

WAR YEARS, PART ONE, MERCHANT MARINE, GARRETT JUPP

World War Two started for me just a few days after I had turned sixteen. The family was sitting in Mother and Dad's living room listening to a newly acquired Scott short wave radio. It was a monstrous black metal box, covered with knobs and filled with vacuum tubes that made it quite warm to the touch. In the middle of a music program it blurted out the message that the Japanese had launched a devastating attack on Pearl Harbor. Our first reaction was disbelief, followed by horror, followed by rage.

My Father, realizing that with one more year of high school I would be eligible for officer's school, started arrangements to enter me in summer school. I worked hard during the summer of '43 as planned, and in the fall I graduated. I was no mediocre student at the school. The contemplation of being in the sights of some sausage maker from Hamburg made me exceedingly smart. By fall I had my high school diploma which opened the way to applying to The U. S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point NY.

The war, cranking up to full tilt, made everything very scarce. Anything of value to the effort was turned in for use in munitions and other war material. Toothpaste tubes were made of a zinc compound and had to be turned in when used. Paper shoes were available in case leather ones could not be had. They were rationed to two pair a year, and a ration stamp was needed for each pair of leather shoes. One young member of the faculty who drove a Model A convertible coupe lost a tire to wear. A tire was lost, at the time, not when the tread was gone, but when the last layer of containing fabric was worn through and the tube blew out. Our teacher was unable to get a replacement, so he let his rim take the continued wear. From the resulting clatter we always knew where he was as he traveled about.

My stint at summer school taught me a lot about farming. As part of the arrangement with the school I was to be a farm hand as an augmentation to my reduced tuition. I studied hard. I didn't want the fate of some of the students who had been drafted and killed. The farm work had great advantages. I was spared all the purposeless rituals that seemed to take up huge amounts of the day in the institution.

I HAD BEEN ACCEPTED TO THE UNITED STATES MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY at Kings Point on the north shore of Long Island and was eager to start. However, I was still too young to go to sea. I had to be eighteen and that

wouldn't happen until December. I pointed out to the academy admissions people that I could complete my preliminary training on land, and sea time would begin after my birthday. I started within two weeks. The Academy started a new class every few weeks. Our convoys taking war materiel to England were getting new ships each day, and they needed to be manned. Once the student pipeline was filled, it was turning out twenty new merchant mariners (not merchant marines!) every two weeks.

I felt thrilled to be there. Everything was structured and immaculate. There was no question that this was a government military school. The rules were simple and reasonable. There was no room for charlatans or personal hubris to muck things up. There was a job to be done, and we could feel it everywhere. After basic training we received our seaman's papers. If there was a hint of sloth in a cadet- midshipman, as we were called, he had the option of shipping out as an able-bodied seaman or go in the army. No one washed out.

We marched in formation wherever we went. There were two double bunks to a room. One of my roommates, Luigi Antonio Picoli, just over five feet, had the energy of a six footer, plus packed into that frame. He lived in Brooklyn, only a short cab ride away. After we had put in a few weeks and were allowed to have liberty on weekends we would go to his house where his mother would make hero sandwiches, the likes of which I have never experienced again. Just before we went to sea Luigi got married. The wedding party went on around the clock for three days. I had to quit after eighteen hours, but the huge family, taking turns, kept it rolling.

The curriculum was setup for us to train and take classes for six months, then six months of sea duty as a Cadet-Midshipman and, upon our return, six more months of study. I elected to take the deck course which meant celestial navigation, dead reckoning and associated studies. At my family's insistence summer school had concentrated my courses on math, trig and the like which smoothed my way into spherical trig and our navigation bible, Bowditch. I still have it. We also had to become proficient in semaphore, flag signals, navigation aids and marine architecture. The academy had a training ship, but it was seldom used for lack of fuel. We were also taught to swim, a logical course for many from the Midwest. One of our swimming maneuvers was to dive and hold our breath and then rise to the surface flailing our arms to disburse any burning fuel that might be present.

I was fortunate in the timing of my eighteenth birthday. It occurred only weeks before my initial shore curriculum ended. As explained earlier, the rules did not allow me to go to sea at seventeen. On completion of my plebe

studies I was allowed leave to spend time with my family before going to sea. My orders arrived in January of '44. They directed me to go to the Philadelphia Navy Yard to pick up the S S Marine Raven, which had just been converted from an armament (tanks) carrier to a troop ship. Pig iron ballast was added above the keel to make up for our bantam weight cargo, but as it turned out, not enough. The Marine Raven was over four hundred feet long with a sixty foot beam. The superstructure was aft, similar to the construction of a tanker. She had steam turbine engines. There were probably four or five decks. Each deck was packed with all the bunks it could contain. Each bunk location had five bunks tiered from deck to the overhead. They were so closely stacked that the occupant had to exit his space just to turn over. The bunks were pipe framed with a platform of stretched canvas. I was even more thankful that my family had made the arrangements it had. Even if I had escaped a worse fate as a GI, I learned that the Army had no plans to make you comfortable. After boarding I took my hazing from the old salts aboard, but it didn't last long. There was still that job to do.

Our first mission was to get degaussed (Gauss was a German mathematician who discovered magnetism). Degaussing was performed to take the natural magnetism out of the ship. When a ship is in dry dock for a period of time and is worked on, it takes on a magnetic field of its own, sympathetic to the earth's own field. Some types of mines are triggered when they sense a magnetic field. So the Marine Raven was wrapped in huge electric cables, making it the core of a magnet. Then direct current was put through the cables to counteract the existing field, making it invisible to magnetic mines. Thus, another possible vulnerability thwarted.

Our first voyage was from Philadelphia to New York City to provision and pick up or cargo: troops. The captain and officers were of great help to me, allowing me hands on sextant work and bridge duty. I remember the food as being great, with two menus offered for each meal. It was a well run ship with only occasional tirades from the skipper. These usually happened over dinner, and pretty much ruined the whole meal.

In late February we stood out from New York harbor headed for a rendezvous with a convoy making up off the coast of Maine. My duties were checking watertight doors for security, bridge watches and navigation checks. By the time our convoy was completed we were about forty ships of numerous nationalities. These were ships that had been at sea or had escaped to sea when the German Blitzkrieg overran their home ports. Most of our convoys included Norwegian diesels. Sailors began to become very suspicious of the Scandinavians, who almost invariably pealed off with engine trouble to head for Halifax after two days at sea. We used to take bets

on which one would leave first and when.

When we reached the forty seventh meridian, our pay doubled. We had entered the war zone. At the time of my first voyage the western Atlantic had been pretty much cleared of U-Boats, but east of the forty seventh things were different. Our convoy began zig zagging, a maneuver to throw off any tracking sub. In foggy weather, and fog was abundant in Atlantic winters, we could keep in formation only by towing a sledge which sent up a great spout of water as it moved along the surface. Ships were separated sufficiently to be invisible to each other during an Atlantic fog. The sledge towed by the ship ahead of us was watched and followed in deadly earnest. For if we lost it we would be the loose cannon in the convoy along with the ships following us. Because of this tracking arrangement we could not zig-zag during fog, but we did have the security of invisibility to the enemy as well as ourselves. The subs could hear us on sonar, but without visual contact their chances of hitting one of us with a torpedo was about one in ten. Torpedoes were not that expendable. We had our share of famous North Atlantic storms. Our ship was no peanut, but even at that I remember standing on the fantail during a fierce one and looking up at water forty or fifty feet above with flecks of froth at the top. Within seconds we, and our ship, were at the top looking down at the expanse of writhing sea about us. Because of our insufficient ballast, during head on seas of this type our bow would leave the water completely, then come crashing down with scary shaking of the masts and trembling of the hull.

Convoys had two speeds: fifteen knots and seven knots. Ours was one of the lucky fifteen knot variety. The luck was in the speed. The enemy U-Boats could only make about ten knots when submerged. If they surfaced they were inviting a pounding from our destroyer escorts. Their strategy was to spot and plot our movement using periscopes from afar, and then to surface at a safe distance and try to race around in front of us and wait for our arrival. That's why the zig-zag. The seven knot convoys were at a speed disadvantage, as you can see, and the U boats beat up on them pretty bad. Knowing this, the Navy afforded the slower convoys twice as many destroyer escorts as the faster ones.

