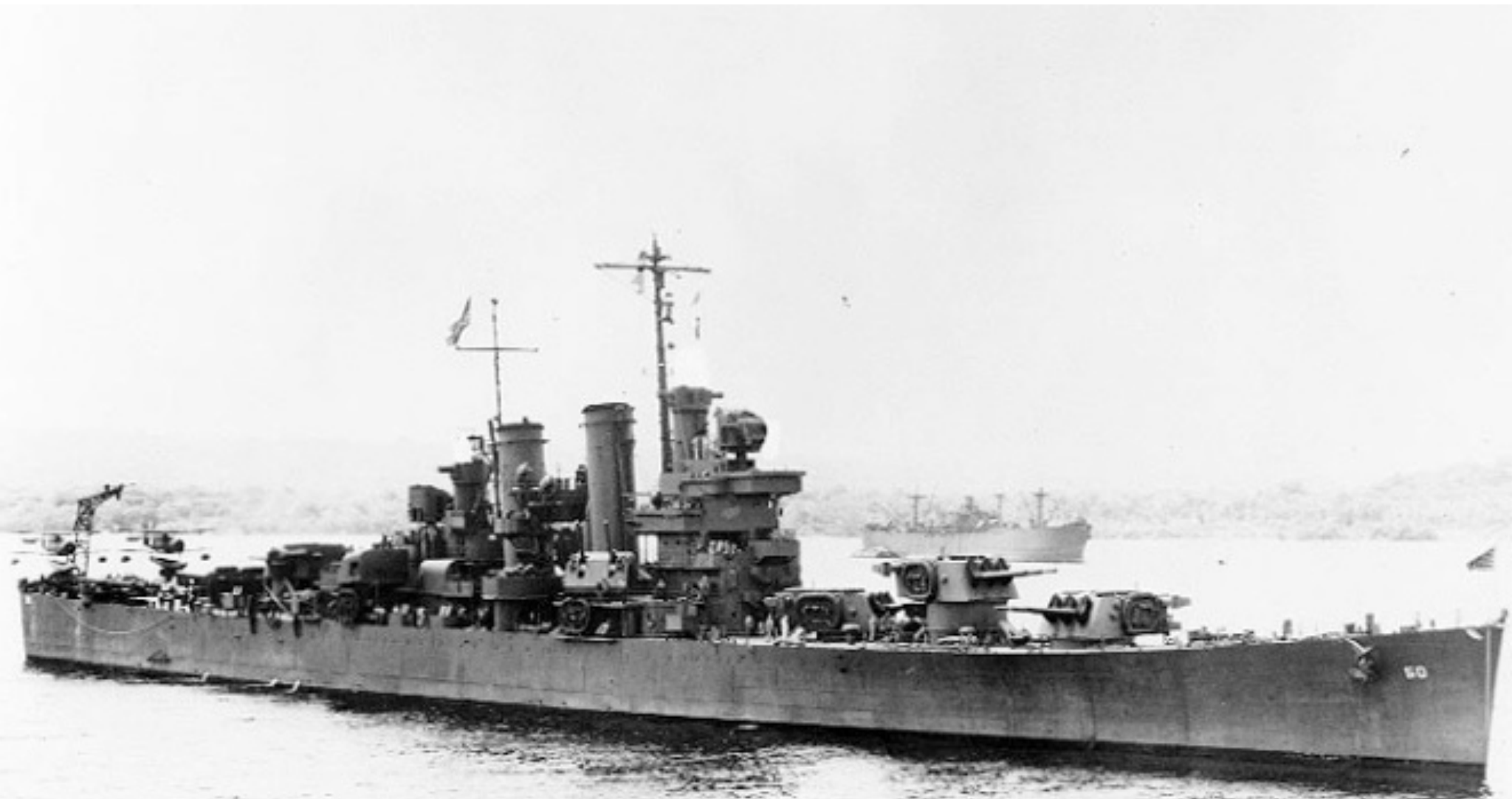
BEGINNINGS

Thusly, I begin the tales and memoirs of my life; as a man who blissfully spent 63 years married to a woman whom he loved so dearly. To a woman who had known of the future separations that would lie ahead but was still willing to venture further into this world of unknowns and uncertainties, hand in hand, with the one she loved. I have always been a “man of the sea,” I recall so vividly, saying on that day, as I sat by my Mildred’s side and asked if she would become my bride, my wife, and be my life-time companion. We spoke of the hardships that would greet this young couple–we

knew there would be many. We spoke of the challenges of separations; we would have to learn to endure. We knew our love was strong; we would endure! We spoke of the children we would beget. All this we accepted, and promised faithfulness to each other. We had made these vows, and we were united, as one, on 23 August 1941. Our eyes, glistening with tears, as we beheld the future in our hearts; and as we held each other, ever so tightly, in our arms–we loved each other so very much. I have never, never once regretted that day! I learned, as time slipped by, those days we spent together, and those we spent apart, when we were separated because of my naval assignments, all had the positive effect of strengthening our love - a love, we knew, which was meant for each other–we had each other.



USS Helena (CL 50)

2

SCHOOLING

I had first enlisted in the Third Fleet Division, First Battalion, United States Naval Reserve in New York, NY and reported aboard the USS Prairie State (BB), a training vessel for the Naval Reservists, in October, 1936. As Naval Reservists, we would spend two weeks, each year, aboard active sea going naval vessels for training purposes. Aboard the Prairie State, we trained in all phases of shipboard life and shipboard tasks, and responsibilities, as did the regular Naval sailors during their recruit training sessions, at naval training centers. Intent on adding to the strength of the Navy, the Re-

servists had been requested to transfer to and assume regular duties as regular Navy men. It was then I volunteered for duty in the regular Navy, 30 July 1940. I was ordered to report for active duty in the USS Helena (CL50), a newly constructed and commissioned light cruiser, to moor in Norfolk, VA. My advancement to gunner's mate was rapid aboard Helena. I rose through the ranks and eventually was promoted to Gunner's Mate 1c within a short span of time. It was then, too, I would be experiencing my first taste of combat duty, on 7 December 1941, the "date that lives in infamy!"

On 30 January 1943, I was transferred from the USS Helena, now at anchor in Espirtu Santo, in the New Hebrides Islands, to the U.S. Naval Station, Washington, D.C. for a course of instruction at the Gunner's Mate and Electric Hydraulic Schools. Upon the successful completion of these courses, I was then selected for enrollment in an advanced course of instruction for potential instructors in the Naval Instructors School. Through Mom's daily reminders and insistence for me to complete all my studies, I finished number one in a class of about 30 Gunner's Mates. In addition, I had also been selected for a further course in advanced instructor's training at a naval school in the San Diego Naval Station. This would afford me opportunities later in my career to be assigned to duties as a Naval Instructor for assignments to shore installation billets.

Here, I must add, while at the Naval Station, I had prepared a "training aid", at the school, which was awarded first place honors and then placed as the "honor award of the week" in the main lobby of the school. Accidentally, I had achieved, in designing this training aid, (a cardboard replica} showing the full operation of a naval gun, with its assimilated firing, and then its full return to "battery" for further operation (firing)! I know not how nor why, but the aid operated perfectly. On the not so brighter side, and as part of the "instructor's training" session, I was giving a presentation to the class of Gunner Mates relating to the disassembly and then reassembly of a Colt .45 pistol. When the dismissal bell rang, I still had about 72 more parts to reassemble! Needless to say, I had many gun parts but no audience! My instructor assured me, I had learned more, by this episode, than he could ever teach–the proper preparation of a lesson plan, with adequate time for full completion of demonstrations, was of utmost importance. Ten minutes later, in a vacated classroom, (the students, were more interested in the break period) and with the instructor's assistance in reassembling the pistol, it once again looked very much like a very capable Colt .45 pistol!

3

ADVANCEMENT

Upon completion of the Instructor School, I was assigned to the U.S. Naval Training Center at Sampson, New York. for a two year tour of duty as an instructor of sailors who had just completed their recruit training. These newly made sailors would become eligible because of their scholastic achievements, while in their recruit training period, for a course of instruction in the Gunner's Mate School or a school of their choice. Their completion of the course prepared them to maintain and to assist in making repairs to large antiaircraft guns, or surface type ordnance and an assortment of

various types of ordnance, both major and minor, used in combat situations. Additionally, they were taught how to prepare for and then use these guns for firing at enemy ships, enemy aircraft or shore installations. Their instructions were complete and uncompromising and the students were well versed for their future assignments.

Later, during the assignment to the Sampson Naval Training Station I received a notice of my advancement in rating to that of a Chief Petty Officer, I had climbed up an other rung of the ladder of success as a Sailor. I now felt the importance of these advancements, which resulted, no doubt,. from always reaching upward in my career and toward my goals. I proudly put on the new uniform of a Chief Petty Officer, and vowed this would be only another step up that ladder and that there would be more. That evening, Mom gathered me up in her arms. I was certain she was as thrilled as I was with my promotion, reaching the top of the enlisted ranking. As I gently wiped away the tears which had formed in her eyes, I mentioned I had always visualized my wearing of the crest of a commissioned officer of the Navy of the United States , as a rung in that "ladder of achievement"! With her blessings, I set my course and then headed, mentally, in that new direction. I knew that Mom would always be there to guide and to encourage me, should the road to this new dream become more arduous than I had anticipated. Her ending phrase would always be, "Be careful– think first!," four words which would carry the weight and give me the courage and guidance I needed to my future successes.

My enlistment was to expire during my time at the Sampson Naval Training Center. It was then I had ninety days in which I could reenlist and retain my rating, that of a Chief Petty Officer. Mom and I discussed the thought, I might try civilian life temporarily, until the ninety-day hiatus period granted for reenlistment, was nearing expiration.

Let me say, at this time, and as always, should any problem arise, Mom and I would discuss together to find the best possible solution to any of our problems, we would sift through the "sands of desires," together, before finalizing on any solution. As the days passed, the desire to return to the Navy's regimen became stronger and stronger. On the eighty-eighth day I bussed to Buffalo, New York in blizzard like weather conditions, to reenlist and once again put on my navy blues. Mom, too, had thought and reasoned it would be best that I return to the life I had previously adopted and the one in which we both felt great comfort, achievement and contentment and in the one I knew I could be most successful. During these eighty-eight days of the ninety-day hiatus, I had acted as a civilian (?) and became certain of what the eventual outcome would be if I remained in that capacity. I had applied for a civilian

type position and had been accepted as a fireman (firing boilers) at the United States Naval Hospital in Sampson, New York. This job, lacking any ability or intelligence, rapidly added to my desire to return to the ships and to the sea and to the regimented way of life. Worst of all, I now felt I was “chained to the boiler” to insure that the gauge always read “steam enough to keep everyone cozy and warm!” Not a very exciting future for anyone with the excitement and with the responsibilities I had acquired and experienced in my early years of Navy life. I wanted to return to that life again–the life I had dreamed about for so many years past. I longed to feel once more, that rolling deck of a ship under my feet and the sweet smell of salt water filling my lungs, these, as a warm tropical sun shined down upon me. As I signed my reenlistment contract and once again repeating my oath of allegiance to my country and to my Navy, I am certain I could feel the Navy Recruiter’s anxiety to reenlist me, as one who belongs in the profession of the sea. Besides, who would ever come out in blizzard weather conditions to reenlist in the Navy of the United States? I had insisted on receiving a thorough physical examination and then on taking the oath of allegiance, prior to the expiration of the ninety days hiatus, to ensure my reenlistment at the rating I had attained.

So, on the 3rd of January 1946, I reenlisted for four more years, in a cold, snowy, blizzard weather condition in Buffalo, New York as a Chief Petty Officer, specializing as a Surface Ordnance Technician, in the Navy of the United States–a happy day–I was at home again! The look on Mom’s face that night, told me. we had made the right and an acceptable decision. This I could read in the look of satisfaction on her face as she gathered me in her arms, once more, and as our bodies were pressed together in love, contentment, assurance and acceptance!

4

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Shortly thereafter I received my orders to report to the U.S. Naval Receiving Station at Pier 6, in New York City to await further instructions and assignment. On 6 March 1946, I received orders for reassignment to the U.S. Naval Training Center, San Diego, CA. as a company commander for a two year tour of duty which would entail the training of Navy recruits. This was to become a favorite, and frequent assignment in which I felt great satisfaction of making young men out of these young lads, some who had no concept of the meaning of discipline, teamwork, responsibility nor, in many cases,

hygiene. After eleven weeks of training, most were transformed into being well disciplined young men, who now experienced and enjoyed a purpose and goal in life and who had learned the true values of reliability and dependability. I found the training of recruits to be filled with excitement and regretted the passage of time at the Training Center in San Diego, which was now was coming to a close. The years had again passed by so rapidly. I began looking forward to the arrival of a new set of orders to a new duty station.

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GUAM, MARIANAS ISLANDS

On 31 December 1948, with a new set of orders in hand, I reported for duty to the U.S. Naval Supply Depot on the Island of Guam, in the Marianas Islands. According to the traditions of the inhabitants of the island, my sons, Arie and Keith, are truly Guamanians. Their days were spent, capturing lizards, or geckos, as they are called in the Guamanian tongue. Incidentally, Guamanians believe these geckos to be, traditionally, the ancestors of their Guamanian heritage.

Additionally and in a minimum of time, after the necessary papers were signed and delivered, Mom was wending her way, on that first ship heading for Guam. She had arranged to ship all she determined we would need for our Guamanian tour of duty–including our 1941 Ford. Then, with the two boys in tow, and with whatever else she and they could carry, they left the States, looking forward to the two year plus tour on that tropical paradise, the island called Guam. She constantly let this Sailor know he had less continuous sea duty than she had had, because of her continuous trip across the mighty, blue Pacific. My ship had made a stopover in Honolulu, whereas, her ship, the USS General Butner, had sailed nonstop from San Francisco to Guam. (I would never, and never did live that down–as Mom would say.)

