

## FRED LONGE'S TOUR ABOARD THE USS WILKES DD 441

Forward:

I spent almost four months aboard the USS WILKES during which time I saw service in the Atlantic and the Mediteranean. I was on the WILKES during the invasion of Sicily in what up to that time was the largest fleet of ships ever assembled.

In view of the fact I only covered the period leading up to the Invasion of Sicily in a diary I have attempted to add notes from the book USS WILKES, "THE LUCKY SHIP" which covers the period from my reporting to the ship on 16 April, 1943 until the start of my diary.

The period prior to June 9, 1943, the day we set sail for North Africa, is found in Appendix A, A2 and A3. That Appendix is copied from the book, USS WILKES.

My Diary of the USS Wilkes begins on June 9, 1943 at the time of departure of the ship to Africa for the Sicilian campaign. I was actually assigned to the USS Wilkes on April 16, 1943 as a temporary officer specializing in anti-submarine warfare. My duties included regular ship duty and anti-submarine warfare duty. Apparently this was another step in my training in anti-submarine warfare work prior to my more permanent duty in Bermuda as the anti-submarine warfare officer training new crews at the Destroyer- Destroyer escort facility.

My purpose in writing this is to cover that period of my time spent on the USS Wilkes.

The following, which I found in the book USS Wilkes, "The Lucky Ship" was written by William J. Mosher former communications officer of the Wilkes. This is a short excerpt found on pages 410 and 411 of the book. (See Also Appendix B)

#### APRIL

- 16.....NY to Norfolk
- 17.....Moored, Hampton Roads
- 19-20.....Raining Chesapeake Bay
- 21.....NYC
- 22.....Brooklyn Navy Yard
- 23-24.....Underway to Norfolk
- 25-30 .....Training Ops Chesapeake Bay, including AA practice

#### May

- 1.....Anchored Lynhaven Road, Norfolk area
- 2.....Escorted MOBILE for their sea trials
- 3.....Anchored Norfolk
- 4.....En route Brooklyn Navy Yard
- 5-9.....Brooklyn Navy Yard—Repairs
- 10.....To Norfolk
- 11.....En route NYC
- 12-14.....Brooklyn Navy Yard—Repairs
- 15-20.....Escorting TF 69—Convoy BT 203 to Panama Canal
- 21.....Moored Cristobal, CZ
- 22-25 .....En route Norfolk
- 25-29.....Ops Norfolk area
- 29.....En route New London C.
- 30.....New London—sub ops.
- 31.....Newport, RI—sub ops

#### JUNE

- 1.....Sub-PT boat exercise—Anchored Port Jefferson, LI
- 2.....Sub exercise
- 3-7.....Brooklyn Navy yard—repairs
- 8.....Gravesend Bay—Loading Ammo
- 9-20.....Convoying with TG 65.5 from US to Oran, North Africa
- 21-30.....Moored Mers-el-Kebir, North Africa. Various gunnery exercise

#### JULY

- 1-3.....Moored Mers-el-Kebir
- 4.....En route to Bizerte Harbor—ran aground—damaged right screw
- 4-6.....Anchored Bizerte Harbor—repairing screw—many enemy air raids
- 7-9.....Underway for the Invasion of Sicily—our beach head LICATA

10-20....."D-Day"—10<sup>th</sup>—shore fire—air raids—combat  
 21.....Underway for Valletta, Malta  
 22.....Arrived—Algiers, NA  
 23.....Underway with TF 81 to Meres-el Kebir  
 24-27 .....Moored Mers-el-Kebir  
 28.....Underway with 2 Cruisers—5 cans—all damaged to US.

**AUGUST**

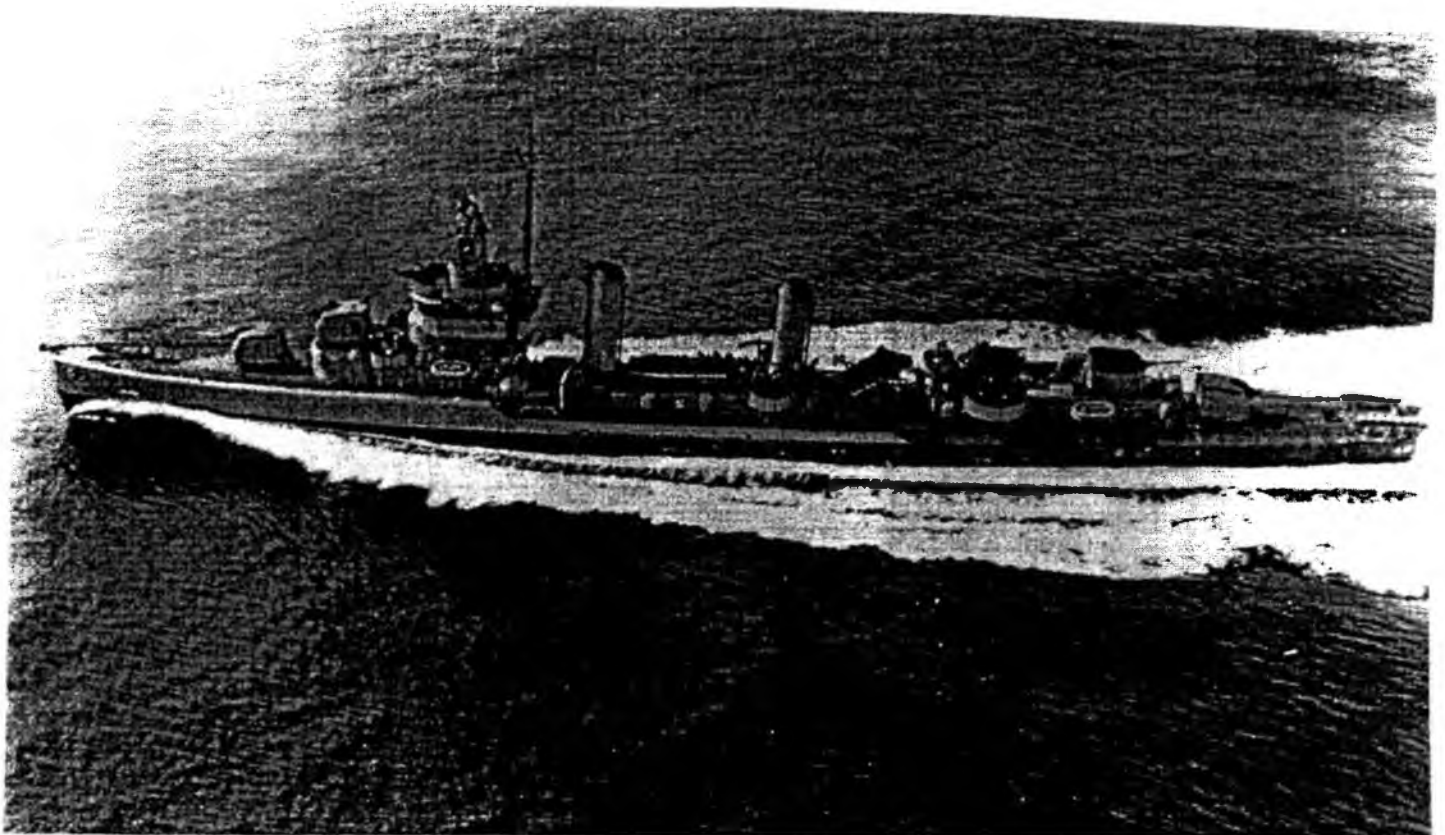
1-8.....Still underway to US  
 8-18.....Brooklyn Navy Yard—for repairs—new starboard screw, new CIC

For any one interested in the history of the Wilkes it may be found in the book *USS WILKES "The Lucky Ship"* written by William J. Mosher former officer and communications officer of the USS WILKES.

From my first day on the USS WILKES to the date of June 9, 1943 the USS WILKES performed convoy duty, various trainings, ship repair work and loading for the trip to North Africa and the invasion of Sicily. (See Also Appendix A)

Following are the notes from the diary which I kept for the period beginning on June 9, 1943 when the USS WILKES left with a convoy to Oran, North Africa. The diary ends when I left the USS WILKES on August 8, 1943. For more detailed information of the USS WILKES during my period of duty it can be found in the book *USS WILKES*, pages 54 thru 70.

NOTE: I make reference to the item numbers in my diary, the pages on which the item is found and the dates applicable to the particular item. I supplement my notes with excerpts from the book *USS WILKES*.



*USS WILKES -- Underway - 2/5/43  
 Courtesy--Navy Archives and Capt Herbert Rommel*

Item 1  
Page 1  
June 9, 1943

Things are beginning to shape up as though action is near at hand. All hands are quizzical as to our ultimate destination.

This evening upon returning to the wardroom, from the movie down below, we were confronted with the first signs of what might be expected—the invasion of the Italian island of Pantelleria. We are not directly concerned with this small outpost, but might the activities not be indicative of our part in the downfall of Germany?

Tomorrow we shove off—where to? As yet no one knows, but the general locality is stamped on all minds. Perhaps the next twenty four hours will reveal to us whether or not this is “The trip”

.EXCERPT from USS WILKES

9th—1030, we left NY with a small 11 ship merchant convoy, for Oran, North Africa. We were in TG 65.5. CTG was in the BROOKLYN. The escorts were: BUCK (CDS-13), SWANSON, ROE, EDISON, NICK, and BOYLE. On the 13th—CDS 16 in the PARKER (DD-604) joined the TG and became ComScreen. Just before we left, we got 2 official Navy photographers, who stayed with us through the invasion of Sicily. They took some fine photos. The CO started rationing fresh water, with very strict water hours. This was a continuing problem for us. Our evaporators didn't work well and the boilers had first call on any fresh water.

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Item 2  
Pages 2,3  
June 10, 1943 AM

This morning we learned the location of our destination. Although our ultimate purpose for being there is still a secret. All signs point to the invasion of Europe.

The noon meal was accompanied by a good deal of gaiety. The main topic of discussion was “Mugging”. Naturally the illegitimate meaning of the word was brought up, and by the comic of the wardroom at that. He connects “mugging” with “scrunching” and “necking”.

There is absolutely no sign of fear among the officers and crew, although every man realizes that this trip is very important.

This ship is in fine battle condition, there being little doubt hat the good record of the ship will be upheld, if not boosted.

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Item 3  
Pages 3, 4  
June 11, 1943 AM

This morning we learned the whereabouts of our ultimate destination. From all appearances it will be the big show coupled with other similar operations.

Everyone aboard seems relieved to know that the time has come for our past vigorous training to be applied. There is still the sound of gaiety in all voices, but each man seems to have resolved himself for intensive training. That feeling the “Hell is just practice” has vanished and in its place the tone of “give ‘em hell” can be detected.

Our journey is very peaceful and has the earmarks of continuing as a peaceful journey. There will undoubtedly be a "rub" with the enemy within the next couple of weeks, but the intensity of the danger is not so great that it will disrupt the present peace and quiet.

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Item 4

Pages 4, 5

June 11, 1943 PM

Am about to retire a I have the mid-watch which is not so pleasant.

The sea has been fairly calm all day although we ran into a squall for a couple of hours. I saw my first water spouts today, which appeared to be amazing. I ran into a bit of good luck this evening as far as the sound gear is concerned. Here's hoping it continues when we meet up with Adolph's boys.

There is still no excitement aboard concerning the forth-coming events. Perhaps it is too fa in the future for any immediate consternation. Who knows???

Well it is time to sack out. Hope there is no GQ this evening. I need he sleep.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

11th—the weather had been stormy  
and while on the 1200-1600 watch, we saw several waterspouts—some quite near.

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Item 5

Pages 5, 6, 7

June 12, 1943 PM

Last nites watch was very uneventful, although it was very pleasant. It was a bright nite and the sea was very calm. The phosphorous in the water was as bright as could possibly be. The waves breaking on the bow of the ship would reveal hundreds of small particles of phosphorous.

This noon at chow we had a lengthy discussion on income taxes. It seems that I will not be paying any income tax this coming year if all goes well.