When we arrived at about the ninth meridian we were greeted by two English Lancaster aircraft who came at us at full throttle about fifteen feet above the waves and hopped over the convoy just above mast height, then climbed and circled us to make sure there were no Jerry U-boats lurking about. They waggled their wings at us and disappeared as quickly as they had arrived. I can still hear the cheer that went up: a roar that Fritz might have heard in Berlin. The whole experience was like a kid would feel being

hugged by his mother after returning from his first day at school. I am moved to this day when I remember the sight of the approaching Brit welcoming committee.

A day or so later we made landfall on the eastern promontories guarding The Firth of Forth, Scotland. It was not only a thrill to see land, it was a scene of much grandeur as we slowly moved up the firth, a picture of peace. There were one to two hundred foot cliff-like, very green bluffs with scattered outcroppings on either hand with sheep at random and stone houses placed at mile or so intervals atop the bluffs. The firth was wide enough that no shore sounds carried to us. The crew was quiet. Nothing save the thrum of our propellers could be heard.

We were still underway in the firth when our first visitors came aboard. They were our pilot and an immigration officer. The brogue of the two made it almost impossible to converse with them. To my ear, their vernacular bordered on pure Gaelic. A lot of the more delicate exchanges needed to be done in writing. We anchored off Greenock, Scotland. When we were anchored and the formalities were completed we began discharging our soldiers. Since our "cargo" could be unloaded into small craft as easily as if docked, we stayed moored during our visit to Scotland. The docks at Glasgow were already overcrowded with the cargo ships that needed them for direct offloading. It turned out to be a slow process as there was nowhere for them to go. There were hundreds on board, and the Brits either just didn't have the lodging or the trucks to take them to quarters in England. We sat, fed our charges, made all shipshape, went through attack drills and sat.

The days dragged on with the discharge of one small boatload of GIs every day or so. One such group was slumped against the inner hull of their LST preparing for the short trip ashore. One of the men had a paperback, and as he read it he would rip out the finished page and hand it to the guy next to him. When the next page was read, two pages moved down the ranks. By the time they left for Glasgow there was a steady stream of pages working its way round to the last man in the circle who threw it overboard. Boredom was a good part of the war.

Our crew had a lot of shore time. We were able to lower a few of our lifeboats and row ashore pretty much at will, with the exec's permission. These double enders could hold about thirty five men. Instead of oars they had bars, chest high in front of each seat resembling the inboard part of an oar. These bars were mechanically connected to a crank and gears, rotating a shaft that ran the length of the boat just above the keel. The shaft went through a packing box in the stern and rotated a propeller. This Rube Goldberg arrangement

was in place for two reasons. A large percentage of the sailors on board had had no rowing experience. Further, when abandoning ship in heavy weather, oars over the side, when the mother ship is foundering only a few feet away had proved to be quite hazardous.

We would "row" (propel) ourselves to Greenock and hop the train for Glasgow. The train was of the European type with a door for each cubical, which had two bench seats facing each other. There was one window per compartment that could be lowered by releasing a perforated leather strap from a peg on the sill. Our fellow passengers were talkative and interested in America.

The Scottish were marvelous. We were, from time to time, invited to dinner by various Glasgow families. We had good chats, with many questions about the U. S. and our voyages. Not all the inhabitants had the obscure vernacular of our first visitors. On one occasion a family in Glasgow's downtown area invited about four of us to dinner one evening. They even brought out their priceless jar of marmalade for the occasion. One Thoughtless member of our group dug into it gluttonously, to our great embarrassment. Our hosts never said a word. We squirmed. He was chewed out royally by his mates on the way back to the ship. One of the group filched a bag of oranges from the galley and delivered it to the family a few days later on his next trip to town. We had no marmalade on board.

One of the ship's seamen and I got along famously. He was well read and knew a lot about Scotland. We left the ship early one day at his suggestion and took the bus to Loch Lomond. We were interested because of the legends that abound on it. The lake is scattered with small islands so, finding a place where row boats were for rent, we couldn't wait to explore one. It was a long row, and we were not in the best of shape. We arrived on its grassy shore and found it quite craggy with no real paths at hand. We rowed along the shore and found what could pass as a narrow foot path, tethered our boat and started to hike. After climbing for about twenty minutes through dense heather we heard the most lovely, lilting, woman's voice with a London sound to it. "Who's there". Not having seen her at this point, and not wanting to frighten her, we hailed back that we were a couple of seamen from the troop ship Marine Raven come to explore your lake.

Following her voice through the thicket we came upon the modest home of our new found friend and her husband, welcoming us from their porch. We were offered tea and biscuits. The cottage was about as cozy as they come, with walls of books and chairs that surround their occupants. We hit it off right away. Our host turned out to be a retired history professor from one of

England's revered colleges. The professor was impressed by my friend's grasp of history, and we both learned a lot from the professor. He wanted to know all about the war and America. I and my friend were taken aback by this lack of information. He either didn't have a radio, or he didn't listen to it much. The British can be so damned smug at times. However, he was also charming and it didn't affect our visit and our animated banter. We talked until we found, to our consternation, that dusk was falling. We hurried our thanks for the hospitality and our farewells, and raced down to our boat. We reached our ship in a bum boat after dark. Our host invited us to keep in touch, but, alas, he had no phone and we never got his address.

Thinking back on the professor's apparent disinterest in the progress of the war, I should have reflected further. Although he behaved so above it all, I'm sure he would have responded in a wink if asked to approach danger for his country. All throughout the war, the elderly Brits risked their lives in duties like channel watching (for incoming German bombers). This was dangerous work, as the Germans took delight in shooting up these posts before going on to more serious work. The elderly also did the disarming of time delay bombs. The Germans had a nasty habit of dropping bombs that would not explode for hours, days or even weeks after their release. It was the elderly who volunteered to dig them up and defuse them, the rational being that it made more sense for them to be blown up than the young, vigorous defenders of the realm. It was the English way.

We were quite safe during our rambles around Scotland. Jerry didn't have much of his Luftwaffe left and he wasn't going to waste it on Scotland. The Battle of Britain had been over for quite a few months. The only annoyance at the time were the Buzzbombs: unmanned, rocket driven, winged glide bombs with primitive target finding capabilities. They took some casualties in the larger cities, but the devices mostly wound up in a farmer's meadow.

Our final trip ashore before returning to the States was for an order of some fish and chips at a pub someone had found in Helensburgh on the North shore of the headwaters of the Firth of Clyde. Ten or so of us took our usual mode of transportation to a small dock adjacent to a middle class, well tended neighborhood. The houses were immaculately kept, most with ten foot high hedges surrounding them. It was eerily quiet, so much so that we felt compelled to speak in whispers. We realized that there were no young people about, no cars. People pretty much stayed hunkered down, walking to market as seldom as possible. The pub was an old timer, old wood and mirrors and marble. The bitter was drawn with long handled pumps. The fish and chips couldn't have been tastier. The bread was grainy, as it seemed to be everywhere. Milling took energy that was scarce in Britain.

Our soldiers were finally unloaded near the end of February, and we headed for home. The trip was uneventful. We arrived in New York harbor March tenth, forty four. The discharge pattern for all merchant sailors was quite simple. We lined up at the purser's window and were paid off for the entire trip, less what we drew in pounds as an advance in Scotland. This amounted to close to four thousand dollars for me. That was when you could get a loaf of bread for fifteen cents.

I remember leaving the ship in the dead of night with the whole pay off in cash, walking from the dock and under the West Side Highway with absolutely no fear of being mugged.

During my stints ashore, which lasted a week to ten days, I had a magical time. I had fallen back in with my crowd in Plainfield who had not been taken into the service. Also, I had dug up some friends from summer school days who lived in the New York City. I was ten feet tall, treated like a hero who had been there and back. The crowd that the other students hooked me up with were the cream of New York. My date was usually Janet, daughter of one of the founders of a famous brokerage house. I got heavily into café society where I really had no business. There were many nights at Toot Shore's, the Stork Club and the 21. The group I ran with showed me off as one who had been there and had the uniform, of which there were few. Looking back, I would have been better off not letting my ego get stroked and my bankroll get blown. If I had taken my discharge pay and put it in the stock market back then, I would be traveling the world now.

I also got in some party time in Plainfield. All my old gang there were slightly younger than me, and were also having as many last flings as they could fit in before they got their notice. I felt just wonderful, and have to this day, about an incident that happened during one of the Plainfield parties. One of our group had volunteered into an elite unit of front line sappers, and was about to be called. On leaving a party, I was backing my car out of the drive and didn't see him standing beside me. I turned my wheels as I backed and my front bumper caught him, which caused a slight case of water on the knee. He was laid up for a week or so and missed his induction. A month later it was found out that the entire unit that he originally signed up to join had been wiped out in Africa or Italy. As far as I know he is still with us.

