My Life in the Navy: A Memoir

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Chapter Summaries

In **Chapter 1**, Bob talks about growing up in New York and joining the Junior Naval Reserve, (later known as the American Nautical Cadets). He mentions enlisting in the US Navy in 1941 and doing basic training at Newport, R.I., He then talks about serving on the USS Wyoming and the USS Raven.

In **Chapter 2**, Bob talks about his duties on the Raven after the attack on Pearl Harbor, escorting ships as far north as Nova Scotia, and as far south as the Panama Canal.

In **Chapter 3**, Bob describes serving in the VGF-28 Squadron as a mechanic on F4F Wildcat Fighters. He mentions the process of pilots learning to land on aircraft carriers. He also talks about different F4F planes crashing during practice.

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In **Chapter 5,** Bob describes day-to-day operations of maintaining planes during the battle of Guadalcanal and the invasion of the Russell Islands. He discusses repairing damaged aircraft, as well as mishaps that took place with different planes attempting to land on the flight deck.

In **Chapter 6,** Bob discusses traveling back to Pearl Harbor and his experience of crossing the equator for the first time. He describes the ritual that Pollywogs, those who had never crossed the equator, went through. He also discusses the many exercises his unit took part in.

In **Chapter 7,** Bob talks about Operation Dragoon, (the invasion of Southern France), in August 1944.

In **Chapter 8,** Bob discusses taking part in the Invasion of Lingayen Gulf and talks about the kamikaze attacks his task force encountered. He also briefly mentions the Battle of Bataan.

In **Chapter 9,** Bob recounts the Battle of Iwo Jima, as was as the Invasion of Okinawa.

In **Chapter 10,** Bob talks about the surrender of Germany, the end of WWII, and the work he did in the navy before being honorably discharged in 1946.

CHAPTER ONE: ENTERING THE NAVY BEFORE PEARL HARBOR

My parents wanted a boy, but the first four were girls. When that boy finally came, they spoiled him rotten, seemed like I was always in some sort of mischief. I went to Wellington C. Mepham High School in North Bellmore, Long Island, New York and had to walk about five miles to school in all kinds of weather.

Across the street from the school was a watermelon farm, and every so often, we were caught when the farmer came out with his shotgun. Then we moved to Brooklyn. I attended New Utrecht High School, then Brooklyn High School for Specialty Trades.

As I grew up, like most boys, I built a crystal set and model airplane. When a lot of boys joined the Boy Scouts, in 1936 at age 13, I joined the "JR. NAVAL RESERVE." Then in 1938, the name was changed to AMERICAN NAUTICAL CADETS, and I had to travel from Bellmore to the Freeport High School gym on Long Island by bus. Then, on May 10, 1939, I worked my way up to Petty Officer, Aviation Machinist Mate 3/C.

My father decided I needed a trade, so he enrolled me in Delahanty Institute for Machinists. I learned to operate all the different metal working machines, read blue prints, and use instruments to measure 1/10,000th of an inch. It was great. I knew what I wanted to do when I graduated.

Then President Roosevelt decided to build up the armed forces. He put out a call for men to join. So, on January 6, 1941, down I went to enlist. My father had to sign for me, and I was finally called January 14th to report to the recruiting office. They said after three months of boot camp at Newport, Rhode Island, I would be sent to Machinist School in Great Lakes, IL.

I remember, they told me to wear old clothes, and to only take shaving gear and a toothbrush. So, I took an old kitchen towel, sewed the sides together to make a pouch to hold my stuff, and off I went to the recruiting office.

Some of the guys carried suitcases, all sizes, and all I had was my little pouch. Did I misunderstand? We all boarded a Navy bus, they handed me a large envelope, and told me, "YOU WERE IN CHARGE."

We arrived at the Newport, RI, Navy Base boot camp and were greeted by a Chief Petty Officer who lined us up. He read us the riot act, then marched us to where we stood in line naked and were given a physical. Then came the needle and shots in the arm, and next came a nice, fuzzy haircut. I wore old clothes, which they either threw away or donated to the poor.

Next came the supply room, where we all stood without a stitch of clothing on, not even underwear. They guessed our sizes and started to pile onto our outstretched arms uniforms, socks, shoes, underwear, a cap, and a sea bag. We had to fold everything and place it into our sea bag. Then we were issued a hammock, mattress, two mattress covers, a pillow, two pillowcases, and two blankets.

From there, we went to assigned barracks, where we all slept in hammocks. We learned how to secure (tie) our hammock with the mattress, and how to form a U over the sea bag. Then, the carry strap would go over our shoulder and off we go with all our worldly possessions. Everything issued to us had to be stenciled with our name, even the sea bag and hammock.

Boot camp was three months of drilling, rifle practice, KP, and learning about the Navy, with no liberty. The last few weeks were spent on board the USS CONSTELLATION, sister ship to the USS CONSTITUTION (Old Ironsides). She was a wooden hulled sailing ship, with cannons on both sides, where we slept in hammocks and constantly hit our heads on the beams in the low overhead. We lashed our hammocks and stowed them in the gunnels of the ship. The only place you could stand up was between the beams.

From boot camp, we were shipped to different parts of the country. On March 31, 1941, I was sent to Great Lakes Machinist School in Illinois, class "A" Group III, for 16 weeks. It was great there: we learned a lot, and we also were allowed to go on liberty. Even though we were one hour north of Chicago and one hour south of Milwaukee, I went to Waukegan, Jack Benny's hometown.

One day, I had a disagreement with a Chief Petty Officer. I ended up in the brig on bread and water, fined $10, and demoted to Apprentice Seaman. The rule was, if anyone got into trouble, they were automatically sent to sea. I was shipped off to Norfolk, Virginia. The train trip there was by steam locomotive. I was covered with coal dust from the locomotive: it was in my ears, nose, mouth, and even my hair. Don't laugh, I had hair then.

On May 19, 1941, I was transferred to the Battleship USS WYOMING, BB-32, built in 1917 for World War I. The ship was anchored in Norfolk, VA harbor, so we boarded the ship's motor launch at the ferry landing, which took us out to the ship. Here, we climbed the gangway, (steps on the side of the ship with a platform at the bottom and one at the top), and asked the Officer of the deck permission to come aboard. Then we saluted him, turned, and saluted the flag at the stern (back) of the ship.

We had to scrape the old loose paint off and put new paint on, swab the decks (mop), and all the other dirty jobs in undress whites or undress blues, which ever was the uniform of the day.

We slept in the air castle, in hammocks that hung from the overhead (ceiling) and, every night, we would swing ourselves up by holding on to the beams. Then, in the morning at reveille, we had to lash our hammocks, and each lash had to be about one foot apart with all the bedding wrapped neatly inside. This was all done before wash up and chow (breakfast).

Here, we learned about the sea-going Navy and the daily routine. Our showers were on this large, round terracotta floor that sloped to the middle where there was a drain. We were given a bucket of salt water and a bar of salt-water soap. First, we wet ourselves with a little of the salt water, then soaped ourselves all over, and used the rest of the salt water to rinse ourselves off. And we would still feel clammy.

I thought I was given the worst job on the ship, Captain of the Petty Officer's Head (the latrine). To my surprise, the showers were fresh water, and I could take a fresh-water shower every day. This was great. I felt human again. I kept that head spotless; I didn't want to lose this job. My battle station, (General Quarters), was second loader on a 5 in. anti-aircraft gun.

The liberty Launch would take us from the WYOMING, which was anchored out in the bay, to the ferry landing. Each time we passed, we saw a ship tied up to the end of the pier, with 55 painted on the side near the bow. It had a large circle with a hole in the middle, divided into 3 segments and 3 colors, red, white, and blue. It looked like a destroyer, only shorter. On June 4th, 1941, they said, "You were being transferred, pack your gear." I begged them not to transfer me; I didn't want to leave my fresh-water shower, but to no avail.

The next day I was transferred to the USS RAVEN, AM55. This was the ship I saw tied up at the end of the pier, an Auxiliary Minesweeper which also carried depth charges. She was a minesweeper, minelayer, and escort vessel, but also a SUB CHASER, with sonar to locate submarines.

The RAVEN was 220 ft. long, 32 ft. wide, with 105 men. Her speed was 18 knots, with two 3 in. antiaircraft guns and three 50 cal. water cooled machine guns. She also had a rangefinder on top of the wheelhouse, and carried 300 lb. depth charges. That was her total armament.

She was a new ship, commissioned in November 1940, and I came aboard 7 mo. later on June 5th, 1941. We operated out of Norfolk, VA, training, patrolling and trying to protect ships from being sunk by the German U-Boats that sank nearly 400 ships. We lost 5,000 men. We weren't even at war with them yet.

The east coast was lit up like a Christmas tree and the German U-Boats sat off the coast and torpedoed every ship they could see in the daylight. At night, they torpedoed the silhouettes of ships

passing between the sub and the shore. By the time we realized what was happening, many of our ships had been sunk.

The uniform of the day was dungarees. We slept in bunks, not hammocks. We ate on plates, not trays. The food was put in the middle of the table, not slopped onto your tray. The food was brought to us, no waiting in line. Wow, this was like home.

My battle station was the 50 cal., water-cooled machine gun, on the starboard (right) wing of the bridge. The other 50 cal. guns were on the port (left) wing of the bridge, and the third in a round tub between the smokestacks, so this gun could shoot either left or right.

The RAVEN was assigned to escort ships and convoys up and down the east coast, and protect them from German U-BOATS. We covered as far north as Halifax, Nova Scotia, as far south as the Panama Canal, and most of the seaports in between. We got underway from Norfolk, VA, and headed out into the Atlantic.

I became seasick and wanted to die, and hung over the rail, most of the trip. I found a bucket (pail) and put my name on it. It was always near me, at the gun, at the helm, (the steering wheel of the ship). I kept it outside the wheelhouse, tied to the mast. Every once in a while, I would motion to the Officer of the Deck, he grabbed the wheel, and out I'd go to my bucket.

One winter day, the ship sailed up the Hudson River, tied up at an ammunition depot on Iona Island, loaded depth charges and ammo, then sailed down the river and anchored off the 79th street landing, in the middle of the Hudson. Big chunks of ice were floating down the river and hitting against the hull, piling up against the shore and blocking the landing.

Since I was the Coxswain on duty, I had to take the liberty party to the landing in the motor launch. The current was very strong, and I had to go upstream and work my way through the ice towards the shore, as the swift current carried the motor launch down. On the first try, we missed the opening in the pilings by only a few feet, and had to go back upstream and start all over. This time, we made it and I was glad the guys going on liberty didn't throw me overboard.

Standing lookout in the crow's nest was an experience: climbing the mast all the way up to the trap door in the bottom of the crow's nest and climbing inside, closing the trap door and looking out, then through the opening between the tub and the hinged cover.

First, I could see all blue sky, then, all the ocean, as the bow of the ship went up, and then down. Then, looking down, I could see the ship pass under me, first one way then the other. That alone was

enough to make anyone seasick. If the person before me was sick, I would open the top hatch, climb out, and close the hatch and sit on top.

This one morning, we got underway from Norfolk Naval Operating Base (NOB), and lowered the harbor, when I developed a pain in my abdomen. The doc diagnosed it as appendicitis. The ship turned around and headed back to Norfolk. There was an ambulance waiting at the pier, and as they carried me off on a stretcher, I said, "It's all McCarthy's fault."

Needless to say, when I returned from the hospital four days later on November 29, 1941, he wanted to know what I meant by that. It seemed everyone on the ship was kidding him. I explained that it was my way of making light of being carried off the ship on a stretcher.

At gunnery practice, we shot at balloons, and I had the only hits. We practiced all the drills over and over again, until every move became automatic. We learned to lay mines and sweep them, and when the paravane cut the cable, the mine would pop up to the surface. We stood by the rail with rifles, and shot at the mine until it exploded. We also learned how to sweep for magnetic mines.

I like to make things, so first I made monkey fists with lead inside them for heaving lines. Then, I wrapped the stanchions (poles) in the mess hall with a turks head knot, top and bottom, then covered the fenders (bumpers) with canvas. All this kept me very busy.

One day when I had Coxswain duty, I had to take an officer by motor launch, in rough sea, to the Aircraft Carrier LONG ISLAND (CVE-1). She a converted cargo ship, the first of the small aircraft carriers, used to train pilots to land on aircraft carriers. After dropping him at the ship's gangway, I moved a short distance away to wait.

When he started down the gangway and I maneuvered the launch to have him board on my starboard side, a big wave sent the launch and me up into the air. The boat came down and then me, with a marlin spike in my lower lip. I took my position at the tiller and continued to bring the boat alongside. I saw men rushing down the gangway. My face was wet from spray, which turned out to be blood. They stopped the bleeding, so I was able to take the motor launch and my passenger back to the RAVEN.

One morning, we were underway off the coast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, which was called "the graveyard of the Atlantic." It is shallow, and you can see masts and bows of sunken ships sticking out of the water, most of which were sunk by German U-Boats (submarine) sitting off the coast.

I was at the helm (steering), when routine general quarters sounded. This is "all hands man your battle stations." This was done every day at dawn and dusk, because it was the best time for the U-boats

to attack. I turned over the helm to the quartermaster and went outside to my battle station, which was the 50-cal. machine gun on the starboard (right) wing of the bridge. I removed the gun cover and the ammunition loader strapped me in securely, as I trained my gun in the air at a simulated airplane, and then at a make-believe German submarine.

There in my sight was a real torpedo. I could see the propellers spinning as it broke through the trough of the waves. I started shooting when someone tapped me on the shoulder and said, "This is only a drill." But I kept shooting until it exploded. The gunner in the tub between the smoke stacks claimed he got it. But to this day, I think I did.

Our ship turned hard to starboard and, at flank speed, went after the U-Boat. The men were busy setting the depth indicator on the depth charges so they would explode at the proper depth. At the command, a pattern of 4 would roll off the stern: first port, then starboard, until all 4 were dropped.

The depth must have been set too shallow, because the next thing we knew, the stern of the ship rose up out of the water and the rudder jammed hard to port. Now, we were going around in circles with a U-boat out there. With the problem finally under control, the sub long gone, we headed for Norfolk.

Shortly after tying up to the pier, general quarters sounded, "ALL HANDS MAN YOUR BATTLE STATIONS. PEARL HARBOR HAS BEEN BOMBED."