Many of our days were spent on the white, sandy beach of Agat and soon, our bodies took on the ebony hue similar to that of the island natives. In addition, weekends, were spent celebrating the frequent and many holy days with our newly found Guamanian friends. These fiestas always consisted of an abundance of beer, with a roasting, suckling pig on a twirling spit, over an open-hearth fire of hot embers of coconut husks. Our friends, John Arriola and Pete, were experts in the art of preparing this mouthwatering delicacy. We became a welcomed part of their celebrations, which were many and frequent, and resulted in learning about the Guamanian culture and traditions, and of their heritage of which they were an extremely proud race of people. They accepted us as truly their best friends. Our feelings for these beautiful people were mutual. They could never stop giving and they gave us much; in their love, their stories and their offerings of friendship for their four friends from far across the sea!

A leading facet of my assignments was to work, collaterally, with the Department of State of the United States and the representatives of the Chinese government in their goals to satisfy the requirements and the agreements of the “China Bulk Sales Agreement.” This, afforded the Chinese Government opportunities to purchase the various and the many types of combat equipment and supplies, left behind by the rapidly, departing American military units. This would then be for use in their country, assisting in their military efforts, and all would be purchased at an exceptionally inexpensive cost. My task consisted of driving to these many areas, or flying over the island chain, to locate any items which could be of value to the Chinese in their successful achievement of military endeavors in their homeland.

I might add at this time, I worked collaterally, with a Chinese Army Major. We became great friends and we discussed much of his interesting life in China and life in his Army. Since he had to make official visits to his homeland periodically, he suggested to me, one time, that I make the trip with him. Perhaps, luckily, I didn’t accept

his offer! Several weeks later I learned he had been beheaded by the opposing forces in China on one of his sojourns back to his native land!

On 30 December 1949, I reenlisted at the Naval Supply Depot, Territory of Guam for six more years in the Navy of the United States. Guam was an exciting tour of duty, so different from the many stories I had heard of the hardships one might encounter or experience while on duty there. On my arrival, I had reported to the Ordnance Department of the Naval Supply Depot for duty as their leading Chief Petty Officer. A Supply Corps Lieutenant Commander Kehoe, (as far as possible from being a regimented naval officer, but he was a great boss and a great guy and we became great friends!), was the officer-in-charge, I was his aide de camp! I was able to do things on my own and without any interference.

Lieutenant Commander Kehoe was happy as long as no one registered any complaints, nor interfered with his continuous efforts of puffing on the end of a cigar - even if they were mine! When the Ordnance Department was combined with another facet of the Supply Depot, and at the Commander's request, I continued to act as his leading Chief Petty Officer. I was then assigned the task of establishing and developing. the "Recoverable Metals Storage Area." The name may sound impressive but actually I considered myself to be "a glorified junkman."

In the passage of time, and in addition to storing salvageable metals or materials for reuse, the yard had accumulated other items which would have shipboard usage value. This was important to those ships which would experience tight funding by the end of each quarter. Funding never seemed to be adequate and the funds were usually well spent before replenishment was effected. We were able to supply these ships in those times of need, and thus we were able to and kept them upon an even keel until funds became available again. We became known as "The Sailors Bearing Gifts," with all the bounty and booty we had accumulated and then distributed it among them. We were able to supply these vessels, without cost. All that was required was just their signature on a Form 307. As a result, our activity became a place of renown to vessels operating in, or those passing through the Guam area. Whatever they needed, we had it in the Recoverable Metals Storage Area, at no cost and without limitations in quantities to these ships in need. (I enjoyed it, so very much–just being able to give it away, with a great smile on my face.)

In June 1950 we, (we, because Mom and the boys also received their new set of orders!) were to leave our little island paradise and began packing our belongings and valuables for the return trip to the mainland. An enjoyable tour of duty was ending and we felt heavy-hearted as we shook hands with the many friends we had found and

made on that beautiful island in the Pacific Ocean, now so many, years ago. A large gathering of these very friendly people were on the pier wishing us God-speed! Our departure, I could see, had also caused a tear or two to drop from the eyes of these many friends whom we were now sadly leaving–those beautiful people–John Arriola and Pete and the people of Guam, also with tearing eyes!

6

KOREAN WAR

I had received orders to the USS Floyd B. Anderson , (DD786), a destroyer type vessel, as their 5”38 antiaircraft gun battery Chief Petty Officer. She was home-ported in San Diego, the California city in which Mom had decided we would settle in upon our retirement from the Navy. Albeit, shortly after reporting to Anderson, in February 1951, the USS Agerholm (DD826), attached to the same destroyer division as Anderson, lost their Chief Gunner’s Mate. I was the junior Chief aboard Anderson, and was selected for the transfer. It was a move I have never regretted. I was able to demonstrate my

prowess and became the leading chief of the entire Ordnance Department aboard Agerholm.. It gave me the opportunity to select the area I wanted most to be responsible for. I again selected the antiaircraft gun battery.
An additional duty to serving as the leading Chief Petty Officer (ordnance), I also acted as the assistant to the Gunnery Officer. I was appointed later, by our Captain, to assume the full duties and responsibilities of the Gunnery Officer, who had failed to carry out his commission in full capacity satisfactorily.

I served aboard Agerholm, from February 1951 to April 1952. Part of this tour was spent in the Korean theater during the Korean War. Agerholm's entry into the Korean War, and in particular, the harbor of Wonsan, where we participated consistently in the bombardment of North Korean shore installations.

I recall so vividly when our captain, Captain Stencil, had called all officers into the officer's wardroom for a briefing, in which he was to describe what was to be expected in the harbor of a country at war with the United States. Being a main enemy port, Wonsan had been under siege for many months by our ships. The Captain asked how should we enter the harbor. I suggested that, since we were in the battle zone and within enemy territory, and now entering an active battle area, Agerholm, should, therefore, enter Wonsan in full battle dress with all guns manned, and with the ship's personnel wearing helmets, lifejackets, and "at the ready" for action!

This was accepted by the Captain and the ship's officers. Agerholm, in this full "ready condition," was maneuvered alongside the station ship for her orders and berthing area. As we came alongside the station ship, a Sailor, sunning himself on that ship's boat deck, and stripped to his "nothingness," called over to me (I was in the gun director, located high above Agerholm's main deck and bridge) , and he remarked, "Damn!, there really must be a war going on!" With those stunning words, he went back into his lethargy and the non-existing world around him. Agerholm, too, apparently didn't exist!

We learned our action would consist primarily of bombardment of North Korean shore installations, in Wonsan, Kojo, and several east coast enemy positions and strongholds. A short time later, Agerholm proudly displayed the image of a truck, painted on the side of the gun mount and gun director which had fired the round that destroyed the truck. It can be safely said, we were the only naval vessel which had "shot up" a truck carrying a gun barrel for the fortifications of Kal Ma Gak peninsula in Wonsan Harbor!

Most of our time in the Korean War was spent patrolling along the eastern coast of North Korea. Our most serious hazard were mines which the North Koreans simply

floated down their rivers and out to sea–a ”poor man’s war.” We fired at many, but hit few, giving us the great firing practice which we apparently still needed.

While we lay to at anchor in Wonsan Harbor, we spent our time firing our 5 inch projectiles, trying to hit five brick chimneys in a factory complex which lay to starboard–but with no success. The chimneys were still standing when I last revisited Wonsan. I am certain every United States naval vessel which had entered this harbor had tried to eliminate those chimneys with gunfire but it was apparent, none were ever successful. I recall another exasperating encounter while attempting to prevent North Koreans from working at the entrance to a train tunnel. What they were repairing or what their duties consisted of, were unknown to us. Agerholm fired round after round into that tunnel’s mouth apparently without success. One Korean was assigned the task of watching for the flash from our guns that were pointed in the tunnel's direction. I tried different approaches in firing our five-inch guns, but to no avail.

When we did fire, and their lookout saw the flash, all the workers would scurry back into the tunnel seeking safety and protection, upon their leader’s orders. I do believe, when I put my binoculars on them, I could see they all would have their “fingers to their noses,” successfully ridiculing our futile attempts at annihilating them! They would then continue with their assignment and no doubt did complete their tasks. For certain, it did take more time for them to accomplish their mission–whatever it was.

Perhaps, we could claim some success because of the delay we caused to their endeavors and their accomplishment of that mission! Meanwhile, our Marines and Soldiers were fighting and dying in that bloody war, on the north end of the peninsula of Korea. To all those living and dead, I raise my hand in a salute of honor for their courageous efforts and often forgotten heroism, in that bloody conflict, which at first had been designated as a “police action” by our then President, Harry S. Truman. Will the people of Korea, on both sides of the demarcation line, the thirty-eighth parallel of latitude, ever enjoy a peaceful and united nation?

Destroyer duty can be at times, the most rugged type of sea duty a Sailor can be assigned to. Life aboard a rolling, pitching, yawing destroyer is a difficult one but one that is extremely rewarding and self gratifying in learning the eccentricities of these vessels, in which they are embarked for duty. It is a duty in which the sailor must become familiar with all aspects of shipboard routines; the responsibilities of each of the various departments; and a thorough knowledge of the ship’s operation and her capabilities as a man-of-war. “Tin Can Sailors,” as they are commonly called, a name these Sailors proudly and happily accept, are extremely well versed, trained and indoctrinated in the many aspects of the various fields they will encounter while aboard one of

these sleek “men-of-war” This is a requirement of all the Sailors of the Navy who sail the seas in these types of vessels. Excepting perhaps Submariners, on duty in submarines–the destroyer Sailor’s life is fraught with dangers while practicing the caution and wariness required of these “men of the sea.” The sea awaits patiently to take the non-cautious nor the non-wary sailor to her bosom!

7

NAVAL TRAINING CENTER

I had previously indicated should the Bureau of Personnel in Washington, D.C. become aware that a sailor has had schooling, training, or experience as an instructor in a Navy billet–a school, or a training facility, and additionally, and perhaps most importantly, with an excellent record of conduct, helps in being selected for new assignments to duty stations “on the beach.” This became evident as shown by my next assignment.

In May 1952, when I once again received a set of orders reassigning me to the U.S. Naval Training Center, San Diego, CA. for a second tour of duty as a "Company Commander." It was during the later part of this tour of duty, when I was notified of a pending appointment by the Bureau of Personnel to serve in the rank of a Warrant Officer (a Warrant Gunner) in the United States Navy.

What a grand and glorious feeling I felt on that day! I experienced a feeling of accomplishment, achievement, and gratitude. I would now be able to serve the Navy and our country in a greater capacity with more meaningful responsibilities; this in itself was, I considered, the great achievement.

The Navy Department had abolished its Warrant Officer program, by not appointing Warrants, for several years, in fact, many. I was informed I had been the first to be selected in the reestablishment of this important program! I had made the top of the list! On 23 September 1955, I was sworn in by the Captain of the Recruit Training Command and appointed to the rank of a Warrant Officer.

Following this appointment, I very proudly placed the cap of an officer (with an officer's crest thereon–a promise I had made to Mom and myself in Sampson, NY), I had been brusquely (but jokingly) informed I was "out of uniform." Incidentally, and very strange indeed, on the following day, I was notified by the Navy Department, in Washington, D. C., of a second selection for me, that of being promoted to the rank of a Lieutenant (junior grade) a happening which I learned of, rarely occurs in the Naval Forces.

I had a choice: Warrant or LTJG. I accepted the Warrant Officer rank, not only because they were usually fed better but the stature of a Warrant Officer commanded more respect from the rank and file of all personnel of the Navy, who recognized ability, knowledge, and achievement. Also, Lieutenants (junior grade) were more plentiful!

Within a day or two I was transferred to the USS Dixie (AD 15) and awaited orders for further transfer to my new duties as the Warrant Gunner aboard the aircraft carrier, the USS Hancock (CVA 19). I searched over half of the Pacific Ocean and scoured half of the Islands of Japan, before I finally met Hancock in Iwakuni, Japan. I served aboard her from 13 October 1955 to 29 February 1956 as the Chief Surface Ordnance Technician (and with the collateral duty as the "Captain's talker" on the ship's bridge when Hancock was underway!). Even then, I felt the feeling of acceptance and the feeling of recognition given to me by the ship's company, because of the Warrant Officers emblems that I now wore upon my uniforms.

8

USS HANCOCK (CVA 19)

I found duty aboard an aircraft carrier to be exciting, educating, but extremely hazardous, particularly for those Airmen who worked the flight deck; launching or retrieving aircraft, refueling or rearming planes, for 25 hours a day. It was also a time when I spent many hours on the bridge as the “Captain’s Talker,” with the duties of relaying the orders of the captain to all and to the many various stations while Hancock was making preparations for getting underway, mooring to a pier; participating in naval ex-

ercises, or most importantly, when launching or retrieving aircraft during “flight quarters.”

I had been called upon (?), by the captain to act as his “talker,” after a young officer (who was, at this time, the captain’s talker) had, inadvertently, and dangerously, relayed an incorrect order to the line handlers as Hancock was readying for sea. All mooring lines had been already “singled up.” She was starting to “kick ahead all engines.” Instead of relaying instantly, and correctly, the next order to the line handlers, to “let go, lines 4,5 and 6,” and then “1,2,and 3” (from aft to forward) on command, thusly freeing the vessel from the pier. This officer had then incorrectly ordered to “double up all lines.”

Normally this is the last command to the line handlers of a ship, which had just come to rest at a pier after being at sea or under any movement. At that precise moment, the admiral of our battle group, who was using Hancock as his flagship for the upcoming maneuvers, leaned over the handrail of the secondary bridge and shouted down to our Captain, “Captain Oldenhall, are you intent on taking Piedmont Pier (at the Yokusaka Naval Station, Japan) to sea with us today?”

With those stinging words, our Captain, angered, and red faced, (as red as the red signal flags flying aloft from the foremast), I became the Captain’s talker! This collateral duty assignment did afford me opportunities to become more adept at ship handling, and for future assignments as an “officer of the deck, underway,” (when I later transferred to the USS Prairie (AD15).