During time ashore between trips to Britain it was not all party. I had some good times with my family. My father, being ex-Navy, sopped up my experiences with relish, as did the rest of the family, but not with his relish. My Mother, being nervous about her son's longevity, made sure we spent time together. She loved taking me to New York on the train. We would go to the

Brevoort Hotel on Fifth Avenue about two blocks north of Washington Square. The salon just inside the entrance had a certain charming starkness of the old world about it. The floor was black and white, foot square, checkered tile. There was a small service bar, wire back chairs and tables just the right size for a backgammon board, drinks and the hotel's wonderful canapes. The west facing, ceiling high, curtainless windows allowed the sun to warm the room with light defused off the cream marble walls. I of course loved being with my Mother. She had a regal deportment about her. The sheer pleasure of shared intellect in that setting was a very singular high point in my life. The war disappeared.

FOLLOWING THE SCOTTISH TRIP, THE MARINE RAVEN MADE TWO MORE TRIPS to the British Isles. In both cases our initial destination was Belfast, Northern Ireland. These times we docked, avoiding the need for lifeboat trips to shore. I joined the Belfast Officer's Club which allowed me to meet a wide spectrum of British land and sea officers. England had really had a terribly rough time of it in the preceding years. They had tried to save France by fighting alongside them on the mainland, followed by defeat and the famous withdrawal from Dunkirk. Almost all in Britain had lost family or friends. I admired their grit.

The two shore stints in Belfast run together in memory. Compared to Scotland and Glasgow, Belfast had no homes, no houses of elegance, just four story brick buildings that ran unbroken for blocks. We were never invited into one of their flats, but from our observations of the buildings and our exposure to their inhabitants, living in Belfast must have been a pretty mean existence. To further demean their lives the flats were dry. That is, there was no running water in the buildings themselves. The winding cobblestone streets that divided the buildings had a center divide where the water was fetched and other ablutions were performed. I was amazed upon visiting the pubs which were pretty scruffy, that the female revelers were well coiffed and very presentably dressed and spoken. Our re-entry into the relative squalor was realized when we returned our dates early in the morning to their homes: The raucous screams from their mothers leaning out the windows of these buildings, when they heard us in the street below, could be heard for three blocks.

Most of my leisure time in Ireland was spent managing the war with my acquaintances at the Belfast Officer's Club. They had running water.

On one of our trips to Belfast, while we were still a few days from sighting land, we were welcomed to the British Isles by a new kind of committee. A Royal Navy corvette on patrol came barreling over the horizon. She made a

wide circle around us looking for enemy subs, as our convoy had broken up only hours prior to her arrival, and our escorts had stayed with the main force. This little lady came along side with cheers by all hands. The corvette, which was Britain's equivalent to our destroyer-escort, was dispatched to take up escort duty for us until we reached the North Channel and Belfast Lough. The crew of the corvette were a cheery bunch. They came close enough to the Marine Raven for banter back and forth. I noticed that their uniforms seemed ragtag, and the hull and superstructure of the ship looked in advanced disrepair. I thought to myself that discipline must be rather lax aboard until I realized that these guys had been battling a fierce enemy with its strength and ability for destruction a mere twenty five miles from their homeland for four years. Esthetics was not even on their priority list.

While we were docked at Belfast, a cargo ship with its bow blown away came slowly by us on its way to berth. Some of her sailors had been injured, but she'd not been lost due to the watertight bulkheads between the cargo compartments. Ships were so crowded into the docking area that any new arrival had to squeeze within a few feet of those already docked to reach its slip. A roar went up from all the twenty or so ships packed in the area. The crew of the damaged ship stood at the gunwale saluting all and silently accepting the praise. They had beat Jerry, but all suffered from shock. The convoy they were in had lost five ships, with eighteen damaged. A note is appropriate: Although my experience as a Cadet-Midshipman had no harrowing moments, it was a fact that during the war the Maritime Services had the highest percentage casualties of any of the military services.

On our final trip to Belfast we were, as usual, jam packed with GIs. On this trip a number of army officers got to know the chief engineer, a sprawling giant of Irish descent. His cabin was well stocked with Irish whiskey. He hosted many a gathering of officers from our ship and a few GI officers who had somehow sniffed out the booze. There was poker and a lot of the usual management of the war. During our weeks of waiting, the group that met in the chief engineer's cabin got quite close. One of the army officers that I enjoyed talking with was an executive with Revlon. I remember thinking to myself - why is a manager of a cosmetics company headed for a shooting war? For some reason it seemed incongruous. By the time we got to France, the sight of our friends going over the side into landing craft was hard to take.

We arrived at Belfast around May twenty fourth and sat. Again, as in Scotland, we guessed that the Brits had nowhere to put our charges, but after a week with none of our passengers going ashore, we began to perceive a possible different scenario. There had been talk of our setting up another

front against the Germans, but no one had a clue as to where or how. Our established front at the time was bogged down somewhere in Italy. Our guess was that we might be headed for southern France to form a pincer to close off German supplies moving south.

June fourth we knew. The massive landings on the Normandy beaches had begun. That same day we were under way. The GIs on board had never set foot on land since our departure from New York City.

The Marine Raven moved slowly out of Belfast Lough. Another ship joined behind us as we entered the North Channel. As we turned south into the Irish Sea a small mine sweeper, not forty five feet long, came in line ahead of us. The Irish Sea had been void of U-boats for many months at the time. However, air dropped, floating mines were still a menace. Our new guardian was wooden for reasons described earlier. In order to set off magnetic mines it towed a powerful magnet way behind it. It also had cables stretching forty five degrees aft from the bow to pick up floating mines and those cabled to the bottom. After more than a week of anticipation our soldiers were eager to get on with it. Our protector, however, could hardly make eight knots, given all the gear she was towing, but the idea of being mined dampened our eagerness to abandon her. At night we were blacked out. Our sweeper carried a small light that was shrouded so that only we could see it. We followed very carefully as we had no pilot aboard; he was our only knowledgeable guide with the Scilly Islands ahead. Radar was still in its infancy for merchant ships. Our leader turned out to be right on the money. We rounded Lands End in the early morning and bore almost due east for the coast of France. Off to the north on England's southwest peninsula was the seaside village of Penzance. It was a kick for me, being well versed in Gilbert and Sullivan in my youth.

That night we heard the war. We slowed to a crawl in order not to arrive at Normandy before dawn. All ships were blacked out, and there were hundreds packed into a relatively cramped area. When I got off watch it was difficult to sleep. This was not a rumbling or even a booming war. This was a crackling war. Even miles away the explosions were distinct and continuous. I thought to myself -how can those poor guys, in the middle of it all, take it without having their eardrums collapse?

We arrived at Omaha Beach in the early dawn. The battle ships were letting go salvo after salvo, in supporting fire for the troops ashore, as fast as they could reload. They were quite close to us which added markedly to the din. There were huge fires all along the beach where the broken debris of war was being immolated. The carnage had been enormous the days before we

arrived. There was no time for formalities. The dead were beginning to get too pungent and became part of the blaze. Almost all the German shore batteries had been destroyed or overrun while we were poking down the Irish Sea. The action had moved inland, which diminished immediate danger to us and our passengers. Within an hour of our arrival the landing craft came along side and the rope nets went over. D Day (for debarkation), for our charges, was now. The seas were quite calm, which eased the possibility of injury that is always present during this operation. As their craft were being loaded the coxswains would come aboard for coffee and whatever they could eat. Some had been shuttling back and forth for two twelve hour shifts. They were gaunt, sunken-eyed and in varying stages of shock.

I was alerted from my duties while the debarkation was in progress by a wailful screaming coming from the main deck. One of our passengers, who was about to board a landing craft, had gone berserk. We had a doctor on board who gallantly took over and tried to calm him. Having little success, the doc gave him a knock out shot. It had to be done before the trepidation spread.

Part of the coxswain's job was to return the wounded and what dead they could to the hospital ships before picking up new troops. It was gruesome duty. No one had thought up body bags then. Even with the fires at work, the beach was still littered with torn up soldiers. Some of the coxswain's Navy buddies had to be taken by them, either dead or wounded, to the hospital ships as well. One coxswain had taken the body of a woman. The story was that she had been with her German boy friend in a hayloft sniping at the Americans, and it had been necessary to take both of them out.