CHAPTER 2: AFTER PEARL HARBOR

The Japs attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941. I said to my buddy, "Someone's going to get in big trouble, doing that for my birthday." Up until that day I had never heard of Pearl Harbor, since all my time in the Navy was on the east coast and in the Atlantic Ocean.

On Dec. 25th, 1941, Chrisman Day, our skipper, LCDR Stryker, was transferred to the Battleship USS NORTH CAROLINA. Our new skipper, LCDR Kirk, came onboard.

On March 5th, 1942, we were moored to dolphins at the degaussing range, when the motor launch picked up the baseball party. They were returning to the ship, when they hit a log and bent the propeller shaft, but they managed to make it back to the ship.

Duty in the North Atlantic in the winter is brutal. Ice forms on the gunnels, and we had to use axes to chop it away. The ocean was so rough. To keep from being washed overboard, we had to tie ourselves to a safety line that was strung fore and aft (from the bow to the stern), and pull ourselves along.

On April 8th, 1942, we were escorting the tanker USS KAWEAH (AO-15), off the coast of New Jersey, heading for Halifax, Nova Scotia, to deliver diesel oil to our ships in Halifax harbor. We were at general quarters when, at 6:30, we sighted a submarine as it was submerging. We turned hard to starboard (right) and, at flank speed, headed for the sub. When we were over the sub, we dropped the pattern of four depth charges.

We thought the U-boat was damaged, but since our sonar did not have any more contact, we headed north to catch up to the tanker we were escorting. I was secured from G.Q. (General Headquarters), and took over my position at the helm.

A few days later, as we neared Nova Scotia, G.Q. was sounded. I took my position on the starboard wing of the bridge and took the cover off my 50-cal. machine gun. I was strapped in and two planes were sighted, which turned out to be Canadian. A short time later, we passed through the submarine gate into Halifax harbor and moored to a buoy.

In the harbor, there were ships of all sizes and shapes, large and small. They seemed to be getting ready to put together a convoy that would be heading for England or Russia. It had been snowing, and by noon, it had turned into a blizzard.

The day before, when the gate was opened to let ships in, a German sub had snuck in, and a Canadian Corvette, (like our destroyers), dropped depth charges and some did not explode. We were told that the same thing happened during WW1: a sub managed to slip into the harbor and torpedoed an ammunition ship. The explosion leveled everything around, except a church had a head blown through a window, without breaking the rest of the glass. The silhouette of the head was replaced with stained glass.

(We found out later that most people believe this, but the true story is that the SS MONT BLANC was entering the harbor loaded with explosives and it collided with the SS IMO leaving, when they collided in the narrows, causing the tremendous explosion at 9 am, December 6, 1917.)

On April 14, 1942, several Canadian Admirals came to inspect our ship. After they left, I had Coxswain duty and took the Canadian Naval Officers ashore. It was a very difficult landing to make. One of the officers complimented me, and the rest of the day, I felt great. When I returned to the ship, the boat was hoisted in and secured for sea.

At 1400, we got underway and steamed out of Halifax, the crew probably leaving a lot of broken hearts behind. At 1600, I took over the helm, setting a course for the Cape Cod Canal. The sea became

very rough, the ship was tossed around like a toy, and most everyone was seasick. That night, we went through the canal astern (behind) our convoy.

A few days later, we steamed into Norfolk, where a barge came alongside with depth charges, to replace those we dropped on the German submarine. To my surprise, I met Duncan and six of the guys from I knew from service school. They were on the Battleship USS NEW YORK, BB-34, built in 1917. Later, we refueled.

On April 19, after lunch, we played a little baseball on the pier, and then made preparations to get underway. At 1300, we moved away from the pier and headed out of the submarine gate to escort the Tanker CHICOPEE, headed for Casco Bay, Portland, Maine.

A few hours later, the port engine broke down, but we continued on our starboard engine, and could only make 12 knots speed. At 1800, General Quarters sounded—submarine—which turned out to be a false alarm. I went back to sleep till midnight to take my turn at the helm, till 2 am in the morning, and went back to sleep exhausted. The next morning, off the coast of New Jersey at 5:30 am, General Quarters till sunrise, then back to sleep, till they woke me up at 10 am, for my turn at the wheel.

The following day we were relieved, and we headed for Philadelphia to pick up the Tanker (oiler) KAWEAH. It was a beautiful day, at 1400 (2 pm) we went through the Cape Cod Canal, this took two hours, the sea is nice and calm. Then we were out in the Atlantic, and once again the starboard engine breaks down, but within the hour it was fixed, and we were on our way again.

On April 22, 1942, at 4 am, general quarters, the Destroyer BROOME, an old 4 stacker built in 1910, had a sub contact, left the convoy, and dropped eight depth charges. We headed out to sea at flank speed to pick up survivors of a torpedoed ship 50 miles away. As we continued to look for the sub, we picked up a contact and dropped a pattern of four depth charges. After it was all over, we saw hundreds of dead fish floating. Finally, at 1600, I took the wheel, and our convoy continued on to Norfolk.

I was relieved at the helm at 1800, ate supper and, at 2030, we tied up to pier #5 Naval Operating Base, Norfolk, VA. I had machine gun watch. The next day, I was asked to go to Sound School and get 23 days leave. I turned them down, and at 11:00 am, we got underway for Charleston, SC.

Off the coast of North Carolina, while at the helm, the alarm was sounded: “All hands, man your battle stations.” At 0615, a torpedo missed our stern, and another missed completely. We picked up a contact on our sonar and we went after him, and dropped our depth charges, but results were doubtful.

The sea was very rough, and we thought that's why the torpedoes broke surface and missed. That night, we entered the harbor and tied up to the oil dock, at the Charleston Navy Yard. It was hot and stuffy in the compartment. I took a cot and my bedding up to the boat deck, and went to sleep.

The next day, we loaded ten depth charges on board, then singled up all lines and got underway, heading for Panama. We were escorting the Tanker CHICOPEE, and a tugboat towing a house on a barge. (We learned later that it was a machine shop.) The sea was calm, and it was hot.

Off the coast of Florida, GQ sounded, and we all scrambled to our battle stations. The Tug Boat CHEROKEE sighted a periscope. This proved to be a false alarm, and we continued on our course to Panama. At midnight, GQ sounded again, and it turned out to be a British Destroyer. We headed back to our convoy and tried to get some sleep.

Throughout the trip, we were on lookout in the crow's nest, eating, sleeping, standing watch at the helm, and were ready to man our battle stations by sleeping in our clothes. We also had many lectures and drills: fire and collision, abandon ship, and learning to put the boat in the water, without power, while underway.

Steering the ship in calm sea was a pleasure, but in rough sea, it became difficult trying to maintain a heading. Off the coast of Mexico, the sea was rough, and it was hard to steer. I was exhausted when my watch ended. The starboard engine broke down, and we were forced to drop back behind our convoy. Shortly after, the port engine stopped, and the convoy disappeared over the horizon. Then, at 11:00 pm, all engines went ahead at 2/3 speed. It was hard for me to maintain a steady course with the swells hitting us from the stern.

The next day started fine, but then, everything happened all at once. The port engine stopped because of water in the fuel, the gyrocompass kicked out, and the steering engine stopped, and I couldn't steer. Within a half hour, the Ocean Fleet Tugboat, CHEROKEE, came back to towed us in. He stood by to see if we were able to repair our problems. About an hour later, we were underway with everything working, and we continued to escort the Tug to Panama.

I was restricted for five days, and I had ten hours of extra duty for leaving my gun station to report the boiler going out. All hands started to paint the ship. We had only finished one side when we had to make preparation to get underway, and secure everything for sea. On this day, we held a field day for Captain's inspection below decks. The following day, we got underway and headed for Key West, escorting the Tug CHEROKEE. It was my turn to take the wheel. The sea was rough, and it was hard to keep a steady course.

On May 11th, 1942, the sea was nice and calm. We sighted a mine floating on the water. We were issued rifles and shot at it until it exploded, then sank. Later, we did abandon ship drills were held, and then I decided to study for Fireman 3/C.

The next day, we steamed into the harbor at NOB, Key West. I went ashore and bought some picture post cards, then prepared the ship for sea. The following day, at 4:30 pm, we steamed out of Key West and headed north to Norfolk, escorting the USS CHEROKEE.

A few days later, it was raining all day, and the sea was rough. During the night, we lost our convoy. At 7:30 the next morning, we finally caught up with it off the coast of South Carolina. Finally, on May 17, I took the wheel and headed through the submarine gate. We then tied up to pier 4 at the Navy Yard in Portsmouth, Virginia.

On May 19th, 1942, we had reveille at 5am, then had a field day for the new Captain, CDR Rucker. I had Coxswain duty and made two boat trips to the ferry landing. The men went on liberty, then I had the gangway watch from 8 till 12. I finally got to sleep after midnight.

The next morning, I took the boat to pick up the men returning from liberty. When I returned to the ship, I heard the good news: Clyde Jennings, as well as ten others and myself, were going to 20mm Gunnery School at Virginia Beach, for four days. It seemed we would be getting the new 20mm anti-aircraft guns installed on our ship.

We were excited about going, and we talked about it long into the night. We didn't get much sleep. But the next day, I found out I wouldn't be going to Gunnery School. I was transferred to the Naval Air Station instead.

CHAPTER 3: MY LIFE IN AVIATION

On May 20th, 1942, the RAVEN was moored to pier #4, Norfolk Navy Yard, Portsmouth, Va. Reveille sounded at 7:00 am. I washed up and, after breakfast, we started to unload the stores. At 10:00, I was told to pack my gear: I was being transferred to the Naval Air Station for shore duty.

Jones, Goergen, and myself, loaded our gear and ourselves into the boat, and Jennings took us to the ferry landing, where we climbed up on the back of a truck and headed for the air station. Here, we were put in Fighter Aircraft Squadron VGF-28. We moved our gear into Building U-20, where I was given a locker, about four times larger than the one on the RAVEN.

The next morning, we went to Hangar #4, where we were to report every day. Here, we learned how to take a propeller off a plane. At 5:00 pm, I quit work and went back to the dormitory, where I straightened out my locker and went to sleep.

On May 22nd, I went to the hangar and pushed all the planes out of the hangar onto the line, to be warmed up. I was put in the engineer force, striking for Aviation Mechanic. The inspection party arrived to inspect the hangar, and they were very pleased. At 5:30 pm, we quit work and went back to the barracks, and ate dinner. I wrote a few letters and went to sleep.

The next day, I went to the hangar and learned how to trouble-shoot and repair the airplane engines. At 5:30, I went to the barracks, ate, and took my blankets back to the hangar. I had guard duty at the hangar doors, with a loaded gun, from midnight till 4 am, in the morning.

The next day, Sunday, I went back to the barracks and tried to learn all I could about repairing airplanes from all the manuals available. The next day, we learned how to start the engine of an airplane, then we had an air raid drill, and all the available planes took off to intercept the enemy.

For the next few months, we learned something new every day and it was exciting. There was even a woman mechanic working on the planes. There were thousands of parts on the airplanes. We had to learn to check everything and fix, repair, or replace whatever was needed to keep the airplanes flying

The pilots had to learn about the airplane, the weather, navigation, and more before learning to fly. They had to learn how to fly with an instructor, how to fight, how to fly visually, then to fly using instruments. They also had to learn night flying. Then they had to learn how to land on a runway marked out as an aircraft carrier, with a landing signal officer showing them if they were too high, too low, too fast, or to slow to land on the simulated carrier. Then, the pilots were ready to try to land on a moving, bobbing aircraft carrier.

COMMISSIONING CEREMONY

On May 30th, 1942, we dressed up for Captain's Inspection by Lt. Commander Tom Blackburn, and then the Commissioning Ceremony was held. Now VGF-28 was officially a Squadron of Grumman F4F Wildcat fighter airplanes. At the time, the Wildcats were the US Navy's top fighter. I was told I was made Third Mechanic

June 4th, we received 5 new F4F Wildcat fighters. We gave them all a 130-hour check. After dinner, I headed back to the hangar, woke up at 4 am, and then took my station directing traffic at East Field. I was relieved at seven o'clock the next morning and headed for the barracks for breakfast. At the hangar, we removed the fuel and oil pumps from the planes, then cleaned and remounted them. We then checked the valves and the compression on pistons #1, 10, 5, 14, 9, 4, and 13.

The next day, we put #8 in commission and started on #9. "ABATU" was an aircraft training unit at the base. We learned to remove the engines on 2 planes and install new ones. Wow, what a big job! We were learning new things every day.

On June 7th, 1942, I helped take all the radios out of our planes, load them on a truck, and brought them to squadron 9. It was my first time driving a 10-wheeler truck, and it felt good. When I returned, I found out I had been promoted to Aviation Machinist Mate 3/C, a Petty Officer, WOW!

The next 3 days worked, I worked on installing a new engine on #6.

A few days later, Lt. Cordell made a darn good landing with a buckled landing gear. At that point, we had five planes out of commission. The next day, Lt. Gibson crashed through a fence, hitting a truck and dragging it clear across the highway, as well as a railroad crossing. He walked away, but the plane went to the graveyard to be salvaged.

On June 14, Red and I went to Ocean View Beach for a swim. This was our first time on liberty in 7 months. A few days later, the air raid siren sounded. I ran to the hangar to get the planes onto the runway. The blackout continued all night, and I never found out if it was a test or the real thing.

By the 20th, I still hadn't been paid, so I went to U-20, then N.O.B., Small Craft Disbursing Office, back to U-20, then the administration building, and then the chaplain in U-16, and finally back to U-20. I was finally paid $25. So on the 23rd, put in my leave request. I scraped together all my pennies and packed to head home.

Starting my 14-day leave on June 25, 1942, I climbed aboard a Douglas DC3 Navy twin-engine transport plane. (It had a small wheel holding up the back of the plane and was called a tail wheel, not like today's planes that have a nose wheel.) Soon, we were on our way to Floyd Bennet Air Field, on Jamaica Bay, and it also accommodated seaplanes, in Brooklyn, New York. The plane made stops in Washington, Philadelphia, and finally New York. Then, a Navy bus took us to the IRT subway.

It was great to be home. My parents and sisters couldn't do enough to make me feel more, welcome, and tell me how much they missed me. Later, I met with everyone I knew: friends, aunts, uncles, and cousins. I had pictures taken with everyone in my dress blue uniform. I felt like a celebrity.