Incidentally, the Captain’s command to the bridge personnel of Hancock later became, “the Gunner is on the bridge–let’s go to sea!” This occurred when I made my appearance on the bridge and when the special sea detail had been set. I always felt elated, just hearing those words, even though they were spoken in jest! However, I was certain they were filled with meaning! The bridge personnel, all would come to a “right hand salute” when that order was given–I experienced a feeling of recognition, of dependability, and of ability, for I had become the right hand of the ship’s captain in his ship handling and the maneuvering of the vessel–the aircraft carrier, the USS Hancock!

He had insisted that I become thoroughly familiar with the many phases of ship handling and gave me many learning experiences and opportunities. This had become evident when I reported to the Captain, who, traditionally, as the last officer, a transferring officer speaks to, when he leaves the ship for reassignment.

We knew, we both were experiencing heavy hearts, and glistening eyes, as he spoke to me concerning my loyalty to him and my dependability, as one of his officers

of the aircraft carrier, the USS Hancock–this while reaching out and shaking my hand for the last time and muttering, “Good luck, Gunner–let’s go to sea!”

9

ASTORIA, OREGON

Although, my stay aboard Hancock was of short duration, it was one full of excitement and learning. The “needs of the Navy” always has first preference in assignments and at this time the needs for a Chief Warrant Gunner to relieve another, who was to retire, at the Columbia River Group (a Naval ship mothballing facility, located in Astoria, Oregon.) This assignment had top priority in the fulfillment of this berth and was to become an excellent tour of duty. I was named as a “ship’s superintendent” with duties in which I acted as the Navy's representative in overseeing the complete fulfill-

ment and acceptable workmanship of contract obligations, by the shipyard, of the mothballing of naval vessels, or the modernization of active naval vessels. This mothballing and/or modernization was performed to insure the readiness of these selected vessels, should the need arise for their use by our nation, if an emergency situation arose.

It became apparent that I was succeeding in these responsibilities, when, later in my tour, I was singled out and called before a group of all senior and junior officers by our commanding officer, to receive a commendation. I had been commended for my aptitude in saving money for the government, and overseeing that the responsibilities assigned to me, were completed satisfactorily and on time. I had always insisted on high standards of workmanship, and without deviance from the specifications as set forth in the contracts, which had been agreed upon by the contractors and our Navy.

I recall one incident, in which a destroyer was being modernized and would then be mothballed. Under no circumstances would I sign the certificate of completion, acceptance and release because of shoddy and unsatisfactory workmanship. The shipyard officials were angered but they finally succumbed to my insistence and the backing I had received from my Commanding Officer, for 100 percent workmanship, as obligated in contract agreements. The ship was then accepted by the Navy!

Nevertheless, I derived great satisfaction and great pleasures from this assignment, but a collateral duty began to develop in which I became the leading “boat officer” for the station’s personnel, who wanted to try their luck at salmon fishing, in this fisherman’s paradise. I made it a point to learn of the best fishing areas outside the mouth of the Columbia River, across the famous and most treacherous Columbia River Bar.

So, frequently, we had many ambitious, but sea-sick sailors, all with good catches of that most famous fish, the salmon. We always ”limited out” and all the fishermen Sailors brought to their homes, a bounty catch of that most delectable fish! It appeared now that my collateral duty (that of “boat officer”), would soon be superseding my primary duty (that of “ship’s superintendent”).

At the end of a most pleasant and exciting two year plus tour of duty, Mom and I packed twelve cases of canned salmon into our household belongings, for devouring at our new duty station. Without doubt, this supply of canned salmon would always encourage the return of the most memorable thoughts of an outstanding tour of duty in the Naval Station, at Astoria, Oregon! This incidence, one of many others, would always lapsed into our conversations when Mom and I spoke of our duties and of our remembrances of beautiful (but wet) Astoria, Oregon.

Disregarding the inclement weather, I have always regarded this tour of duty in Astoria, Oregon as one of the "most enjoyable, and most beautiful, and most rewarding in my naval career, this in evergreen Astoria–but forget not, all of my assignments had their merits.

Never, not at one time, did I ever regret any of my duties. I have been a fortunate Sailor, who, so frequently, was assigned to types of duties in which I had been able to share with my Mildred, and the boys at my side. The Astoria Naval Station had excellent living quarters, just minutes from the main gate of the military complex. We enjoyed an outstanding view of the once beautiful Mount St. Helens, framed in our kitchen window, presenting a picture, of which I am certain, no artist could ever have reproduced.

We were constantly supplied with firewood by civilian personnel, attached to the Naval Station, which was "constantly wet," and which resulted in 'inconstant fires" in the fireplace. Whenever we were able to light one off, it was a rarity, and we all "rallied round the fireplace" and would pay homage to the "god of wet wood fires" I, at one time, recall my fire building prowess (or lack thereof) when I was huffing and puffing to get a fire started.

Mom came bounding into the living room and questioned my fire building capabilities, but in words not too kind nor too gentle but very certain! All I could see were those stunning legs of Mildred, from her knees down, the rest of her from the knees up, was hidden in the blinding smoke that had completely filled our living room. I can say, with a shrug, my fire building, then, was never considered to be completely successful nor acceptable by Mildred–nor the boys. I had been commanded, never to build a fire again as long as we lived in 1 Lee Road, Astoria, Oregon!

We were together as family for more than three years, including our beloved parakeet, Sputnik, so named, because of his (her-?) frequent flights, round and round our spacious, (now smoke-free), living room, imitating the Russian's Sputnik. She also imitated the Japanese, by repeating the words, "Benjo wa, doka desca " (?). (Ask me and I will tell you the meaning of that Japanese phrase!)

I was able to build a motorboat and the trailer, which we towed to San Diego. Also, we did return with, as previously related to, that load of canned salmon, a set of new orders in my hand, and with memories of a fun-filled tour of duty in a fun-filled environment. Mom and I had frequently spoken about those enjoyable times, which were spent together in Astoria and we looked forward to visiting our once upon a time, wet but happy home!

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USS PRAIRIE (AD 15)

My new set of orders instructed me to report aboard the destroyer tender, a repair ship. USS Prairie (AD15) a repair ship, for duty–9 May 1959, as the relief for the Chief Warrant Gunner–the Ship's Gunner who had been admitted to the San Diego Naval Treatment Facility for treatment of a heart problem. This type of duty, aboard a "destroyer tender," a repair vessel for destroyers, is patently called "tender duty"" since these vessels only go to sea for about twenty-four hours each month, depending on the vessel's workload. This was to ensure eligibility for the crew members to qualify for

"sea duty pay." After a twelve-month stay in a stateside homeport port, destroyer tenders may be assigned to spend a minimum of six months in a far eastern port for repair work to vessels assigned to duty in those waters.

Vessels in need of repairs are "nested" alongside the tender, for any and all types of repairs, to maintain their seaworthiness and to insure combat readiness should the need arise. Destroyer tenders all have the proud record and most importantly, the capacity to make repairs as rapidly and efficiently as those made in a regular shipyard, but often under more adverse conditions. Life aboard Prairie was not as hectic as some other ships I have served in–it was truly "tender duty." Her duties did not include protecting ships in "harm's way" but repairing and making renovations to them, so that these vessels could then fulfill the obligations for which they had been built.

I had been selected, while aboard Prairie, with one other Chief Warrant Officer, to assume the duties and responsibilities as an "Officer of the Deck, Underway." The responsibilities were indeed awesome! All that I had garnered aboard Hancock was now applicable for use aboard Prairie. This I applied immediately to my watch-standing capabilities without any definite learning hesitancy. What I had learned aboard Hancock, I could now apply to good use aboard Prairie. Capt. Quinn–skipper of the Prairie–had commented, he was "glad to have (you) aboard." (I didn't sleep for three nights!)

Assuming his watch as Officer of the Deck, the officer is entrusted with these responsibilities: the efficient operation of the vessel, and the safety and welfare of the ship and mostly for her crew. He must act with rapidity but with precision and precaution in his decisions, never allowing the ship to sail into "harm's way." This again to protect the personnel and the ship in any emergency situation that may arise on his watch. He enforces alertness, calmness and alacrity in the efforts of the bridge watch standers who are the mainstays of a well coordinated and well operating ship's bridge. Only the Captain or the Executive Officer, the second officer in line, can supersede the Officer of the Deck's orders simply by announcing "I have the con!." Thus, during every watch he stands, with safety and alertness, the keystones to a successful watch, the Officer of the Deck is in a training situation. However, above all, he must know how to and must able to abide by the "rules of the sea" to protect the ship and its personnel from "sailing into harm's way."

Standing a four-hour watch did, at times, become tiring and tedious. I have consumed pots of coffee and smoked packs of cigarettes while on watch to eliminate these feelings, but never any feelings of boredom, and to insure complete alertness. Of most

importance was to remain alert, ensuring the means and the ability to deal with any emergency situation at any time.

However, at the first evidence of an emergency developing, no matter how minor nor how major nor how rapid it may appear to be, the bridge begins to hum with activity, with each watch stander carrying out his prescribed and assigned tasks until calm is restored or the alert has been recognized and/or eliminated.

Never will I forget the night Prairie was steaming slowly, on a northerly course in the South China Sea towards the Straits of Taiwan (then called the Straits of Formosa) with the coast of the Chinese mainland to westward and Taiwan (Formosa), the island, to eastward. We had been making runs up and down the west coast of North Vietnam, just prior to the official start of that conflict with that nation, photographing the coast and watching for any extraordinary activities by the North Vietnamese. All hands were looking ahead to a few days of rest, recreation and liberty in the Japanese port city of Yokusaka.

The night was ominously dark, with a mild wind and only a rippling movement of the sea. The new bridge watch standers were at their stations, and appeared to be especially alert. Our surface radar system was showing a myriad of surface contacts ahead of Prairie, as we steamed on a northerly course towards and then deeper into the straits. I commented to my Junior Officer of the Deck, a lieutenant junior grade, “How is Prairie going to get through all of those contacts without colliding with any?” He answered with a shrug of his shoulder. I wasn’t impressed!

Suddenly, the starboard lookout made the report, a “darkened (showing no navigation lights) fishing boat was crossing our bow from starboard to port.” Since we were on a collision course, I ordered the helmsman to “come hard right” to avoid hitting the boat. After what seemed to be an eternity, Prairie finally reacted to her new rudder angle and slowly began her turn to starboard. As rapidly as we had first seen the unlighted boat, then just as rapidly it disappeared under our bow!

An ominous silence surrounded us except for the soft “putt-puttering” of the endangered fishing skiff. Would we send him down into the briny deep and down into the Chinese equivalent of a “Davy's Locker”? Suddenly, then, the now exciting sounds of his putt-putting engine grew louder, reaching our ears, indicating he had made it under and across our bow safely. As I looked down from the wing of the bridge, I saw in the stern of this small boat, grinning up at us, was the Chinese helmsman, his white teeth shining brightly, despite the darkness of the night, and showing us his uncontrolled grin of happiness.

Later, I was told, by the Prairie's captain, who now had arrived on the bridge, (sans uniform), these fishing boat owners would invite a collision so they could sue and then get perhaps two boats or sometimes three for the cost of just that one, old, now-sunken skiff. They knew too, and believed, the demons that always followed their fishing crafts could be cut away from their stern by a menacing ship's bow. The closer they steered towards a larger craft meant the more demons would be destroyed and their fish catch would be large or larger for that evening. I thought his catch, and after this close call, would be large and heavy enough to sink his boat, demons and all. This, the captain related to me as he held out his hand to shake mine in gratitude and then remarked, "Gunner, you have just avoided an international situation! Well done!"

A "well done" comment under circumstances such as this always looked good in our "fitness reports" which were relayed to the Navy Department in Washington, D.C. periodically. I might also add, it was apparent, the captain was satisfied with my ship handling, without interference, since I continued with the action I had taken, to avoid a collision.

After several weeks in the Naval Station, Yokusaka, Japan, Prairie headed south to report to the Subic Bay Naval Shipyard in the Philippine Islands, to make repairs to several destroyers and other vessels in need of our help. It was here, at Subic Bay, I received a set of orders from the detail officer in Washington, D.C. to report back to the states for a new tour of duty at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station. I had been selected to assume the billet as the Officer in Charge of the Great Lakes Naval Training Center's Ordnance and Gunnery School, a really top assignment, which normally would be assigned to Lieutenant Commanders. I dreamed of seeing the possibility of wearing the gold bars of these high ranking officers, shining from the sleeves of the uniforms I would wear! In spite of the responsibilities and the honors assigned to this large step upwards, I pondered, whether or not I should accept this new assignment–doubt began to creep into my thoughts! I had been offered an outstanding assignment as an officer in charge, (OinCh), of a school.

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RETIREMENT

After a long and difficult period of reasoning with myself, and a radio call to Mom, who at this time had insisted I make my own decision, I decided against the assignment and not to accept this once in a career opportunity and apply instead for release from the service! I had achieved the goals I had set for myself and I was well on the downside of the slope of my naval career, and closing in on thirty years of service. It was an extremely difficult decision to make. I drafted a letter to the detail officer in Washington, D. C. thanking him for his consideration in choosing me for the appoint-

ment to this prestigious billet, and also, in addition, I asked for a discharge from the U. S. Naval Service!

The decision I made was based on a variety of reasons, which included the living conditions at the Great Lakes Naval Training Facility, its weather, and its location in Illinois. Also, what was of the greatest importance, Skip (the elder son) was entering his college years and Keith was closing in on them, Joan was on the move up, also.

The months spent away from the family were becoming burdensome, I had spent much time away, and most of all, now, I wanted more time with my Mildred and my family. These became the important factors in my decision to resign from the Navy and those responsibilities exercised by being a Naval Officer–and as you know, both which I dearly loved. You are aware of the decision I made.

I also requested from the detail officer to render me permission to sail Prairie back to the states. She too, had received orders to return to San Diego, which would complete her present West Pac tour. That homeward bound, easterly crossing of the Pacific Ocean, which I was sure would be my last, was one of the many I had made. The Prairie, no doubt, looked down upon this Sailor making what could be his final crossing of the Pacific.