A frightening moment was when one of our fighter planes just missed us on its way into oblivion in the Bay of the Seine. Although the Luftwaffe had almost ceased to exist, the ground fire was fierce.

The worst wrench came when we heard a deafening explosion just off our bow. We looked, and there was a black pillar of smoke and an abysmal hole in the water where our shepherd of the Irish Sea had been. There was nothing else, nothing. It saddened us all profoundly. We had come to think of its crew as mates. We never knew what it was that did them in, but the emotional distress was heightened by the thought that it could have been us had they not been sacrificed.

The landings had been going on for two days when we arrived. One German gun emplacement remained in act on a promontory to our east. It

was popping away at any boat or ship that got close enough. He was making a real nuisance of himself, being placed right between Omaha and Utah beaches. As I remember, the promontory was Point Au Hoc. Although the battleships in the flotilla had been working him over as we entered the area, they hadn't been able to silence him. A destroyer went in and apparently lost the inconclusive duel and retired. For the destroyer to be effective it needed to shorten its range. By drawing closer it got under the cliffs on which the gun was perched. This was the gun that the English Marines finally had to take, in the famous episode, by climbing the cliff on rope ladders, anchored by grapples lobbed by mortar-like devices into the turf above. Their losses were great. The gun was finally silenced by their grenades hurled into the gun's slit in the bunker.

When all our passengers were departed we headed, at full speed, back to England. We were edgy and sad. Our protector was gone. There was no replacement. We were by ourselves, and the captain got every last bit he could from our turbines. The Marine Raven fairly shuddered until we got back around Lands End. I think our leaders felt we were a little more expendable without our precious cargo.

Our next port was Bristol, where we stayed for at least a week. Some of our officers took the train to Southampton in hopes of seeing a buzzbomb. I didn't join them. My take was that it wasn't very smart. We had made three trips across the Atlantic and one trip to the front, and had come off unscathed. Why press it.

The Bristol docks were surrounded, as far as the eye could see, by barracks and a smattering of military equipment. It became quite clear that this was where the major staging area had been. It was all but cleared out now.

We made one or two more trips to the French coast without incident, and then sailed the Marine Raven back to New York. It was my final trip as a Cadet-Midshipman. The studies at the Merchant Marine Academy resumed. I would be in line soon for a Third Mate's license. The studies were rigorous enough to keep me out of the café society circuit, and the friendships I had had when I was rich dropped off. The Plainfield group had almost all gone into the service by now. However, being an upperclassman, I was able to go home most weekends.

During my final days at the Academy the war was won in Europe and we were all given liberty to go to Time Square for the celebration. I guess it was a rollicking time. My memory is sketchy, let alone the nursing of a hangover on the way back on the bus.

I had only a few weeks to go before becoming a third mate in the merchant marine when I got the good news. I had applied for ensign in the Navy when I returned from sea. Being one of the top ten percent in my class, my commission had been granted! I was ecstatic, I remember the time and place exactly. I was reassembling a Browning machine gun outside the gym when I was unceremoniously handed an envelope from the United States Navy with my commission in it!

WAR YEARS - PART II - U S NAVY - DESTROYER - PACIFIC THEATER

The weeks after receiving my ensign's commission passed quickly up to the U S Merchant Marine Academy graduation ceremonies. I was given a uniform allowance and told to pick up my orders at Church Street in downtown Manhattan in ten days. I was fortunate in the acquisition of uniforms. For the most expensive outlay, my dress blues, I simply removed the old Cadet-Midshipman insignia and attached the spanking new ensign's gold.

I was anxious to get my orders. It was pretty obvious I would be going to the Pacific as the war in Europe had been won, and most of the mop-up operations were being left to the allied troops on the ground. The situation in the Pacific was more formidable. Although the major naval battles had been fought, and the Japanese Navy was not a great threat, there was still the question of taking enough of the enemy's home territory to force him to capitulate. This didn't appear to anyone to be an easy task since the battles for the Japanese occupied islands saw fierce resistance from a people willing to die thousands of miles from their home, even in hopeless situations where the contested turf was of no nationalistic or personal interest to them.

There were many families close to us in Plainfield who had lost sons in the Pacific. This was going to be no cake walk. I spent the ten days of liberty close to my family. My father was practically busting his buttons with pride. My mother was subdued and apprehensive. She gave me a book, "Survival in The Pacific", taking every possible little step to assure my return.

Finally the ten days were up. I was ordered to San Francisco to board the U S S Dortch, a Fletcher class destroyer, in eight to ten days. Upon receiving the order packet, which included my travel orders, I was told to report to the travel officer in the same building on Church Street. I was elated. I was handed a ticket to San Francisco on a T W A DC3 leaving in a few days from La Guardia Airport. The Dorch was scheduled to put to sea in a matter of weeks, which spared me the grueling three thousand mile troop train experience.

Returning home I found that what was still left of our gang at home had planned a send off party. We all gathered at my family's place for drinks and dinner. The flight was scheduled to depart at two in the morning the next day. After a tearful farewell to my family the six or seven of us younger ones drove to Manhattan. At the time, ticketing and departure were taken at airport shuttle bus terminal across the street from Grand Central Station. After a few final drinks with my buddies - coed - fond farewells were exchanged at the bus door pending the war's end. Facilities at La Guardia were minimal: a fueling station and a small pilot's lounge. The passengers were required to leave the bus on the ramp and walk to the steps leading up into the aircraft.

The DC 3 aircraft, or "Gooney Bird", as it was affectionately known, was the workhorse of the skies during the war. It had a radial piston engine on each wing and carried about fifty passengers in seats arranged four abreast. It was the best transport we had, and had a safety record yet to be surpassed. Fully loaded, it had a range of eight hundred miles. Our flight was fully loaded.

We stopped in St. Louis, Tulsa, T W A's home base, and Santa Fe. On the last leg to the Coast and San Diego the pilot circled the Grand Canyon, offering us all a spectacular view. What with the stopovers, we arrived on the west coast almost two full days after our departure from La Guardia.

All passengers deplaned in San Diego, with no confirmed time for departure for San Francisco. Having asked everyone I could find for a firm ETD, I finally got an unofficial estimate of about six AM. It was midnight.

At the tender age of eighteen I had firmly established the habit of smoking cigarettes. I was down to my last two and facing a nicotine fit. I was informed that the only place with smokes available at that time of night was a canteen on the other side of the field. With six hours at my disposal I went for it; about three miles round trip. Some two hours later, with smokes in my pocket, I arrived back at the waiting room and found that my flight had left.

I was not too panicked as I still had my tickets for the two remaining legs to San Francisco. However the next flight was in the early hours of the next night. There were a few service men and a T W A agent passing time in the small wooden building that served as a waiting room. I let them all know that I'd settle for any ride north. Luckily, there was no set time that I should report to the Dortch. But, I knew I couldn't dally.

At about nine in the morning a beautiful, impeccably dressed woman

walked up to me and asked me if I would like a ride to Los Angeles. I was overwhelmed. After accepting, and before I had a chance to ask a single question, she told me to follow her. After a few minutes walk, during which I was too numb to make inquiry, we arrived at a hanger with a Globemaster idling inside. There were only a few Globemasters flying. Manufacture of these monsters was curtailed when the war started. They were better than twice the size of a DC 3 with four engines. I was invited aboard by some very impressive and wealthy looking people at the top of the entry steps. They were all very friendly, if a bit solicitous, and asked me if I'd like a beer. The plane was arranged inside like what I would have expected Air Force One to be: a large conference room with a big table in the middle and sofas lining the walls with a center aisle aft with small rooms on each side. I knew instinctively that I was not going to be feted by this group of about fifteen. Also, I probably looked a bit wrung out. My lady benefactor cordially escorted me to one of the small rooms aft, invited me to make myself at home and departed. The room had three portholes, two couches and an adequate table with magazines.

While the plane was still idling, and before I went to sleep, I could barely hear the conversation, but realized I was riding with some very heavy hitters in the movie business. I was awakened by the cleaning crew in Los Angeles. Except for them, the plane was empty.

I found the pilot's lounge at the LA airport and settled in. Early evening, word went out that there was a Mitchell bomber about to leave on a ferry trip to San Francisco. Servicemen began to appear from everywhere. We were escorted by an Air Force officer to the bomber. We all swung into the opening in the belly and found places comfortable enough for a half hour's ride. I picked a center fuselage machine gun bubble. Very comfortable actually, if you weren't obliged to work it. The last man aboard picked the pilot's seat. Not very smart. The pilot arrived and confronted the slob. "If there ain't no (expletive) to drive this (expletive) nobody's going nowhere". The slob was summarily bumped.