The next thing I knew, it was time to go back to work. I went to my aunt's house in Brooklyn to say "goodbye," then returned to Floyd Bennet for my 1:35 flight to the Norfolk Naval Air Station.

The following day, I gave plane #2 a complete, major overhaul. After work, I went down to see the RAVEN at pier 3. It was a good feeling to see the ship and all the guys. There were some new faces; I guess they were our replacements. The next day, I continued working on plane #2.

During this time, our planes were practicing landing on the carrier USS CHARGER, in the Chesapeake Bay, when plane No.4 jumped the carrier deck and sank. Also, 3, 6, and 8, cracked up on the carrier deck.

On July 12th, our whole squadron moved to Monogram Field. We woke up at 6 am and carried our sea bags out to the truck that would take our gear to the hangar. Then, Camerdese and I got on the truck that took us to Monogram Field in Suffolk, VA. We moved in and got settled. The area used to be a grass field, or maybe a cornfield. Worked on setting up a storeroom all day and installed a fan in the office.

Our F4F fighters would practice carrier landings there, over and over, before attempting to land on an actual aircraft carrier again.

A few days later, when a plane went down in the woods, I drove the fire truck—which sounded like we were speeding to the crash site, with the siren loud and clear, though we were only going 35 mph —because there was a governor on the plane. But the pilot was okay.

We were all helping to build a hangar to work inside on the planes, to be out of the sun and the rain. We were doing a great job.

The routine at Monogram was the same as East Field in Norfolk: repairing planes, standing on guard duty, cleaning up the hangar, inspections, setting up a store room and organizing it, packing away spare parts, eating and sleeping, and watching the pilots get better at obeying the Landing Signal Officer's hand signals.

July 15th, I put a wheel on #7 and gave it a 60-hour check. We also lined the runway with flowers so the pilots could practice simulated night carrier landings. The following day, I installed a new battery and tail wheel on two of Fighting Squadron's planes. We had an air raid drill, then I spent the rest of the day stocking the storeroom.

A few days later, I was paid $30. I went to Norfolk and bought my father a $25 War Bond, then went to the canteen. It was very hot, and we hadn't gotten rain for weeks. But that night, around 9:30 pm, it started to rain. Night flying was suspended.

By this time, everyone is pitching in to help to build the hangar, and the pilots were still practicing carrier landing in the field all day.

* * * * *

One day, I was invited to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Culpepper for dinner. He was the "Sheriff of Suffolk," and had a great family. As a sailor, some of the words I used were very colorful. I slipped during up dinner, and even though I tried to cover it up, it was out there. My face turned red. After dinner, their daughter asked her father if she could drive me back to the base and use the siren. After that, I never used any off-color words again.

On August 1st, 1942, I had the day off and went swimming at the Culpepper's pool. It was a great day. By the next day, we had almost finished building the hangar. Camerdice took me to Culpeper's pool. We had supper, then Jean drove me back to the camp in her father's car.

On August 3rd, three planes crash-landed at the same time. First, Lt. Cordell was taken to the hospital, after making a forced landing and crashing into an embankment. Then, Lt. Kirchberg was in such a hurry to land after seeing Cordell crack up, he didn't lower his landing gear and he "cracked up." Meanwhile, Lt. Bailey blew a tail wheel tire during his landing. Wow, what a day.

The next day, payday, I got $50. Our planes went up for gunnery practice, but the target would not release. Later, St. Arnold brought Sully Culpepper, the sheriff's son, out to the field.

On the 5th, flying was cancelled, because of the rain. So, George went to see Sully in Suffolk, and I worked on my rug. A few days later, we learned what to do in the event of a crash. I drove the fire truck, and the men carried the hose to the crash site, along with the tools needed to get the pilot out of the cockpit.

On August 8th, I was attached to ordinance. We cleaned the guns on all the planes, then someone fired the Chief's 22 cal. Pistol. So, we all got restricted, meaning no liberty. The following day, someone tore up the field with a tractor. That meant we were really in trouble.

The next day, I packed target cans and heard that the pilots did well at gunnery practice. Then, I helped move the storeroom to a new location. That night, we had night flying, and my job was driving the fire truck. Later, I did some work on my ring.

On August 23rd, the crew played the officers in a game of softball. We won, 21 to 1. The following day, all the planes took off for Philadelphia: ten fighters and two SNJ-3s, (which is a two-seat trainer). Later, five fighters and two SNJ's came back.

The next day, the rest of the planes returned, as well as a TBF9 torpedo bomber, from scouting. It landed in the mud, north of the field, and we worked all night to get it out. The following day, we received some new men, (boots), straight from Navy Pier, Chicago.

On Friday, August 28th, Camerdice and I pulled a 120-hr. check on #5, then cleaned up and headed for Suffolk. But I got there too late for the movie, so I came back on the liberty truck.

On September 3rd, I pulled a 90-hour check on #1, the skipper's plane, and fixed the hydraulic system in the landing flaps. Also, a Douglas DC3 transport plane landed today, carrying several Admirals from Washington D.C. to look over our facilities. The next day, I received cookies from my mom.

The next day, I pulled a 180-hr. check and used experimental spark plugs. Then, I cleaned up and went into town. The next morning afternoon, we went to a baseball game: Naval Air Station against Suffolk. We won 4 to 0—it was great.

On Sept. 6th, we heard that a Jap sub torpedoed a US tanker off the Oregon coast. The next day, Friday, I received another box of cookies from mom.

On Sept. 8th, I pulled a 60-hr. check on #8. I was recommended to be promoted to AMM 2/c (Aviation Machinist Mate), but I didn't have enough time in. On Sept 9th, I went into Dismal Swamp to

salvage parts from #4, which crashed the previous day, and ended up with a bad sunburn. On the way back, we stopper at Culpepper's and had a nice, cool drink.

The following day, Mrs. Culpepper came out to the base to invite five of the boys and myself to a weenie roast. The day after that, we went to a party at the Culpeppers, swimming party and dancing. We all had a great time.

CHAPTER 4: SERVING ON DIFFERENT AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

A few days later, half of the crew went on board the Aircraft Carrier RANGER for five days. Harold and myself were the only engineers left. We serviced tail hooks and changed the tail wheels from soft too hard for the carrier landing. Then after work, we went to the Norfolk USO to go roller-skating.

The following day, nine planes took off from the RANGER. One returned, because he had no air speed indicator. We cleaned out the pitot tube, where the air goes in, and the rest of the planes returned before dusk. A few days later, a plane from Scouting 41 crashed on the field, then another plane crashed in the Nansemond River, both due to selector valve failure.

On September 19th, 1942, we had a personnel, locker, and material inspection. I had the best and neatest locker in the camp! The next day, the men returned from the RANGER. We then had 12 planes, a full squadron. Our planes went to the Naval Air Station to have the new radar equipment installed.

The next day, we started to strip the life rafts, fire bottles, and temperature gages on all the planes. Then, we continued to remove them from the remaining planes. The metal smiths and helpers worked until 3 am installing new brackets for the oxygen bottles. Me and some others worked until 4:30 am installing a new selector valve on plane #10.

On Sept. 25th, plane #12 crashed on takeoff. Later that day, I packed my gear and went aboard the aircraft carrier CHARGER (CVE-30). We went out into the Chesapeake Bay to qualify pilots of the VGF-28 and VGS-30, in taking off and landing on an aircraft carrier.

Tavonatti, one of the pilots, didn't put his tail hook down and crashed through the barrier. The plane went up on its nose and over on its back, pinned him down in the cockpit. We were able to get him out in a few minutes, and he survived. His plane was sent down to the hangar deck, and soon after, we resumed flight operations.

It was cold and raining during that time. We anchored near the USS HANNIBAL at the degaussing range.

A few days later, we arrived back at Monogram Field. One of the men threatened to kill all the officers; they gave him a General Court Martial. After our training and several mishaps at Monogram Field, we headed back to the Naval Air Station at Norfolk.

Sept. 30th, seventy of us headed back on the Aircraft Carrier CHARGER. She was moored on the north side of pier 5, at the Norfolk Navy Yard. I helped load all of the squadron's stuff and store it

below in the hold. Then on October 1st, 1942, we managed to get all 30 planes on board; meanwhile, the ship's company had been loading stores on board all day. The following day, we hoisted a new plane on board; in doing so, the steadying line broke and bent the propeller.

Oct 3rd, we cast off with the help of tugboats and steamed out through the submarine gate. In company with the RANGER were four destroyers that formed Task Group 22.1.(170), heading south on a zigzag course to Bermuda

Oct. 4th, the ocean was very rough, and everyone was sea sick except me. The RANGER had planes in the air every day, on the lookout for submarines. As the first plane tried to take off, the pilot gave full throttle and reached the end of the flight deck, when the bow was at its lowest, and he flew straight into the ocean. So, he was picked up by the destroyer.

Next, they tried to time it so the plane would reach the end of the flight deck, when the bow would be at its highest. The flight deck officer gave the signal. The pilot gave full throttle and powered down the deck, reaching the end of the flight deck, just as the bow was up. It worked this time, and the plane was up and away. We all cheered. The rest of the planes were able to take off without incident.

Now it was time to land the aircraft back on the bobbing deck. The landing signal officer would give the cut signal to the pilot, when the plane was in the right position and right height. The first plane looked perfect and was given the signal to cut his power back to land. The stern of the carrier dropped and the height to land was no longer 2 or 3 feet, but 10 to 15 feet. You know what happened to the landing gear of the F4F? It collapsed. The rest of the planes still in the air were sent on ahead to land in Bermuda, and all air operations secured for the rest of the trip.

Oct. 6th, the planes of Fighting Squadron 27 took off to land at the Bermuda Air Station. A short time later, we anchored in Grassy Bay, Bermuda. Two days later, we got underway and headed for the flight area, where we met the 4 destroyers. We held flight operations, then conducted gunnery practice,

At 11 am the next day, we got underway and headed for the range for gunnery practice at sleeves We held flight operations the next day, and then had antiaircraft gun practice, and later anchored off St. George, Bermuda, where I went on liberty and bought some post cards.

By Oct. 11th, everything was ready to go on board the Aircraft Carrier SUWANNEE, as soon as it came in. We had a swimming beer party and had a great time.

<u>USS SUWANNEE: Commissioned Sept 24, 1942, with Captain Joseph J. Clark</u>

On Oct. 19th, we heard that the SUWANNEE was anchored in the harbor. We loaded all the gear onto waiting trucks and headed for the docks, where we managed to move all squadron and personal gear on board the tugboat MARY ANN. Then, we headed out into the harbor to go on board the SUWANNEE.

As we started loading our baggage on the carrier, Hess's baggage fell into the water. He couldn't swim, but he started to go after it, so I dove in too. The current took it a long way, but I was able to get it back. (I found out later that the water there was infested with sharks and barracuda.

The next morning, the catapult accidentally shot a plane off, killing 4 men and crippling two others. We ceased operations and headed full speed back to port. The destroyers stayed behind to pick up whatever they could. The bodies and wounded were taken to the hospital ashore. The next morning, we were underway.

We were in company with the Aircraft Carriers, RANGER, SANTEE, SANGAMON, and the SUWANNEE. We also went underway with the Cruiser CLEVELAND, as well as 10 destroyers: the CORY, ELLYSON, EMMONS, FORREST, HAMBLETON, HOBSON, MACOMB, and RODMAN. This included two old Navy destroyers—four stackers built in 1919.

FRENCH WEST AFRICA INVASION, CODE NAME: OPERATION TORCH
Attached to the Center Attach Group, objective Casablanca via Fedhala

Oct. 25th, 1942, the whole task force was underway, heading out to sea. It looked as though we were headed to Africa to start a second front. Our task force had 18 ships. Our group would join up with Task Force 34. The destroyer FITCH was one of our escorts.

We were Task Group 34.2 aircraft carrier group with the RANGER, SANGAMON, SANTEE and the SUWANNEE, along with the Cruiser CLEVELAND, and our ten destroyers that would protect us from enemy U-boats that roamed the Atlantic Ocean in wolf packs.

Oct. 28th, we joined up with the rest of the convoy Task Force 34 and took our position behind the main force, with ships as far as the eye could see in all directions. Since we had radio silence, all messages were sent by flag hoists, which were going on fast and furious during the day. And the blinker light was used to send Morse code messages at night.

Then, on October 30th, one of the SANTEE's bombers dropped its depth charge on the flight deck, as it was catapulted and rolled off the ship into the sea and exploded. That shook the whole ship, causing some damage, but she managed to continue with the rest of convoy.

At this point, our bombers were in the air, constantly on the lookout for enemy submarines. Then, on Nov. 2nd, there were sub contacts and depth charges were dropped, but we had no way of knowing what happened.

Our aircraft would maintain patrols from dawn till dusk ahead and on both sides of the task force. A destroyer would drop back behind the convoy to make sure no enemy subs were following us on the surface, and our planes kept searching for any sight of enemy submarines.

On Nov. 4th, around one o'clock in the morning, the wind began to pick up and the waves were getting bigger. Then, by 10 pm, it was so bad that one of the ships had to drop out of formation. By midnight of the 6th, and morning of the 7th, the wind and sea was a little quieter. A ship was spotted, and the Destroyer TAYLOR sent a boarding party to make sure the Spanish Merchant ship—the SS DARRO, a neutral ship—didn't radio our position and alert the German U- boats.

On November 7th, the southern attack group with the Aircraft Carrier SANTEE, Battleship NEW YORK, Cruiser PHILADELPHIA, several Destroyers, Transports and a Minesweeper, left the convoy and headed for their invasion position off the coast of Safi, French Morocco. All of Task Force 34 was comprised of 102 ships that left from ports up and down the east coast and joined up with us after we left Bermuda. We refueled twice at sea, and once off the Moroccan coast in rough weather.

In our convoy of troop and cargo ships, there were 35,000 U.S. Army troops and 250 tanks commanded by Major General George Patton. We headed for the coast of Casablanca, Morocco, and we heard the British had 250 ships into the Mediterranean Sea, with American and British troops. We were told the British troops had to wear American flags on their uniforms.

Most of us were a little apprehensive. It was our first combat operation, and we had all heard of the German U- Boats and the wolf packs, roaming the Atlantic and sinking everything in sight. Our bombers were in the air constantly on the lookout for the submarines. I heard that some of the carriers sent out fighter patrols as we approached the coast to scout for enemy aircraft.