Just a little while ago a couple of us had our hair cut a la "Heinie" style. It really feels swell. Certainly will be much better on the bridge.

The sea is getting a little rougher right along. As yet none of the officers are sick although a few have felt a little woozy at times, including yours truly. There is nothing quite like it.

The sea has done an about face. The weather is very poor-windy and cold. The ship is really performing some real tricks. Sure isn't good for a man's stomach. I should know!!

Item 6  
Page 7  
June 13, 1943 AM

Last evening was very pleasant and mild. We had a discussion on invasions in general. Perhaps this shall apply to us in the near future.

The entire ship seems to have gone for short haircuts. Some of them are really the thing. It seems that every man aboard is a barber. It seems that everyone is looking forward to a long period away from the states.

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Item 7  
Pages 7, 8  
June 13, 1943 PM

Almost ready to sack out for the nite. Felt a little woozey all day due to the rather heav seas, but am up to snuff now.

Had a chicken dinner this evening-being the Sabbath etc. Not caring for chicken I am in no position to exercise my gratitude toward a swell meal.

Ate at second mess which was a jovial affair. We discussed the amount of energy one of the officers expended each time he climbed his rack. 4/5.5 HP—a few more like him aboard and we can dispense with our propulsion machinery.

Also discussed sea-sickness. The heaviest eater on board is looking forward to getting sea-sick, but his appetite is not depleted in the least.

Must now prepare myself for a good nite's sleep unless the sea gets as rough as it was last nite. A person has to work like the dickens to stay in his sack.

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Item 8  
Pages 8, 9  
June 14 PM

Today has been very uneventful so far. There was a good deal of kidding at chow, but nothing extreme. The officer of the deck and I kidded each other about our respective home towns. Sure as hell wish I could see mine right now. Lord knows when I'll see it again. Hope it isn't too far off.

The sea is considerably calmer than yesterday and the air is very much warmer. Perhaps it will continue to get warmer as we are approaching warm territory-the heat also applies to the enemy. From all of the latest reports the enemy is rather close at hand. Everyone is eager for a run-in with a u-boat. No one more so than I.

Almost chow time, so I must prepare myself for a repast, and then the sack as I have the mid-watch again.

It is now a while after chow. I had to enter here the description of a most delicious steak dinner topped off with ice cream-mmmmm.

Item 9  
Pages 10, 11  
June 15, 1943 PM

We are still cruising along undisturbed by submarines although u-boats have been reported in this area. There are quite a number of them reported to be about one day from our present position, moving in this direction. It is very unlikely that we will contact any of them under water.

To compensate for that very delicious steak last evening, we had liver and onions this non. Could anything be more horrible? Hope we have something decent tonite for chow.

The sea is a little rougher than it has been in the past couple of days, but not to extent that anyone has become ill.

The mustache is becoming very discouraging. The hair is very long but it doesn't shho a bit. If this keeps up I'll dunk it in the inkwell. Then people will sit up and take notice!!!

Just had show-pork chops, French fried potatoes, apple pie mmmmm!!!!

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

On the 15th, the cans refueled from our tanker. We had been doing a lot of training lately, working the various gun crews at GQ, fire, damage control drills, etc. You name it, we drilled at it. Buck O'Berry gave recognition training twice a day to the director people, gun crews, lookouts, and officers. Every one had to be an "expert". "P-40", the primary US fighter plane in the MED, became another of our "watch words."

As we got closer to Europe, we started to pick up "Axis Sally" and "Lord Haw-Haw" on the radio. On the mid-watch, we always patched her up to one of the speakers on the bridge. If the CO happened on the bridge, we had to turn the speaker off—quickly. It was very interesting to hear her spiel and besides she had all the latest songs from the US. How she got them always puzzled us. From Washington (WCX), we got our daily world news (several pages long), which the radio gang copied (dit-dot-dash) and distributed it to all hands. There was always a huge difference between the US and Axis versions of the news.

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Item 10  
Pages 11, 12  
June 16, 1943 PM

Got off watch about an hour ago and the way down from the bridge I stopped off on the torpedo deck to listen ton one of the cooks playing a mandolin. The music wasn't of the excellent variety, but it was really swell because the nite is perfect. There is a full moon out that sends a gay reflection across the water from behind scattered clouds. It reminds me much of Piseco lake and the wonderful evenings that I've set there.

We are presently in the most dangerous sector of our journey. Very seldom do ships traverse these waters, but for various reasons we are not altering course. If all goes tonite I'm sure we will have a very successful trip. To stand out on deck one is assured by the serenity of the nite that nothing could possibly go wrong, but we all know definitely that thee are many submarines lurking in this immediate vicinity.

The day progressed without any unusual occurrence. Held my morning lecture this PM without any difficulty-an ammunition handling room isn't the most convenient place for a lecture, but it will do.

I'm sure going to miss watermelon this year. As yet I can't see any possibility of returning to the states in time for any watermelon.

It shouldn't be very long now before things really begin to pop. In my opinion we will be pouring out steel on June 27,- but that is merely an opinion. Perhaps I will be wrong as usual.

The ship is in fine fighting condition. The only thing that will impregnate any doubts as to her veracity will be large caliber gun. Aircraft, torpedo boats and small war vessels are of little consequence, although we do expect to meet up with them.

I have a very nice nites sleep ahead of me, so I will take advantage of it.

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Item 11

Pages 13, 14, 15, 16

June 17, 1943 PM

Am about to retire for a few hours sleep as I have the mid-watch.

Today was a very wonderful day. The weather was superb and everything progressed according to plan.

As yet we have had no cause for alarm and there is no indication that we will run into trouble. Due to the characteristics of our task group there is little trouble to be expected.

Starting Sunday we will have a general quarters drill three times daily. All officers will wear their pistols and they shall be prepared for any eventuality. In addition all officers will retire fully clothed except for shoes.

From the memorandums that the captain has been putting out it is quite apparent that he is in anticipation of a pending battle of some kind, be it a battle between naval units or an invasion. The captain is preparing the ship for any and all casualties. He has stated that the ship will fight to the last man and knowing the captain, this is not hard to believe.

All hands are cognizant of the fact that any pending invasion will be met with very stiff resistance as it is very much expected by the enemy. Of course there is always the possibility that the enemy may not feel that certain of his positions are of importance enough to warrant great risk to his naval units and to his land forces. From the latest news reports his air forces will be under terrific strain also at the time of invasion.

We had a very delicious steak dinner again this evening. Guess it is getting to be a habit aboard. During the meal the topic for arguments was "Prunes". It seems that a few persons believe that a prune is a dried plum. Shameful isn't it????

This morning our news broadcaster and commentator told us of the coming circus on "Fantail Square Garden". The officer's were the various characters in the circus. The officer broadcasting has a wonderful sense of humor and a terrific imagination. Yesterday he advertised "Dr----'s" surgery. He came on the air with "Quack, Quack, Quack" implying that the Doc was a Quack. Upon signing off he stated, "If you want a shot, see Dr----- who will show you the needle. You can tell him where to stick it"!!!! Dirty isn't it??? But never-the-less it is certainly damn good for morale and gives the officers something to talk about. Nite



Item 12  
Pages 16, 17  
June 18, 1943 PM

Just finished the noon meal-spaghetti. It was terrible to say the least. Sure could go for a little of the old home cooked variety. Perhaps we will see sunny Italy soon and can obtain some there

Our morning broadcaster is really a card. This morning he mimicked F.D.R. as quoting Joe Stalin's "Reveille". I believe that this fellow has the greatest sense of humor of any one I know.

There was a short submarine scare this morning, but it didn't last very long. There will undoubtedly be a few more scares, but as I've mentioned before, due to the characteristics of our task group we have very little to fear.

Our trip should be over in at least three more days. We should soon be in Mussy's "Mare Nostrum". Sure hope—(just had another scare from the ship ahead-false business)-the sea is as calm as it has been out here.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

By the 18th, we were close to North  
Africa, and several long range US patrol planes came out to cover us during daylight  
as we approached Gibraltar.

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Item 13  
Pages 17, 18, 19  
June 19, 1943 PM

Just finished reviewing for one of my very uninteresting lectures this morning.

It is now after chow and I have very little to do for the next couple of hours or so. I may as well write a bit and then take a very nice nap.

Last evening was one of the most perfect evenings imaginable. The sea has been like a beautiful lake in the past few days and the moon is at its best, being full. The sky was lazy with drifting clouds through which the moon shone very prettily on the ocean.

It was a perfect nite for subs, and there was a little excitement. There was a good deal of confusion for a few hours, but eventually everything was restored to its former peace and quiet.

This morning the Doc issued to all officers syrettes of morphine to be used on the men when wounded, along with a battle bandage and a packet of sulfanilamide.

We are really equipped now, carrying the following at all general quarters: gas mask, tin hat, life jacket, pistol and holster, extra magazines, battle dressing, morphine, sulfanilamide and a knife. Sure as hell would hate to have to go over the side to try and swim.

It shouldn't be long now before we will reach our destination. As yet we have very little idea as to what or when will be our next move. Some men even predict returning back to the states. In fact I had a dream last nite during which time I dreamed that we were back in the states before it is possible to return. So far I've heard of every month from July to January as being the speculated date of return. As for myself I have no basis for any opinion so I will tag along with the unqualified.

Time for a bit of reading and then a nap.

Item 14  
Pages 19, 20, 21  
June 20 AM

Another day and still steaming along peacefully. There is little fear now from enemy subs because we have sufficient air coverage.

I just returned from a little rifle practice. May as well get the practice while it is available.

The weather is a bit poor today, but the thought of seeing land soon is enough to compensate for any discomforts due to seas.

We expect to enter "Mare Nostrum" soon. As yet we have had no indications of this being any warmer weather. I suppose it will be plenty warm soon.

The next twenty four or forty eight hours are really going to be tough. I have the mid-watch and we are having GQ for an hour after sunset and an hour before sunrise. That means practically no sleep at all. Ho! Hum! I'll have to catch up after the war???????

The "radio" program was very interesting this AM, It featured the "Quizz" kids of the ship. Certainly was humorous.

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Item 15  
Pages 21, 22  
June 20 PM

We are now definitely in the war zone and are within short range of enemy air fields. There is little danger however, but the threat is always present. At the present moment two of our ships are investigating possible enemy contacts.

We had our first sunset GQ and everything progressed according to plan. The officers gave the appearance of an armed marine group wit knives, pistols, etc. To me this is all very interesting because it is my fist time on such a show. Ordinarily the interest would die out, but in this case there should be continual new developments which will maintain an interesting state for us.

I don't know whether I'll be able to sleep tonite or not. I just finished eating about eight peanut butter and cracker sandwiches and a coca cola with a half lemon. I have to get up for the mid-watch in 1 ½ hours so it won't matter much.

I will attempt to get a little sleep now , or at least a little rest.

#### EXCERPT from USS WILKES

20th—we passed through the Straits, which was duly broadcast by Axis Sally. However, she reported the "W" as a minesweeper, which was good for a few chuckles. It re-enforced our opinion that Spain was less than neutral. Just after we got into the Med, the CO accidentally wandered into a minefield, which wasn't on our charts. The shore station sent us a "flash" telling us we were in the field. We had a few anxious moments until we were able to get clear.

Item 16  
Pages 22, 23  
June 21, 1943 AM

Well we are steaming along in "Mare Nostrum" and as yet "Muzzy" hasn't tried to hinder our present cruising. Everyone aboard would welcome some of "Muzzy's" navy for a little scrap.

This business of GQ at sunrise and sunset is really going to be tough on the boys having the mid-watch. Last nite I was on watch from 2345 to 0515 this AM. There isn't an awful lot of time for sleeping which is bad.

The sea is very calm, but I've heard tell that it can be mighty rough at times. So far this has been a vacation- one which I will always remember. I hope the return trip home is as peaceful.

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Item 17  
Pages 23, 24  
June 21 PM

We have at last arrived at our destination. No casualties or even danger of casualties. It has been a most successful trip for all concerned.