This decision was to be the longest thought out and most sorrowful of all. On 31 August 1961, my separation day came. With orders in my hand, as I left Prairie, I looked back at her, then moored to Pier Six, at theNaval Station, San Diego, CA. I felt that strong emotional reaction once again, similar to one I experienced when I left Helena at anchor in the waters of Espiritu Santo, now so many years ago. Had I made the right decision? I thought only time would tell.

Now, at times, as I reminisce, I still wonder if I had made the correct choice. Time has spoken!

Coincidences do crop up when writing a dissertation such as this. My thoughts just carried me back to my first enlistment in the United States Navy and now my discharge from the Navy. On 5 October 1936 I was sworn in, for the first time, aboard the USS Prairie State (BB) and now on 31 August 1961, after twenty five years of military service I was being honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy, for the last time–from the USS Prairie (AD 15), almost to the same date and ship's names. Coincidence?

The dates and times I have stated in this memoir are as accurate as they can possibly be or be remembered. I have had the help of my Continuous Service Certificate, which had been updated by yeomen of the various commands I had served in, and then signed by an officer who was responsible for its accuracy. The CSC reveals the complete history of the duties, ships served in, and all assignments of a career Sailor.

I had always enjoyed my tours of duties and my life in the United States Navy, excluding the separations from home. I no doubt would not hesitate to start over if I ever had that opportunity. We know the passage of time takes its toll. It was a struggle at times, as I advanced through the rates and ranks, and I sincerely believe that my greatest achievement and satisfaction was that of being promoted to the rank of a Warrant and then Chief Warrant Officer. This was in itself a great success since Warrant Officers are few in numbers and good Warrants always were and still are a rarity in the Navy. They are of a special blend and breed, and their capabilities and knowledge are depended upon and recognized by all military ranks and ratings and recognized for their knowledge and their proficiency in their specialties and abilities to satisfy the ship's needs, and most importantly, the needs of our Navy.

I was fortunate to have survived the many and various wartime engagements in which I had participated. For example, I had received a change of orders to report to the USS Helena, from the destroyer the USS Rueben James. I had been aboard the destroyer just one day when the orders for a change came through [again]. Several days later, Rueben James was torpedoed by a German submarine, and sunk, in the frigid waters of the North Atlantic Ocean. Her loss of crew was exceptionally heavy.

Then there were the seven major surface battles and engagements I had experienced during the recent fracas with Japan: the many, many shore bombardments of Japanese held territories and installations; the attacks by Japanese planes in their bombing and torpedo runs on our ships and Helena; the torpedoing and the sinking of the USS Juneau; a torpedo which passed, as I watched it, within yards astern of Helena, between her and the heavy cruiser San Francisco; the torpedoing and the sinking of Helena, just days after my new assignment; and leaving for schooling prior to her loss on 6 July 1943.

There was the peacetime collision, when my ship, the inbound USS Prairie (AD 15) and an outbound Japanese freighter collided at the entrance to Tokyo Bay in heavy fog. Just seconds before the freighter had struck Prairie, and then scraped along her entire port side, I had been standing, mustering my division of Sailors at morning quarters.

Then, that great disaster, which, I hope the world will never forget–the dastardly and unprovoked attack on Pearl Harbor. And finally, the several other near misses I have had. For those Shipmates who did not have that second chance, nor for all those who lie beneath the blue, and now tranquil waters of the oceans of the world, I do often silently pray and give thanks for my good fortune to have been afforded those many second chances. *There are no flowers on a Sailor's grave*.

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SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF SEA BATTLES

The following are the many, minor and/or major, wartime engagements. Some were of extreme importance, in which we participated while I served aboard the USS Helena before her demise. Her actions are of great renown, and have been recorded in the annals of time, and the books of history, and she had helped to decide the fate of the world as we know it today.

There were the myriad air attacks, submarine alerts, enemy torpedo launches, both, by air and sea, (I once watched helplessly, as a Japanese torpedo struck the star-

board side of Helena just a few feet forward of my gun mount and then watched as it fell harmlessly from her side and back into the sea–I was so very fortunate. Luckily, it was a dud!

There were those major confrontations with a determined enemy. There were many and frequent bombardments of enemy strongholds and positions, when we steamed into enemy waters, acting as a decoy to lure their ships into battle, or planes to attack, while the main portions of our fleet stood by at the ready.

At one time, 32 torpedo planes attacked, intent on destroying our warships and the cargo vessels which we were herding, to reinforce and supply our embattled Marines on Guadalcanal. The Helena and her sister ships, downed many of the Japanese planes of that attack without injury to any of our vessels.

I remember the seven major night surface engagements between major ships of the allies and major vessels of the Japanese, of which some battles are recognized today, as the greatest surface battles of any that had ever been fought. I remember the rescue of those Sailors whose ships had been sunk or were sinking–this last action afforded my shipmates and myself the greatest recompense we could ever have received in the saving of their lives.

As a result of these actions, and other following major interactions with our enemy, the Helena was notably, and honorably, and officially given the title of "The Fightin'est Ship in the Navy," by the United States Navy Department, a title which she certainly earned and which now still stands in our naval archives and the annals of time. This title of honor is still recognized by veterans of that recent fracas. Frequently, I am still asked questions about her exploits in the Battle for Guadalcanal. A book has been written about her noble deeds. Helena was criticized, although honorably, by the enemy leaders, for having "six inch machine guns," due to the rapid and very accurate firing of her main and secondary batteries of air and surface guns. She has been credited with the sinking of several Japanese cruisers and destroyers while engaging them in the night battles of the Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands.

Her unfortunate demise in the Battle of Kula Gulf, 6 July 1943, at 0230 ended a short, but a brilliantly fulfilled career. She would have, no doubt, brought further and greater glory to her well known, and illustrious name which, even now, has been noted in the history books of the naval battles of Guadalcanal and other battles of World War II. It was in these engagements in which Helena and her sister ships turned the tide of battle and the Japanese forces back towards their home islands.

We, at times, had felt the full sting of the whip lashings of failures in the earlier battles, battles in which both navies tasted the bitterness of defeat. Our earliest and

greatest loss occurred with the destruction and sinking of three of our battle cruisers, the Astoria, Quincy and Vincennes and the Australian cruiser, Canberra, in the Battle of Savo Island on 9 August 1942.

In spite of the sinkings that night, the Japanese leaders were becoming more aware of the beginning of the final episodes of their attempts to control and exploit the South Pacific Ocean area and which was now starting to close in around them. Our skeleton forces, with which we had turned the tide of battle in the beginning, were now being reinforced by newly built and newly commissioned ships-of-war and auxiliary vessels coming down the building ways of the shipyards of the United States. Hastily trained crews, too, were also intent on destroying the ambitious dreams of the Japanese warlords.

Still we were experiencing the destruction or losses of our sea forces. With each loss of a ship-of-war, we knew there would be the tragic loss of members of her crew.

With the untimely sinking of the torpedoed aircraft carrier, USS Wasp, a veteran of several encounters in the South Pacific area, Helena had rescued over 400 of her Sailors from the ever waiting and ever embracing waters of the Pacific Ocean. We had opened our hearts, and our locker doors, to these fuel oil stained, retching, bewildered, frightened but grateful Survivors of that gallant lady who now rests too, in those tranquil waters which surround the Island of Guadalcanal, her missions for peace, now successfully completed.

At one time, our carrier strength had been reduced to one crippled carrier, the USS Hornet. She had received minor damages in an earlier engagement with a superior enemy force, whose planes had left their mark.

All Sailors aboard a vessel at sea, voluntarily, “stands a lookout watch,” for, perhaps, a fog enshrouded situation which may ensue; or an inadvertent collision might occur; or when enemy planes may appear and attack is imminent; or should the chance of a surface battle loom.

Minutes prior to the loss of the USS Wasp, I was “standing a voluntary lookout watch” at my battle station, looking to seaward for anything of a suspicious nature. The task force, to which Helena had been assigned, was providing assistance to Marine reinforcements being landed on and supplied to those already on Guadalcanal Island. As I sat at my gun station, looking to seaward, I saw the sharp reflection of the sun flash across my vision from what appeared to be from glass! Knowing it was not the reflection from an ocean wave, I was convinced that what I had seen did come from the glass on an enemy submarine’s periscope! I made a hurried report to Helena’s bridge, describing what I had observed, and what could have been the possible

cause of that flash, and then perhaps, the significance of such a sighting. The bridge may have been too occupied with the many other details, of an emergency nature, at the time I made the report since no evasive action was ordered nor taken, nor questions asked.

Minutes later, the Wasp was aflame, with these flames and smoke barreling skyward. Fatally wounded by three Japanese "long lance" torpedoes, she was now leaning, precariously to starboard, burning and "taking on water." Her impending loss had resulted from those three hits launched by a Japanese submarine (I-19) which had penetrated our protective, destroyer screen and then waited for Wasp to come into its periscope view and firing range.

"I was convinced that what I had seen did come from the glass on an enemy submarine's periscope!"

Would the results have been kinder to Wasp if a more deliberate action had been taken after my report was received by, and then acted upon by the bridge personnel? I have asked myself this and the following question many times as my years progressed from youth into adulthood. A vivid picture of her ensuing loss, flashes periodically in my mind's eye!

A photograph I have shows what I had seen–the loss of a mighty ship of war and a loss of so many of her heroes! Would Wasp have lived another day, if more of an evasive action had been taken after my report to the bridge was received and then acted upon?

In the following rescue attempts of Wasp's Sailors, Helena had acted courageously, "standing by" her side, facing danger to herself from perhaps, another waiting, hostile submarine, as she rescued many of the carrier's Sailors. She had placed herself in "harm's way" as she made these attempts. We all know that material objects can be replaced but the loss of lives of those who served and defended this nation in combat on the land, or on the sea, or in the air can never be, and should never be forgotten for their deeds so honorable. These words ring true for Wasp's crew members and those members of other ships who also now lie beneath the quiet, calm waters surrounding those tropical islands of the South Pacific Ocean.

Photograph taken from a Japanese plane during the torpedo attack on ships moored on both sides of Ford Island shortly after the beginning of the Pearl Harbor attack. View looks about east, with the supply depot, submarine base and fuel tank farm in the right center distance.

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THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR

Every true Sailor has in his heart, a place for a ship for which he has strong affections. A ship is never an inanimate object to that Sailor but one that is alive with the vibrancy of life, shared with those who serve in her. She is a part of them, they are a part of her. Her crew gives her life and she shows a strong desire to serve her crew faithfully and without failing. Each, Sailor or ship, is dependent upon the other. The USS Helena (CL 50) was "my lady," the ship I still have strong affections for. I still brush away tears as I did when I learned of her loss, of her sinking after those torpedo hits,

now so many years past. This was the ship in which I had sought a haven of safety, for protection from the ravages of turbulent seas, or an enemy intent on her destruction.

Ships give their crews great comfort, and a feeling of protection, in many of the hazardous, untimely, unsafe or recurring conditions, or consolation in times of loneliness and melancholy in the thoughts of those who sail in them. These ships ask for little in return. My life aboard Helena and of my experiences while serving in her, in the years of peace or those of turmoil, I still, after these many years, trod her "gleaming decks as I return to my lady" in thoughts and memories–since she too sails no more.

Now, to bring events of warfare in which I was involved, into stronger focus, with a suggestion of, but not complete, chronological order, I have written of events as they slipped into my thoughts. Let us now slip back in time and place, so that I can write about one of the most disastrous events in all of naval or world history, and which had changed the course of history, to as we now know it, more than sixty years later from that most infamous–Date of Infamy -7 December 1941.

Helena's introduction to combat readiness was taking place long before that fateful day. Her days and nights were spent in the training of her Sailors, in Hawaiian waters and operating areas, always preparing for the eventuality of war. She knew not where nor whence, but she wanted to be ready should such a holocaust ensue.

For this, she had slipped down the shipyard ways in the Navy Yard in Brooklyn, N.Y in September, 1939, destined to become, truly, the "fightin'est ship" in our Navy. A true testing of her meritorious skills as a ship-of-war came during that unprovoked attack on the Sailors and on their ships in the naval base of Pearl Harbor and the Soldiers and Marines and their bases on the island of Oahu of the Hawaiian Island chain in the Pacific Ocean. This date, had been proclaimed as a "Date of Infamy," by our President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, on the day following this unprovoked attack.

As with the many other ships in the harbor, this was Helena's first taste of combat. She even then showed herself to be a proven and seasoned veteran–it was the start of a short, but a notable career, and one of with an envious reputation.

She was the first ship to open fire that morning, "within nine minutes from a cold start." She later would earn the title as the "fightin'est ship," because of her exploits in the Pacific area of that recent war, and while earning awards for seven major engagements, which we, as her crew, are authorized and do proudly wear, a star for each encounter, upon our Pacific Area Campaign Ribbon.

Also, she was the first vessel to received the newly created Navy Unit Commendation Award for her actions and participation in routing the Japanese forces in thirteen engagements as a member of Task Force 76.

Prior to and during the attack on Pearl Harbor, Helena had been mistakenly identified by the Japanese attacking force as the battleship USS Pennsylvania (BB38), the flagship of the Pacific Fleet, since she was then occupying Pennsylvania's normal berthing space in the 1010 Dock. Pennsylvania had been ordered into a dry dock for minor repairs. Helena, then, returning from operations at sea, had been ordered to moor in the 1010 Dock area in Pennsylvania's stead. The USS Oglala, flagship of the Pacific Mine Force, shortly thereafter, tied-up alongside, port side to Helena's starboard side, thus giving these two ships, moored together, the appearance of a wide beamed battleship. The attacking Japanese pilots were convinced this was their prime target as indicated on the charts they carried in the cockpits of their aircraft. These charts accurately charted the location of all the ships of our Navy and their types, who were at rest in Pearl Harbor, on that fateful Sunday morning. Albeit, the very recent change in berthing locations of the two ships, Pennsylvania and Helena, had not been noted on these revealing charts.