Then, we heard that General Patton made the remark, before the convoy left Norfolk, "Never in history had the Navy landed an army at the planned time and place, but if you land us anywhere within fifty miles of Fedhala and within one week, I'll go ahead and win." With our ships in the Mediterranean Sea, a German aerial torpedo hits the transport THOMAS STONE (AP-59), and her Army troops made it to shore 150 miles away with the help of a British Corvette.

OPERATION TORCH BEGINS

On Nov. 8th, 1942, we arrived off the coast of Morocco under cover of darkness. 70,000 British and American troops landed at 4 am. The Troop Transport THOMAS JEFFERSON had her boats in the water at 2 am and lost 16 of her 33 boats, because they were damaged on a rocky beach, three miles away from where they were supposed to come ashore. The LEONARD WOOD lost 21 of their 32 landing craft, because they were wrecked. And later, 8 were wrecked in the heavy surf

The USS LEEDSTOWN entered the Mediterranean with the British war ships in a convoy of 37 transports. Shortly after landed her British and American troops with her 24 landing craft during the night off Algiers, they were attacked by 13 German Ju88 Torpedo Bombers. One torpedo struck the ship, destroying her steering gear. Then, two enemy planes bombed her, and a German submarine sank her with two torpedoes. There were 500 survivors, but 8 were lost.

The British had 7 aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean, and we had 109 F4F Wildcat Fighters on our 4 Aircraft Carriers. We stayed in the Atlantic Ocean with all the German U-boats off Casablanca. Our Battleships and Cruisers were there to knockout the shore batteries, and French war ships if needed. We didn't know if the French would resist, so our ships were told not to fire unless they fired at us first.

At 4:20 am, the Vichy French ordered submarines to patrol off Casablanca. The cruisers catapulted their planes into the air to scout, and to direct fire from the big guns of the battleships and cruisers, if needed. French fighters attacked the scout planes, so the order to fire was given at 6:23 am. Shortly after, the French coastal batteries opened fire. The Destroyer MURPHY, giving fire support off Point Bloindin, was hit, damaging the engine room, killing 3 men and injuring 25.

While the Cruiser BROOKLYN was bombarding the shore instillation covering the troop landing, she was hit by a dud, from a shore battery, which damaged two of her guns and wounded 5 of her crew. The destroyer LUDLOW was damaged by a shore battery.

The Battleship MASSACHUSETTS silenced the guns from the French battleship Jean Bart, sank 2 French destroyers, and blew up an ammunition dump. It was hit twice with slight damage. Several enemy torpedoes narrowly missed the Cruiser TUSCALOOSA

The Heavy Cruiser WICHITA came within range of the French shore batteries. The Vichy gunners scored a direct hit, which exploded in a living compartment, injuring 14 men, and the fires were extinguished. Torpedoes from a French sub made the WICHITA take evasive action, and 3 torpedoes missed. She later attacked French ships trying to leave Casablanca harbor.

Our invasion forces landed at 4 am on the beaches of French Morocco. A sub fired a torpedo at us and missed. Before sunup we were 35 miles off the coast of Port Lyautey, Morocco. We launched our first flight of fighters and bombers at 6 am. We would be covering the landing of Army troops near Casablanca, and would be the lookout for enemy aircraft. By dawn, 3,500 troops had already landed.

The French shore batteries opened fire, and two of our destroyers and a minesweeper were damaged. The TBF's, (torpedo bombers), which could carry 2 torpedoes or four 1000 lb. bombs, took off on bombing missions, and continued on throughout the day.

The RANGER lost 13 planes: 9 crashed into the sea. The French lost 52 planes on the first day. The Destroyer MACOMB rescued three pilots from a carrier, as well as a survivor of a British plane that was shot down by mistake.

On Nov. 9th, we were at our general quarters stations all day long, and there were flight operations from dawn to dusk. Submarine contacts were all around. The ELLYSON dropped 4 depth charges, and the CORRY dropped 12. The RANGER lost 3 planes. The French lost 22 fighters and 5 bombers.

The RANGER launched 3 Army L-4 Piper Cubs for observation, and our ships fired at them, not knowing they were ours. Luckily, none of the planes were hit. French shore batteries also fired on them as they flew over the beach. Army observation plane was hit, but he was able to sideslip his plane to the ground and drag himself away, just before it exploded.

On Nov. 10th, a submarine fired 4 torpedoes at us and missed. The destroyers ELLISON and HOBSON went after the sub, dropped their depth charges, and the sub was presumed sunk. The Cruiser CLEVELAND moved to another location, and the Cruiser BROOKLYN joined us.

The French Battleship JEAN BART, while still tied up to the pier in Casablanca harbor, fired her 16-inch guns at our ships. The RANGER sent 7 dive-bombers with 1000 lb. bombs and scored 4 direct hits. The Battleship MASSACHUSETTS also sent a 16 inch shell into her, jamming the only working turret. There was no more gunfire heard from the French battleship.

For the 3 days of operations, our Aircraft Carrier SUWANNEE sent up 255 sorties; later, we found out that we lost 3 planes in combat, and 2 had mechanical problems. In three days, the Navy Wildcats destroyed 26 and 5 probable enemy planes. In the evening of the 11th, the Destroyer HAMBLETON anchored near by the Tanker WINOOSKI off Fedala, and was struck amidships by a German U-boat torpedo. She was towed to Casablanca, where the Seabees, a (Navy Construction Battalion) cut out the damaged 40-foot section, then joined the two halves together.

On the 11th, a U-boat sank the Joseph HEWES. On the evening of Nov. 12th, a German sub slipped in among the ships and fired 5 torpedoes at three transports. All torpedoes hit their mark: all three transports burst into flames and were abandoned. The transport RUTLEDGE sank and lost 15 men, SCOTT sank and lost 51 men, and BLISS burned until 2:30 the next morning, then sank.

The Transport JEFFERSON'S boats rescued survivors of the torpedoed Transport HEWES, which went down with 100 men and their Captain. The following day, the JEFFERSON picked up survivors of the transports SCOTT, RUTLEDGE and BLISS. Later the same day, our planes reported sinking a German sub, which we later found out to be French.

The Aircraft Carrier CHENANGO had transported 78 Army P-40 fighter airplanes of the 33rd fighter Group. When the air field was secured by the army, the planes would be catapulted and fly off her flight deck to land at the captured airfield, with a bomb-damaged landing field

On Nov. 15th, the cargo ship ELECTRA was torpedoed with wounded soldiers on board. The destroyer COLE succeeded in removing crew and passengers, except for the men working on damage control. On the 16th, our destroyers sink a German U-Boat.

The first Army plane was catapulted, and he went to see if the planes were able to land at the field. He tried to avoid the bomb craters made by our planes to keep the French planes from taking off. He damaged his plane when trying to land and tried to get word back to the ship to hold the flight, but it was too late. All the planes were already in the air. Since they couldn't return to the carrier, they had to try to miss the holes in the damaged runway. Many were damaged when they tried to land.

A few days later, on the 17th, my Aircraft Carrier, the SUWANNEE, left the area and was joined at sea by her sister ship the SANTEE, as well as the rest of her group, headed for Norfolk with a stop at Bermuda. We departed Bermuda Nov. 22nd. On the way home, we hit very rough weather, and the waves were coming over the 820 ft. high on the flight deck. I think it was a hurricane.

Little had been written about the Navy aircraft Grumman Wildcat F4F fighter during the invasion of North Africa. Most of the Navy pilots expressed mixed feelings about flying against the French. For 3 days, they battled the French 'Escadrille Lafayette, which we trained with during WW1.

* * * * *

On Nov. 29th, after returning to Norfolk, I was given 4 days leave and went home to a wonderful greeting. On Dec. 4th, I returned to Norfolk and went back to work on my plane. The next day, I was paid $28.00, and we stopped work at noon.

On Dec. 7th, my birthday, we had a squadron dance at the Pythin's Castle with beer and sandwiches. We got back to base at 2 am.

The next day, I went to the dispensary to find out what was wrong with my foot. They put me in the surgical ward with a fever in my left leg. The infection in my leg kept getting worse, and it began to show on my other leg. After six days of lying on my back going crazy, I was better and ready to get out of there.

On Dec. 14th, I was discharged from the hospital and met up John Reynolds from Bellmore, my hometown. We talked over old times together—it was a nice visit. Then, I packed all my stuff, ready to go on board the Aircraft Carrier CHENANGO.

On Dec.16, 1942, the fighter squadron VGF-28 and crew, (including me), were transferred to the Aircraft Carrier, CHENANGO, after she was repaired from damage caused by the hurricane she encountered on the return from the invasion of French West Africa.

A little background on the CHENANGO: The United States desperately needed aircraft carriers. Of the 7 carriers in the Pacific, five were sunk: the LANGLEY, LEXINGTON, YORKTOWN, WASP and HORNET. The SARATOGA was also badly damaged on Aug 31st, 1942, at Salvo Island, and needed to be repaired. The ENTERPRISE was the only US carrier still able to fight against the Japanese Navy.

The Navy decided to take 4 oil tankers and convert them into aircraft carriers. They were named after rivers: SANGAMON, SUWANNEE, CHENANGO and SANTEE. The 4 of them were busy. They were involved in the invasion of French West Africa, along with the Aircraft Carrier RANGER, from Sept 30th, 1942 to Dec 16th. When Admiral Nimitz heard of the great job we did at the invasion, he said "I want those 4 converted tankers here in the pacific NOW!"

* * * * *

On Dec. 17th, 1942, we headed out the submarine gate with several transports: the USS CLYMER attack transport, with 1300 Seabees, the cargo ship ARUNDEL, the transport JOHN PENN, and 3 light cruisers: MONTPELIER, COLUMBIA and CLEVELAND. Also, several destroyers—14 ships in all—designated as Task Force-13.

Dec. 21st was our fourth day at sea. The water was calm and the sun very hot. Who would have thought! A few days ago, it was snowing. As an SBD, (Douglas dive bomber), was coming in for a landing that morning, it crashed into the sea off the port side of the ship and sank in about five minutes. The pilot and gunner got out safely, and a destroyer picked them up. Later, as we were landing aircraft, a TBF (torpedo bomber) crashed on the deck, when their tire blew out. Luckily, no one was hurt.

On Dec. 23rd, a pilot was killed today when his engine conked out. Memorial services were held for him on the flight deck. The next day, another plane crashed while coming in for a landing at Coca Sola. The pilot was taken to the hospital with serious injuries.

Early Christmas morning, we arrived at the Panama Canal. Our Christmas dinner had everything that night, from turkey to pie alamode, and of course cranberry sauce—it was delicious. Later, we approached Balboa Heights, on the Pacific side. Tugboats helped move us to the dock, where we tied up, and I went to sleep content.

CHAPTER 5: THE PACIFIC OCEAN AND GUADALCANAL

The next day, at Balboa we took on our capacity of fuel, then CHENANGO proceeded out into the Pacific Ocean, escorted by two torpedo boats. They zigzagged back and forth at full speed, as if they were putting on a show for the crew. In a short time, flight quarters was sounded and we turned into the wind to land all our planes returning from the canal Army base.

After all our planes were on board, we joined our convoy. Task Force 13, a convoy of 10 ships including the Cruisers COLUMBIA, MONTPELIER and CLEVELAND, along with the torpedo boats, returned to their base, and we began our 27,000-mile cruise to the hot spot of the South Pacific: GUADALCANAL.

It had been 10 days since we left Norfolk. The ocean was calm and the sun very hot. I heard we were going to New Caledonia, which was eight thousand miles away from Panama. It would take about 28 days to get there. The Chief Master at Arms put me on report for not being in the uniform of the day, woe is me.

After the hot weather, it began to rain, and we had rain all day. All flight operations were canceled, so the crew and I started to piece together the puzzle I got for Christmas; it was really difficult. By that point, I hadn't heard anything about my being on report. I hoped he forgot all about it.

The next day, we held flight operations. Lt. Phylier and Lt. MacClutchen buzzed the ship several times and came very close. The two pilots that buzzed the ship were grounded for two weeks.

A few army bombers circled the convoy and continued on their way. One of our destroyers had a contact on their sound gear and went after the sub. They made several runs on it. We wanted to launch bombers, but they weren't loaded with depth charges.

We crossed the equator today; those of us that had never crossed were called pollywogs.
On Dec. 31st, 1942, I started the Second Petty Officer course for Aviation Machinist Mate (AMM2c). Later, we refueled three destroyers and gave their crews ice cream and bread.

The next day, the cruiser catapulted one of their seaplanes to scout ahead of the convoy, but it crashed into the sea, and its depth charges exploded and killed both the pilot and the gunner. The cruiser stayed behind looking for their men, then later, caught up with us.

I completed the first 7 assignments for Aviation Machinist Mate 2/c and handed them in to Mr. Kirchburg, the Educational Officer. He gave me the remaining 9 assignments, and I went to work on them.

Jan. 4th, 1943, the sea was calm and the sun was hot, but there was a nice, cool breeze. It was eighteen days ago that we steamed out of Norfolk. The gunners got in a lot of practice shooting at sleeves towed by our planes, and they keep getting better every day.

An SBD, (this is a dive bomber with a gunner facing the rear of the plane,) was out on gunnery practice and came in for an emergency landing with holes in every blade of his propeller; the guns were not synchronized correctly.

I continued to enjoy my classes and found them to be interesting. At this point, scout patrols had been going out all day. Before dusk, we tied everything down securely for an expected hurricane. The weather looked awful with a lot of raining, but luckily, the hurricane missed our convoy. We passed very close to Tahiti. We couldn't see it, it was close by.

Later when the weather cleared, we sent out our scouts to locate the enemy convoy. As they returned from their search and started to circle for a landing, the engine conked out on one of the dive bombers and they crash landed into the sea. The pilot and gunner were both picked up by our escorting destroyer.

Jan 10th, 1943 was a beautiful day. My clothes returned back from the laundry only missing one sock—not bad at all. It had been 26 days since we left the states, and still no attempts have been made to stop our convoy.

A few days later, we crossed the 180th meridian. Slightly after dusk, we broke down, and the engines stopped dead. We were in very dangerous waters, so all hands manned their battle stations. Water was found in the fuel oil. After about an hour, we were underway again.

By Jan. 15th, we were almost at our destination. Then, towards evening, our steering apparatus broke down and we just went around in circles. The following day, the steering from the bridge was still out of order, but we were able to steer from the after-engine steering room. Towards noon, we sighted New Caledonia and, after dodging reefs and shoals, finally reached Noumea harbor.