The harbor is very beautiful. The scenery reminds me a good deal of California-especially the mountains.

As yet we don't know where or when we are going from here. It looks as though we might be part of a big show, but things change so rapidly that one can't quite piece together the fragments of the entire picture.

There isn't much time for sleep and I didn't have very much last nite so I shall sign off for now.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

On the 21st, we were all safely in Oran. We refueled from the CHICOPEE and then moored at the mole in Mers-el-Kebir alongside the ROE, EDISON, McLANAHAN (DD-615) and KENDRICK (DD-612).

Everyone thought Oran and its environs were superior to Casablanca. There were a great number of cans and cruisers in the harbor. It was the headquarters of the US Navy Command for the up-coming invasion of Sicily. The crew enjoyed some swimming parties and liberty in the city. We moved the ship several times. Local laborers were used as line handlers. After a couple of bad situations—they were too weak and not able to do the job of line handling, the CO (quite properly) used our own deck gang as line handlers. The "locals" made a big howl, but the CO said they would be paid anyway. That satisfied them—they got paid, for doing nothing. The "locals" wore 6-8 layers of clothing, so that all the holes would be covered and they would not be "embarrassed". As we left the ship on liberty, the Arabs would line up right outside the gates, trying to sell souvenirs and other "things." Navy mattress covers were in high demand by the "locals".

Item 18  
Pages 24, 25  
June 22, 1943 PM

Our first day in this very picturesque port has been very interesting. I was unfortunate enough to be in the duty section so could not go into town. However upon being relieved of my watch at 4 PM I went for a wonderful swim in the ocean. Some of the boys are practicing with a shallow water diving mask. It is great fun.

The only thing that can compare with the climate around here is California. The scenery is superb and the weather is unbeatable.

I don't know how long we will be here, but it can't be for very long because of certain characteristics. When we shove off it will probably be for a more severe war zone.

There is little more dope at present so I should lend my attention to a murder story.

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Item 19  
Pages 25, 26, 27  
June 23, 1943 PM

Went into town today and visited some real unique places. I was unable to buy anything as I couldn't change my American money. There was very little n line of sourveniors to be had so it didn't matter much.

Prior to going into town we went for a swim out by the army hospital. I Have never enjoyed a swim as much as the one today. The water was superb. There were a good many nurses around but the swim was much more inviting.

The "bath-house" was a former summer home or some such place. The floors were all of tile and the walls of plaster. There are numerous small gardens surrounding the house. It was very quaint and interesting.

If there were some social activity-besides nurses-this might be a nice place to live. The climate is incomparable and the swimming is fine. The countryside is very scenic and in my opinion very beautiful.

The town, from the sea, is very pretty, but upon entering the town proper one detects a different feeling about the place. The streets are narrow and fairly dirty. The population is very mixed with a surprising number of uncivilized people. The stores are on a whole rather "crummy", but some of the stores were very modern and exceedingly spacious.

I must now attend the movie below so I shall terminate my writing for the time being.

Item 20  
Pages 27, 28  
June 24, 1943 PM

Well another day has passed and with it has gone a very good time.

This morning at 7AM one of the officers and myself went in for an early morning dip. The water was splendid.

It was a very beautiful day-not offering much incentive for work. I did a little work this morning while lying in the sun and repeated this afternoon. About 4PM I went in for another short but pleasant dip.

This evening after chow two of us climbed a mountain and watched the sun set. It was a very pretty sight.

Well this afternoon we got the dope on what is to come. It may not be the biggest show on earth, but it will be one of the best. My guess a few days ago was a little off---quite a little.

As yet no one is terribly worried about what is to come, but there isn't a man who doesn't think of the things that are possible. I'm quite sure we will all be a little relieved to return to the states-when and if we do. As yet there is no indication that we will leave even after this forthcoming event.

I must turn in now as I am tired after all of my exercise.

#### EXCERPT from USS WILKES

On the 24th—Ike and the King of England and other dignitaries drove out on the mole where we were moored. All the ships sounded their whistles and sirens in salute. Everyone cheered and waved. The bridge gang got a good view of them through their binoculars. Their visit raised everyone's already high spirits. By this time, all hands were speculating where we would invade. There were rumors that Churchill was pushing for an invasion of the Balkans. For a long time he had been calling the Balkans the "soft underbelly of Europe." We pulled out our charts and hoped the rumors were wrong—no soft places there. We exercised our landing party. There were lots of mountains to climb.

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Item 21  
Page 28  
June 25, 1943 PM

Very little to report for the day. I had the 12-16 watch and am preparing myself for the 04-08 watch in the morning.

It was a fairly warm day, but I was in no mood for swimming and am slightly sunburned now.

Item 22  
Pages 29, 30  
June 26, 1943 PM

Another very uneventful day has passed and we are still moored as before. There is little indication that we will be moving soon, but even when we do move it will not be for the purpose of fulfilling our plans for any invasion.

Our task in the forthcoming event has been slightly changed, but our position will carry the same weight. The characteristics of our job will be slightly altered and there should be a little more action. I have no intentions of implying that the risk the ship will be running will be greater because such is not the case. However the risk is not any less since we will be in the same area. Perhaps someday the opportunity will be mine to discuss the situation-after the war!!!

My day was very uneventful-being one of the "loafing". My section rated liberty, but only a certain number of officers are permitted to leave the ship at one time. I did not particularly care about going ashore because there is another port that I wish to visit, so I voluntarily remained aboard.

At the present moment I am about to "hit the sack" and do a little reading-fiction. So I bid adieu to my very faithful readers of this uninteresting resume of a wonderful experience.

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Item 23  
Pages 30, 31, 32, 33  
June 27, 1943 PM

Just time for a few lines prior to eating chow. It is 6:45 and I want to be sure and get to first mess.

This morning I attended the first mass in my life in which I took an interest to a rather high degree. I do feel shameful that during my church going life there was very little interest in the mass itself, but due to certain events I believe my disinterest was partly justified.

This morning at 0800 mass was held on the forecastle of another destroyer. The "altar" was underneath the barrel of a 5" gun as was the chaplain. To some this would not be impressive, but to myself it was one of the most impressive sights that I have ever witnessed. Perhaps it was the symbolism of "This is God's war". Whatever it was it made me realize that there must really be a greatness in a mass which could be said under any and all circumstances.

Tomorrow I am going to confession and then to communion. This will be my first time in quite some time and it will be most gratifying to know that I can face the forthcoming events with both clarity of mind and conscience. This may perhaps sound very trivial to some, but to me it is a matter of utmost importance.

There has been some discussion about the tenseness of the crew. Upon arriving here everyone was at his peak performance for combat. It is quite similar to the case of a football team that is worked up to a pitch and then rests a bit after waiting for the game. It seems that a few of the men are even frightened somewhat of what might happen, but this is only natural as everyone appreciates the strength of the Germany's air force. However to calm the mind we must keep in mind the strength of our own air force as well as that of the RAF.

My suntan is coming along beautifully. There is very little chance of getting sunburned any more so my many hours in the sun may be spent without fear of sunburn.

Chicken and ice cream for chow. I dislike chicken, but when it come to ice cream an entirely new light is shed.

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Item 24

Pages 33, 34, 35

June 28, 1943 PM

This day was a very eventful one for me although little of the occurrences would be of interest to anyone else.

This morning I attended confession and holy communion which in itself is cause for celebration as it was my first time in a couple of years. I certainly feel much better for it.

Another reason for elation is that I may soon get to see Bob Lacy. I met a friend of his this evening and found out Bob's whereabouts and what he is doing. It seems that he will be in our little show when it comes off. Should I get liberty in our next port there will be very little doubt that I can contact.

This evening we had the good fortune to have the company of an army officer who was able to describe to us a good deal of the African campaign. From his descriptions it was not difficult to understand the hardship of war. I am thoroughly convinced that the American public is unaware of the actual facts concerning the war and our fighting men. The public is too naïve to accept the true horrors of war. I also think that the American people would be damn proud of our army if they knew the circumstances. Our boys are fighters through and through and it is not a battle alone they are fighting, but a German soldier himself. There appears to be a hatred that only atrocity can develop. On the other hand some respect must be held for the enemy because at times there has been real sportsmanship.

I have a full picture of the forthcoming events and I'm afraid to admit that the situation is going to be a tough one. This little show is going to take a considerable amount of blood and guts. And our boys have plenty of the latter. We can only hope that they won't have to use a considerable amount of "blood".

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Item 25

Pages 36, 37

June 29, 1943 PM

I am just about to retire after a very long day. I just returned from the 20-24 watch after having four previous hours of watch plus a few hours of mental strain. Sure is surprising what a person can do.

We are en-route to an area where we will hold a dress rehearsal in just a few hours. The dress rehearsals are generally a pretty sad affair, but they expose all of the faults which must be corrected.

We are again assigned to our former position. Tonite or rather this morning we will find out the importance of our position.

From the latest information out the enemy apparently is aware of the forthcoming attack. We definitely have abandoned all hopes of a surprise attack. We are prepared to meet a strong and expecting foe.

From the latest news reports we have found out that the Italian navy has left its hiding base and is now on the loose. Everyone is hoping that they will show up around here as we need the "practice" which is all that could be expected.

Now time to turn in.

#### EXCERPT from USS WILKES

On the 29th—we took on 14 Army signalmen from General Patton's Army. They were going to do the spotting on our beach head for our up-coming invasion. We got well acquainted with the Captain in charge. He had made the initial landings in North Africa and had gone thorough all the subsequent actions. He didn't like Patton. He called him "old P—s and Wind." 29th—The NICK and we went out to practice with our Army spotters. We put them on a beach in an isolated area. Both ships fired a lot of shore fire. The Flag on the BROOKLYN was supervising us. During the exercise, we had a great deal of trouble with our voice radio communication with the shore spotters. The NICK and our radio frequencies interfered. This was going to be a continuing problem, not only for the Sicily invasion, but for many invasions to come. There just wasn't any adequate radio equipment available. The frequencies were too close together and the equipment was not able to differentiate between the frequencies. The Flag gave us "hell", which we thought was not deserved. Then to add insult to injury, the main bearing of the port engine burned out.

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Item 26

Pages 37, 38, 39

June 30 PM

Today was a day of much disappointment for this ship. Prior to making out practice firing run this morning our port engine went out. We were able to make the run, but under strain to the starboard engine. For a while everyone was certain that we would be omitted from the forthcoming invasion. There was even some talk about having to return to the Brooklyn Navy yard for repairs.

It would be absolutely suicidal for us to enter the invasion operations on one engine.

Just a few moments ago the chief engineer reported that we could probably repair the engine by tomorrow evening. There is now renewed enthusiasm about the invasion.

I have never seen anyone quite so glum as the boys were today. It is rather disappointing to find that all training efforts for the past three months have gone to pot. Here's hoping.

There has been little else of importance today. The firing this morning was fair, but could stand considerable improvement.



I haven't felt too well today, having a touch of cat fever. It has made me very lazy to say the least.

Well I must now prepare for chow. I missed the first mess which is a birthday dinner for the navigator.

We're having chicken so I don't mind. Hope we have ice cream for dessert.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

We limped back to Oran and went alongside the tanker, WINOSKI, on the 30th. The PARKER, MADDOX, and MERVINE were also moored alongside. All our engineers and the tender people worked very hard and fixed the bearing. We were as good as new.

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Item 27

Pages 39, 40

July 1, 1943 PM

It looks as though this ship is going to miss the battle after all. Chances for a suitable repair job are very slim now and there is very little reason for any hopes. I'm afraid that this will be a very disappointed crew if we don't make the invasion as all hands are more than eager.

Because of this trouble it is very doubtful that I will see Bob Lacy. Seeing Bob would certainly ass to the success of this trip for me. I knew damn well that all was going too well.

We had some very delicious steak for chow this evening, topped off with some delicious cherry pie.

I am too disappointed to write any more so I shall stop now.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

1st—We were still alongside the tanker, working on the bearing and fueling.