The flight was uneventful, but terribly noisy. I slept nonetheless. I was exhausted after the required vigilance all those hours in anticipation of a possible hop to the next way point.

There was a shuttle bus from the airport to the San Francisco Navy Yard. I easily located the "Dirty Dortch", as she was called by her crew.

The ship was abustle, with wires and hoses and welding sparks everywhere. I reported to the watch on the quarter deck and gave him my orders. I was

taken to the Exec' (the executive officer. He ranks just below the captain) who cordially, although somewhat stiffly, accepted my orders and welcomed me aboard.

My initial responsibility was to be a sort of head gofer. The ship, besides having the final touches put on her armament and engines, was in mid throes of provisioning. No sooner had I loaded my gear into my bunk than I was on the road in a pickup truck with four or five charges (assistant gofers) standing in its bed. I was given pay vouchers for vendor billing purposes, and we were off gathering everything from lumber and welding rod to toilet paper and dried eggs. I was somewhat nonplused, having never commanded anyone more important than a small dog, when my charges in the back started chanting in unison and at the top of their lungs in downtown San Francisco "Hey, Hey, we're giving babies away". It seemed to amuse the people on the street, so I decided not to be labeled "chicken shit" my first day as a working naval officer and let it go.

Most evenings were spent at the bar at The Francis Drake Hotel. It was touted as the longest bar in the world at the time. I couldn't fault the assessment. If someone entered and shouted at the top of his lungs for a friend he could only be heard less than a quarter way down its length. The old saw that emanated from the ex-servicemen posted in, or passing through San Francisco during the war probably could have been true as the room was so big no one could verify or deny it. It was said that horny airmen would enter the bar and pose the question in a loud voice "Anyone wanna get laid". I would guess the bar had well over one hundred stools, and after six PM, customers were three deep.

The weeks went by with frenetic activity aboard the Dortch. The contractors wound up their work, and the wires and hoses connecting us to shore services slowly disappeared. The crew began concentrating on putting the Dortch on a war footing. Due to my provisioning work I hadn't spent much time aboard and now had to familiarize myself with every inch of the ship. It was essential that every man aboard knew where everything was stored, where damage control equipment was and how to use it. I was appointed one of the damage control officers and was ordered to memorize every water-tight door on the ship and how to secure each one.

About two and a half weeks after I'd become a Dortch officer we were ready for shakedown trials. Anything that wasn't bolted down was strapped, blocked or braced in place. Decks were completely cleared. Our oil fired boilers were brought to a head. I was ordered to secure all non-battle ready hatches and doors. I had not done my homework thoroughly enough. I

missed about five. I also missed the first day of the sea trials. My boss, a lieutenant from Harvard, ordered me to my bunk for a day, after a tongue lashing about the ship's security in case of an accident. I was humiliated, but I also was brought to realize how serious these guys were. This was no sitting duck merchant ship. This was a fighting ship out to kill the enemy - if he didn't kill us first. Within two days after my detention I knew every passageway and hatch five times over.

I resumed my duties, a much more chastened ensign, when we had reached our trials station off the California coast. When we started our maneuvers I became certain that the skipper was out to tear the Dortch apart. He began by cranking her up to flank speed. A great cheer went up from the engine room when we reached thirty seven knots (44 MPH)! While we maintained this heart pounding speed, the crew was ordered to take battle stations. While the crew was skittering to their stations the skipper ordered the rudder hard to port. Sailors, caught half way into their life jackets and juggling their helmets, began sliding across the deck into a heap against the life lines or into the super structure. A destroyer with its tall, thin profile, unlike a speed boat, does not lean into the turn, but out from it, making it even worse for the sliding bodies. The veterans, who comprised more than half the crew, had put their helmets and life jackets on below deck and were all hanging on to something when on deck. They knew.

When the crew pulled itself together with the Dortch still at flank the skipper ordered full speed astern. I thought she was going to break in half. As the crew and I held our breath, with a moan and a loud rumble from the engine room and a lot of white water aft, we came quickly to a stop and started to back. The great lady had taken it all in stride.

I was awestruck. The sheer power at work here made a body suck wind. Three thousand tons and three hundred and seventy seven feet of aluminum and steel behaving like a seagoing jack rabbit is hard to describe with any detail. The "rooster tail" at full speed stood probably thirty feet high. After the trials were over I felt quite secure that no Jap was going to catch this lady.

After a short stay back at the ship yard for final instrument calibration and a check of inventory we were off to Hawaii. Drills were continuous at sea; battle station drills, depth charge drills, smoke screen drills, flooding drills (that's where I came in with my compartment isolation expertise), silence drills and simulated gunnery drills. The Dortch had a crew of three hundred. When these drills were ordered the decks became awash with humanity. All hands were holding on as they moved along the deck now.

The area of wreckage at Pearl Harbor was so extensive I have put it out of my memory. The rest of the navy yard where the largest ships were not resting on the bottom was pretty shipshape.

After docking we began provisioning again, but this time from our destroyer tender. The tender was about the size of a victory ship and was full of all sorts of goodies like beer, ice cream, movies, and an especially sought after item: foul weather gear. The most wanted was the foul weather jacket: a grey-brown alpaca lined, water proof, incredibly warm olive drab twill number. The water proofing was accomplished by impregnating the fabric with a foul smelling oil of what composition I didn't know. The reason this all comes back is that I was in charge of doling them out to the crew after they had been delivered by the gig from the supply ship. The operation took place in the forward hold of the Dortch, an airless place just above the keel. The reason for this vivid memory is that midway through the dispensing of the jackets to the crew I got violently seasick - the only time in my entire seagoing career.

As the provisioning continued there were still luxuries that some of the hustlers in the crew felt they just couldn't do without. These included ice cream, beer, fresh eggs, steak, boots and candy. If there wasn't an immediate need, they would serve, in the future, as bargaining chips in exchanges with other ships in the task force. The way these things were gathered was to get an officer to requisition for some trumped up shortage of an essential, then doctor it up and obtain the goodies either from our supply ship or ashore. This practice was so rampant it took on a name of its own - "midnight small stores".

While we were in Hawaii I paid my sole visit to a USO. Nice ladies abounded. Good munchies were everywhere. Although there were waves of small talk, intellect was not the strong card.

Waikiki beach was a big draw for us and other servicemen. There were girls there, but not many. Recreation was brief for everyone. Diamond Head seemed a spec on the horizon compared to the pictures on the travel brochures.

We were at Pearl less than a week. One day of that week was spent off one of Hawaii's deserted islands at real gunnery practice. We set up floating targets at sea and blasted away at them with our five inch guns and our forty millimeter machine guns. One exercise intrigued me. We set up patrol about a thousand yards off the shore of an uninhabited island that had been picked and with under sized propulsion charges in our five inchers we began lobbing shells into the island much as one would use a mortar. This

brought back memories of the destroyer off France that was trying to get a shot at the last German shore battery and couldn't hit him at close range because his shell trajectory was too flat. We were looking at the prospect of many such encounters off the Jap islands. The Navy, I suspect, had learned something.

We steamed away from Hawaii heading almost due west, and shortly picked up a battleship to escort to the far east. After four or five days out of sight of land we sighted a speck on the horizon. It turned out to be Wake Island. Wake still belonged to the Japanese. After having driven the Jap fleet into the western Pacific our strategy was to just leave them there with no supplies to rot. But, it was the habit of our Naval ships to stop off for a day or two on the way to or from the western Pacific and give the Japs that remained a few more headaches, and get in a little gunnery practice to boot. During this exercise we stood off to the south of the island and the battle wagon we were escorting laid off to the north. They, with their sixteen inch guns, were lazily firing into the island every minute or so. For our part, we couldn't reach the island from our distance with our five inchers, so we would race in and get off about two salvos. After months of what had to be near starvation the Japs still had fight in them. They had guns of a caliber to match ours and their shells began arriving as soon as we were in range. The task force commander decided it wasn't worth the risk and ordered us to stand off. As we moved to the south the battleship's radar, which was locked on to a target on the island, was drawn off the island's range and followed us, with the more prominent reflection, as we steamed south, with the sixteen inch gunners on the battle ship unaware. The next salvo straddled us with huge spires of water, drenching the Dortch. With one hit amidships we would have sunk us in minutes!