Noumea is the capital of New Caledonia, and this is where we dropped anchor. We were told that our ship had joined the escort carrier group that would provide air cover for supply convoys

supporting the occupation of the Solomon Islands. There were many ships there, including the Aircraft Carrier SARATOGA, sister to the LEXINGTON.

Now, the Navy had 5 carriers to fight the Japs: SARATOGA, ENTERPRISE and 3 converted tankers, CHENANGO, SUWANNEE and SANGAMON. It was all the aircraft carriers we had at the time to face the whole Japanese Navy.

At anchor in New Caledonia, our boat ran aground on the way to the beach, so we went swimming sooner than expected. Just as I climbed back into the boat, I saw one of the guys start to go under. I dove in and was able to get him to the boat. He wanted to pay me for saving his life, but I couldn't accept it. That night, I fell asleep happy knowing that I had saved someone from drowning.

On Jan 24, we were underway from Noumea harbor, New Caledonia, with two Destroyers and two Cruisers, headed for the Solomon Islands. The crew was in high spirits, knowing we were now headed for some action.

The next day, towards evening, we proceeded into Havannah harbor, where there were many other ships. We dropped anchor near the Aircraft Carrier SUWANNEE, and astern of the Cruiser WICHITA. Here, we joined Carrier Division 22, SANGAMON, SUWANNEE, with Rear Admiral Ragsdale, operating with the Battleships COLORADO and MARYLAND, the Destroyer TAYLOR, and several other destroyers. I was part of the first carrier division ever formed.

The Doctor took x-ray of my left thumb, and he thinks it is broken. I made the mistake of trying to keep two planes from getting damaged, by putting my hand in between. Now I have an aluminum splint on my thumb. The Taylor Cub, a two-seat airplane, was assembled and painted Navy blue, then later took off from the flight deck while we were at anchor.

On Jan. 27th, we were underway, steaming out of Efate harbor in company with 6 cruisers, 8 destroyers including the TAYLOR, and the Carriers CHENANGO, SANGAMON and SUWANNEE, forming task force TF 18 and headed for the southwest coast of GUADALCANAL. We were all busy installing droppable wing tanks on the fighters, giving them extra fuel so they could stay in the air longer.

RENNELL ISLAND INVASION: 30 JAP TORPEDO BOMBERS ATTACK OUR CRUISERS

The 3 Heavy Cruisers WICHITA, LOUISVILLE and CHICAGO picked up unidentified aircraft on their radar throughout the afternoon, but under strict orders for radio silence, they did not call us for air support. The Jap planes were circling 40 to 50 miles away, sometimes coming as close as 20 miles.

The cruisers, along with their destroyer, zigzagged after nightfall; the enemy planes would come close enough to strafe the cruisers and run.

The Japanese planes trying to locate our ships. Over 30 enemy torpedo bombers attacked; many were shot down. During the attack, one torpedo hit the Cruiser LOUISVILLE, but failed to explode. Another torpedo ran parallel to the WICHITA; another headed directly at the ship, but was a dud and did not explode.

The Destroyer LA VALLETTA shot down 3 of the Jap planes, and two torpedoes hit the Heavy Cruiser CHICAGO, causing severe flooding and loss of power. By the time the attack ended, her repair crew had the hull boarded up and was able to stop the ship from listing. The damaged Destroyer LA VALLETTA was escorted to port by the Destroyer EDWARDS, who rescued 224 of the 1,050 survivors. Then, the Heavy Cruiser LOUISVILLE took the CHICAGO in tow.

On the morning of Jan. 30th, 1943, the enemy attacked with 20 Jap torpedo bombers again. The destroyer LA VALLETTA shot down 6, and was damaged by a torpedo, leaving 62 dead. Others were shot down by the other ships, but 4 managed to fly through all that flack. 4 torpedoes hit the CHICAGO and she finally sank 30 miles east of Rennell Island. The destroyers went in to pick up over a thousand survivors.

At noon, we joined TF-16 with the SUWANNEE and continued to operate in the Coral Sea, off the coast of San Cristobal Island, in the Solomon Island group. Our bombers sank 2 Jap subs, then upon landing, one bomber's tail hook didn't catch any of the cables and crashed into the barrier. It was cleared away quickly and we continued to land the rest of the returning flight.

The Aircraft Carrier ENTERPRISE had been seen on the horizon most of the day. No more attempts have been made to stop our operations at GUADALCANAL. Our destroyers sank a Jap submarine at dusk. Everyone is on edge, so as our dive bombers were returning from their mission, one of the destroyers, thinking it was the enemy, shot at them. I'm glad they missed.

Feb 1, 1943 with the operation complete, we headed for Efate. The following day at 7 am, we steamed into Havannah Harbor, Efate and anchored near the Carrier SANGAMON. Admiral Ragsdale took over command of Carrier Division 22. At 9:30, we headed for the Fiji Islands.

The next day, we joined forces with 4 battleships and two destroyers. One of the destroyers came alongside and sent sealed orders over. We changed our course and headed northwest. The Dive Bombers were loaded with 1,000 lb. bombs, the Torpedo Bombers were loaded with 4 -1,000 lb. bombs, and two

of the Torpedo bombers were loaded with torpedoes. We were all ready for trouble, knowing it would probably break the next day.

We learned later that a Jap force of 18 ships was headed to evacuate their troops from GUADALCANAL. Planes from Henderson Field on Guadalcanal sent Dive Bombers, Torpedo Bombers, Navy Fighters, and Army P-40 Fighters to attack the Japanese destroyer force. Our planes damaged 4 of the destroyers, yet the Japs were able to evacuate almost 4 thousand of their soldiers.

The following day, the enemy was reported to be 250 miles away. I had no idea why we didn't engage the enemy—maybe they were too far away.

Feb 8th, Jap destroyer force completed the evacuation of almost two thousand more Jap troops from GUADALCANAL. The following day, it was reported that the organized resistance had ended on Guadalcanal, concluding a six months struggle to capture the Island and other islands in the Southern Solomons. The campaign was extremely costly in men, ships and material for both sides.

On Feb. 14th, the squadrons moved ashore. I stayed on board because of my broken hand. It didn't seem to be healing right. A few days later, the cast came off. My hand didn't look so good.

The following day, we were underway, headed for the Jap held Russell Islands. Two planes crashed into the barriers and one chewed up the tail of another fighter. I guess the boys had too much shore duty. Early the next day, we entered the area where the Heavy Cruiser CHICAGO was attacked and sunk.

INVASION OF RUSSELL ISLANDS

On Feb 21st, 1943, the invasion of the Russell Islands began. Four TBF bombers for scouting and sub patrol took off in darkness. Then, at daybreak, the fighters took off and the rest of the day flights were coming and going to rearm and refuel on a regular schedule.

It was later reported that the Marine Raider Battalion and Army troops went ashore on the invasion of Russell Island and secured a beachhead, supported by our Task Force 68.

At 2 o'clock in the morning, general quarters sounded: our radar detected bogies coming in our direction. Our fighters took off to intercept and went after the Jap zeroes when they were 30 miles away, but they got away. It was a long day and we were all exhausted; by that date, we had been in 4 battles

The following day, a fighter coming in for a landing crashed on the flight deck of the Sangamon. We could see the blaze, which lasted about 20 minutes. Men in asbestos suits got the pilot out in time. It's a wonder the gas tanks didn't explode. Then, early in the afternoon, a 50 cal. Machine gun went off accidentally, wounding 4 men and damaging two bomber wings. The 18-year-old boy responsible was demoted to seaman 1/c and transferred to another branch of the service. Later the tail hook of a bomber coming in for a landing bounced over all the cables and crashed through the barriers.

On Feb 26th, we transferred from the CHENANGO to the Destroyer. On March 1st, I was transferred to the army. After I woke up after good night's rest, we received 2 new fighters and I was made plane captain of one of them. I checked it over thoroughly, greased the landing gear, and oiled the propeller. This was my baby, and I had to take good care of it. The monkeys near the airstrip looked funny swinging from tree to tree. I knocked a few coconuts out of a tree and tried to remove the outer part to get to the shell. Wow, it was hard.

I did a lot of walking around the island, and it made me tired. Every now and then, I would pick up a coconut and eat it. After dinner, I picked some oranges off the trees until I was full. We were expected to leave for GUADALCANAL in a few days, so I washed all my dirty clothes in the stream, now I was set for a while.

The next day, shortly after 4 pm, we learned there was an enemy aircraft approaching. I grabbed the pilot's parachutes and dumped them into the planes, hopped in, and started the engine. Just then, my pilot hopped up on the wing. I got out, and he climbed in. He was a little excited as he taxied out to the runway, hit a hole, and nosed over. Dirt flew everywhere. He was not hurt and got into another plane. In a few minutes, they were all off and caught the Jap bombers 10 miles off shore.

On March 5th, we were expecting a hurricane and tied down all the planes securely. It started to pour, a very heavy rain, with the wind increasing every hour. About midnight, the storm broke. We all stood by the planes and put more lines on, then finally went to sleep at 6 am.

The next day, about half the crew packed their gear to get ready to board a destroyer. Then, orders were changed, everyone packed their clothes and everything they had, and headed for GUADALCANAL, leaving three of us to take care of 14 planes.

March 9, 1943, the 86 planes from all 3 of the Aircraft Carriers of Division 22 Air Group were dispatched to Henderson Field, GUADALCANAL, to relieve the exhausted pilots of the Aircraft Carrier ENTERPRISE. Our planes fought off repeated enemy attacks and shot down 5 Jap planes. They also sank an enemy destroyer.

The following day, Mar 10th, we woke up early and put parachutes in all the planes, then at 7:30 all the pilots climbed into their planes and every one of them started. The transport planes taxied onto the runway checked their engines, and with full throttle, headed down the runway. Then all the fighters took off two at a time—what a beautiful sight. Next, the dive bombers, and finally the torpedo bombers.

The next day, I had breakfast, then rushed down to the field to send the last two fighters up to join the others at GUADALCANAL. All 3 Aircraft Carriers, SANGAMON, SUWANNEE and CHENANGO were sending their planes. Their first stop to refuel would be the island of Esperito Santos, code name "Buttons" about 160 miles north.

Here, they saw the damaged Aircraft Carrier ENTERPRISE being repaired from damage during the invasion of GUADALCANAL. From here, the planes would fly almost 600 miles over Open Ocean, to GUADALCANAL, code name "Cactus." They would go on to bomb the airfield on New Georgia Island at night. This would be 400-mile round trip without running lights. Three and a half hours later all our planes returned, and only one with bullet holes in the plane from antiaircraft fire.

Mar 19th, 1943, we started to build an extension onto the officer's club. We worked all day; when we finished work in the evening, we were pretty well exhausted, and the Colonel gave us ice-cold juice, which really hit the spot.

In the evening of the 20th, our planes took off from Henderson Field, on GUADALCANAL, to mine the harbor at Bougainville, which is about a 600-mile round trip. All planes returned safely. There would be two more missions to drop mines in the same harbor.

We had been working on the officers Club for several days, and it was beginning to shape up nicely. One day, a branch from a coconut tree fell on the electric line and broke it, so then we didn't have any electric lights in our Quonset hut. So we found a lantern and hung it in our Quonset hut, The nest day, we learned we lost Lt. Bailey at GUADALCANAL, he was about the best guy I ever met, we all feel terrible.

An SBD, (Navy dive bomber) came in with a dead battery; we changed it and sent him on his way. Then, one of the boys cut his hand and needed five stitches. Also, a Lt. walked into the propeller of the Army Piper Cub airplane and was seriously injured. The pilot, Lt. August, was very upset and refused to fly the rest of the day. I haven't felt good all day; the Doc. thinks its jaundice, whatever that is.

On Mar. 31st, 1943, the Doc. and Lt. August flew me to the other side of the island, where I was put in sick bay; they said I had malaria. A few days later I felt good, and the Doc. said was okay.

The CHENANGO left Havannah Harbor and hadn't returned by April 7th. We heard the Japs attacked a convoy near the island of Tulagi, in the Solomons, damaged the Destroyer WARD, sank a New Zealand Corvette, and damaged 2 oil tankers and a tank landing ship.

April 11th, I started taking care of an Army Piper Cub airplane, so I started it up and checked everything out okay, and then the 3 of us went to church. After dinner, we went to the movies and saw "Pride and Prejudice", a very good picture.

The Navy Taylor Cub from the CHENANGO flown by the Skipper of the ship landed with mail for us, and then a P-40 flown by an Australian pilot, was taxiing, because the big engine makes it hard to see, crashed into the cub, both men were seriously injured and were taken to the hospital. I later found out, the second person in the cub was the ships doctor.

Jim McLain flew in on the SNJ-3 plane, (this plane was used during WW2 to train pilots), and it was good to see him again. Then Lt. Commander Gassly from our ship came over to pick up the Captain, and he told us about operating from GUADALCANAL, how the planes returning from their missions, full of holes. Our pilots fought off repeated Jap attacks and shot down 4 Japs, and sank a Jap destroyer.

Today, Lt. Kelly, the officer in charge of us, went back to the ship, and the signal officer from the CHENANGO took his place. He wanted to know what kind of planes I have worked on. I thought for a minute and said, B25 Bombers (Army), F4F Fighters, F4U Fighter (Marine), SBD Dive Bombers, 0-49 Stinson, Hospital Plane, SNJ Trainer, and the J2F Cub. It looked like he was going to be strict, and the "holiday" was over.

April 24th, 1943, some of the planes from GUADALCANAL came back, and the personnel from VF-28 came in by the truckload. We were working like mad to get the Quonset huts fixed up for the returning crews. That day was Easter.

On April 25, our planes returned from Guadalcanal—at least, the ones that were left. After hundreds of hours of combat flying, the pilots returned, 14 suffering from malaria, and all the pilots having lost around 15 pounds each. Our planes fought off repeated enemy attacks and shot down 5 Jap planes. They also sank an enemy destroyer.

I felt a little discouraged, so I went for a walk and picked, oranges, tangerines, lemons, limes, and bananas. The island was full of fruit, nobody grew them, and they just grew everywhere. I heard the ship was leaving for the States soon, and I hoped to be on it.

A few days later, I learned that the squadrons were going back the next day. They were all packing. I didn't know if I was going with them. The Navy said "yes" and the Army said "no," they needed me. It was nice to be wanted, but I wanted to go with my squadron.