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Item 28

Pages 40, 41, 42

July 2, 1943 PM

Well the port engine is fixed and is presently turning over at a slow speed. The big test comes when we shove off and run the engine to 139 revs. It isn't the bearing that presents the difficulty, but the possibility of broken turbine blades. Should there be an broken blades I'm afraid we won't see the invasion, which every day looks to be better and better.

I have been busy all day doing various jobs from corrections to fixing (or trying to fix) the recorder. To add to my laborious PM I had the 12-16 watch under a very warm sun.

This afternoon the commissary steward returned aboard with enough grub to feed the ship for the duration. His methods of obtaining food must be miraculous as there aren't many ships in the fleet that generally are able to rustle up a full quota. To make things more questionable the commissary steward is as uncouth a person as one would wish to meet. Oh well as long as there is plenty of chow aboard!!!

This PM there was quite a ruckus in the wardroom over who had the most hair on his chest. The doctor was the instigator since he has enough hair to stuff a pillow with.

For chow this evening we had some very delicious pork chops topped off with apple pie. Poor civilians-and soldiers!!

Well it is almost time for the stationing of the special sea detail so I should quit writing now.

Oh yes I forgot to mention that we are making this journey by our lonesome. And with the Italian fleet on the loose!! -to say nothing of the fact that we will be passing points within tenor fifteen minutes from enemy airfields. Ho Hum there is nothing like GQ anyhow/

There goes the stationing of the special sea detail.

#### EXCERPT from USS WILKES

2nd—In the late afternoon we got underway for Bizerte.

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Item 29  
Pages 42, 43, 44, 45  
July 3, 1943 PM

It is now 1710-almost chow time for those eating at first mess. It is improbable that U will be eating at the first mess as only nine officers may be in the wardroom at any time. That leaves little "Ferdy" a little time to stroll around topside.

Last nite I had the mid-watch which was the most tiresome watch that I have had to stand to date. We had sunset GQ which lasted for approximately one and one-half hours. To top that off we had sunrise GQ this morning at 0530 so when I hit the sack at 0630 it was for the purpose of sleeping. And I might add that I did sleep-until noon.

There were a few interesting highlights worthy of mention during the mid watch. The most interesting occurred at approximately 0300 when a school of porpoises crossed our bow. There happened to be a good deal of visible phosphorous which shows very brilliantly upon turbulences of the water. Upon seeing a streak of phosphorous coming directly at us the starboard lookout became excited. As the streak approached the bow of the ship he began to arouse deep concern among the bridge force. However most of the bridge force had seen such cases before, therefore discarding any thoughts of torpedoes.

I might add that I myself was slightly concerned with the wake as it could have easily been a torpedo track. But upon seeing another wake moving very erratically in the water I dismissed the idea of torpedoes.

Our radar picked up a few suspicious objects, some of which were identified as friendly. Other objects were too far away to cause alarm.

The old man blew up this noon when he saw twelve officers sitting at the table. Yours truly made an immediate exit to the fantail.

This afternoon I helped with correction of the operational plans for the forthcoming event. I might add here that as small as the operation may appear to be in the news, it is going to be of tremendous size. The expected loss of life is very high, but in an operation of this type the loss of life is of little consequence. That is what makes for the horrors of war.

I shall quit now as I have to leave the wardroom country.

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Item 30

Pages 45, 46, 47, 48

July 4, 1943 AM

We are presently anchored in a channel outside of one of the most bombed cities imaginable. There is not a solitary building visible from here that hasn't been battered. The allies certainly showed little mercy for the city during the siege.

The channel and harbor are both littered with axis wreckage, some of which was engineered by the axis for the purpose of blockading the channel. And I might add that their plans for eliminating the use of the bay were almost successful. I might also add that so successful were the scuttlings that this ship may not see the invasion, although that is a very pessimistic outlook.

Getting back to the wreckage there are very few usable dock facilities due to the complete and thorough demolition. There must be scores of sunken ships here-ships of all sizes and categories.

At one location of a wreckage floats an Italian flag much as a tombstone, as indeed it must be.

Last evening we were running all over the damn sea trying to avoid various convoys which were all friendly. We picked up a number of aircraft, but all were either friendly or afraid to approach us.

Our present location is exactly 14 minutes from enemy airfields, so we can expect a raid of some kind-perhaps not, but this place has raids on the average of 5 nites per week. This figure should be very high now because of our incessant bombing of Axis airbases rendering them useless.

Last evening after chow we discussed various riddles and puzzles. The doctor works himself into a dither most of the time. From his actions one would take him to be a master mind, but only from his actions.

I hardly think there will be any liberty today, but we may have excursions into town. There is little possibility of my seeing Bob Lacy, but should he make an attempt to look me up we should be able to see each other. I'll soon know.

I think that now is a splendid time to continue reading "Torpedo Junction". The remarks concerning our armed forces are perhaps slightly sarcastic, but the chronological order of events is perfect.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

4th—Some FOURTH, we and the other ships in our Division, proceeded to Bizerte. We were one of the first US ship to go into the harbor. The area had just been "liberated" from the Germans. The harbor and its entrance was still full of sunken ships. We picked up a French pilot and we ran aground (See various Sea Stories). After we anchored, Lt Johnson inspected the bottom and found considerable damage to the starboard screw. It had 2 bent and damaged tips and the tip of the 3rd was sheared off.

Item 31  
Pages 48, 49, 50  
July 4, 1943 PM

This afternoon I went ashore in this God-forsaken port and the sight that greeted me was none too beautiful.

There were many more sunken vessels, including submarines that we were unable to see from the ship.

The first stop was a junk pile composed mainly of German planes. There wasn't a great deal of wreckage, but should we total up the many such junk heaps we will find quite a few planes that will do no harm to anyone.

In this immediate vicinity the ruins are not too great since there are a very few buildings. But upon entering the city itself one finds quite a different picture. I walked throughout the entire city and I will dare say that there isn't one solitary building that hasn't met some sort of destruction. Very few buildings are at all habitable and even those would prevent a very healthy home.

It is strange to see bullet holes in the walls of every building, roofs blown in by a bomb, or a complete building completely demolished by a bomb of some heavy caliber.

There are no civilians in the town, which adds to the grotesque picture. There are but few military personnel patrolling.

I can't help but wonder what some of the more complacent folks back in the states would think after seeing the pulverized city which once was a thriving modern African city.

The demolition of the city must have been methodical completed with incessant bombing. I can well imagine that a good many German and Italian soldiers died in their snipers nest.

There were many diggings in the streets where our engineers had dug up booby traps. So effectively were these traps laid that even now they catch some un-alert soldier unawares.

When our forces first occupied this city motor vehicles were detoured along routes laid out by our engineers.

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Item 32  
Pages 51, 52  
July 5, 1943 PM

Another day has passed without the occurrence of any important events.

Just a short while ago we had GQ. We received word that unidentified planes were approaching, consequently the call to GQ. The "all clear" finally sounded indicating the planes to be friendly.

I had a glorious sunbath today for the first time in quite sometime. It was delightful.

I'm almost certain that the day of the invasion will be very soon. Preparations are apparently completed as there is now little rush work to be done.

As yet I haven't seen Bob Lacy and probably won't see him due to the coming event. He has undoubtedly been moved to some embarkation point by this time.

I am now prepared for an evenings relaxation-reading mystery stories. Quite a diversion from the war I would say.

Item 33  
Page 52  
July 6, 1943 AM

This morning at about 0500 or 0430 Adolph sent his boys in for a visit with us. We were very rude to our guests and practically told them to go home where they would be more comfortable. But they did not heed the warning so now all of Adolph's boys won't be going back to Germany.

It was quite a show which proved to be a great help to the morale of the crew. It sort of breaks the tenseness that has subsisted for the past few weeks.

There is no further dope on any dates as yet, but one can't help but feel that it won't be far off. I hope so because I am anxious to return to the good old U.S.A.

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Item 34  
Pages 53, 54  
July 6, 1943 PM

Most of the day was very quiet, except for my watch, which, as usual, produced its usual contortions.

After my watch, at 4 PM, I went ashore looking for souvenirs. The best type of souvenir is unavailable due to confiscation by the U. S. Army. I was able to pick up a couple of German bayonets, but they are of little practical value. What I really had intentions of getting was a German mauser pistol, but those that are left are prize possessions of the soldiers who will not part with them.

This country is hotter than hell. This morning at 11AM it was 107 in the shade and high sun was yet three hours off.

We shove off tomorrow for parts unknown. It is a sure bet that the invasion isn't due for a few more days at the least. After my initial indoctrination in this war game last evening I'm quite surprised to find myself anxiously awaiting the "push".

"Jerry" might visit us again this evening and will get his usual warm reception. He should know better than to litter up the country with his lousy planes. Oh well if Jerry can afford it let him come, we're ready.

Oh yes the folks back home would certainly like the "local gas stations". It seems that Jerry left a considerable amount of 100 octane gasoline in this vicinity which is used with the greatest of pleasure. One merely has to go to one of the innumerable storage places and fill his tank.—No question asked.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES  
6th—Our engineers were still working on the screw. We had a heavy air raid in the afternoon. 4 bombs hit close to us. When air raids came, we had to pull our divers out of the water. We fired our 5" guns, using our new "super dupers". We shot down one, perhaps 2 bombers, firing 156 - 5" shells. We also had a very heavy raid at night. In the shore based searchlights, the planes looked like moths. There were a large number of heavy explosions where the LST's were loading. We fired more 5" and shot down one bomber, which crashed near our port bow. The shore AA guns and the British ships in that area were also firing, but they were using conventional AA—set to burst at a set altitude. All their shells were bursting well below the planes. Our 5" with the proximity fuses had the muscle to reach the planes. We had several other raids that Page 20 kept us busy (see other Sea Stories).

Item 35  
Page 55  
July 7, 1943 PM

Today we shoved off and are presently doing some local patrolling. The attacking forces are now forming and soon we will make our approach.

The day of the invasion has been disclosed-I'm wrong again.

This event will take place with the largest striking force in the history of the world. The last invasion is child's play compared to this one.

#### EXCERPT from USS WILKES

7th—After our people had done the very best they could with the screw, the CO took the ship out for a short run. We patrolled in the Tunisian War Channel, north of Cape Guardia. The whole ship shook very badly at speeds over 15 kts. Our maximum speed was about 20 kts. Everyone was concerned we might not be able to GO. Of course, that was unthinkable. We hadn't come all that distance, put in all the time and effort and then fail. The word "fail" wasn't in our dictionary. Nothing could keep our CO from a good fight!! All hands agreed on that!! If we couldn't go, the Commodore would transfer to one of the other cans. However, we always felt he was more comfortable on the "W". He knew us and we knew him. We knew what he wanted done. He rarely had to ask.

The CO recommended a medal, Legion of Merit, for Lt (jg). David O. Johnson, our assistant engineering officer, who was in charge of the diving work. He also commended the following men for their fine work: Henry S. Smith, B 1/c; Richard E. Hover, B 2/c; John Mercer, MM 1/c; John M. Mast, MM 1/c; Lawrence E. Kelley, MM 1/c; Leslie E. Eft, MM 1/c; Michael R. Martinick, F 3/c. All of these men made dives to work on the screw.

The invasion of Sicily was called "HUSKY" and husky, it was. It was the most ambitious military/amphibious operation of the war, to date. It was a direct forebear of OVERLORD. There were about 2500 ships of all types involved, from the US and British Navies, plus a couple of Polish "cans." Here again, IKE and his staff, along with his British counterparts, put together a masterful plan. While there were some errors made (i.e. the shooting down of our transport planes with paratroops on board), the landings and subsequent follow up went very well. Better than expected. It was still a learning experience for everyone.

Intelligence reports indicated our beach head was heavily defended and we could expect heavy resistance. We all got detailed briefings from high ranking intelligence people (i.e. how to conduct ourselves if a POW, etc.). Everyone also got Plague and Typhus shots, plus our usual boosters.