I've never seen anyone move as fast as our skipper. He was gone from the bridge and into CIC (combat intelligence center; or, as it was dubbed, "Christ I'm confused") in half a second, ordering the task commander to cease fire. It wasn't long after that that the whole exercise was called off and we were steaming west again.

As we approached the war zone our fuel supply was running low. It was time to rendezvous with a tender/oiler. The AO seemed to come out of nowhere with one escort. I must admire those guys. If a Jap plane spotted them, they would have been in dire straits. The refueling operation needed reasonably calm weather, which we had. The oiler and our ship needed to hold an extremely steady course side by side, at a distance from each other of, I would guess, about fifty feet. Courses and separation established, lead lines were fired to us from the oiler and secured. Next, we used the first line to haul

across a cable that was to support the fueling hose. The hose was trolleyed between ships dangling from the cable. Our best coxswain was at the helm during this exercise. If the distance between the two ships varied a few yards we ran the risk of either dumping the whole lashup in the drink or worse, snapping the cable. As we fueled, the trading started. Another line had been run between our bow and that of our fueler, with a trolley rigged to be pulled back and forth between the ships. Food, movies, beer and the like were requisitioned. If there was a shortage on the tender, the midnight smallstores from Hawaii came into play, and the bargaining started. Thanks to our Shylocks' work of weeks before, we always got pretty much what we wanted.

One of our engineers was a reduction gear specialist and was needed on another destroyer. He also went to the oiler on the trolley line. He rode in what was known as a breechesbouy. The contraption is built just like an infant's walker, but instead of being supported on legs with wheels, it was slung from the trolley. That engineer was one nervous sailor until he reached the deck of the oiler.

As we moved west we joined a larger task force: as part of the Third Fleet. The ships were gathering for the final assault on the islands closer to Japan's mainland: Okinawa and Formosa, and a campaign to retake Luzon in the Philippines. We were steaming north toward Okinawa when the weather turned incredibly foul. The seas were coming in abeam from the east. I was on the wing of the bridge and our roll was at absolute maximum. We were taking on water in the lower decks of the superstructure, endangering our electrical systems. I could nearly touch the water when we rolled to starboard and look straight into the rain when we rolled to port. The ships in the formation had become completely separated. In the confusion we had not been given orders to change course. Fortunately our skipper took it upon himself to come into the wind with barely steerage way. As a result we stopped taking on water which could have eventually done us in. But, heading into the seas, we developed other problems. Each time we dove into a trough, green water bounced from first turret to second turret then headed for the bridge as we ducked. With each of these dives the propellers came clear of the water. With our propellers alternately free, then abruptly submerged the propulsion turbines were tearing themselves up. If we shut them down we would have broached and foundered. We were barely able to maintain steerage way, as it was, with our propulsion machinery under load only half the time. This was a typhoon similar to the one a year earlier when three destroyers and eight hundred men were lost.

I remember, many times during bad weather, I could feel the hull, which was right at my shoulder when I lay in my bunk, pulsating in and out by a

quarter of an inch as the seas attacked. I began to understand why our ship was so light and agile.

The Kamikazes were still rather active, but their attacks were beginning to diminish; not for lack of zealots, but for lack of planes. The Japs had moved them to their northern islands for safe keeping in preparation for the defense of their homeland.

Along with this danger, we were girding for our entry into the battle at Okinawa, which, as I remember, was just getting under way.

We were told little about the damage to our engines wrought by the storm, but apparently it was bad enough to require some major repairs. My next memory was our arrival at the shipyard in Guam. Luck had smiled on this sailor one more time.

Notification of some sort must have reached us, for after our repairs were completed we simply stood by, moored off the shipyard at Guam. We were lolling about putting the engine room back in shape after the yard crew had departed, when the incredible news arrived: The Bomb had been dropped!

At the time, the impact of this was not fully comprehended. It was comforting to know we had such a powerful weapon, but we had no idea how powerful. Notwithstanding its impact, we fully expected to see action at Okinawa within a week. We, that is the new crew members who joined in San Francisco, began to think this was the best war we ever fought. We didn't steam for Okinawa or anywhere else. We may have done some unhampered patrol duty. What ever we experienced was uneventful enough to be lost from memory.

News arrived within a short time that another one of our super weapons had been delivered. A week or two passed with nothing eventful happening aboard the Dortch when we were ordered to sail for Tokyo Bay. The Japs had surrendered!

The crew was full of fun. The lights went on! There was great excitement when our movie theater was set up on the fantail one calm evening - unheard of!

We arrived in Tokyo Bay just before dusk. Since a large contingent of heavy ships from our fleet was either in the bay or approaching, we were ordered to get out of the way. Our skipper picked an estuary opening into the bay. A place near the bay's entrance. We anchored as the light was on its final exit,

but we could make out the shore of our little cove quite distinctly. The scene was a quintessential Japanese print. There was only the slightest movement of air, with ethereal, intermittent mists floating with it. The land rose abruptly from the water's edge with a succession of almost vertical rock spires, gaining modestly in height as they marched inland. From there craggy surfaces, a profusion of green grew in varying heights and density. Peeking through gaps in this rocky composition were what looked like paper doll houses whose lights would wink on, one by one, as the dusk settled into darkness. It was a picture of such an exotic fairyland, I found myself puzzled that these people sought to kill themselves off trying to conquer Asia.

As we were approaching Tokyo Bay we had sincerely anticipated the populous to be waiting on the beach shaking their fists. These must be a docile people. The War Lords tell them to go get slaughtered, they go. The War Lords tell them to stop, they stop.

The next day we joined some twenty ships of the third fleet anchored in the bay proper. We cleaned the *Dortch* from bow to stern, from water line to running lights in preparation for the formal surrender ceremonies soon to be observed aboard the battleship *Missouri*. She was only about a hundred yards from us.

One or two days later small boats carrying the Jap leaders began appearing on the bay. While preparations were being made a message was brought to me by our skipper. It was from the *Missouri* and it was for me! My Father's brother, Stan, who was a commodore and had been serving as U S liaison to the Ausie Navy and had been invited to join in the formalities with the Australian contingent. The message was formal, as it should be, but it had a familial good wish and good luck at the end. With help of my captain I composed a message in proper navalese and returned the greeting. I was flabbergasted. I had had no idea where my uncle was.

A word here about the rank of commodore: The US Navy does not have such a classification, but during the war, in cases where we had semi-permanent attachment of an officer to the English or Australian Navies, who do have that rank, it was at times necessary to adjust to their ranking system for reasons of protocol.

Unfortunately the crew of the *Dortch* didn't see much of the surrender formalities. The Jap delegation boarded the *Missouri* to port. We were to starboard. There was a great silence on the bay as the signing of the articles took place. As close as we were, we could not see what was going on, as the starboard gunwale of the *Missouri* was lined with rows of sailors and marines

at attention.

The next day the work of executing the subjugation of Japan got started in earnest. We were moored off the Yokosuka Naval Base. Our job was to pilot barges out to sea loaded with armaments and ammunition consigned to the depths. One of the barges was detoured from its trip to deep water and came along side the Dortch, where souvenirs, in the form of Jap Mambu pistols, rifles and bayonets were distributed to all hands. Ammunition, thoughtfully, was not included. The warehouses of Yokosuka were loaded, and the process took weeks.

At day's end, when the shuttling barges docked for the night, the real occupation of the Japanese mainland began - at least by the crew of the destroyer Dortch. The first order of business was to obtain transportation for liberty ashore.

Although there was yen scrip printed by our military, the real buying power was in the dollar. One of the Japanese aparatchics in charge of the navy yard docks and equipment was tickled to sell us a Jap captain's gig for ten dollars. It was a thirty footer with a six cylinder diesel engine that could drive it to thirty knots. One of its big drawbacks, however, was that its speed could only be regulated between twenty knots and thirty. To attain speeds below twenty it was necessary to shut down the engine. We had a machinist mate try to find a way to fine tune the throttle, but to no avail. Once the RPMs were reduced to a certain point our power plant simply shut itself off. We couldn't find an interpreter, which left us void of any help from Japanese navy yard personnel. We were stuck with a perpetual speed boat.