A most awe-inspiring and frightening occurrence, I experienced, at the start of the attack was to watch a torpedo being dropped from the "belly" of a Japanese "Kate" torpedo bomber aircraft. Then as I watched, the torpedo sped, "knowingly," through the water intent on seeking out and deliberately "slamming" into Helena's starboard side, amidships. After it had been launched, it had dived under Oglala, and then struck Helena, just below her six inch belt of armor plating, completely destroying all of her forward engineering spaces and the forward fire room. The concussion of the exploding torpedo opened Oglala's seams, and she began to take on water rapidly. Finally, this gallant lady, this old Fall River steamer, turned over onto her side, and then slowly sank, astern of Helena to where she had been towed.

The Helena's casualties were high. Many of her Sailors lost their lives–in excess of 253–or more than one third of her crew! Others suffered severe burns; several rushed to where they thought they could find a haven of safety, others with flesh and their clothing hanging from their appendages as they ran; many with other severe injuries; all caused by flash burns and the explosive force of that torpedo which enveloped them as they ran to their battle stations. None knew what actually had happened nor what was happening. "What had caused this? Who had caused this?," they called out to each other. Many have never learned, since they now lie under the white crosses in the Punchbowl National Military Cemetery, a Field of Honor in Honolulu, Oahu–not far from and overlooking 1010 Dock of the Pearl Harbor Naval Station, where they had breathed their last breaths of life.

Helena had been able to, by restricting the flow of water from her damaged engineering spaces, through the valiant efforts of a well trained damage control team, gently but reluctantly eased her bow into the murky, shallow waters of Pearl Harbor, and thence onto the muddy bottom of the harbor. She too, had suffered internal and external injuries, as so many of her crew had experienced on that unforgettable Sunday morning–7 December 1941.

When the battle subsided three hours later, and as the jubilant Japanese pilots were winging their way back to their carriers, I had my first opportunity to look out upon this scene of complete devastation. A scene of total disaster, of wreckage, and of an absolute horror to behold, which had been created by that attacking Japanese force.

Heavy, black smoke rising from the many burning ships completely filled the air, the USS Oklahoma lying on her side. Arizona, with thick black smoke rising skyward from her burning fuel oil, her foremast toppled over, was sunken with her decks awash, and now resting on the bottom of Pearl Harbor.

I could see Nevada, intentionally grounded off Hospital Point; apparently to prevent the blocking of the seaward channel. The destroyer Shaw was in a floating drydock, ablaze and burning out of control, with her bow a distorted and crumpled mass of twisted steel, caused by a direct bomb hit in her forward 5 inch powder magazine.

I could see and smell the omnipresence of the thick coating of heavy, black fuel oil now covering the waters of the harbor, with Sailors, trying to hold their heads above this thick, suffocating oil, calling out to be rescued. The stench of death had now begun to permeate the heavy, laden, foul air of Pearl Harbor! This was the scene created; a picture which words alone can never accurately describe nor retell, nor retell.

This was the picture which no photographer could ever fully capture; nor could reveal the true feeling of despair and helplessness which had invaded our thoughts. I could feel, not only observe, the reality of the impact of the damages which had so recently been perpetrated upon us, by that hostile force. The thoughts of the extent of these losses, both human and material, burned in anger in my chest. I asked why; over and over! Why? But I had no answers as I heard the cries of those Sailors in that fuel covered water who were still desperately calling out for help, and to be rescued.

I saw our nation's flags, some torn, some tattered, some hanging limply from their staffs on ships that had been bombed, torpedoed, or strafed. They too, those courageous American Sailors, must always be remembered, as all the other combatants, as they who continued to carry out their honored responsibilities, of hoisting our nation's emblem, at precisely 0800. This, in spite of the hail of strafing bullets, the fal-

ling aerial bombs, the flight of limb tearing shrapnel from these exploding bombs, and the ”din of battle” all around them. They showed to the Pearl Harbor combatants and the peoples of the world, “that our flag was still there.”

I remember too, those band members who continuously, courageously, proudly, and loudly played through to the last note of our nation’s anthem as stricken vessels were capsizing or as ammunition exploded close to and around them. I could feel the pangs of uncertainty repeatedly interfering with my thoughts as I asked myself; could we ever recover from this onslaught which caused so much death and destruction in so short an interval of time? Then a thought slowly crept into my thoughts, and as it grew, I became more certain. I became fully aware of the correct answer, which now controlled my thinking. I knew we could, and I knew we would, and we did because of the determination and the will of an aroused and angered people on that infamous “Date of Infamy!”

Other thoughts were at times rampant, as I continued to look out over the devastation that once was this great bastion of our nation. I thought why did this nightmare occur in spite of the advanced warnings we had had. Why?

After Helena’s sighting of that surfaced submarine, while operating with USS Phoenix (CL 46), did that submarine crash dive, after being sighted in those forbidden, operating waters in the Lahaina Roads on that previous Friday night?. This incident had been reported to headquarters, by Helena, but no action had been taken nor ordered to be effected. Why? Why wasn’t more concern shown when the radar operator at Opana, Oahu reported his radar had picked up a large flight of unidentified planes heading towards the island on that morning? Why was this flight of planes accepted to be “just a flight of B-25’s from the States.” Why?

Why, after the USS Ward (DD139), a destroyer on patrol duty at the mouth of the entrance channel to Pearl Harbor, depth charge and sink, a Japanese midget submarine on that Sunday morning? Why, didn’t we go to a “ready condition”?

But as in mythology, the Phoenix would arise again–so would the injured Helena and her sisters–all but three of the sunken or battle scarred ships which had suffered under that unprovoked attack, on that quiet, beautiful, Sunday morning, on a quiet, beautiful, Hawaiian island–now, so many years ago.

An aside, one of Helena’s secondary battery of 5 inch antiaircraft guns, following a “hedgehopping plane,,”” flying over nearby Hickam airfield, fired a 5” .38 caliber projectile through the tall, brick chimney structure of the incinerator building on Hospital Point. The large hole, created in the center of the stack, remained as a reminder of that

fateful morning, and repairs to the chimney were not effected until the war had ended. (Then, they demolished the entire smoke stack.)

Helena's gunners were credited with at least that spectacular hit (?) and two downed planes. It was also noted, the Japanese planes were avoiding Helena's rapid and effective gunfire as the attack progressed, and they were then concentrating their attacks on other ships and in other areas in the harbor.

Temporary repairs were completed rapidly on Helena in the unfinished dry dock #2 in Pearl Harbor. When these repairs were completed, 15 December 1941, the injured Helena then steamed, without escort (but cautiously), across the Pacific Ocean to the Naval Shipyard at Mare Island, CA., at a top speed of about 12 knots. (Her normal top speed, before her torpedoing was over 34 knots).

I had imagined that every submarine of the Japanese fleet was between us and the shores of California! She did arrived safely but very much in need of those intended repairs. We found the pier, to which we were to moor already bustling with energy and activity. We could see the necessary replacement parts and the most modern and recently developed combat ordnance equipment to make us more combat efficient than before. All this to show our anger to those who had committed that unprovoked and infamous attack.

Replacement units could also be seen for most of the entire forward engineering spaces and other units that had been completely destroyed by the blast of that one torpedo, and the several near bomb misses that fateful morning. Many other units also were spread out over the pier to make us once again the fast, seaworthy vessel we were before the onslaught. Most noteworthy, was the horde of Navy Yard workmen, with their toolboxes and torches, watching, waiting, and "at the ready," and anxious to come aboard this gallant lady and to start their repair assignments with a "can do - will do" attitude.

In addition to the refitting and the completion of the many repairs to her engineering spaces and propulsion equipment and units, Helena was the first vessel to receive the very efficient, the very secretive and the very highly guarded "radar." This unit would and did operate with extreme efficiency and dependability during our future upcoming night and/or day surface engagements, and in defending the gallant Marines landing and those having landed on Guadalcanal Island.

We would learn of the advantages and the capabilities a radar system gave to early warnings, and to locating and then "ranging in" on approaching enemy aircraft or warships was staggering.

It also should be as noted previously, because of America's determination and resolve, her capabilities to repair and rebuild, and of her newly found cohesiveness, only three ships of the battle of Pearl could not be restored nor rebuilt, as noted earlier, as we were, to answer the call to assist our growing fleet in "chasing the enemy from the seas."

MARE ISLAND NAVAL SHIPYARD

Within days after Helena's arrival at Mare Island, Mom was already wending her way, by train, across our country. It was to be the first of many reunions we would cherish, prior to the future separations Mom and I would experience in our years in the service to our country. Each separation made us appreciate and love each other so much more. Homecomings are experiences for which only Sailors can be truly so deeply grateful as they look forward to the day when their ships set their courses which will bring them to their home ports and to those who wait so patiently for their return once again.

My thoughts often go back to the hours Mom had spent waiting at the San Diego Fleet Landing, experiencing lengthy delays for the arrival of the vessel, on which I was embarked, to return to San Diego after several weeks at sea. I always felt and I knew, in my heart, Mom was as eager to see me as I was always so eager to see her waiting there!

Immediately after our arrival at Mare Island, I had been fortunate to be assigned to living quarters, in a navy housing unit, without a waiting period. The furnishings, which I bought at a very nominal and reasonable cost, went with the apartment. (I oft times wondered, just how many times had those pieces of furniture been sold and resold as a means of a Sailor getting an apartment without a waiting period). However, of much more importance, Mom and I were together!

The housing officer-in-charge turned his head and looked the other way and gave us that "break," when he learned of what we had just experienced. I have never forgotten the address of our first home. It was and still is so very important to me and was also to Mom! It was 32 Citrus Street, Vallejo, CA, a number which had been etched in our memories. We enjoyed so very much the several months we were able to spend together. Our time together, already, was so rapidly slipping by and it would be shortly before the repaired, and the once battle scarred Helena would be returning to the seas once more, heading then, for a fate unknown!

The clouds of war were becoming darker and darker as each day, each week, and each month passed, all too rapidly, for two who were intent on making each minute, each hour, each day, so full of love and respect, endearment and appreciation, admiration and happiness.

Then, that day of departure finally arrived! Helena left in a fog enshrouded San Francisco Bay unaware this would be for her, the last glimpse of her homeland, which was now fading fast astern, to join with our forces in the Guadalcanal Island area, a part of the Solomon Islands group.

The crossing was uneventful, with ports-of-call at Pearl Harbor, where memories abounded, the islands of the Samoan group, the Fiji islands, and finally the island of Espiritu Santo, in the New Hebrides group. Here we joined Task Force 76, consisting of a group of aircraft carriers, heavy and light cruisers and destroyers, whose main objective was to halt the southward advance of Japanese forces towards Australia. Further, to retard their attempts to complete the recapture of Guadalcanal Island, an extremely, outstandingly, important stronghold.

14

GUADALCANAL

Our Marines now were engaged in a life and death struggle to maintain their tenuous foothold on this island. Our first set of orders was to bombard the Japanese positions and to prevent our Marines from being forced off the island and into the sea, and also to prohibit remaining Japanese forces from being supplied with personnel reinforcements, ammunition, medical and food supplies. In retaliation, they struggled fearlessly to resupply their troops, with ships and personnel. We had named these forces, the "Tokyo Express."

It was during this series of night battles and continuing shore bombardments, in which both forces experienced substantial losses to ships and personnel and each suffered major and crippling damage to ships and equipment. Later, Samuel Eliot Morison, the noted author and historian, in his excellent book, *The Two-Ocean War*, graphically describes "the Guadalcanal Campaign as being the the most bitterly fought and contested campaign in all of American naval history."

It was comprised of seven major naval engagements of vessels of war, a staggering loss of naval personnel, and, in addition, innumerable forays, skirmishes, air attacks and shore bombardments. It was to be the start of the allies' successful series of moves northward towards the home islands of Japan and her eventual defeat. She would now attempt fewer forays into southern waters and made less island invasions for dominant territorial gains. The battle cry, "Remember Pearl Harbor," became the inspiration for all those who were involved in those bloody engagements of our northward advancements. (And I know, Helena remembered those words also!).

Unfortunately, a naval battle, the Battle of Savo Island, which developed into a most disastrous defeat ever inflicted upon ships of the United States Navy, this, because of several blunders, took place on the night of 9 August 1942, just to the east of this small island–Savo Island, and north of Guadalcanal Island.

The Japanese were intent on forcing our Marines off of Guadalcanal, who had successfully landed on this strategic island just two days before, by pushing them back into the sea. In this night sea battle, the forces of the United States suffered a most severe and humiliating loss of three heavy cruisers, and many lives in this first major battle of the Guadalcanal Campaign.

These cruisers–the USS Quincy (CA 39), the USS Vincennes (CA 44), the USS Astoria (CA 34–ships whose names are now etched in the memories of so many, and are of those vessels who participated in the start of the Guadalcanal struggle. They rest silently on the bottom of "Iron Bottom Sound", with their guns still pointing, at the ready, and in the direction of a now imaginary foe.

In addition to the tragic sinking of these valiant and sorely needed American cruisers, was the loss of many of their crews. An Australian cruiser, the HMAS Canberra, which had been assigned to operate with this American task force, was also sunk by the enemy. Notwithstanding, the following day we experienced our first retribution for our recent Savo Island battle losses and defeat, by our sinking of a Japanese cruiser by one of our submarines. This was to be the start of Japan's ever increasing inability to defend the islands or territories she had previously conquered, and the eventual denial to her Navy to be a real threat to the land, sea and air forces of the allied na-

tions. We all knew the course to the home waters of our enemy was to be long, arduous, and strewn with losses and defeats, to both sides, before Japan's capitulation as a conquered nation was assured.

The days in between the forays were always long and filled with expectancy and anxiety as we awaited in our ships in the harbor of Espiritu Santo Island, a southerly island which afforded relative safety from any harm. Rumors would dominate our conversations, but never predicting what could next be expected. Finally, the anticipated command rings out, carried by the ship's speakers to all parts of the vessel,"All hands make preparations for getting underway. The ship will get underway at 1600. We are heading north, again, tonight." The curtness of the message gave rise to and caused expectations and many predictions to run rampant because of our concern of not being fully aware of what the oncoming hours might bring. Questions abound: Is the "Tokyo Express" on the move again tonight? Where will we engage them? How many ships are in their force? What ships? What types? Which ships of ours will participate?