Our target was the port city of Licata, on the SW coast, the west most landing area of the entire invasion. There were high hills surrounding the city. There was a large mole (breakwater) protecting the city and harbor. Before the war, it was a trading and fishing center. It was a very ancient place, dating back to Roman times. Our portion of the beachhead was called "JOSS" (Yellow and Blue Beaches). Task Force 86, with Rear Admiral R. L. Connolly in the BISCAYNE (AVP 11), was in overall command. TASK GROUP 86.1, was ComCruDiv 13 (covering and support group).

MERVINE (CDS 15), DAVISON, QUICK, BEATTY, TILLMAN; COWIE (CDD 30), KNIGHT, DORAN, EARLE; PARKER (CDS 16) (DD 604), LAUB (DD 613), KENDRICK (DD 612), MACKENZIE (DD 614); CHAMPLIN (CDD 32)(DD 601), BOYLE (DD 600), NIELDS (DD 616), COLE, BERNADOU, and DALLAS. They left from Mers-el-Kebir.

The "DIME" force attacked Gela, in the center. TF 81, commanded by Rear Admiral J. L. Hall, Jr., consisted of 8 transports (APA, AKA), including Admiral Hewitt's flagship—MONROVIA (APA 31) and force flagship, SAMUEL CHASE, Cruisers—BOISE (CL 47) and SAVANNAH, 35 ocean going landing ships, 8 mine ships, and 10 patrol craft, plus 11 cans. The cans were: NELSON (CDS 17) (DD 623), MURPHY, GLENNON (DD 620), JEFFERS (DD 621), MADDOX (DD 622), BULTER (DD636); GHERARDI, (CDD 43) (DD 637), HERNDON (DD 638), SHUBRICK (DD 639), McLANAHAN (DD 615), and ORDRONAU (DD 617).

The Commodore was in command of the beach and Naval Gunfire Support Group. All ships had the color of the Beach (Yellow or Blue), they were assigned to, painted on the bridge. We had a large Blue Flag, with a white background painted on the wings of the bridge. This was a simple but excellent idea, to get the ships and boats to the proper beach. In the few days before the invasion, everyone sharpened their knives and the officers cleaned their .45's as well. All hands wanted to be fully prepared and nothing left to chance. For the invasion we had "the honorable position"—close to any action.

Ships on our beach head—BISCAYNE, with Rear Admiral R. L. Connolly (CTF 86) on board. Cruisers—BROOKLYN, BIRMINGHAM, over 200 landing ships of all types, 8 mine sweepers, and 33 patrol craft, plus several auxiliaries. The destroyers were: BUCK (CDS 13—CDR. E. R. Durgin), WOOLSEY, LUDLOW, EDISON, BRISTOL, WILKES (CDD 26—CDR. Vernon Huber), NICHOLSON, SWANSON, and ROE.

The "CENT" Attack Force (TF 85) was commanded by Rear Admiral A. G. Kirk, on the ANCON. It was the largest of the 3 forces and contained the Cruiser—PHILADELPHIA, and British monitor—ABERCROMBIE, along with 18 transports (APA, AKA), 28 landing ships, 16 mine vessels, 4 patrol craft, and 19 "cans". Their landing area was Scoglitti, the East most area. The destroyers were:

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Item 36

Pages 55, 56

July 8, 1943 PM

It is a most beautiful day today, but very warm. The sea is as calm as water in a bathtub.

It won't be long now before all hell will break loose. This little operation will really make history although very few people realize or appreciate the tremendous power that must be congregated.

If one looks astern of us he will see nothing but a mass of ships of all types and categories. It is almost beyond one's imagination to realize the number of ships in this encounter.

I must get a couple of hours sleep now as there will be no opportunity during the next week or so

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

Our TF left Bizerte in the afternoon of the 8th. On the way out, one of our cans spotted a crew of a downed German bomber. They picked them up and later transferred them to a boat going back to Bizerte. The die was cast—we were on our way!!! It was a truly impressive sight. It was a sunny, warm day. As a feint, our TF headed towards Greece to throw any off German snoopers. '

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Item 37

Pages 56, 57

July 9, 1943 PM

We are now making the final approach to our objective. It won't be but a few more hours before all hell breaks loose.

I had a short sun bath this afternoon, which was perhaps my last. Imagine sun bathing during the greatest military movement in history.

This assault gives me much the same feeling as a first prom. Time drags up to zero hour. I imagine that there will be a little more excitement tonite than at any prom.

We go at GQ at 8PM and remain at GQ until after the assault. It might be only 12 hours or it might be 48. If it is 48 I'm really in a pickle as I haven't had more than a couple of hours sleep in the past 30 hours. Oh well it only happens once in every life time—thank God.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

On the afternoon of the 9th, the weather changed to a full blown storm. We had white water on our bridge. We all felt for the troops on the LST's and LCI's, who were laboring badly. After dark, we changed course for Sicily. The Commodore was very concerned about the high wind and surf conditions on the beach head. By the time we got close to our target, the wind and sea calmed—a miracle, and the answer to our prayers. The CO instructed all hands to take baths, and put on clean clothing. The cooks made a huge pile of cold cut (ugh) sandwiches. You'll eat anything if you're hungry. Fresh water and waste buckets were put out at all GQ stations. We were prepared for a long GQ.

The SWANSON and ROE were the Gaffi, FSG #2, supporting the landing of the 7th Regimental Combat Team (west of Licata), RED Beach. "W" and the NICK were the FSG #5 for Blue Beach, supporting the 13th Regimental Combat Team, (east of Licata), in the Falconara area. The soldiers we were putting on the beach were from General George Patton's Army. At 2000 we went to GQ. From 2300 on, we saw and heard many bomb and gunfire flashes and bursts from the beach, and many fires on the beach.



Item 38  
Pages 57, 58, 59  
July 9, 1943 PM  
July 10, 1943 AM & PM

It sure as hell looks like the fourth of July ahead. There are innumerable flares in the sky, presumably from our aircraft. Bombs can be seen to be bursting continually and AA bursts can be seen in the sky.

We are a short ways from the beach. Zero hour is about three hours off. More fun.

There is plenty of hell being given to the beach by our aircraft. There are many large fires. The enemy seems to be using an AA similar to our 40 mm.

We are still moving in. At present we have 2 hours to go before the first troops land. Here's hoping.

Everything is very quiet now. It is almost time and there is no indication that we have been sighted.

All hell is breaking loose. Fires everywhere.

Mussy's boys getting hell now.

It is now late morning. All is going well. We met up with a little resistance. The troops are landing rapidly.

It is now late evening and I am really tired. GQ was secured at 1130 this morning and I had the 12 to 4 watch. We had GQ after 4 so no sleep there. We are going to GQ again shortly and then I have the mid-watch. This will leave me with no nites sleep to my credit in three days. Not good.

The better part of the show is apparently over. It was swell whil it lasted. This PM we had a few enemy aircraft overhead, but noting to cause great alarm.

At the present moment we are steaming to an unknown destination for an unknown reason. Perhaps there will be more fun.

Take me back to New York.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

10th—"D" DAY—0028, we sighted PC 562, the reference ship for the BLUE (our) Beach. The NICK came with us to our area and the SWANSON and ROE assumed their position on their Beach (RED), which was adjacent to ours. 0150—3 searchlights from the breakwater picked up the BISCAYNE and PC 562, who were anchored in the center of Blue Beach (3000 yards out). The lights swept over them

repeatedly. The ships just lay to—waiting. By 0230, the searchlights were sweeping over us and the NICK. We held our breath—expecting a shell to follow. It was eerie, the lights would pick up a ship—hold it for a minute or so, then sweep on, then come back to the ship, then sweep away, then back again. This was repeated many times. It was a miracle everyone held their fire and kept their “cool.” By 0245, the Germans discovered the TF off Gela (DIME), the next beach head east of ours. There was heavy gunfire from then on. We all thought, the enemy would open up on us.

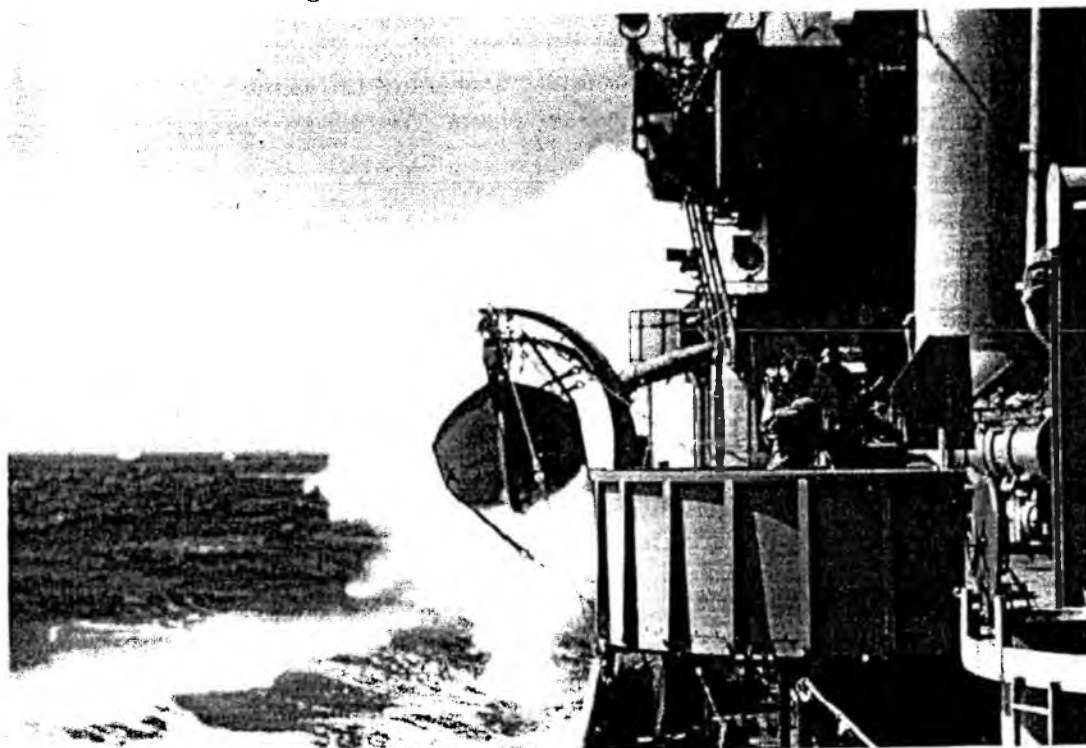
0300—The landings in our area started. About this time, the cans picked up small, fast moving targets to seaward of us. One of the possible enemy forces expected were German and Italian “E” boats, which were much like our PT boats. The Commodore ordered the SWANSON and ROE to go and check them out, as he didn't want “E” boats to get in with our LST's and LCI's. They went out at 25 kts—SWANSON leading. A very short time later, we all saw a large flash to seaward. The Commodore knew something was amiss and he tried to raise them on the TBS. He had no luck. 0329, he got word that they had collided. The boats turned out to be friendly PT boats, who had gotten out of position and off their timing by the bad weather. 0410, we opened fire with our 5" guns on our assigned targets. It was a spectacular sight. The gun flashes were blinding and deafening. Our first salvo hit the searchlights. They went out and never came back on. In short order we had fired 140 rounds of 5". 0416, There was a fire on the fantail. It was put out in a couple of minutes. 0430, another fire—under the depth charges (a very bad place for a fire). It was out in 4 minutes. 0444, the BIRMINGHAM, escorted by the LUDLOW, started to fire on shore targets. 0445, we observed on our SG radar our troops were landing. 0458, we observed a large flash from Gela. We later learned it was the MADDOX blowing up, after a bomb hit. They lost 210 men killed. It had tied up alongside of us about 10 days before.

(Editor's Note: Pre-invasion intelligence reports showed a rather large Italian Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) base at Porto Empedocle, some 20 miles west of Licata. We had trained with our own PT boats and the Commodore knew how pesky they could be. So he was concerned when our SG radar picked up these fast moving pips.)