I was chosen as skipper of our newly acquired menace because of my merchant marine experience. It was scary work. Reverse was impossible. The transmission could not be put in reverse without shutting down the engine. The bay was getting crowded with all manner of craft. Extreme alertness was my only hope of avoiding catastrophe. Fortunately the gig was exceptionally maneuverable, which allowed me to pick my way through the relatively slow moving traffic. The big trick was knowing when to shut down the engine prior to coming along side. I got pretty good at it, usually being able to make the dock or the Dortch at a slow coast. The beauty of this arrangement was that when a trip ashore was called for, be it for officers liberty or for supplies, I was the driver and I got the shore time.

I hobnobbed with a tall, thin Californian who had had his studies at UCLA interrupted by the war. We made quite a few trips to the City of Tokyo together during our stay on the bay. I was amazed at the lack of citizens on

the streets. Of course there were few places for the people to come from or go to in the city. Most buildings were damaged beyond practical use or completely gutted. The palace grounds and the buildings around it were spared by our flyers. Some of these buildings showed signs of life, but certainly no bustle. The building where MacArthur had set up his occupational headquarters was across the street from the palace grounds and was untouched. Tokyo was certainly no tourist attraction. There were some street vendors of oriental food which didn't look too appetizing. The greatest, and most annoying aspect of these trips was the swarms of urchins that followed us everywhere badgering us for gum and cigarettes.

On one of our trips, my Californian friend (I'll call him Al) and I decided to visit the Diet, which escaped damage and was obviously not in session. It was wide open with no one about. It consisted of a large auditorium with a bench where what would have been the speaker or his equivalent sat at center stage. High on a wall above the bench, with a staircase leading to it, was an impressive looking, ornate chair - almost a throne. Al wanted me to take a picture of him sitting in it. As he was about to strike the pose of a grand leader, a howling came from one of the anterooms, and a little man appeared in a state of unmitigated apoplexy, jabbing his finger at Al from across the hall. We weren't sure what his problem was, but from his demeanor, we decided, without a word between us, to opt out with all the haste we could muster. Two days later the Stars and Stripes, the armed forces newspaper, reported a formal protest from the Japanese to MacArthur's headquarters, complaining that some sailors had committed the heinous crime of sitting in the throne reserved exclusively for his Majesty, The Emperor! Fortunately, it was not pursued further and that was the end of it.

One of our engineering officers got into business within weeks after our arrival in Japan. He bought a geisha house. The potential was obvious to him. The owners were bankrupt, as were most of the small, Japanese entrepreneurs at the time. He acquired the whole thing, building, girls, chef and furnishings, for little more than twice the price of the gig. It was run as a traditional geisha operation, not, as we all suspected, as a whore house. One day while it was early enough and not open for business, a lot of the Dutch officer corps were invited to visit. It was a building of gorgeous, old world architecture with upturned eaves, eighty percent glass or open blinds of bamboo. It was in a setting of its own, of bamboo, tall grasses and bonsai gardens with ponds. The large entryway led to a grand, open room the size of a gymnasium, unobstructed to the roof. The floor covering was of tan, woven reed mats. Surrounding the main hall were small, doorless rooms with the same decor of slatted, roll up blinds, and lacquered building supports of dark, but brilliant greens and off reds. The rooms looked out on the gardens.

The ambiance was breath taking. These rooms and the central hall were where the geishas entertained their guests. Our colleague, we were told was doing very well. Thinking back, he probably was making a fortune. His employees had few other places for work, and his customers had money they could not spend elsewhere and were eager for the female companionship.

The weather was not always serene on the bay. We were sideswiped by another typhoon during our stay. At the height of it there were naval vessels of all sizes dragging anchor toward the mouth of the bay. Why the fleet was not ordered to fire up boilers at the outset seemed like a great blunder to me. Because of the Dortch's slim profile our anchor held fast. My boss was standing anchor watch. As the fleet slowly dragged by us stern first there was one, a cruiser, that looked as though it was headed straight for us. My boss, the obviously wealthy, pink faced, Harvard man, correctly judged that there was soon going to be some bent iron and he was going to be in the middle of it. Our captain was occupied getting decks cleared and getting steam up and was not listening to the intercom, over which my boss was almost in tears and at the top of his lungs pleading to be relieved of his anchor duty. Finally the exec responded. I remember feeling a little sorry for him and the bind he was in. However, being the overbearing and offish man that he was, I had a wicked, private chuckle to myself thinking about his tearful bleating on the bow. Fortunately the cruiser missed us, but only by about thirty feet.

Near the end of our stay on the bay the Dortch was ordered to take a skeleton crew to the heavily fortified island of Miyaki south of the bay and demilitarize it. The majority of our sailors were still busy dumping armaments from the Tokyo area. Miyaki is a five mile wide, incredibly rugged, volcanic lump that protrudes almost straight out of the ocean on all sides. There were no docking facilities and no coves or bays big enough to get the Dortch out of the weather. On our sixty mile trip to the island we were accompanied by two LSTs with Jeeps aboard for transportation while we were working on the island. These were unloaded on one of the few beaches on the island where there was a road leading into the highlands. We moored off that beach and used our captain's gig to get from the ship to the jeeps. My first ride to the fortifications was almost straight up the side of a cliff. The day was dead calm. When we reached the top of our first ascent the driver stopped and we all turned and looked back. Below us was the toy like Dortch resting on a glassy, transparent sea of misty green with her shadow undulating across the coral below.

Here I learned what the atomic bomb had done for us. The whole side of the island that faced east, the side that protected the entrance to Tokyo Bay, was

honeycombed with deeply dug chambers for cannon, ammunition, living quarters, commissary, etc. It would have cost many lives to have rooted the Japs out of these redoubts, let alone occupy the island. The first order of business was to destroy these rocky defenses whose interiors resembled ant colonies. One of our officers who had studied demolition at Annapolis was put in charge of this work. It was done, fittingly enough, with depth charges from the Dortch's arsenal.

Our Annapolis man and his workers would set five or six of the depth charges in the lower reaches of these three dimensional mazes and wire them to go off simultaneously. Upon detonation the reaction was spectacular. The fortification, usually a two hundred foot high promontory facing the sea, became a multi-vented volcano spewing dust, boulders, munitions and the stores of the defenders far out to sea. When the smoke and dust settled or drifted away the elevation of the entire hummock had dropped fifteen or twenty feet.

While our demolition team was carrying out its destruction my crew was supervising a Jap work team, who were stripping the munitions dumps in the interior of the island and trucking their contents to the one usable dock on the island. This was a concrete slab stretching about forty feet along the side of a semi-protected cove. Japanese barges were tied up to the dock and received the truck loads of munitions. My crew supervised the operation and one of us would pilot the barges cargo to deep water for disposal. The Japs were becoming more and more sloppy in their handling of the explosives. It was my responsibility to halt operations until we could find our interpreter, who was usually into the sake by the middle of the afternoon. It was at this juncture about three days into our work there was an explosion of considerable force ten feet from where I and two of my enlisted men were standing. All my men dove for the water. One, who was about to leave the dock with his barge was wounded and fell into the water where his mates kept him afloat. Something entered my arm. All three of us had the cache of explosives between our selves and the water. We took the only escape route open to us. We hightailed down the dock with the detonations brought about by the first rippling behind us. We found a farmer's storage pit a few yards from the dock and took cover. It seemed as though the dock kept blowing up for an hour, but it probably only lasted a few minutes before the last explosion occurred.

While we cautiously worked our way back to the dock, a whole contingent of officers and enlisted men were on hand. We found that our wounded

comrade had been returned to the ship. His wounds, although there were many of them in his back, were superficial, and the ship's doc was dressing them before he was flown to Tokyo. After a few weeks we learned that he'd completely recovered and was returned to the States for discharge.

Two Japanese had died in the havoc. There was an inquiry that came to little, and the work resumed. Our native laborers were very careful, and we had no more incidents.

As for my wound, it was made by a tiny piece of shrapnel for which the doc didn't feel needed probing. Three years later the particle came to the surface as an itching spot. I removed it as I would a splinter.

Our recreation on the island came when we were invited to our interpreter's modest bungalow where he seemed to have an endless supply of sake. He loved to party. We learned a great deal about Japanese culture from our talks.

We finished our work of dismantling the island's arsenal in three or four weeks, returned the Tokyo Bay and reboarded the crew members we had left behind. Many of the warships had departed and were replaced with auxiliaries, tenders, oilers and other support craft. On returning, I found that our favorite, high speed bay transportation had hit some flotsam in the bay and sunk. No injuries had resulted, but there were some very wet, stoned officers who had some explaining to do.