These were the thoughts, and the questions which prevailed as the ship's speakers became silent once again. This we could be certain of, Helena, with her sisters, will steam northerly, heading for the infamous, "the Slot," the seaway between the islands of Guadalcanal and Tulagi, in a "darkened ship" condition, (a nighttime, steaming condition with no lights showing) Smoking was taboo topside, since the light from the burning cigarette end could possibly be seen and our presence or movement be revealed to or detected by a prepared enemy. Helena, again, was to be the lead ship, because of her radar potential, and the ability to spot targets electronically and with greater accuracy, and at greater distances than with normal methods.

At precisely 1600, Helena "up anchors", upon orders, and when the anchor is aweigh, she begins to move cautiously towards and then through the minefield which protects the entrance to the channel leading to the anchorage area inside Espiritu Santo harbor. Once through the minefield, the throb of her powerful engines could be felt throughout the ship as she increases her speed. Ships of the task force now scurry back and forth to their assigned positions in the column. They then turn their bows towards a predetermined, northerly course which will guide them towards the island of Guadalcanal, and "the Slot", where contact with the Tokyo Express is now expected to be made. The oncoming night is filled with extreme anxieties and uncertainties.

This night was typically tropical with a moonlit sea, calm; but with a gentle roll to which Helena answered. We could smell the sweet, and drifting fragrances when cautiously passing a tropical island in the distance, being wafted to us by the offshore breezes. This is the kind of a night, so typical of nights, deep in the south latitudes of

the Pacific Ocean when peace and tranquility reigned. What lies ahead, of this we are not certain.

Will we see the glowing tropical sun as it breaks over the horizon once more. Will we feel the rise and fall of the sea as we race back again to Espiritu Santo and to her bay of safety? We do know the “Tokyo Express” is on the move, intent on replenishing Japan’s troops and supplies still on Guadalcanal. Both forces, our Marines and those of the Japanese, had been experiencing heavy fighting, with high casualties, and the needs for replenishment were increasingly in demand by both foes, who were fighting to maintain a foot hold on or for the control of this small tropical island - but still, an island with extreme strategic importance.

Here, where the completion of the building of an airfield and then, the control thereof, would give an overwhelming advantage to whomever was the victorious force.

To the eventual conquerers, our determined Naval, Marine and Army forces; would annihilate this enemy and drive him back into the sea. To these heroes would go the glory and the honor of capturing and securing Guadalcanal after seven months of hard fought confrontations, on the land, and on the sea, and in the air against an equally determined enemy. Henderson Field would be completely under our control, but only after the frequent, harassing “fly overs” and naval surface contacts by the enemy forces had ended. Thus giving the Allied Forces the capability of extending their range of observation and the control of the sky and the sea, now deeper into enemy territory. We would sail one step closer to the doorstep of Japan’s home islands.

As these thoughts were unfolding, our speakers announced we had entered Iron Bottom Sound with an assigned mission to bombard the Japanese held positions on Guadalcanal and to assist our cargo vessels in their offloading, intent on delivering the well needed supplies to our embattled Marines and Army personnel on the island. Helena had gone into a full combat readiness condition, a condition in which all battle stations are fully manned, ammunition is at the guns, and are prepared and ready for any eventuality.

I watched as our main battery of surface guns moved away from the center line of the ship and “ranged in” on their targets on the Island, to await the order to ”commence firing”. At that command, one could hear and could feel the roaring, frightening sound as these five and six inch projectiles left the muzzles of their guns; but which you knew would carry carnage and destruction as they landed on their predetermined targets. The blast of energy could be felt as it attempted to tear away at our clothing as each round was fired from these fifteen 6”50 caliber guns which constituted Helena’s main battery of ordnance.

Soon, on the distant island, black smoke began to rise and then larger puffs of smoke appeared, thus, indicating our targets were being located and were being hit. You will recall, earlier in this dissertation I had written Helena had been accused of having “six inch machine guns” by the Japanese warlords. To one with an inexperienced eye, this could appear to be true, as these projectiles continued to pour forth from these “6 inch gun barrels” in intervals averaging less than eight or ten seconds, and without hesitation. Reports of the havoc we were creating would be forthcoming from spotters on the island, who no doubt silently cheered, as each projectile found its intended mark and that target was blasted into nothingness.

Suddenly, I felt a cold chill coursing through my body and my thoughts, as I watched another salvo of projectiles tear into its target. This time, additionally, I then visualized a picture of a young, kimono clad, Japanese wife, with her children in tow, answering the knock on her door and then reaching out for the message which announced the death of her husband–“killed in action, on Guadalcanal Island while fighting for his ideals and credences,” it read. My thoughts continued, on a parallel course. What if these circumstances were reversed,- what if now, with Helena being the target of return fire from this same island, perhaps a young bride in the United States would be reaching out for a similarly worded message, revealing the death of her husband, who had met his fate under similar conditions .He too was fighting for his ideals and credences on that same day as his ship was bombarding the same island, and as it was then blasted into nonexistence.

The battle for Guadalcanal continued to explode into both, major engagements and/or minor skirmishes, with ship to ship participation, shore bombardments and air attacks, all for this small, but very strategic island in the southwest Pacific Ocean. This island's name was unknown to most everyone in the beginning of these engagements, but its importance as a prize of battle became familiar to all as the days, then the months passed by. It was to be seven months of continuing engagements, on the land, on the sea and in the air, before the island of Guadalcanal could be claimed as ours completely, but with both sides experiencing a count of human and material losses, so very important and so very constant and extreme.

Relief came from the perpetual flames of battle when Helena was awarded the opportunity to spend a few weeks in the Espiritu Santo Island anchorage, away from the stench and the din of battle. Ships, like men, need time to relax and "recharge their batteries" for whatever the future may hold in store for them. Minor repairs, refueling and replenishment of our much depleted stocks of ammunition and other supplies, had to be completed.

The stress of battle, the long days and hazardous nights in the Slot, we pushed further back in our thoughts and our memories. Never, not a word pertaining to Helena's capabilities, her prowess, her courage, her engagements as a ship-of-war, were ever discussed as we worked to complete our assignments in readying our ship to meet the enemy when called upon again. During those moments of relaxation, the more pleasant and diversified thoughts of home and loved ones prevailed. The building of a baseball field, on the neighboring island of Aore, was completed by some of Helena's crew members and was then named in her honor- "Helena's Field". The days away from the din of battle, lessened the stress of those many past engagements in which we had been participants. However, each day passed by so very quickly as we waited to be called upon once again to participate, in the defense of, and the battle for Guadalcanal Island.

On 12 November 1942 found Helena again heading northward towards the island. Word had been radioed by our reconnaissance aircraft, they had spotted a strong force of Japanese ships on a southerly course, heading for the island, no doubt with reinforcements and supplies. After an all night run, ofttimes with speeds in excess of thirty knots (about 36 miles per hour), and by first light, we had arrived in Iron Bottom Sound after passage through Lunga Channel.

Once again we commenced our bombardment of Guadalcanal, always with the thought of driving the Japanese from the island. The day was not complete. That afternoon, thirty-two torpedo bombers launched an attack on our force. The Japanese pi-

lots suffered severely with the loss of most of their aircraft. I watched, with great concern, after the attack had subsided, as three Japanese, the pilot and two of his crew members, hanging on to a floating palm tree, and then intentionally trying to drown themselves when the crew of a small boat of our force made an attempt to rescue them.

After that afternoon's "shoot down" of so many of their aircraft, a feeling of calm, but a tenuous calm, permeated the ship. We wanted just to rest peacefully and to discard all thoughts of today's actions from our minds. However, reports from our observation planes continued to be received giving information on the advancing of a more forceful Tokyo Express; of its speed, course, types and number of vessels.

To await the arrival of these ships, whom we knew would be arriving in the area, after nightfall, our task force had moved to an area of relative safety to await the fall of darkness which would afford us further protection. We waited, trying to occupy ourselves with tasks, minor nor of no importance. Then at last we heard the familiar heavy, rumbling sound echoing throughout the ship as the anchors were being raised from the sea bottom and then nested in their hawse pipes, secured and once again readied for sea. The sound of that single, clear, melodious bugle note over the ship's sound system told us once again the anchor had been freed and was "aweigh", free of the bottom, and from holding Helena as a prisoner, that we were once again underway!

Word had filtered down to all stations that we would engage the Japanese armada shortly after 2400. Their force consisted of two battleships, one light cruiser, and fourteen destroyers, with the mission to continue their efforts to now destroy Henderson Field and eliminate the Marines defending Guadalcanal Island and the strategic airstrip. We remembered, this was a prize so vital to the allies in their move towards our enemy's home waters. The Japanese admiral, assuming at first, we had abandoned the area, no doubt experienced great surprise and amazement at being challenged by a force with a great deal less firepower than his, in this impending and continuing battle for Guadalcanal Island.

Our recurring struggle for this island and several other battles that followed with other allied task forces, has been compared to battles that had been fought in centuries past. Damage, some minor and some severe; ships sunk or sinking; the extreme ferocity of battle, was experienced by both sides, with the final honors of victory going to our forces.

Once upon a previous encounter, our mission near completion, one of our newly built and commissioned destroyers, the USS Barton, which had just arrived from a

shipyard in the States, and was on her first mission, experienced only seven minutes of battle before her "death". This was her first and only combat experience since the day she "slid down the ways" just a few short months ago. She was destroyed and sank after being ripped apart by Japanese torpedoes. Most of her crew went down with their newly built and newly commissioned ship!

In the irony of battle; an electrician's mate aboard Helena, who recently had arrived in her for duty, and whose battle station assignment was to control the "firing" (lighting) of the ship's large searchlights when called upon, moved his position a few feet to another area on the searchlight platform. He had assumed it would be a safer location! He was killed by the flying shrapnel that had penetrated the steel platform in the area to which he had moved! His former position suffered no damage! (Incidentally, this shell hit was only a few feet forward of my gun mount when it struck the searchlight platform.)

This was a night in which many ships of both flotillas, allied or enemy, received major or minor damages. The loss of life and injuries to Sailors of both the Allies and the Japanese, incurred by these ships of both fleets was great, in numbers and severity. Records indicate this frightening and infernal night battle was finally ended when Helena's Captain Hoover, now the senior commanding officer, took command of the remaining ships, those alive and uninjured, and ordered all ships, that could move to retire from the battle area.

Only five ships could comply completely with his order. The time was 0226, just one hour plus of battle had passed in what is now considered to be the most desperate sea fight fought, since a seventeenth century battle off the coast of England. We again had accomplished our mission by preventing the Japanese from completing their reinforcement of the island. Substantial losses and injuries were inflicted on two of our light cruisers and four destroyers, theirs consisted of two destroyers and one battleship.To both, ships and men, damage and sinkings on each side was about even. All of the remaining ships experienced some major or minor battle scars from this devastating battle. In addition to our ship casualties; our personnel losses–losses which could never be replaced, included two of our great admirals, [Admiral] Scott, embarked in light cruiser Atlanta and [Admiral] Callaghan, embarked in heavy cruiser San Francisco, both were killed when the bridges of their flagships were hit and destroyed by enemy gunfire.

The following morning, as Helena was leading this battered but victorious force southward towards Espiritu Santo under Captain Hoover's (now the senior officer of

the force) command and guidance, an undetected Japanese submarine (I-26) launched a torpedo into the injured, light antiaircraft cruiser, USS Juneau.

I was standing at the lifelines, looking over toward, and admiring Juneau's lines, with another Warrior, and I then watched as a torpedo sped between Helena's stern and the bow of San Francisco and into the Juneau which, after the hit, disappeared from the scene completely, in a huge ball of flame and smoke; as the torpedo ripped into her side, with sight and sound so very devastating. A large, mushroom cloud arose slowly skyward, accompanied by a deafening roar. When it cleared there was not a trace remaining on the water's surface nor elsewhere, to indicate Juneau had been there just seconds before. The explosion was so intense! Helena was struck by an air-borne section of one of Juneau's 5 inch gun mounts. Her loss was the most tragic death of a ship and her crew, including the five Sullivan brothers, All but ten of the crew, who later were spotted by an aircraft and then pulled to safety from the clutches of the pitiless sea, had perished.

Juneau, being an antiaircraft cruiser, was in reality a floating ammunition maga-zine from stem to stern, and a hit in an any area below the waterline would cause a holocaust, such as the one she had just experienced. Her normal, high speed would have been her salvation. Albeit, in the surface battle of the night before, she had re-ceived a torpedo hit in her forward engine room which caused her to proceed at a speed well below her maximum.

I say all this In the defense of Helena's captain, Captain Hoover, who was recog-nized by his crew as an extremely, skillful and outstanding "ship handler", who was a leader who showed dedication to, appreciation for, admiration and consideration for his crew–an officer of praiseworthy note. We felt, he had been unduly accused when ordered to appear before a Naval Court of Inquiry, being charged with "leaving the scene of conflict, and making no effort to rescue any survivors of the USS Juneau holo-caust". He was later exonerated by the examining board and cleared of all charges. The Captain was able to convince the Board, there was no certainty, whether or not the at-tacking submarine had left the area of attack of this injured battle flotilla.

In the final judgement of our Skipper, he was officially, highly praised and com-mended for having demonstrated excellent judgment in rendering the order for disper-sal of the remaining ships, which also were subjected to attack. To remain in those hos-tile waters, invited further assault and perhaps, further destruction and loss of ships remaining. He was also able to convince the board there were no survivors in the wa-ters after the smoke and debris of the Juneau incident had cleared. Captain Hoover was also able to further persuade the the examining panel, to accept the possibility

that the submarine could still have been lurking in those dangerous waters, and thus adding, perhaps, to the possibility of more personnel casualties and ship sinkings. His reasoning and actions were highly accepted by his crew, and apparently all others. All involved, without exception, accepted the decision handed down by the Court of In-

quiry, as being the best possible action to have been ordered. and taken.