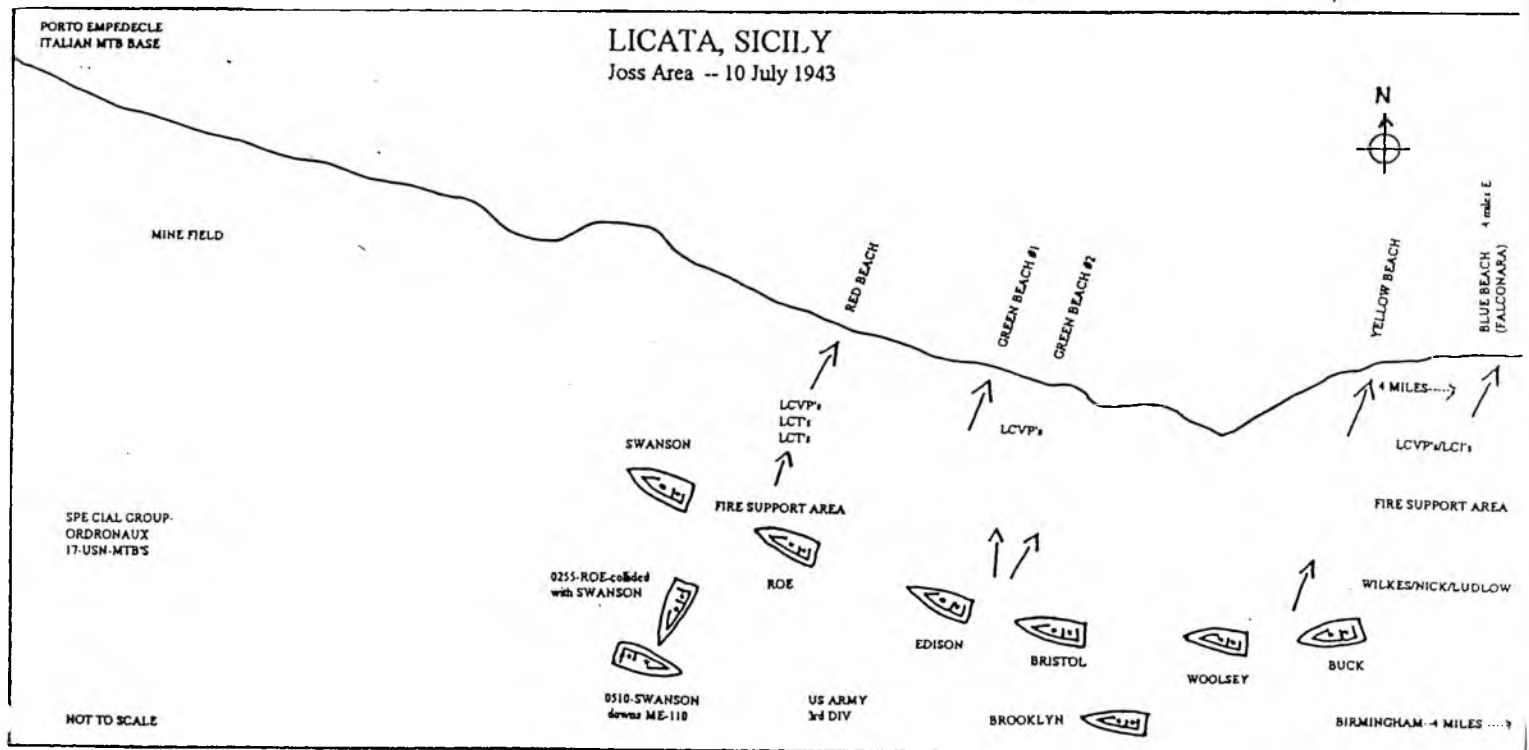
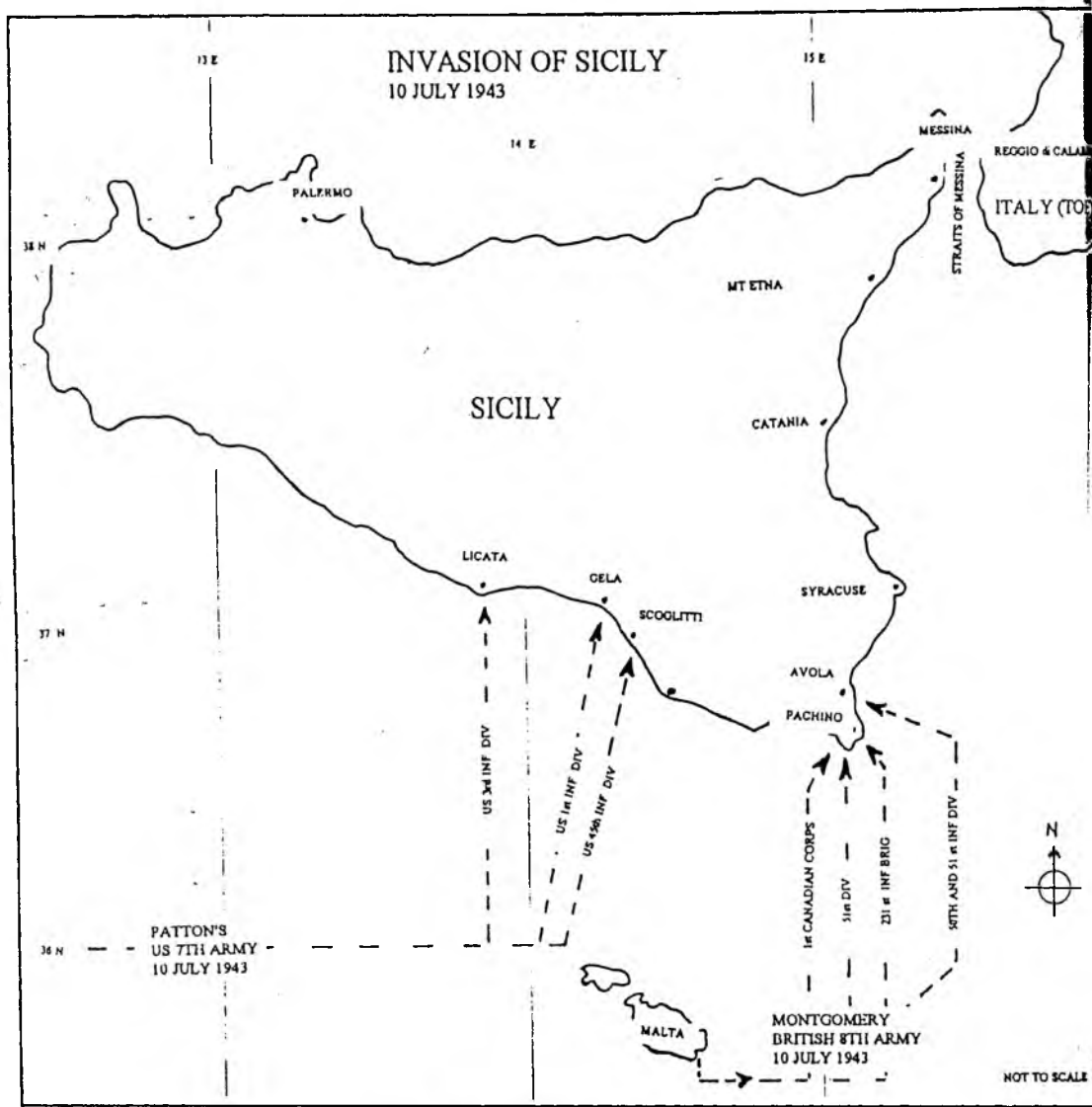
We later learned the CO of the SWANSON (senior) was leading the “charge”, at 25 kts. He gave an order “Form 180 (fall in behind). The ROE didn't get the “word”. The SWANSON turned and the ROE didn't. The bow of the ROE hit the SWANSON amidships, right in the #1 fireroom. Both #1 fireroom and #1 engineroom were flooded. Both ships were very heavily damaged and knocked out of action. They had to jettison everything possible to stay afloat, fired their torpedoes and dumped the depth charges, ammo, anchors. Everything that was loose was thrown over board. About that time, an LST was hit to seaward and we feared one of their fish had hit it. Later we learned not so. 0512, a German ME 110 tried to attack the SWANSON.

Fortunately they kept a few of the proximity fuse 5" shells and knocked the ME down on the first salvo—some shooting!!! The SWANSON limped into Malta for emergency repairs and the ROE made it to Oran. On the way the ROE was attacked and it also shot down the bomber. 0505, enemy planes bombed LST's on both Blue and Yellow Beaches. 0511, an ME 110 came over our Beach and we fired on him and he fled over the hills. 0547, we received several shell splashes nearby. We tried to knock the guns out, but they were in the cliffs. A bit later the Army Rangers took care of them. 0603, we opened fire on more assigned shore targets, in area “D” -battery #72. There were enemy holed up in houses along the water front. We fired our 5" into them, hoping

the civilians were gone. Our gunfire started large fires on the beach in our assigned target area. 0750, we got our first radio contact with our SFCP. There was an Italian radio station, playing music, on the same frequency. It made radio contact with our SFCP impossible. It stayed on the air. They didn't have a clue that an invasion was going on and their "world was ending". Fortunately, there was no need for SFCP. We drew more shore fire—no problem. 0800, we picked up 3 US Army men adrift in a small rubber raft. They were: PFC Di Renzo, Michael Armond and Victor Lodman. They said they were the only survivors of a landing craft on BLUE BEACH, which beached on a rock, ramp down and got hit by enemy machine gun fire. They said all others were either killed or drowned. Before he was killed, the boat's coxswain threw over a small life raft. They were glad to see us. 0830, we got word from the Beach that our forces had occupied Licata. 0835, we saw the American Flag flying over the castle St. Angelo in Licata. The BIRMINGHAM and BROOKLYN were firing on the beach. 0917, Orders—"Hold all NGF."—"All objectives taken." 0930, the Commodore moved the NICK to the SWANSON's old area and it came under shore fire—no problems. 1000, we transferred the Army men to a passing Army motor boat. By 1030, the Commodore decided things were under control and secured us all from GQ and set Condition 2 (watch and watch). All 20/40 MM guns were to be manned and 1/2 of the 5" guns. We now could get our regular chow and those off watch a bit of sleep. We weren't at GQ as long as we figured. Henry Mobley and Bill Mosher stood watch and watch on the 40MM AA guns, also controlling the 20MM as well. We had a busy time for the next few days. When we secured from GQ that morning, our decks were covered by empty 5" powder cases that had to be picked up, put in containers, and stowed below. They were "re-cycled." 1515-1645, enemy planes attacked the beach, LST's and us. 5 Focke-Wolf planes kept popping over the hills. We got a near miss. We'd fire on them and they would flee over the hills. 1821, we got more air raids and another bomb hit near us. At this time, we were patrolling 3000 yards off BLUE and YELLOW beaches, between Falconara Castle and 2 miles east of Licata. Later the NICK was assigned to an area off RED beach.



*Leading the pack in heavy weather  
7/9/43--On the way to the invasion of Licata, Sicily*



Item 39  
Page 59  
July 11, 1943 PM

Should a man want sleep badly this would not be the place to obtain it. In the last seventy two or eighty hours I have had approximately eight scattered hours of sleep. There is little hope for obtaining sleep as long as we remain in this locality as the enemy persists on making nuisance raids throughout the day—much to our regret!!!

Oh well I did manage to sneak in a delicious steak dinner.

Time for me to get a couple of minutes sleep while everything is quiet.