The next day, May 10th, all the guys left for the ship. There were only three of us left to send the planes off. We had to install a new tail hook on #1 and gas up all the planes; the rest of the day, I worked on the Cub.

May 11th, woke up early and help start the planes; they all started except #9. We heard one of our fighter pilots, Lt. Kukuk, tried to land on the carrier without letting his tail hook down to catch the arresting cable. He crashed into the barrier and bent the blades on the propeller.

May 13th, 1943, we heard Task Force 18 bombed Munda and Vila airfields in the Solomons. May 15TH, the squadrons returned again from GUADALCANAL. It was good to see them back. After dinner I reported to the line and was made crew chief of #4 fighter plane. Boy oh boy, I was hot stuff now.

May 18th, first thing in the morning we got the news to pack. We threw all our gear together and piled it on the truck, and by 7 am. we boarded a destroyer and headed out to sea. Boats took our gear and us to the CHENANGO.

The next morning, unexpectedly, we hoisted anchor and sailed out of the harbor, once as sea, we turned into the wind and started to land 30 fighters and 6 bombers. Shortly after dinner we sighted our convoy. On May 20th, as we were landing planes, one of them caught fire as it landed, but was quickly extinguished.

A short time later, general quarters sounded, enemy aircraft were detected closing on our convoy and only 60 miles away. Our fighters were scrambled, and in a matter of minutes, all 32 planes were in the air, intercepted and drove the Jap planes off, without any loss to the convoy.

Towards evening, enemy planes were seen at a distance of 12 miles, and before they could get any closer, our fighters were on them. They scattered in different directions and managed to get away. As we launched aircraft, one plane crashed into the sea, but the escorting destroyer picked up the pilot.

The following day, after our convoy unloaded all their supplies at GUADALCANAL, we headed back towards Efate. Patrols were taking off all day. One of our torpedo bombers, while trying to land, crashed into the catwalk and went over into the water; the pilot and gunner were picked up but the radio man went down with the plane.

May 23rd, 1943, we returned to Efate, where I started working on Magnetos. A few days later, we moved to "Camp Charlie". None of us liked it there, so we went back to where we started. We received 4 used fighters, so we picked the best two, and gave the others to fighting -26.

On June 2nd, the CHENANGO was attacked by a Jap sub, and the bombers left early to catch it. Our fighters were delayed in leaving, at least until the ship was out of danger.

June 3rd, at 8 am, we were on our way back to camp when a P-40 (Army) plane crashed. We were the first ones there, and the engine was ready to catch on fire with gasoline all over the ground. The plane was on its back, pinning the pilot in. We all lifted up on one wing, while the pilot crawled to safety. I grabbed him by the arm and helped him to the ambulance, by that time, the fire engines had hoses played on the fire.

MOVED BACK ON BOARD THE CHENANGO

June 13th, we moved back on board the CHENANGO. We loaded our luggage on trucks, and after a two-hour trip through the mountains, we arrived at Havannah Harbor. Then, by boat to the ship, we spent the rest of the day unpacking and getting everything put away. The Aircraft Carrier SUWANNEE was hit by a bomb on the forward end of her flight deck, off GUADALCANAL, and we were going up to replace her the next day. During that time, three TBF's, (Bombers) were kept aloft at all times, scouting and doing sub patrol.

June 16th, 1943, on our third day at sea, enemy bombers were intercepted by our fighters, and were scared off before dropping their bomb load on us. Throughout the day, enemy aircraft were seen by our air patrol, and all ran rather than fight it out. One of our fighters made a hard landing, causing the right landing gear to buckle; it was sent to the hangar deck for repair.

It was then reported: the largest raid since April 7th,'4th. The Japs attacked a convoy off of GUADALCANAL. While a large number of Jap planes were shot down, Jap dive-bombers managed to damage LST-340 and she beached off Lunga Point. The AK-76 cargo ship is also damaged. At one o'clock in the morning, 8 enemy planes were spotted 43 miles away, but no alarm was sounded because the distance quickly increased as the Jap planes headed away.

June 17th, 1943, about 10 o'clock in the morning, Lt. Cmdr. Palmer of VF-26 sighted and shot down a Jap bomber, which was shadowing our carrier. Later, Lt. Phylier, sighted another bomber of the same type; he chased the enemy plane into a cloud and was able to escape.

Towards evening, a fighter crashed on the deck, slicing a wire cable, which whipped across the deck, slashing seaman Zellan seriously wounding him. The wreckage was cleared away and we continued to land aircraft, still in the air waiting to land. The following day, Zellan was put in a bomber unconscious and flow to the hospital at Efate, in very critical condition.

June 19th, an enemy bomber was sighted, but managed to escape. Later, we fueled a destroyer; while steaming along, we noted, by the way they painted its bridge that they shot down one Italian plane and one Jap plane. Immediately, after the first flight took off, we started to fuel another one of the destroyers; on his bridge showed they sank a Jap Battleship, a Jap Cruiser, a Jap Destroyer, and five Jap Zeroes, unassisted.

A large number of Jap bombers were somewhere in the vicinity. 12 fighters were sent aloft, while 10 more stood by with the pilots in the cockpit ready to take off on a moment's notice. Meanwhile, at Henderson Field, GUADALCANAL, hundreds of planes were ready to come if we were attacked.

On June 21st, they made me a plane director on the flight deck. The Japs knew we were out there and had been trying to get through to us. Our fighters, leaving the convoy, turned several attempts away and our convoy came through without any damage.

The following day, one of the pilots did not extend his tail hook all the way, and when it caught hold of the arresting cable, it jerked the tail hook out of the plane. The plane did not stop, and crashed into the barrier, rose up on its nose and settled back down. About the same time, another fighter crashed into the sea. The wreckage was cleared off the deck and sent down to the hangar deck on the elevator, while a destroyer picked up the pilot in the water.

June 23, 1943, our convoy came into sight, and our ship swung around and headed back towards GUADALCANAL. This was the fourth time that trip, escorting as many convoys. The convoy that was the biggest ever to enter Guadalcanal. We were praised highly on flight operations, and by nightfall, the convoy was safe at its GUADALCANAL anchorage.

On our way to Efate, we ran into a big storm, and it lasted all day. All the planes were lashed to the deck securely, to keep them from being swept overboard by the wind. Big waves came over the flight deck.

Towards evening, the captain of the ship made a speech about the good work and perfect coordination of all hands involved. He also told us of the importance these convoys were in bringing men and supplies into GUADALCANAL safely. The next big push was expected on the Jap-held island of Bougainvillea.

June 25th, five Torpedo Bombers and two fighters flew off to land at the airstrip. A short time later we dropped anchor in Havannah Harbor. New Recruits came on board to relieve the men going back to the States for new ships and shore duty at an air base. The 3 fighters that crashed on deck were lowered onto a barge to be rebuilt by FABU-5 (Fleet Air Base Unit #5).

June 26th, this morning all the planes were catapulted off the ship while it lay at anchor. About 15 of us were going to the bomber strip to work on our planes. About 1 pm, we boarded a minesweeper and headed out of the harbor for Vila harbor on the other side of the island, the sea was rough and most of the guys were sea sick, I slept all the way.

Early on the morning of June 27th, the planes took off for GUADALCANAL. I heard they would be supporting the invasion of New Georgia Island, from June 30th to July 25th.

June 28th, we packed our clothes again and moved back on board a minesweeper that took us to Havannah Harbor, where we moved back on board the CHENANGO. We were given the medals we rate, so we will have them for the upcoming Admiral's inspection.

June 30th, 1943, we were going to the fighter strip to help the Fleet Air Base Unit No.5 repair the planes. About 20 of us had been taking engines out of old planes and installing new ones. After work, we went to the dock and caught the boat back to the ship. This routine of going to work by boat at 7:30 in the morning, to the fighter strip, and returning to the ship every night, continued for several days.

We made it to July 4th, but wars don't wait, so we continued to work putting the planes in running condition, so they will have every available plane for the "big push", which was coming soon, for dinner we returned to the ship. That day marked our 200th day out of Norfolk; a lot had happened since then, and there was a lot more to come. We continued to repair planes, replacing bad cylinders and installing bulletproof linings in gas tanks, we also tried to make a SBD dive-bomber out of four wrecks; that was some job.

Finally, on July 8th, we finished, and all the planes were in good flying condition, ready to go. We returned to the ship and got our lockers ready for locker inspection and at muster we were inspected for haircuts for the upcoming Admirals Inspection. The coming Sunday, the USS RELIEF (hospital ship) was giving a USO show on our ship, so everybody got busy cleaning and polishing brass. We practiced for the Admirals Inspection and the formation during the awarding of medals ceremony. Meanwhile, the forward elevator was raised high enough to make a stage, and they were busy rigging it for the USO show.

On July 11th, Nurses came over from the hospital ship, USS Relief AH-1, and the USO show started shortly after 2 o'clock. The Coloradoes Band played for us, and the show went over big. After the show, there was ice cream and cake for everyone.

On the morning of July 12th, the Admiral of Carrier Division 22, which this ship is attached to, inspected the personnel and the ship itself. Everything was ship shape, and the Admiral was well pleased. After inspection, the Flying Cross Medal was awarded to Lt. Houtman, a pilot of Scouting 28. But the ceremony was interrupted when enemy planes were sighted 43 miles away, bearing 190 deg.

The dive-bombers were catapulted, and the fighters took off down the deck. Shortly after, there was an explosion which rocked the ship, then another bomb landed on the catapult. As repair crews closed the hole, a third bomb hit #3 barrier cable where I was standing, and I was killed and carried off the deck. (Of course, all of this is imaginary, and was carried through in pantomime, the imaginary hole in the deck was covered over with steel plates as in a real battle.)

July 16th, today I took a boat over to the Carrier SANGAMON to see some friends of mine and spent a nice afternoon together. While I was there, a tanker just missed ramming the carrier by inches.

July 17th, 1943, towards evening, the Battleships moved out of the harbor with only 10 minutes notice, leaving part of their crew and boats behind, they steamed out of the harbor at full speed. All night long, we loaded provisions on the ship: boatload after boatload went into the hold. The next day, we heard the news: 7 Jap ships were sunk and in 20 minutes and 47 Jap planes were shot down, while six of our planes were lost.

Navy, Marine and Air Force, bombers, dive-bombers, torpedo bombers and fighters attacked Jap ships at Buin, Bouganville, in the Solomon Islands. Our planes had heavy opposition from Jap fighters, yet we managed to sink one destroyer and damage two others, as well as a minesweeper.

The next day, all the men to be transferred back to the States left and boarded a supply ship at anchor in the harbor, and the Cruisers left the harbor after loading up on ammunition. The harbor seemed so empty, with practically all the ships gone. Only the repair ship MADUSA, and the Hospital Ship RELIEF, and the three converted Aircraft Carriers, were still here, and we were painting the flight deck. The following evening, the battleships returned and anchored, and we received new recruits, fresh from the states.

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NEWS ON THE INVASION OF EUROPE

At this time, we learned that the British 8th Army was very close to Catania, Sicily, after breaking up and scattering all the resistance of one German armored division, as well as parts of another, in one of the most decisive battles yet fought for Sicily.

Catania, Sicily, was still holding out against the 8th Army's drive. Parachute troops here dropped 7 miles south to prevent the enemy from destroying an important bridge. In Europe, a squadron of P-38 planes intercepted and wiped out an entire formation of German Junker-52 transports, while carrying troops and supplies to Sicily.

NEWS FROM THE PACIFIC

In the "WAR NEWS TODAY": US planes swarmed on Japanese shipping in Kahili Harbor this morning and fought off a hoard of Jap Zeros.

And the LATEST WAR NEWS: American Warships repelled two more attempts by the enemy, to get supplies to the Munda air base in the central Solomons.

PACIFIC NEWS: the enemy counter attacked our forces on Munda, Solomons group, with no affect but with heavy losses to the enemy.

PACIFIC NEWS: Allied airmen flew nearly 2,400 miles to the Japanese Naval Base of Soeraba, in the Netherlands East Indies; this was one of the longest bombing missions ever flown.

PACIFIC NEWS: the attempt to supply Bougainville Island in the Solomon Islands by the Japs was crushed by our bombers. Our bombers shot down 5 enemy planes and sank a seaplane tender.

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On July 22nd, we were still anchored in Havannah Harbor; they had been working on the Cub all day, painting the new insignia and checking it out. We painted the stripes on the flight deck and cleaned the tar off the tops of the landing lights. A British Heavy Cruiser, escorted by two of our destroyers, entered the harbor early in the morning and anchored.

Lt. Silva set up a $1,000.00 anchor pool for the United States. The way it worked, everyone picked a day, hour, or minute, the ship would anchor or tie up; once we reached the United States, as was recorded in the ship's log.

July 26th, 1943, all aircraft equipment was unloaded from the ship. All spare equipment was removed from the ship—more indications of us going home. The Captain announced that our planes were now operating from the Russell Island air field and, while on patrol, ran into 27 Jap Zeroes. Tavernetti shot down 4, and 16 were shot down by the entire flight. None of our planes were lost.

On 29th, we made preparations throughout the day for getting underway. All of our planes returned from the Russell Islands and were left at the fighter strip; the pilots came on board by boat. After dinner, the port gangway was taken down and stowed away, and all loose equipment was tied down and secured.

After six months of duty off Guadalcanal without being discovered by enemy planes, submarines or the Japanese fleet, the CHENANGO was ordered back to Mare Island, California, for repairs and train a new air group.

The following morning at 6 am, we got underway for "Espirito Santos" to unload all spare parts and ammunition and to take aboard 200 passengers. At 6 pm, we reached our destination and anchored. We worked through the night, unloading and then loading 25 wrecked planes, as well as 40 engines to be dropped off at Pearl Harbor.

The next day by 10 am, we loaded the last plane and steamed around to the harbor on the other end of the island. This is where the Troopship SS President Coolidge was sunk, and there were 3 Cruisers being repaired from torpedo hits. This island was the last stepping-stone to Guadalcanal.

The rest of the pilots and crew came on board, plus 200 passengers going to San Francisco. The passengers included personnel from VF-111, a Navy fighter squadron called the Sun Downers from GUADALCANAL. They were there from April 26, 1943 to July 1st, then moved to Espirito Santos. The Chiefs that came aboard were sleeping in my compartment, and cots were set up on the hangar deck for the rest of us to sleep on.