Helena continued making runs with her sister ships, fighting off enemy air attacks, bombarding enemy positions, now extending farther north beyond Guadalcanal, leaping from enemy stronghold to the next. New ships, with new crews, were constantly joining our forces. These new vessels were now being partially manned with experienced veterans of the many past engagements and with novices just released from the training centers of our Navy. We knew these new sailors would shortly be called "veterans" just as we once were called "novices.," now so many months and so many encounters past. We knew too, the production lines, for the manufacture of war materials and equipment in the United States, were producing these items at top speed, helping us to overcome this persistent, well-trained and well equipped enemy. Newly commissioned ships with newer instruments of war, were joining our task forces. With names new and unknown to us, they were readying to assist us in defeating those determined enemy "men of war".

15

COMING HOME

My days aboard Helena were coming to an end. Unknowingly, the “needs of the Navy” would soon dictate that I leave her for duty elsewhere. Experience in battle became keywords for the training of those newcomers and recruits, who came as our relief.

Word of an impending transfer came to me as we lay to in Espiritu Santo. Chief Gunner’s Mate Dupay, (an outstanding chief petty officer, a great friend and a great teacher), asked if I would accept a transfer to the Gunner’s Mate Electric and Hydraulic School in Washington, D.C. for a course of instruction to enhance my specialties. I

had to sit down because of the shock that had overwhelmed me, to learn that I had been selected for the transfer. Seconds later I was able to respond, and almost inaudibly, I muttered, “You can bet your “rear end “ I will.” (However, not exactly in those words!) The word spread rapidly among Helena’s ordnance gang that I had been selected for this transfer. Gunner’s Mates and Turret Captains, of all ranks and ratings, from all divisions of the ship, offered their monetary savings to me to make a “swap”, but my answer was “no”—I was going home!

(Several years later, when peace had returned to the world once more, I sadly traveled to Riverside, CA. to attend the funeral of Chief Petty Officer Dupay. If I only could have thanked him once again. I had lost a great shipmate and and he had been an outstanding chief petty officer to work for. I was overjoyed, to learn, he too, had made it all the way through the war–safely!)

Orders for my transfer to this new assignment were hastily typed by Helena’s yeomen. I had packed my sea bag.in record time. On 20 January 1943, with the set of orders cut for the new duties in my hand, I boarded the USS Aldebaran, a Navy cargo vessel, which was getting underway for the states within several hours. She was to be my transportation back to the West Coast.

Needless to say, I climbed aboard her long before she sailed. As the motor whaleboat carried me towards Aldebaran, I looked back over my shoulder searching for Helena. She stood out from all the other ships in the harbor. Shipmates were lining the lifelines, waving and calling out to me and wishing me God speed. Just as I had turned to look once more, before boarding Aldebaran, at what was to be my last glimpse of “my lady”, I thought I heard her murmur, “Good Luck, Sailor.”

Luck , for her, ran out at 0230, 6 July 1943 , when she was ripped in half by three Long Lance torpedoes, launched by a Japanese destroyer, in the night battle of Kula Gulf. The gunfire from her main six inch gun battery and five inch secondary antiaircraft guns was so rapid and continuous, the flashes of the exploding gun powder had lighted her port side almost as bright as the light of day. She had presented herself as a target to the Japanese torpedo men and had caused her own demise!

The USS Helena, ever the “fightin’est ship of the Navy” now stands a watch eternal, as she lies in the warm, deep waters of Kula Gulf just off Kolumbangara Island, in the Solomon Islands group. Several other man-of-war vessels, of both nations, now do as well.

I am certain her bow numbers, “CL50”, stand out evermore vividly than any of the bow numbers of other ships that lie with her. This in honor to her, resulting from a short, but outstanding record during her numerous, major and/or minor engage-

ments, in the Battle for Guadalcanal, and subsequent encounters, as our victorious forces continued their march ever northward. Her prowess as a leading naval man-of-war was publicized in a recent newspaper release which had listed the top ten major surface engagements in which our Navy had participated in during its 225 year history.

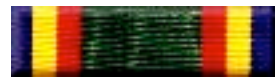
It was interesting to note, Helena had been recognized by name and hull number and was designated to have had participated in two of those ten key battles—namely the Pearl Harbor Attack and the Battle for Guadalcanal. She is now at rest in the company of those honored Sailors and Vessels, of both Allied and Japanese forces. All had fought so valiantly that night to maintain their own ideals and to achieve their own goals, in the now famous Battle of Kula Gulf, 6 July 1943. Helena had once again proved her might and her capabilities as the, officially noted, “the fightin'est’ ship in the Navy, by causing both injuries to and the sinking of several Japanese ships. She is now entitled to this well earned and well deserved rest as she lies blanketed by 300 fathoms of the warm, dark waters of Kula Gulf in the Solomon Islands chain, this gallant lady, still manned by 190 of her crew, who all now stand “a watch eternal”. I am certain tears prevail, by all who served in this great lady, who now sails the seas no more; but her prowess and her record as being officially the “fightin’ est ship” in the Navy” remains with her evermore.

16

MEDALS AND RIBBONS

As previously noted, Helena was a most highly decorated naval vessel for her many wartime exploits, and because of her many escapades, and operations which where of great significance, when confronting the enemy. Helena was known as a “can do“ ship, which resulted in her being selected for participation in many of the surface involvements of major importance in maintaining a foothold in the Guadalcanal battle area. Her prowess as a ship of war, bestowed upon her the involvement and the acknowledgment of completing any and all of the assigned tasks with the most honorable results.

Her name is one of the most highly recognized of the “men of war” by those Sailors, who operated in the Pacific area. Thusly, she was the first vessel, a ship of the line, and her crew, to be honored by being awarded the newly created Navy Unit Commendation Award and Medal. This for her participation in seven major sea encounters, which were all of strategic importance to the Allied forces. This award had been designed and approved of, to recognize the ship and her crew as a unit, for their dedicated, their untiring and their continuing efforts to defeat a foe intent on defeating them.



Other awards I also proudly wear, the highly prized Good Conduct award and medal with four bronze stars. A Sailor who is able to complete four years of flawless conduct is awarded originally the Good Conduct Ribbon, and then a bronze star for each of the succeeding four years he is able to travel this narrow but rewarding path. Along with this significant achievement went, at times, the disheartening phrase uttered by those less capable or less fortunate, “I see you haven’t been caught yet!” It was usually spoken in jest, perhaps, but always spoken, I am certain, with a bit of envy.

I also am entitled to wear the American Defense Campaign Ribbon with one star, which indicates service in the armed forces prior to the start of the World War ll conflict . The bronze star indicates sea duty in our Navy of the United States. I am also eligible to wear and have been awarded the American Defense ribbon.

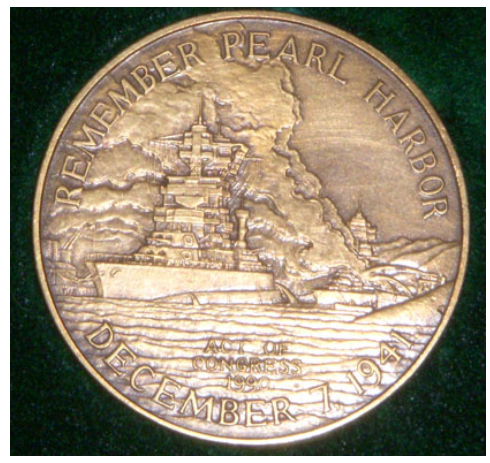
Next is the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign ribbon with one silver star and two bronze stars which indicates my participation in the seven major and decisive sea battles or encounters of major importance and significance, while aboard Helena, in the Pacific battle area.

Campaign ribbon number six, representing the World War ll Victory Medal, issued to all members of our victorious forces over the Japanese warriors in the Pacific area and also to those for their final defeat of the enemy in the European theater. Next in seniority is the Japanese Occupation ribbon awarded to those who occupied Japan after the conflict and the China Service medal ribbon for service in China and waters adjacent to this nation. These, In recognition for continuing service to the United States after the World War ll conflict, and through the years ending in 1954, active duty personnel of the armed services were recognized for their continued allegiance to the country for which they had fought so long and so hard and so valiantly.

For service during the Korean war, combatants were cited for their participation in this conflict with the Korean Service Medal and Ribbon. My ribbon contains two bronze stars for major actions in which the destroyer USS Agerholm (DD826) was involved. My battle station was then that of acting Gunnery Officer. The Gunnery Officer had been relieved of this duty and I had been appointed as his relief. I had assumed the responsibilities then of directing and firing of the ship's main battery, (5'38 antiaircraft guns), in repelling any enemy intent on inflicting harm upon Agerholm and/or her crew. I had been elevated to a position with these greater responsibilities, and as a Chief Petty Officer, it was determined I could fulfill the expectations of those who had granted me these additional responsibilities . I kept in mind the old adage, "Chief Petty Officers are the backbone of the Navy" and did my utmost in carrying out those expectations. As a result, I received several "well done" and a "4.0 commendation" from our skipper, Commander Stencil.

Since the Korean fracas was a United Nations venture, this organization awarded their United Nations Service Medal to those who served in the Korean area from 27 June 1950 until the end of hostilities in July 1954. I must add, additionally, those who participated in this action, also received from the President of South Korea, his nation's esteemed "Korean Presidential Unit Citation".

In 1991, after many years of letter writing, "knocking on doors", and hearing promises made, we, the survivors of the attack on Pearl Harbor, finally received this most cherished medal–the Pearl Harbor Commemorative Medal. It was, perhaps, intentionally issued on the fiftieth anniversary of the attack. on Pearl Harbor. A family member of those who did not survive the attack and those who did survive were the recipients for their participation in this unprovoked holocaust. The government had finally authorized the issuance of a medal to keep alive this memory, after which, the dark, black clouds of war had rapidly filled the skies of our universe and plunged this nation into the severe and savage times of a devastating four year world war.



I am a card carrying member of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association. The Association was started through the efforts of eleven Pearl Harbor Survivors who met in Los Angeles on 7 December 1958. They met to remember and honor their friends who

did not survive the Japanese attack and to make efforts to locate those who might express interest and then to unite with them into an association with a common bond. Their efforts have been well rewarded with responses from many of the men and women of all ranks and ratings of the military services of our country who could claim participation in the attack.

It had been stipulated in the founders' rulings, and later made a part of the Association's Constitution and By-Laws, all applicants had to have been on the island of Oahu, or if off shore, then within the three mile limit during the attack, and between the times 0755 and 0945. A federal charter had been granted to the Association in 1958 by our government, and the Association since then has flourished and experienced phenomenal growth. The passage of time is now beginning to have its effect on the membership by the "tolling of the ship's bell" with more frequency as each day closes with the loss of another Survivor or two, of that infamous attack . May it never, never be forgotten!

I quote a passage published by James Michener, the renown American author of many outstanding novels:

They will live a long time, these men of the South Pacific. They had an American quality. They, like their victories, will be remembered as long as our generation lives. After that, like the Confederacy, they will become strangers. Longer and longer shadows obscure them, until their Guadalcanal sounds distant upon the ear like Shiloh or Valley Forge.

If you were to paraphrase "South Pacific" and "Guadalcanal" and substitute "Pearl Harbor", it then becomes applicable to those who have survived that infamous attack. To retain this in the memories and thoughts of all people, has become the important endeavor; the primary goal and objective, of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association. to "Remember Pearl Harbor, keep America alert".

The Association strives to restrain these "longer and longer shadows from obscuring us" and what we represent. We all speak with pride of our actions and endeavors at Pearl Harbor, on 7 December 1941, and thereafter, at the island of Guadalcanal and the islands in the South Pacific area campaign or wherever shooting occurred. We are

all heroes, if only in fulfilling our obligations for which we were so thoroughly trained. We must always remember, the damage to our fleet, though extensive, occurred in the earlier minutes of the assault and then only until our guns commence their firing.

I am also a card carrying member of several other military organizations, namely, the Fleet Reserve Association, The Retired Officers Association (which has been renamed, the Military Officers Association}, The Warrant Officers Association, The USS Helena Organization, The United States Cruiser Sailors Association and The Tin Cans Sailors Association. All of these organizations, as stated in their Constitutions, believe so strongly in the United States, her ideals, her philosophies. They speak of and for the provisions of the welfare for those who defended the honor of this country, and they speak, most of all, to protect, the freedoms we all continue to enjoy this day!

In this foregoing treatise I dealt primarily with my experiences and of the years I was honored to have been able to serve our country, in our Navy. They do stand uppermost in my mind because of their importance in my attempts, and of those around me, to maintain our way of life. I wrote of my many experiences and of the frequent excursions I participated in, some with a promise of impending harm, are strongly imbedded in my thoughts. Thus, both in times of peace or in times of war, and if I could disregard the factor of aging– should I be recalled to serve again, I would not hesitate to be the first to step into line again.

17

EPILOGUE

My initial screams of life took place on the 13th of February,1916 at 7:05 pm (1905), in 134 River Street, Paterson, New Jersey. A midwife handed this screaming, “newly “emerged”, twelve pound plus, bouncing baby boy to his mother, Carrie (nee Caroline Schleicher), and then to the proud father, Arie Korporaal.

Dad then turned up the gas light for those in attendance to see his newly born son, for whom he already had great aspirations, thoughts and plans. Our years passed by all too quickly, but all were filled with experiences so very delightful to a growing

boy who constantly enjoyed the privilege and the companionship of being with his Dad.

We fished together; we walked together; we talked together; we enjoyed, we saw, and we explored life together. We saw "the new motion picture world" together. I saw, for my first motion picture, with him, the very appropriate *Down to the Sea in Ships* now so many, many years past. Could this, plus his service in the Navy of The Netherlands, his continuing love for his country of birth and his allegiance to his queen, Queen Wilhemina, and later his very.strong allegiance to this country, the United States of America, have been the precursor for my choice to make the sea and my dedication to service to my country, my way of life in future years?

We also made short day trips in those now ancient and discontinued steam trains to nearby towns. I attended with him, any and all patriotic events which took place in Paterson, New Jersey, or its surrounding suburbs.