#### EXCERPT from USS WILKES

.1th—Sunday, early in the morning, we came across LCT 211 which was in distress. It had no engines, no power, no light, no anchor, no food or water, and its living spaces were flooded. We got help for her. 0810, an enemy bomber came over the hills and hit the LST 158, which was unloading on the beach, west of Falconara. The LST exploded and burned for 2 days. 0920, more raids by dive bombers. They again popped over the hills and we couldn't see them until the bombs dropped. We fired on them—and they fled. 0927, 2 US planes came over the beach. A DD—not us—fired on them and shot one down. Pilot bailed out OK. 0956, 6 P-38's came over our area for air cover. 1037, 22 B-17's passed over head and bombed the beach. More enemy raids; we had a bomb hit near us. 1227, enemy dive bombers bombed the beach. We open fired with 5" and 40MM, and 1 bomber was shot down. 1402, 4 Stuka's bombed the beach. We fired on them. They went over the hills. 1535-1700, we could see many heavy air raids on Gela, with bomb splashes and the AA fire. 1702, a Liberty ship (ROBERT ROWAN) carrying ammo exploded at Gela. It had been hit by a bomb. A cloud of smoke and debris towered several thousand feet into the air and tracers from 5' shells arched through the sky. It was a fiercesome sight. 1741, more AA fire over the transport area. 1 plane shot down. 1750, another plane shot down. 2000- 2200, many more raids. We got dive-bombed and a very near miss off our port bow. 2220, a near miss on us, and we almost collided with a British LST. 2330, a low flying Italian bomber (Savioa Marchetti 81 type) dropped bombs and missed—but very close. It turned and started another run on us. We opened fire with our 20MM and 40MM guns and shot it down in flames. It crashed very close to us. (See Sea Stories). For the first 2 days, the ships and troops in the Gela area were under fierce attack. With glasses, we could see the trouble they were in. At one point German tanks broke through, almost to the waterline. The cans and cruisers, with their NGF, turned the tide of battle. They suffered many more air raids than we did.



*Waiting for the Stukas, July 11, 1943, off Licata, Sicily  
Henry Mobley and his port 40 MM gun crew*

Item 40  
Pages 60, 61  
July 12, 1943 PM

We had a very quiet day today, with plenty of sunshine. There was absolutely nothing disturbing us in our area, however we could see plenty of activity in adjacent areas, including the shooting down of a couple of enemy planes.

Last nite the situation was an entirely different nature. A fleet of bombers came over and raised hell with the place, although they created no damage. One of the bombers damn near got us. The fool dove down out of the dark and let go a short ways off our port beam. A little later we compensated for his rudeness by picking off one of his brothers.

A very funny thing happened yesterday when some Limeys accidentally shot at some of our own planes. The captain told the signalman to send a message to "Dirty Bastards" to stop firing. The signalman sent it verbatim including the "Dirty Bastards".

We had some very delicious roast beef this evening. The Navy certainly has its good points.

Everyone is anxious to return to the states. There is only one good thing about remaining away for a long period of time and that is the accumulation of pay.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

12th—was uneventful, except 0816, we were attacked by 3 ME 109's—they missed  
We continued to patrol and watch for enemy planes. In the morning cruisers fired on the beach in Gela, and continued most of the day.

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Item 41  
Pages 61, 62  
July 13, 1943 PM

Very quiet day today with only one air raid so far. Perhaps we shall have more this evening-per usual.

The only interesting event during the entire day was a German propaganda broadcast in English. According to German claims it is futile for us to continue the war. They claim to have sunk innumerable ships of all classes including a couple of cruisers. They claim very serious damage to six other cruisers and many more ships. I can truthfully say Pfuii.

And then we heard about our poor children in the states being cruelly treated. They are forced to work from 3AM until late evening when they reach the ripe old age of eight. And in warehouses too!! We certainly raise supermen now-a-days.

And then we heard how well the German children were treated. No work, plenty of care, etc. It almost makes me wish I were German-Yep, I certainly envy the Germans

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

13th—0800, enemy planes  
continued to hedge hop over the hills. Bombs dropped near LST 385 and us. We fired on them, but they went over the hills. 1530, refueled from the BIRMINGHAM. 2100  
back on station patrolling.

Item 42  
Page 63  
July 14, 1943 PM

Another day with no occurrences of any consequence. However due to certain events during the day I rather expect a few Axis planes overhead tonite. They won't be able to inflict any damage due to the air strength of the Allies in this sector.

I was fortunate enough today to pick up a captured Italian rifle with a few rounds of ammunition. The rifle was dirty and in poor condition, but I now have it in fair operating condition.

It gets rather boring around here at times, but a few minutes of activity generally compensates for that.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

14th—0517, the BROOKLYN hit 2 mines, but apparently was not badly damaged and was able to stay on station. All the cans except BUCK NICHOLSON, WILKES and LUDLOW left our area. We remained behind to provide AA protection for the beach.

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Item 43  
Page 64  
July 15, 1943 PM

Visited ashore today and picked up a few more souvenirs.

During my visit ashore I had talks with some of the natives here. One of them was selling tomatoes and lemons. When I told him that I had no ----- money he replied that American money would do as we were all American.

Children were very pestering, asking for cigarettes and candy.

Last evening we listened to "Peggy" broadcast from Berlin. She told of the slaughter of Americans here and of the sinking of numerous war vessels. She sure could pread the old oil.

Time for the sack as I have the mid-watch.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

15th, we sent our boat to the beach, with Lt D.O. Johnson in charge. They brought back about 40 Italian rifles and ammo as souvenirs. He also took some very fine photos of the activity on the beach and the ship. 15th—the British hospital ship LEINSTER came into Licata.

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July 16

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

16th—the SS SEMINOLE, a US hospital ship came into Gela. We were still getting air attacks

Item 44  
Page 65  
July 17, 1943 PM

Today us another dull day. At least yesterday and the day before I managed to get ashore which offered some diversion.

I bought a few small watermelons while I was ashore yesterday so the summer will not have passed without my tasting watermelon-even in a foreign land.

I also managed to pick up a couple of medals which are worthless as far as value is concerned.

There is still no sign of our leaving here in the near future. In fact all indications point toward a very uneventful summer in the Mediteranean Sea. Oh well the pay is still adding up to a neat total.

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Item 45  
Page 66  
July 17, 1943 PM

Just finished listening to Peggy's program. According to their news broadcast the German communique's most of us should be lying on the bottom of the sea. We should be bombed day and night by Axis aircraft!!

I managed to find some peanut butter in the refrigerator and then proceeded to make good use of it. Really delicious.

Should a person be interested in going slightly "bats" at a very slow rate he need be just aboard ship with us. Everyone is getting grouchy and mean. I suppose it is only natural since we have done nothing but patrol for days.

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Item 46  
Pages 67, 68  
July 18, 1943 PM

An another day passes without bringing forth any events of marked interest.

The best part of the entire day is evening chow-a delicious steak topped off with apple pie supreme. Can't complain about that can I?

I just came below from the bridge where we could see hundreds of Axis prisoners herded on the shoreline, waiting??to be shipped off. The news reports that thousands of prisoners are being taken are very well confirmed.

The prisoners do not seem to be discontent with being through with the war. In fact some of them are rather pleased.

Everyone has about reached the brink of insanity aboard. A couple of more days and every one will be in a proper state of mind to pass the entrance exams at Marcy State Hospital. If only there were new faces, different things to do, more variety in the meals everyone would be content. A good naval engagement would really by the thing.



Most of the men think of "Wine Women and song" continually. We can all furnish the son<sup>1</sup>, but as for Wine and Women someone else will have to intervene. I myself could really stand a good drink and the sight of a white woman. Imagine those poor marines stranded in the Solomons without the scent of liquor or the sight of even a "frowzy frill" for six months. Here I've only gone six weeks and I can't remember what a decent girl looks like.

Oh well someday!!!!

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

18th—our transport planes started to land at the Licata airport. The Army engineers did a fine job in getting it in shape. Early in the morning, there was a huge explosion on the beach. It looked like an ammo dump. In the afternoon 18 LST's approached Licata with reinforcements and we directed them to the proper area. LCI transferred an officer to us.

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Item 47

Page 69

July 19, 1943 PM

We really received some good news today. We will very shortly leave this sector and might possibly head for home. Of course our optimism might be a little high but there is reason to warrant a little of it.

Everyone is in the best of spirits because of the good news-naturally. The gloom has finally faded away and all hands are now back to normal.

We had a birthday dinner this evening for the Gunnery Officer. The main dish was a bit of delicious roast beef.

Last night we received an unwarranted warning that gave us a little concern. Of course anything is liable to happen around here so it best be that we are prepared.

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Item 48

Pages 70, 71

July 20, 1943 PM

Business is really picking up. We should leave this hell-hole in a very few hours and begin to head for home-indirectly. I'm ready to leave here immediately to report back to the good old U.S.A.

We had another birthday dinner this evening, this time for the Captain. The meal was absolutely tops-steak, ice cream and cake. The ice cream was our first in quite some time and was not the best in the world, but it certainly tasted like the best.

The news reports all sound very good. The bombing of Rome was good news although "Peggy" reported that we had bombed no military objectives and had made a shambles of cultural and religious points. But knowing from experience that Peggy's reports are about 1% truth and 99% propaganda. I<sup>1</sup>, sure the raid was highly successful.

Boy home!!!!!!

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

20th—we were still at Licata and transferred our Navy photographers to the BUCK. We were leaving and they were staying. From "D" Day, the weather was sunny, hot and clear, with smooth seas. All this time, a steady stream of LST's and other amphib ships were coming in, beaching and discharging a huge amount of tanks, trucks, and a mountain of other equipment. They were all escorted by US and British cans. Licata was supporting General Patton's Army's rapid advance in Western Sicily.

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Item 49

Pages 71

July 21, 1943 PM

At last we are on our first leg for home. It may be a week or so before we actually begin the long trip back, but it is fairly definite now anyhow.

Everyone aboard is 100% happier now that we all realize that we are headed back. It almost seems like a different ship.

While sleeping this PM the boys began to shoot the AA guns which awakened me with a start. Soon after that there was a tremendous explosion which shook the ship. I at first thought we were being attacked by enemy planes, but it turned out to be a mine which was floating in the water. Fortunately it didn't hit the ship, else I would not now be writing

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

21st—0100, we were relieved at Licata and headed to Valletta, Malta, arriving about 0700. The island was very beautiful, but you could see the terrible bombing they had been going through since the beginning of the war. The SWANSON was tied up to a pier, getting emergency repairs. It looked odd, with the forward stack missing. It was a mess and they were lucky to have survived. We didn't get any liberty. We were there only a very short time, as we left for Oran later that day—just limping along. On the way, we came across a floating mine. We fired 20/40MM at it. All hands were top-side to watch the fun when it exploded in a huge roar. Shrapnel rained down on the decks, but no one got hurt; some got souvenirs.

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Item 50

Page 72

July 22, 1943 PM

Just came back from a short liberty-1 hr to be exact. We didn't leave the ship until 10PM and everything here closes before that.

The city is a beautiful one and it looked rather interesting. It reminds me of a beautiful California city with its clean white buildings, but upon visiting the city itself it does not appear as clean as it does from the sea.

From the sea this city looks perfectly modern. There are a few Moslem temples about that are outstanding.

It won't be long now before we leave for the states. I can't wait to see the old lady of Liberty standing in the New York skyline.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

22nd—we arrived in Algiers at 1700 and moored alongside the LYON (AP-71) at a pier. The city was very beautiful, on the side of a large mountain. Up to now, we hadn't been able to get any supplies and we were running out of food. In Algiers we were able to refuel and get supplies. The SWANSON came in. Some of our crew got liberty.

Item 51  
Page 73  
July 23, 1943 PM

Just returned from the 20-24 watch which was very quiet and very pleasant. It is a bit cloudy out, but the weather is very enjoyable.

As yet we have not begun our return trip to the states, but we are preparing for it. At present we are acting as escort.

There is a noticeable amount of slack in the officer's and crew. For some reason or another everyone has a grouch o and no one seems to be happy.

Today we learned that Palermo has fallen into American hands. I guess that the army's predictions that they would take Sicily in a month is going to come true. It has only been two weeks since the invasion and most of Sicily is in our hands. Hope the damn war ends spoon.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

23rd—in the early afternoon we got underway with CTF 81, in the SAMUEL CHASE. The escorts were: DAVIDSON, ORDRONOUX, BERNADOU, KNIGHT, LAUB, COLE, and DALLAS, with the Commodore, as ComScreen.