CHAPTER 6: UNDERWAY FOR PEARL HARBOR, TRANSFERRED TO SEATTLE

August 1st: this morning at 8 o'clock, we weighed anchor and steamed out of the harbor in company with the Light Cruiser ST. LOUIS—which was hit by a torpedo at the bow and had a temporary repair—to be repaired at Pearl Harbor. We were passing the Japanese-held Marshall and Gilbert Islands, and our guns were manned at all times, since these islands were still held by the Japanese.

On Aug 3rd, at 3 o'clock, we crossed the 180th meridian. This made it necessary to repeat this day. In the last 24 hours the ship had traveled 345 miles, with 2,680 miles to Pearl Harbor and 4,770 miles to San Francisco. We refueled the 3 destroyers in our convoy and gave them each 10 gallons of ice cream and exchanged movies.

August 5th: those of us that had never crossed the equator were called "pollywogs." The crew that had crossed before were called "shellbacks". Today, the "pollywogs" (us) took over the ship and subdued the "shellbacks" and painted, tied, and hung them from the overhead, then put them into irons. The Captain was put in the brig until he yelled "pollywog", then the Pollywog flag was hoisted upon the yardarm throughout the day.

At daybreak the shellbacks tried to cut down the Pollywog flag but did not succeed. Some Pollywogs were put into the brig, guarded by Commander Busey, head shellback; the leaders of the pollywog rebellion were made to parade on the flight deck with swabs and pea coats. At 1800, Davy Jones came aboard and each one of the pollywogs were given a subpoena to appear before the "ROYAL HIGH COURT of the RAGING MAIN" tomorrow.

It read, "Whereas: The good ship CHENANGO bounded through equatorial waters is about to enter our waters, and the afore said ship carries a large and slimy cargo of landlubbers, beachcombers, sea-lawyers, parlor dining plow deserters, park bench warmers, chicken chasers, hay tossers, chit signers, sand crabs, he vamps, four flushers, squaw men, and all other living creatures of the land and last but not least, liberty hounds, and moving picture sailors, falsely masquerading as sailor."

The next day, the uniform of the day was underpants and no shoes. This morning we crossed the equator and, according to tradition, we pollywogs had to be initiated. One at a time, we were brought onto the hangar deck, were bent over and swatted; this started us off running between men lined up on both sides, hitting us with belts. At the end of the line was the Judge: I gave my summons to him.

I knelt down before the King and got swatted, then I kissed the knees of the Queen, which had grease on them. From there, I kissed the fat belly of the paymaster, which also had grease on. I was then dusted off with a grease brush and was squirted in the mouth with cod liver oil, then painted with Mercurochrome.

I was placed in a greasy chair and dumped backwards into a pool of water in the elevator pit, where two men lifted me up and yelled "Shellback", and I yelled "YES!" Then I was allowed to climb out of the pool of water and climbed over pipes and was swatted as I dove headlong into a long winding tunnel full of chicken guts and coffee grounds. There was just enough room near the top to breath.

If your head touches the canvas on top, it was hit with a paddle, and your face went down into the garbage. So, I crawled on my belly to the end of the chute, where a fire hose was squirted on me, to clean all the coffee grounds off; then, I headed for the shower

The next morning, I woke up and my backside was black and blue, but it was a great time. I will never forget crossing the equator. I met one of the passengers, John Gluck, AMM 2/C, who lives at 34 First St., Elizabeth, N.J. we watched as the destroyers were refueled, while underway at sea.

August 11th: early this morning, we sighted the Hawaiian Islands. It looked as if it went up into the clouds. By 8 am, we saw the Aircraft Carrier INDEPENDENCE CV-62 steam out of the harbor, and the harbor pilot that brought her out of the harbor had now transferred to the CHENANGO. Then, we proceeded into the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard.

We passed the Battleship OKLAHOMA, which was sunk with torpedoes when the Japs attacked, and the turrets and after-crane were still visible. We also passed the Heavy Cruiser PENSACOLA, which was also sunk and reclaimed. Several aircraft carriers were here: the New LEXINGTON, ESSEX, PRINCETON, and a few Battleships.

As we pulled alongside the dock, there was a reception committee with a band playing Hawaiian music, women in hula skirts dancing, and lots of people on the dock waving and yelling. WOW, what a welcome! It made us feel great, after returning from the war zone—the band playing and the people cheering—it was a wonderful and grand reception.

We then unloaded the 25 wrecked planes and 40 aircraft engines and moved to another dock. All day long, we loaded PBY flying boats and other planes on board, along with other wrecks that were headed for the states. Later, I saw Camerdise and all the rest of our guys that were transferred to the New Aircraft Carrier LEXINGTON; it was great to see them again.

The next morning, we tied down and secured everything for sea, and at 8 o'clock we moved out into the harbor assisted by tugboats and proceeded out to sea. We were underway for San Francisco. The water was rough and a strong wind was blowing, the spray is coming over the flight deck.

Aug.14th, I sewed a new rate on Templeton's uniform and congratulated him on his promotion. We had inspection of our quarters and medals were awarded to our pilots for bravery at the Russell Islands. Captain Wyatt announced that he was being transferred, and he wished us luck.

I went to Lt. Peterson and asked what was happening with my rate promotion to Aviation Machinist 1/c. He was encouraging, but that was about all. I was told of being transferred to the receiving ship at San Francisco, so I started to pack things I didn't need for the next few days; this filled up 2 sea bags. All my uniforms were put in my Parachute bag.

The sea was getting rougher, the ship being tossed with the ground swells. The weather was getting colder every day; I almost froze while taking a shower. I finished packing and put on Blues, which is now the uniform of the day. They were much warmer than dungarees.

Aug. 19th, 1943 woke up in the morning, and there she was: San Francisco, big and beautiful and all wrapped up in fog. It wasn't long before we passed through the submarine net and under the Golden Gate Bridge. As we sailed past the island prison, "Alcatraz", we could see the big gray buildings. It gave me the creeps.

At the Alameda Air Station dock, we tied up, and we all started to unload our cargo of planes. I put in my courses for First Class Aviation Machinist Mate. The next day, we continued to unload the wrecked planes and engines. When everything was unloaded off the ship, we moved out into the harbor and anchored.

The next morning the ship got underway for Mare Island Navy Yard. Here, I took the Jeep and went on my first liberty to the nearest town called "Vallejo". Everything was so high priced: all I bought was a dozen picture post cards. I wore all my medals, and everyone noticed them as I walked down the street. The bearings fell out of the differentials on the jeep, so I cleaned them all up, replaced and tightened the bolts by hand, and was able to make it back to the ship.

The next morning, Tranery, Friedman, and myself went to San Francisco on liberty. We ate, got a few souvenirs, and had a great time. Then, we came back to the ship by midnight, even though liberty expired at 8 in the morning.

We woke up early and, after work, everyone moved ashore into barracks. As soon as my stuff was put away, I decided to look over the Base; it was a lot bigger than it looked and had a lot of interesting things.

August 28th, the new Skipper took over the ship. Captain Ben Wyatt gave a farewell speech, and Captain Ketchum said he was honored with such a fine ship. Most of the guys were going on leave, so I am now Division Petty Officer in charge. Workmen came on board and removed the old catapult by cutting out a section of the flight deck.

Every morning we march down to the ship and go to work. Lt. Peterson told me to stand by on a minute's notice, to be transferred. More of the men were going on leave every day, and the Division gets smaller and smaller. With my gear all packed and ready to go, I decided to go on liberty and ran into Powell on the bus to Oakland. We went to a dance and had a good time.

Sept.2nd, I had the duty, and 125 new men (boots) came on board. The new men had been standing all the watches, which lets us off completely. We were paid, and so Gray and I were going ashore.

Sept.7, at noon, I was call down to the ship's office and received my orders to report to Con Fleet Air, Seattle Wash., Astoria C.V.E. Pre Com. Detail, with 30 days delayed orders, to count as leave. I WAS TOLD I PASSED WITH FLYING COLORS WITH 3.7 OUT OF 4.0 MARK ON MY AMM 1/c TEST! I took everything I own and headed for the main gate, and grabbed a taxi to the Southern Pacific R.R. Station. At 11 o'clock that evening I boarded my train, and into the night we headed.

It costed $77.50 for the train fare alone, and I didn't sleep very well on the dirty, hard seats, but I was going home, and that was all that counted. I had been riding in coach all day, so I decided to go to the lounge car and sit in comfort, when an Army Lt. approached me and wanted to know if I would like a berth, which was all paid for. I gladly accepted and slept like a king on a soft bed.

During the day, we made several stops, and I got off to stretch and get some fresh air. I met several people who were very nice, especially a Lt. from Chicago, who I sat with. In Chicago, I had a few hours wait for the New York Central RR. It wasn't long before we boarded the train, and it felt good to be headed for home once more. It had been a long time.

When I woke up, I and could see Buffalo, NY pass. And then we were headed down the Hudson River towards NYC. The train arrived early, and I headed for home. It was a grand homecoming: mom cried, and everyone was happy. They hadn't expected me till later in the day.

By Sept. 30th, my leave was almost over, and I had to return to Seattle. My father took me to the Newark, New Jersey railroad station, where I met my train for Chicago. I made a bed out of two seats, and before I knew, it was morning.

I got off the train and stretched and took a deep breath of fresh air in Pittsburgh, PA. Then in Canton, OH, I got off the train and was able to get a sandwich from the canteen. Then, I wrote Mom a post card from Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

I arrived in Seattle, Oct 4th, 1943, and caught a taxi to Sand Point Naval Air Station. On Oct. 6th, I checked in with the O.D. of the air station and was assigned to (Combat Air Service Unit) C.A.S.U. #7, in A and R dept. (assembly and repair). I liked the work, and we had liberty every night. I practically had half the crew of the CHENANGO there. It felt good when I knew everybody. So, after talking half the night, we all fell asleep.

I meet the same people every day at work. A lot of Waves (Navy women sailors) and civilian women work in the same building. The girl I met on liberty was very pretty and works in the dispersing office, where I put in for reimbursement of my travel.

Oct. 13, they put me to work on wing repair for PBY flying boats, and several other types of planes. I borrowed tools from the girls, and they showed me better ways to rivet. I love the work, and I hope I can stay a long time.

The Navy Bus brought a bunch of us sailors to the University of Washington for the dance. After the dance, the bus brought us back to the base with a girl that lives on the station. It was a Captain's daughter, so I walked her home.

Oct. 18th started the one week to qualify as a class" A" swimmer. First, we had to swim 4 laps free style, then one lap under water, and tread water for 5 minutes. We were dead after this, especially when classes were right after lunch. At 5 o'clock, I went on liberty and met AL at the Service Men's Canteen.

The next day at swimming, we learned to take our pants off in the water and inflate them, and use them as water wings to stay afloat. We also learned to use artificial respiration.

Oct. 21, I was transferred to Blueprint Dept. The work was interesting, and I liked it. Then, at swimming class, I learned how to slip out of a parachute with clothes on. Then, we swam one lap each: backstroke, sidestroke, free style and breaststroke. The next day, we had to swim 40 laps and learned how to break the different holds.

Oct. 29, 1943, I decided to take the physical for pilot training and passed with flying colors

Nov. 4th, we were all sent out to the graveyard to salvage parts from wrecked PBY airplanes. We did this for the next few days. A few days later, we found out our outfit was leaving for Astoria, Oregon. Our liberty cards were taken away, so we couldn't go on liberty.

Nov.9th, we all piled into several buses and headed for Astoria, Oregon, about 250 miles away. At 9 pm, we arrived at Tongue Point Naval Station, with brick barracks, bowling alleys, pool tables, canteen, ship's store, laundry. We were assigned lockers and bunks. I hit the hay as soon as I unpacked.

Nov.13th, they informed us we were being transferred again. We went to the Clatsop County Airport, Oregon. When we got there, we were housed in barracks "A", across the coastal highway from the airport and hangars.

A new road was under construction to run behind the barracks. One of the runways crossed the highway. Robert Hewes and I were traffic cops, letting the trucks cross the runway only when no planes were in the area. We also decided to get a job at the NEW ENGLAND FISH Co. This was a great way to earn extra money, and we each earned $20.83. We worked 3 days; it was great. But then, we had to double up on the crossing guard, which meant no more fish work.

On Nov. 25th, 1943, Thanksgiving Day, big Bill, John Secoolish and I were being transferred to Tongue Point. We were going on the Aircraft Carrier USS TULAGI CVE-72. The next day, we went to hangar #1 and saw several different movies on drill presses, lathes and shapers.

Nov. 29th, we started training on the Aircraft Carrier, USS KALININ BAY CVE-68. These carriers were a lot different than any I had been on before. On the weekend, John Secoolish and I headed for Portland, cleaned up at the George White Servicemen's Center, and got a good night's rest. The next morning, we went to the United Service Men's Center, had breakfast, and went ice-skating. We had a heck of a time.

Dec. 6th, we headed to Tacoma, Washington, to get on board the Aircraft Carrier CASABLANCA CVE-55 for a training cruise. Liberty was taken away because some of the guys were drunk on the bus.

December 7th, 1943, the war had been going on 2 years, and I was three years older, age 20. Haley Hanson, John Secoolish, and I went to the movies on the base.

Dec 8th, we boarded our training Aircraft Carrier CASABLANCA, which was named after the battle, which I was a part of, on the Aircraft Carrier SUWANNEE. It was very foggy, so we didn't get underway until 3:30pm. We proceeded north, up Puget Sound, and anchored off Port Townsend. For two weeks, we had Flight Quarters and General Quarters drills, classes, and abandon ship drills. We were taught where to go and what to do, and we got familiar with the ship.

Dec 20th, we returned to Tacoma and tied up to the wharf. By 5 o'clock, we reached the Naval Air Station Tongue Point, where we stumbled out of the train and marched to the barracks.

Dec. 21th, was the Commissioning of our new ship, the Aircraft Carrier TULAGI, CVE-72. We boarded buses and headed for the docks in Astoria. We all fell in by division and marched aboard in dress blue uniforms to witness the ceremony that took place on the flight deck.

All of us that were on board for the ceremony were now called Plank Owners and were given certificates as proof. Then, we changed into dungarees, and helped load stores and supplies that came on board.

Christmas day, made out the watch list for the next day. The stores and provisions were still coming on board for the next few days, and I had elevator duty. It was also laundry day, so I packed all my dirty clothes into my laundry bags, and then we got our stuff back at night, all cleaned and dried.