Dad's place of birth was in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, but his loyalties and patriotism now belonged to this country, as noted before. He believed in this country and what it had to offer its citizens. Evidence of his love for this newly found land was frequently revealed as he smartly placed his hat over his heart whenever this nation's flag was paraded past him, or while attending functions in which the military participated.

An incident which took place at a parade and which had been etched in my young mind when Dad leaned over to warn an observer standing in front of him to show his respect and allegiance by removing his straw hat (called a "skimmer" in those days) whenever this nation's flags were paraded by. The warning apparently was ignored and went unheeded by this observer, when I last saw him chasing his hat, which now was acting like a cart wheel, rolling across the parade route, and under the high-stepping horses. Dad had made his point and the surrounding spectators were now showing their approval, and delight, with a hushed burst of laughter and gentle applause.

Mom participated in most of our excursions and, in particular, the Saturday afternoon venture into town to purchase the supplies for the coming week. To me, it was a trip into another world. I was fascinated by the put-putting of these new motor cars that were whizzing by at such phenomenal speeds! This Saturday outing meant donning our fineries and then boarding the bus for the trip into town. Dad always had the nickels to pay for our fares and I was always awarded the window seat to watch the passing scenes. It was an adventure into another world. Although the route to town was always the same, and the scenes never changed, still everything I saw was new to

my mind's eye. I had thousands of questions to ask and received thousands of answers.

Our home was a comfortable, two bedroom house with a large kitchen and a cozy "parlor". This was the room to which, the door was always closed and locked and then opened only on special occasions or perhaps when visitors were expected. The kitchen was the main room of the house and the one which brings back so many, many fond memories. This room was the center of all the special, or informal activities which took place. The coolness. of it, the odors which predominated as Mom busily prepared our meals, still remain. I can see Dad sitting off to one side at a large, round, oak table, reading his evening newspaper. This, after a busy day's work as a dyer of silks in Weidmann's Silk Mill, (as it was named) and after overseeing my futile attempts to master my math problems just learned that day in Public School 12.

I can see also, the activity which always took place, just prior to the Saturday afternoon excursion into town, to make this room spic and span. Mom, with her brooms and dusters and cloths, is busily attempting to make things shine and sparkle as if new. Dad is "blackening and polishing" the large and predominate wood burning stove used for both cooking and heating. He then proudly steps back to observe and admire his work, with occasional Dutch expletives, gently, under his breath, criticizing his failures. I continue to see this calm and peaceful scene over and over as the old kitchen clock continues to tick away the passage of time–as now, all too rapidly!

The Dutch language was rarely, nor fully, spoken in our home, being used only on special occasions or when secretive revelations were being discussed by the elders. Sometimes Dad insisted, vigorously, to those who visited, "We are now in America, and enjoying what this young country has to offer, speak then, English only, but speak proudly, and it should be spoken by all." Those words still ring out clearly in my thoughts of a man who now admired and now believed in all that the United States represented and offered to these newcomers and to their new found freedom in this new land.

However, there were certain times and occasions when this ruling would be forgotten. Friends, and there were many, would join together to listen to and enjoy the oft repeated tales of their memories of their homeland and then join in singing the songs of the land they loved and knew. These, of the land, with a love they all still carried in their hearts, and had never really left behind, nor had never really forgotten. Unaware, they were at times, revealing their hidden love for the country, upon whose earth they had once trod and played, in exchange for this new country, which now of-

fered them so much more, in opportunities and freedom alone. Still, tears would glisten on their cheeks, truly revealing their innermost feelings. and their thoughts. None of the elders had, nor none would ever forget their love for their beloved Queen, Wilemina–Queen of The Netherlands.

The melodious clink of coins hitting the bottom of the now empty "beer pail" would signal, "replenishment time was in order and was necessary." After several of these trips of the beer pail to the corner pub for replenishment, the gatherings would become more garrulous and boisterous. The language of the "Nederlands" would now become the spoken word. It was then I learned a few Dutch words, mostly, those not normally spoken in a church gathering.

Then it happened, during one of our many trips to town. The emerging "world of electronics" had reached out and tapped Dad on the shoulder. He had endured the world of sound flowing forth, sans clarity, from the windup Victrola which stood in the place of honor and in the sanctity of the parlor. He had suffered long enough with the scratchy sounds, which predominated, when he played the recordings of his beloved music of his homeland, or Beethoven, or Mozart. Then on a Saturday afternoon excursion into town, he stumbled (for all intents and purposes,) into a shop which sold those new fangled apparatus called "radio." Joyously, he made the purchase of one, a battery operated radio which he was told "was the marvel of the age" a Freshman Masterpiece! Now, in the place of that tired, wind-up Victrola, would stand a modern radio console–a miracle of the nineteenth century with its myriad of levers, knobs and switches, and batteries, which had to be charged constantly! Apparently, it was a great and grand attraction, because suddenly we had more neighbors visiting–some whom we never had known. They came just to hear the sounds emanating from that fascinating new piece of modernity. It was, at this time, the only radio in a house on Butler Street. Dad and Mom spent many hours sitting in front of that Freshman Masterpiece, both often falling asleep, as the batteries slowly lost their magical power of helping to bring the sound of now recognizable music and human voices to their ears. Life was abundantly beautiful for this small, happy family at 105 Butler Street, in Paterson, New Jersey!

For a young, eleven year-old, curly, tow-headed youngster, life could not have been kinder. I was learning to become a young man with impeccable (?) qualities as time was passing us, now all too rapidly. Dad was a disciplinarian, but one who was always fair and love-abiding in his judgments and discipline. I accepted his guidance. I assuredly accepted his manner of discipline!

In late August, 1921, tragedy struck the Korporaal home! Dad had spent part of the night eel fishing (eels are a Dutch delicacy) in the Hackensack River, a great eel river, which flows through northern New Jersey. Two fishing friends, with whom he had been fishing, had left earlier. Dad had continued to fish since the catch was exceptionally good that night and he had the following day free from his daily labors. From a distance, just shortly after they had left, they had heard Dad's cries for help, and hurriedly returned to where they had left him, but all to no avail. They could not locate him after making a thorough search up and down along, the river bank, where they all had been fishing together.

At 0200, a uniformed policeman rapped on our front door to notify my mother of the tragedy, by drowning, of her husband. Circumstances of the casualty were sketchy. Apparently, this expert, long-distance swimmer had tripped and had fallen into the river, struck his head, and then became entangled in the weeping willow trees, whose branches reached downward and into the water. How could a youngster believe this story, of a man with the physical capabilities his Dad enjoyed, die so tragically? It would be years later before I accepted his death, always believing for so long that I would, one day, find him standing in the doorway, with arms outstretched to welcome me, and calling out, "mien pickie" as he always did in the past when I answered the ringing doorbell.

Mom moved to another house on Butler Street to be nearer to her sister, my Aunt Gertrude. Her life was changing; I knew she too missed the love and the companionship of the man whom she loved and admired so very much. For the first time she had a job, to which she had to answer. She became a winder in a silk factory. Monotonously, all the day, she reeled the silk from skeins onto spools. Her salary was far from adequate, but somehow, we did manage and continued to live as comfortably as these changes in our circumstances permitted. I realized then, my help was needed to assist her (of which she never spoke) in her attempts to maintain the living conditions to which we had previously became accustomed to.

Those days filled with fun, spent on Bell's lot, were fast disappearing. The hours spent swimming in the old swimming hole, complete with a its Huckleberry Finn-type swing; suspended from that outreaching tree branch, the pond, which was a country-mile from the nearest sign of habitation, I now walked less frequently. I could feel a lack of the desire to spend any time in these haunts, I once so greatly enjoyed! My days spent there became fewer in numbers since I was now delivering the morning and evening newspapers to customers on a route. I developed a weekly distributorship

of fifty to sixty units of the Liberty Magazine, (which, in that era sold for five cents). I built a shoe shine box and shined shoes for ten cents a shine.

Later, I became a pin boy in a bowling alley. I earned five dollars weekly and received a bounty of tips from the bowlers. When the New Jersey State Bowling Championship used our bowling lanes, I would be chosen to be one of the pinsetters for this prestigious event. I proudly accepted their selection each time, having been singled out from several other competing pinsetters. The excitement of being a part of these tournament nights, setting up pins for these champions, all remains so alive, so vivid in my memory. On those nights, my pockets would bulge with "tip" money.

Each evening I would pour my receipts onto the kitchen table and then so proudly pushed them towards my Mom. I could see tears well up in those pretty, brown eyes as she reached out to touch my hand. At times such as these, I could read and I could feel the unspoken words of her love and her appreciation, displayed in those glistening eyes–spoken words, I felt, were not necessary. Because of her insistence that my schooling never be compromised but must always be uppermost in my endeavors and thoughts and without interruptions, I had graduated from Public School 12, at a very young age. I had skipped two semesters because of my grades and then started my high school years in the Central and later the Eastside High Schools of Paterson, New Jersey.

Mother and Dad are now at rest, together, on a shaded knoll overlooking the City of Paterson, New Jersey. Perhaps, as they look out into the shadows, they can see their home on Butler Street and also hear their favorite music emanating from that Freshman Masterpiece radio, as they sit, hand in hand, which they had done so frequently, enjoying their union to each other with a love that never faltered–now so many, many years in the past.

Mother did remarry. She was persuaded to move her life to New York City, knowingly, this second marriage did not have the substantive qualities of her marriage to my Dad. Attempts were made to make it succeed, but to no avail. I too developed an attitude that this union could not flourish and I did little to help make it prosper. Never did I learn to truly accept the change, nor did I really try, for obvious reasons; for no one could take the place of my Dad! After giving this marriage a fair chance to succeed, it was finally decided by each, to separate and they would then venture into a life independent of each other. Mother and I remained in New York after deciding New York had a way of life to which we had no problems of adjusting.

I had been continuously employed by a major department store for several years now, during the long and lingering depression of 1929. Perhaps, because of my ambi-

tions, my capabilities and my allegiance to this company, they had now opened a door which would lead to a successful career in the “department store family”. It was apparent that I had shown my superiors that I possessed the knowledge and the initiative for advancement to a position with many more responsibilities than I had as a stock person. Still the rumbling sound of waves dashing upon the shores of distant lands, I could hear, as they continued to permeate my thoughts. In order to move closer to those persisting dreams, I had volunteered then, and as I related earlier, to become a member of the United States Naval Reserves thus taking me a step closer to fulfilling those continuing and gnawing ambitions to become a full-fledged, regular member of the Navy of the United States . I was nearing my goal. Monday nights were drill nights, which gave me the opportunity to don the Navy blues which I so admired.

Additionally, in the years I served as a Reservist, I had made several cruises aboard naval vessels, of varying types, from destroyers, to cruisers, to battleships; I was then experiencing that feel of a rolling deck beneath my feet–my dreams were being partially realized. Then, again as I have written earlier in this writing and as I recall once more, the opportunity came when the Navy Department requested of Naval Reservists, to volunteer for full time service in the regular Navy of the United States. I do believe I was number one in the long line, then, with the others who shared similar dreams, as I placed my name on the signature line to serve in the profession I had dreamed of for so long. The sea was, at long last, opening her arms fully, to me.

I reported to the newly commissioned USS Helena in Norfolk, Virginia, 30 July 1940, as a Seaman for active duty in the Navy of the United States. Helena, was a young ship, a new ship, which had slipped down the shipyard ways, just months before in the Brooklyn Naval Shipyard.

With those final thoughts, some in repetition, and these, the following, I have repeated because of the their importance, in directing the future years of the life I had chosen. I do want to again recall, from earlier in this dissertation, of the impact it had upon my life, when I had refused the opportunity to continue my military career as the Officer-in-Charge of the Gunners Mate School at the United States Naval Training Center in Great Lakes, Illinois.

I would have, no doubt, been advanced to a higher rank, but I was pleased to have achieved as much as I had. As a Chief Warrant Officer, I had reach the upper rung in my ladder of success; this with a rank recognized by all naval personnel, as the ultimate achievement in a naval career! I now again recall and reveal the true feelings I felt, as tears blur my vision, as I took that last stroll down Pier Six, in the United

States Naval Station in San Diego, away from my ship, the USS Prairie (AD15). This, also, was to be my last walk as an active duty, commissioned officer in the Navy of the United States! I had achieved the goal I had planned so many years past, those, which I made that night, at the Naval Training Center in Sampson, New York, with my Mildred by my side–that of becoming a commissioned officer in our Navy, and which I had so proudly achieved. Tears flowed freely then, as they frequently do now!

I knew that I would tread those decks of naval vessels, never more. However, I accepted this, for I knew my life would now be even more complete, and richer, as the two of us, Mildred and I, would stroll, hand in hand together, happily through our remaining years of later life. Our children would be fulfilling their desires, their dreams, by becoming students at the college level of schooling to achieve their goals in their lives .

But the sea, which I sincerely loved, and still do, would beckon me no more. And now to recap (but just a fraction) I have shared with you, the sum of the more important and the more other joyous episodes of my life, some of which I may have repeated in these writings, but I do feel that they were important to some of the many incidents in my life's story and they would strengthen their impact. I have felt too–yes, someone has been watching over me, and guiding me, safely, through the many, many perilous times of a war and the other times of danger–as I passed through life's many stormy seas. These, on a journey, which is now almost finished, and I do believe, yes, successfully! I had achieved the many goals I had planned! If only, they could all have been finished–hand in hand with my Mildred by my side. For her my love abounds!

Columbia River Bar

The Columbia Bar, also frequently called the Columbia River Bar, is a s
bars and shoals at the mouth of the Columbia River spanning the US st
gon and Washington. The bar is about 3 miles wide and 6 miles long. W

Related Glossary Terms

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Index Find Term

USS Agerholm (DD826

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USS Hancock (CVA 19

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Chapter 7 - Naval Training Center

USS Helena (CL 50)

USS Helena (CL-50) was a St. Louis-class light cruiser of the United St
Completed shortly before World War II, she was damaged in the attack
Harbor, and participated in several battles in the Pacific War.

Related Glossary Terms

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Chapter 2 - Schooling

USS Prairie (AD15)

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