The Dortch and three other destroyers were ordered back home within a week or two after our return to the bay. Our first task before leaving was to load up with medical supplies and other necessities, including not so essential items as beer and ice cream for the occupying forces on Iwo Jima.

When we arrived at Iwo we went ashore in the captain's gig with cases of beer and had a beach party. The occupiers of the island took on the work of bringing the supplies ashore. We relaxed. After a few too many beers some of us wandered inland and came upon the pockmarked landscape and debris of a battleground. We found rotted Jap bodies tucked into holes all over the place. The fierceness of the action must have been awesome. We were all pretty pleased with ourselves for having joined the Navy.

Just having done what we did was probably the dumbest move any one of us had made in our entire lives. There must have been hundreds of unexploded land mines just waiting in that field to kill or maim us all. I

extended the idiocy when I saw a Jap hand grenade and decided I had to have it for a souvenir. The thing was a little smaller than, and the shape of, a tomato soup can. The detonator consisted of a plug the size of a cigar butt sticking out of the top. Upon picking it up I found the detonator loose and unscrewed it, pulled the plug and threw it five yards away and waited. In a few seconds it went off like a small fire cracker. Inside the grenade was a yellow powder (picric acid) which I assumed was not too sensitive. I found a stick and took the bomb to the ocean, submerged and cleaned out the explosive material. The revelers at the beach party gave me a wide berth. They knew a crazy when they saw one. The reason I'm able to write this is that I was successful in my cleaning job, reassembled the spent detonator and I had my prize. I don't think I have since, deliberately done anything as dumb as that.

Our return trip across the Pacific was uneventful. Again we watched movies on the fantail when the weather was good. There were no stops between Iwo and San Diego.

We entered the straits between San Diego and Coronado with all flags flying, including the victory pennant which was hoisted on the main mast and flew all the way to the taffrail. It was a triumphant entrance with cheers along the shore.

Shore leave was immediately the order of the day. My lanky friend Al who was taking a sabbatical from UCLA was host, as this was his home territory, and we left for Los Angeles as soon as we were ashore. We were met at the bus station by Al's family - a joyous occasion. Al had wheels, which made our stay in LA exceedingly facile. The year was coming to an end, and Al, the returning hero, had no trouble getting tickets to the Rose Bowl.

I was fortunate to have another host. My uncle Oliver Garrett lived in Santa Monica. He was a scenario writer for one of the big studios, and took on the duty of being host to me and Al. We were his guests at the finest restaurants on the Hollywood Strip. He saw to it that we were invited the Garden of Eden (a lavish apartment complex housing the elite of the Hollywood crowd) for a party given by none other than Eve Arden. Upon our arrival Eve greeted us with a warm smile and pointed to a large table in the hallway which was loaded with bottles, ice and glasses, saying, "It's all yours, boys". A first for me. Al and I had such a good time that few of the details come back to me. The next morning Al and I awoke, each in our own bedroom the size of a normal living room. A maid was in attendance to cater to our every wish. She explained that our hostess, one of the previous night's guests, had to leave earlier and was sorry that she missed us. We had spent the night in a virtual

palace, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, with breakfast served adjacent to the one outside. My dear uncle had arranged with one of the guests to bed us down for the night. It was done as lavishly as it could have been.

A few days after the Rose Bowl our leave was up. Upon returning to San Diego we found that the Dortch had been ordered to The New York Navy Yard. Back to sea again.

We were a flotilla of four destroyers on our voyage to the east coast. We did have one triumphant thrill as we coasted southeast off Mexico. Our commander got us all up to flank speed as we steamed about three quarters of the way to Panama and headed straight for the beach of Acapulco. At about a hundred and fifty yards from the beach we, one by one, in line formation, put our vessels hard right rudder, to the cheers of the bathers, went back to normal cruising speed and continued our trip. The display must have been spectacular to those on the beach.

Most of us had never been through the Panama Canal. The line handling in the locks was a frantic scramble. After emerging from the Pacific set of locks we were sailing in fresh water! Our ship was in control of a Panama Pilot. We all relaxed and took in the eery experience of sailing through the middle of a dense jungle. During the period of smooth, fresh water the ritual started. It was determined that the Dortch should be desalted. All hoses were deployed and the fire pumps started. We were thoroughly desalted from masts to the bilge. That having been done, it was time for initiation. The hoses were turned on the junior officers. It was a humiliating experience, but we weathered it without too much loss of face.

After we descended the Caribbean locks, we docked at Colón with liberty in shifts. That's where I realized that I was not cut out to be a strong leader of men. The town consisted of a few parallel dirt streets with alleys connecting them. One street was the home for bars and cheap curio and craft shops. The other was one hundred percent red light district. During one liberty shift I was given an SP (Shore Patrol) arm band and a forty five pistol hung on the web belt around my waist. After a boring time patrolling the muddy streets and seeing only a few of our crew staggering back to the ship I entered a bar where there was an unusually shrill sound of a woman screaming. She stopped when I came in. Immediately I was surrounded by hookers trying to get me to make a little business arrangement. As I was retreating, one of them lifted my gun. I was anything but in command of the situation as the woman waved the gun around the room. I did have the consolation of knowing that there was no round in the chamber, and I was pretty sure that its present owner didn't know how to put one there. Nevertheless it was a very tight moment. It was solved when one of the Dortch's seamen cajoled the

bitch, wrested the pistol from her hand and returned it to me.

The trip around Florida and the Keys was uneventful. It was a delight to be approaching home waters. We arrived early in the afternoon at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and as we came along side our birth there were my Mother and Father on the dock to greet us. They were the only ones. My Father, being in the shipping business, had sources. I was so embarrassed I wanted to go and hide.

Our stay in Brooklyn was short. The turbines apparently needed some final tweaking on the repairs performed in Guam. Those officers and men who had been in the Navy since the beginning of the war were discharged immediately which shortened our ranks. With the crew greatly diminished we sailed for our home port at Charleston SC.

Our discharge date was determined by the length of time we had been in the service. As a result, I, as a really short timer, was looking at many more months of shipboard duty.

One of the ensigns on the Dortch was older than almost all the other officers except maybe the skipper and the chief engineer, late forties maybe. He was liked and respected by all of us, officers and men alike. At the beginning of the war he had been a chief warrant officer and had been bucked up to ensign due to a lack of commissioned officers. Because of his plight, he is the only man I remember by name - Keogh. He had been in the Navy since his late teens and was a decided cut above the average noncom. When we arrived in Charleston it was decided by naval personnel that he be bumped back to warrant status. We were all ready to fight. We all signed a letter from the captain urging Navpers to reconsider. It was to no avail. Keogh quit the Navy. It was a sad day, not only for us, but for the Navy.

Now it was time for the demilitarization of the US war machine. As was the usual proclivity of the government, inventory was at the top of the agenda. Everything was arranged in its proper order, either on board or in steel boxes to be stored ashore. An inordinate panic arose when a forty five pistol was missing. All hands were put to work scouring the ship. All hands' personal belongings were searched - no pistol. We had an officer, a lieutenant, who was the personification of the suave and withdrawn (he reminded me of Fred Astaire) who had just been discharged a week before. There was talk of Naval Intelligence hunting him down. We all realized that if he hadn't been caught in the act, there was little chance of that pistol ever getting back in government inventory.

I was promised that I would be discharged when the Dortch had been mothballed. I went to work diligently painting, creosoting, spraying and painting protective webs over the guns and radar antenna. We were all, officers and men, basically day laborers as the work went on. The Dortch was decommissioned, but my number was not up. So of I went to work on another destroyer. There were some twenty or thirty destroyers in various stages of "mothballing" moored up the Cooper River, northwest of Charleston. The work went on for about three months more before I was finally discharged.

I bought a car and was free in the evenings and on weekends. The refined inhabitants of Charleston, having been used to hosting for the cream of the Citadel, feted us remaining officers continually.

During this time I found myself often at a garage having my second hand car tinkered with. One of the mechanics had no ears or hair and was missing half his nose. His face was scar tissue. His goggles had saved his eyes. For all of that he was upbeat, intelligent and a great philosopher. We spent a lot of beer time together. He had been a Navy pilot and had successfully landed his burning plane on his carrier deck. This man had no remorse. He was undergoing grafts at the veterans hospital and was continually excited about each new bit of ear that appeared. The war was over for me, but not for some.

There were others at the VA hospital who were worse off than he. Today I am saddened by the millions of our citizens who race to be healed for the most minor ailments, or race to counseling for the likes of a bad hair day. I wonder if we ready for the next sacrifice?