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Item 52  
Page 74  
July 24, 1934 PM

We are now quietly moored in the same port that we first entered in Africa. Our activity has simmered down to the waiting for sailing orders to Uncle Sam.

It was a beautiful day today, somewhat typical of this section. The sun was terribly hot, so much so that it was very comfortable lying in the sun. I did manage to get in a couple of hours of sun bathing, but effect was untelling.

Wonders of wonders!! Today I shaved off my mustache. I'm sure that the lack of its presence will be little noticed since it was barely visible anyhow.

I must now retire to my sack and indulge n a little reading--detective stories. The entire ship is now reading the damn things!!

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

24th—moored Mers- el-Kebir, Oran and some liberty was granted.

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Item 53  
Pages 75, 76  
July 25, 1943 PM

It is getting a little monotonous writing of days that are very dull.

This morning the "old Man" held a conference and really "belted" us around a bit. He is highly displeased with the general attitude of the officers and men. Wherein the trouble lies is a mystery to him, but a few of the officers felt that it is a natural trend, following a cycle which inevitably repeats itself-the build up-the battle-the let down.

I had he 12-16 watch this afternoon in the hot African sun. Sure would liked to have gone swimming.

This evening at chow-pork chops again-we had a lengthy discourse on criminology and sex. Quite interesting.

I figure to be in New York about Aug. 8 or 9. It looks as though I'll get some sweet corn and watermelon after all.

There is little doubt in my mind that the first appearance of the Statue of Liberty will be widely accepted with enthusiasm. Little old New York is really going to take a licking when this gang returns.

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Item 54 -  
Page 76, 77  
July 26, 1943 PM

Today was another of those days that furnishes little to write about. This morning I had the watch until 1230 this noon. I then ate chow and took a jaunt into town looking for souvenirs. Strange as it may seem there is nothing to buy. What goods are available for souvenirs are perhaps ten times their actual value.

Mussolini's abdication makes the outlook on the war a little brighter. Everyone is hoping that Italy will capitulate in the near future. It would certainly conserve a lot of lives.

I think we are shoving off tomorrow, although it may be a little later than that when we do shove off.

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Item 55  
Pages 77, 78  
July 27, 1943 PM

We received the news this morning that friend Mussalini had been captured by some authority in Italy. Too bad we couldn't get our hands on the old boy. I'm sure he would enjoy our hospitality.

I missed my guess last evening when I assumed that we would depart today. However I am almost positive that we will take leave tomorrow.

My greatest pleasure of the day was the receipt of a letter from home-my first since the first part of June. I read it over and over again until my lust for hometown news had been satiated.

I spent a very lazy day squandering my time, as it were; This PM I typed up some operational plans for the bridge after which I spent an hour in the sun.

The sun is too warm to be enjoyable. I find the greatest difficulty in trying to get some sleep in the sun. It is practically impossible.

We had a delicious steak dinner again this evening topped off with ice cream. I sure will miss the meals when the time come for me to leave.

## EXCERPT from USS WILKES

This was the end of our part in the invasion of Sicily. All during this time, we were able to tune our radio in on Radio Berlin's "Lord Haw-Haw", and Axis Sally and Peggy. They didn't have a clue what was happening. One German song that was a "hit" with us—"Lilly Marlene". After North Africa, the Med and Sicily, our crew felt we "owned" a part of that song. For the crew members that might recall the song:

The words—"Would you like to hear the story of a girl that many soldiers know? It's a tale of love in all it's glory. They tell when the lights are soft and low."

Verse 2: "With a kiss she gave her promise to be constant as the stars above. Every soldier knows she's kept her promise and she has been faithful to her love."

Verse 3: "Summer soon gave way to autumn, then came winter with his snow white beard. Once again she faced a lonely springtime, but night after night she still appeared."

Verse 4. Tho' each tale must have an ending. No one knows just what the end will be. But tonight when twilight is descending if you'll come along here's what you'll see.

Chorus: "Underneath the lamp post by the barrack gate. Standing all alone, every night you'll see her wait. She waits for a boy, who marched away and tho' he's gone, she hears him say. Oh promise you'll be true. Fare thee well, Lili Marlene. Till I return to you. Fare thee well, Lili Marlene."

Some comments by the Commanding Officer is worthy of note: "The SG radar is the most excellent and useful device issued to forces afloat—It's performance, navigationally, was superb. It's accuracy in maintaining station in screening dispositions and on patrols left nothing to be desired." No truer words were ever written. All watch officers would give a Hearty "AMEN" to that appraisal. The CO was less enthusiastic with the performance of the SC (Air Search) and FC (Fire Control) radars. The Commodore noted there was a breakdown in AA fire control. Many ships, mostly amphib types, fired on every plane within range. On D+1, a damaged P-40 tried to make an emergency landing on the beach. Every ship nearby opened up on the plane. The Commodore took them to task, in rather "blunt language" for firing on our own planes. Both the NICK and we (Buck O'Berry) had a graduate of the Navy Recognition School on board. At GQ he was stationed on the flying bridge and had direct contact with the directors and the lookouts. This paid big dividends.

In the Licata area, Naval losses were very light—23 men killed, 118 wounded. We were "lucky."

There were 71 British, 48 US, 6 Greek, 3 Polish cans in the entire invasion.

(Ed Note: The famous war correspondent, Ernie Pyle, was on the BISCAYNE for the invasion. He was on the ship when it was in Bizerte Harbor, during the heavy air raids prior to the invasion. He wrote several dispatches describing the fierceness of the raids. If he was impressed, as he was a battle hardened correspondent, they must have been bad.)

Item 56  
Page 79  
July 28, 1943 PM

At last we are leaving the dear old Mediteranean. I can't say that I'm the least bit sorry about the whole affair. I does get rather boring waiting around for something to happen.

We should pass out of the Straits of Gibraltar at approximately 10Am tomorrow From there it will take about nine days to reach the states as we are in fast company.

Tonite we had the last ice cream we will eat until we reach the states. We also had pork chips again which are rapidly becoming tiring. The food that I yearn for presently is home grown vegetables.

So far we can make little of nothing of the Italian situation. The fight for Sicily is apparently becoming more difficult. Sure would like to hear what "Frank" will have to say about the situation.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES 28th—we left Oran escorting 2 cruisers (BROOKLYN and BIRMINGHAM), 1 tanker (CHICOPEE). The Commodore was in charge of the screen—6 cans (DAVIDSON, ORDRONAU, BERNADOU, KNIGHT, LAUB, COLE, and DALLAS). All the cruisers and cans had some damage and were going back to the States for repair, a bunch of cripples.

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Item 57  
Page 80  
July 29, 1943

At last we are back in the Atlantic heading homeward. Our present course is rather puzzling in that it is not taking us directly to the states. Perhaps we are diverting ourselves from the path of enemy submarines which apparently lie in great number around the Azores.

So far we have had excellent weather. The sea is very calm and the sky has been clear all day. There are a few clouds overhead no, but not enough to warrant any fears of a storm.

This evening we had a most tasty roast beef for chow. The greatest surprise of the evening meal was the dessert-apple pie and ice cream. That makes three days with ice cream for noon day and evening chow. Need I complain of such luxuries?????

EXCERPT from USS WILKES  
29th—we all passed through the Straits of Gibraltar.

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Item 58  
Page 81  
July 30, 1943

Lord only knows where we are getting our ice cream from day after day, but nevertheless we haven't missed a meal in four days. I'm rather pleased with the set up.

Damn I wish we would start making a bee-line for New York. If we continue our present course it will be dooms day before we get back and I'm quite anxious to be back before that. There isn't anything of interest to write about these days. It is all good old navy routine.

The news of late has been quite encouraging, but the Sicilian campaign is not going according to schedule I'm afraid. Perhaps an all out offensive will commence soon which will be the determining factor in the campaign.

Perhaps the Italians will attempt to make peace soon. I hope so as it will prevent needless bloodshed.

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Item 59  
Page 82  
July 31, 1943

At long last we have run out of ice cream, but the steak still remains. In a way I'm slightly fed up with steak as delicious as it may be.

I've been having a long argument with the navigator on Mercator projections today. Perhaps my reasoning is a bit false, but it sounds good. At least the navigator admits that I may be right.

The news from Europe sounds very promising indeed. Perhaps Italy will soon sue for peace.

We are still on a bastard course which is taking us no where. As far as I'm concerned a bee-line to New York would suit me fine, the hell with the subs.

The weather is still dandy. No seas to speak of.

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Item 60  
Page 83  
August 1, 1943

Another week should find us nestled in some snug U. S. port. It seems as though we have been out to sea for ages now, but it has only been a few days.

The weather is still fine. The barometer is high indicating good weather in the near future. We do have an occasional rise in the wind, but generally it is mild and only temporary.

The news is still good, but events are not occurring rapidly enough. The complete capitulation of Italy is most desirable.

We had some delicious apple pie for chow this evening after another "pork chop" meal. I am looking forward to some sweet corn and watermelon soon. Yea man!!!!

---

Item 61  
Page 84  
August 2, 1943

Just returned from chow, which was a birthday party for three of the officers. The meal was composed of chicken, shrimp cocktail, soup, potatoes, asparagus and the trimmings. It was an excellent meal and a very jovial affair. There was a good deal of wit involved in the jesting.

We should be home in about six more days. Everyone is quite happy about the return since wine women and song have been missed extremely during the past eight weeks.

The weather is still wonderful and the barometer indicates it's continuing as such.

Perhaps I may be able to get home for a few days when we reach the states if all goes well. There are a few technical points which may prevent it, but the outlook is bright.

Item 62  
Page 85  
August 3, 1943

Just came off watch. We are headed very nicely for the states and should be in in about 4 1/2 days.

The weather has done an about face and at present is pretty lousy. The barometer is falling continually and should end up giving us a neat storm.

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Item 63  
Page 85  
August 4, 1943

Getting closer to home now. We should be there in about three more days.

The weather has calmed down again to normal. The barometer is high indicating a fair voyage.

Tonite we had steak for chow again topped off with apple pie. Some meal.

I have the mid tonite so I shall endeavor to get a couple of hours sleep.

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Item 65  
Page 86  
August 5, 1943

Slowly but surely we are getting there. Two more days should find us outside New York Harbor.

The weather has mitigated itself again. At the present writing it is very rough with a stiff breeze blowing. And last nite the sea was like glass.

The ships newspaper came out today with a few good articles.

Just came off the 20-24 watch. We are really in a nice storm or rather on the edge of the storm.  
EXCERPT from USS WILKES

5th—We had a very uneventful crossing, except for the usual bad weather.

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Item 65  
Pages 86, 87  
August 6, 1943

The end of the trip is rapidly approaching. We should be in port in about 36 hours from now if all goes well. I am really looking forward to seeing New York again.

We have been having some real tough weather for the past thirty six hours or so. The barometer has hit a new low for the trip, but it now looks as though it will clear off a bit.

A few of the boys have displayed the green color around the gills during this melee and I am very happy to report that my color has been a rosey red—no aches, no pains.

This evening we had another roast beef dinner topped off with pineapple pie. D-e-l-i-c-i-o-u-s.



Item 66  
Pages 87, 88  
August 7, 1943

Twelve more hours and the trip will be over. I am looking forward to spending a quiet???Sunday in New York.

Everyone aboard acts as though we're about to embark on a picnic. The attitude of the ship is certainly different than when we were patrolling off the Sicilian coast. My last watch aboard the ship will be the mid-watch tonite, which also happened to be my first. How well I recall that first miserable watch when death itself would have been a pleasure. I certainly hope my stomach holds up better than it did then. It should as the weather is fine.

We had a steak again for chow this evening. Guess it is a habit.

Item 67  
Page 88  
August 8, 1943

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The trip is now over. We came in early this morning and were able to see the mist rise from New York. The Lady of Liberty was a most pleasant and welcome site as well as the incomparable skyline of Manhattan.

It has been an interesting and adventurous trip. One not soon forgotten.

EXCERPT from USS WILKES

We  
arrived in NY on the 8th, and went right into the Brooklyn Navy Yard. We were there

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