A few days later, I met Chief Valerio, and he seemed like a nice guy. We had been taking on fuel and stores all day, it seemed like it would take forever to fill the hold.

Jan 8th, all morning we prepared for Captain's Inspection. I put on my best dress blues, a clean white hat, shoes that looked like a mirror, and a clean haircut. We fell into ranks and stood at attention while the Skipper, Captain J.C. Cronin, looked us over. He then presented the Purple Heart to one of the men. We also learned that seaman Wallace died this morning when he was hit by a block and tackle.

UNDERWAY FOR BREMERTON NAVY YARD

A few days later, we were underway for Bremerton Navy Yard. The ground swells hit the ship and tossed us around like a cork. Most of the crew were seasick—I don't know why I wasn't. The ship was underway all night and early the next morning, when we entered Puget Sound and anchored off Bremerton Navy Yard. The Aircraft Carriers LEXINGTON and LONG ISLAND.

The next morning, the ship lifted anchor and headed for the degaussing station. All clocks and watches were sent off the ship, so as not to be magnetized. Once underway, we ran the range to see if we were degaussed correctly.

Towards evening, we anchored off Port Townsend and loaded bombs. We broke all records and worked all night until 6 am. I had an easy job—I ran the elevator. It rained and the wind blew—it was an awful night.

Jan. 14th, the ship lifted anchor, going out to test her guns and calibrate her compass. I stood my first watch as a lookout on the ship. The wind howled through the rigging, and I shivered. After completing gun practice, we headed for Seattle, where we tied up at Pier #41. I went ashore with Podell, a kid from Brooklyn; we got a bite to eat, went to a dance and then to a movie, and slept at the armory.

Jan. 18, as we headed to Alameda Air Station, California, the water wasn't quite as rough as it was in Seattle, but bad enough to keep most of the crew sick. It was still dark when we steamed into San Francisco Bay, and I could see lights on the Golden Gate Bridge. Dawn broke as we tied up at the Alameda dock. The yard workers were there and immediately started to load planes on board.

The next morning, they were still loading and lashing down the 60 planes on board—all types, including Army fighters and bombers, Navy dive bombers, torpedo bombers and fighters, a Lockheed Hudson transport, Vega Venture Bombers, and a J2F Cub. We also made room for 350 passengers going to Hawaii.

Jan. 21, 1944, we pulled away from the pier and headed for sea. The sea was pretty rough, and to top it off, we hit a storm. The ship pitched, rolled, groaned, and shook. Boy oh boy, what a shakedown cruise it was!

The passengers slept all over the ship on cots, most of them under planes on the hangar deck. (That is, those that weren't seasick.) The rest were hanging over the railings.
I slept up under the flight deck in the gear and repair shop, the "shack". By the third day, the sea had calmed down a lot and we all turned to and cleaned up the ship.

Jan. 27th, as the sun came up, we could see the Hawaiian Islands. We tied up to the pier at Ford Island, and proceeded to unload our passengers and planes. They fed us and gave us ice cream too. While we were unloading the planes, the rest of the crew watched an exhibition dance put on by Hawaiian girls in grass skirts.

Bright and early the next day, we started to load wrecked planes. At noon, we shifted births to the Navy Yard, where a giant crane unloaded the two army B-26 bombers and the 3 Lockheed Hudson transport planes. We then took on board 300 passengers, marines, and sailors. On Jan. 28th, we were underway again.

Feb. 3rd, 1944, we pulled into San Diego, tied up to a pier at North Island, and unloaded the wrecks. The next day we were underway for the gunnery range to give all our gunners practice. A few days later, we moored to pier #3 at the Destroyer Base, where I went ashore and bought a half dozen eggs for my new stove.

Then, I cleaned up, put on my blues, and headed for San Diego. I had my wrist watch fixed and bought new ribbons for the upcoming inspection. The next 2 days, we went to firefighting school to learn to fight fires in the engine room, boiler room and oil tanks. We put out all these fires with water and fog nozzles.

On Sunday, Jacobs, Schultz, and a few of the other guys decided to go to Tijuana, Mexico. It was a big deal to cross the border to buy a few gifts, and they had problems coming back.

By the middle of February, I was appointed Section Leader of the 3rd section of V-1 division, consisting of 20 men. I was also appointed as Petty Officer in charge of the flight deck. Wow, all in one day!

Feb. 24th, as we prepared to get underway and secure the airplane boom, a cable parted and the boom came swinging in. The outrigger snapped and came crashing down on me. By some great miracle, it missed and nobody was hurt. Once underway, qualifications for takeoff and landing on the carrier for the pilots began, and continued throughout the day.

Lt. Fryer crashed a fighter into the barriers; he was ok, and the plane was sent below to the hangar deck. When the plane hit the barrier, it cut the cable, which whipped across the deck and hit the man in the asbestos suit, as well as a hospital corpsman, critically wounding the corpsman.

At 8 am the next morning, we continued to qualify pilots, Lt. Fryer made a perfect first landing but on his second try he crashed the barrier again, this time only damaging a propeller. Another fighter was brought up, and the wreck went down to the hangar.

On the next landing, Lt. Fryer's tail hook skipped all the wires, crashed through all 3 barriers, and hit the island structure—leaving part of his wing there, plowing into the catwalk, spinning up on its

nose, and over the side into the sea. Our Destroyer escort picked up the pilot after he was dragged down by the plane; he had managed to free himself and popped up to the surface.

The next day, qualifications were on the catapult. My job, one that I didn't want but was stuck with, was spotting the planes on the exact spot, to be hooked up to the catapult. We catapulted seven planes. Everything went well the rest of the day, with touch and go qualifications for the pilots. They were getting better and better as they became confident in the signal officer.

Feb. 28th, we moored at North Island and started to take on 100-octane aircraft fuel. There were a lot of ships there, including the new Aircraft Carriers HORNET and SANTEE. We loaded our squadron on board, as well as 5 wrecks, all going to Norfolk, VA. We got underway at 6 pm, headed for the Panama Canal. In company with the British Aircraft Carrier HMS EMPRESS, they had been conducting flight operations all day.

We expected to reach Panama by March 9th, and preparations were made to go through the locks. While moving the planes on the flight deck, I accidentally damaged the control surface on one of the planes, so then I had to fix it.

The following morning, we were the first Aircraft Carrier to go through the Panama Canal with aircraft on board the flight deck, with 2 inches to spare on each side of the carrier. On March 11th, we left Panama in convoy with 2 British Aircraft Carriers, HMS EMPRESS and SPEAKER, two Destroyer Escorts, and 2 Canadian Corvettes.

We arrived at Norfolk March 18th and underwent overhaul. As all Navy men know, we were not supposed to keep a diary or log of the ship's movements; well, I was caught, and the rest of my logs were confiscated. So, then I had to rely on my memory, and use a lot of other sources.

May 28th, 1944, underway from New York with the deck loaded with, Army P-38's and P-40 Army Air Force aircraft, in convoy with 2 Aircraft Carriers KASAAN BAY, who also was loaded with Army Planes and MISSION BAY, whose planes will help protect us and seven Destroyer Escorts including the HOLLIS, HAINES, RUNELS, CURRIER and TATUM.

Then on June 5th we ran into a storm, other than that it was an uneventful voyage, we reached Casablanca on June 6th, after unloading the Army planes, we took on passengers and 35 prisoners of war and two days later, headed out to sea, headed for Norfolk. The prisoners were locked in the forward anchor chain locker and were brought all their meals.

On June17th, we arrived at Norfolk, where we unloaded our passengers and the prisoners, and the KASAAN BAY returned to New York with 342 survivors of the Aircraft Carrier BLOCK ISLAND that was torpedoed May 29th.

A few weeks later, on June 28th, after we replenished our ammunition and loaded enough supplies to feed an army, we were underway with another Aircraft Carrier, the KASAAN BAY, and 3 destroyers: GREER, UPSHUR, and TARBELL, headed for Quonset Point, RI.

On June 29th, 1944, we took on 28 new F6F-5 Grumman Hellcat fighter airplanes, as well as personnel of the fighter/observation squadron VOF-1. This squadron, the first of its kind in the Navy, is a fighter unit, trained as fighter pilots, and also to perform air-spotting missions, for the big guns of the Battleships and Cruisers.

Admiral Calvin T. Durgin also came on board as Commander of Task force 27.7: this meant we were to be the Flag Ship. The KASAAN BAY had Squadron VF-74, with 24 new F6F Fighters, 8 new F6F Night Fighters, and 3 TBM Avenger Torpedo Bombers.

CHAPTER 7: OPERATION DRAGOON, THE INVASION OF SOUTHERN FRANCE

Then on JUNE 30TH, we were underway from Narragansett Bay, heading toward Africa in company with the Aircraft Carrier KASAAN BAY, as well as 6 Destroyer Escorts: CURRIER, RUNELS, HAINES, MARSH, and TATUM. The Destroyers would try to protect us from the German U-boats in the Atlantic Ocean.

We traveled in Readiness 2 Condition, which meant under radio silence, and the ships darkened at night on full alert conditions. The pilots practiced takeoff and landing, and the gunners were given plenty of practice shooting at sleeves towed by our planes. Our ship conducted drills over and over again,

On July 5th, we entered the war zone. July 10th, we arrived at Oran, Algiers. Task Troup 27.7 was dissolved, and Admiral Durgin left the ship for Naples.

July 17th, we leave Oran, headed for Malta, and were now task group 88.2. On July 25th, we anchored at Malta. Admiral Durgin returned along with 2 British Aircraft Carriers, and we got underway from Malta, headed for Egypt.

July 27th, we entered Alexandria harbor and anchored, Egypt is a neutral country and Alexandria is a "non-occupied" port. Liberty parties were allowed to go ashore. We were told to obey the Military Police and keep out of "out of bounds" places. That night, German bombers came over. This was the first time Alexandria had ever been bombed; luckily, no damage was done to any of our ships.

The next morning, we were underway and cleared the harbor. We also stopped at the islands of Corsica and Sardinia, which are off the coast of Italy. The next few weeks were spent training in the Mediterranean Sea. They say this is a dress rehearsal for operation "Dragoon", the INVASION of SOUTHERN FRANCE.

The night before D-day, Aug. 14th, 1944, convoys departed from many different ports and rendezvoused off the island of Corsica. We were told that the British Navy and their 7 Aircraft Carriers had joined us, with all their Destroyers and Corvettes. Ships sailed from Oran, Corsica, Naples, Malta, Palermo and Taranto, and headed to their assigned positions off the coast of Southern France.

The Carriers, Battleships, Cruisers and Destroyers were in position off the coast of southern France. There were 885 ships and landing vessels, carrying nearly 1,300 smaller landing craft, as well as around 150,000 troops, and 21,400 trucks, tanks and other vehicles.

To confuse the enemy, dummy paratroopers were dropped behind the lines, and small fleets of patrol craft, simulating an invasion force, as far east as Genoa, to make the enemy think we were going to invade far to the east. One of these diversions was led by Lt. Comdr. Douglas FAIRBANKS Jr., (USNR), the movie star.

The French resistance started raising havoc, disrupting railroad lines and communications. The night before D-Day, the tension was high. For the pilots and many of the crew, this would be their first time in combat. August 14th, we were joined by ships of the Royal Navy, Carriers, Battleships, Cruisers and Destroyers that stood off the coast of France.

Before the invasion started, the Battleships, French Lorraine, British Ramillies, and American TEXAS, NEVADA and ARKANSAS, opened up their big guns on the enemy shore batteries. The visibility was poor and they could not see their targets, but with radar were able to hit their targets. There were over 50 ships, including Cruisers, Destroyers and 9 Aircraft Carriers.

INVASION OF SOUTHERN FRANCE: OPERATION DRAGOON, August 15, 1944

August 15th, D-Day, four hours before the invasion started, the destroyer USS SOMERS DD-684 engaged and sank a German Corvette and Sloop, but 2 days later, was damaged by a shore battery. Woke up early and ate breakfast, the speaker system blared, “All hands man your battle stations.” A minute later, a bugle sounded “flight quarters”, and we headed for the flight deck.

It was still dark as we steamed in formation with the Aircraft Carrier KASAAN BAY, 45 miles off the invasion beach. It was a clear autumn morning and at 0530, Commander PERRY gave the signal, “Aircraft, start engines.” There was very little wind, so we had to use the catapult. I directed the planes onto the right spot, and Lt. BRANNAN did a great job sending the planes off one by one. We launched our first flight squadron, VOF-1, flying Grumman Hellcat F6F-5 fighters.

The first flight took off with bombs, the second flight was to spot targets for the Battleship NEVADA, the third flight went to spot targets for the Cruiser PHILADELPHIA, and the final flight before H –hour was loaded with 1,000 lb. bombs to blow up the rail junction, to prevent the Nazis from getting reinforcements, as well as to be on the lookout for German aircraft. Several of these spotting missions were launched throughout the day, which worked out very well. The big guns were able to hit their targets within 2 or 3 rounds.

While the planes were out doing their job, we were busy respotting the flight deck, so the deck was clear and ready for any emergency landings, as well as the plane’s return. A short time later, our

planes returned from the first mission, and the ship turned into the wind to let them land. As soon as each plane landed, the wings were folded as it taxied forward and parked in the bow, to clear the landing area for the next plane.

After landing, one of the pilots, Lt. DIETRICH, was very excited and told his story: he spotted trees in the middle of a plowed field with the plow marks running right through the trees. He shot a few rounds into the trees and they blew up. Then Lt. PURCELL told of just missed the wires from the barrage balloons, but Lt. ROBERTS wasn't so lucky—his wing was sheared off and he pancaked into the water. Later, we learned was picked up by the Destroyer MURPHY.

Lt. Cmdr. BRINGLE made a good landing and taxied forward from the barriers. Ens. McKEEVER made a good landing, but his tail hook didn't catch a cable and his plane bounced over the barriers. He crashed into BRINGLE'S plane, cutting it in half, with him still in it, but both pilots were okay. The two planes were dumped over the side, and the flight deck was clear and back in business.

When all the flights returned a little after 5pm, all the crews were busy rearming, refueling and the aircraft machinists were checking the planes thoroughly. We secured our flight deck for the night and set up the deck for the early morning flight. The pilots were in a better mood after their first taste of combat.

Spotting, or putting, the fighters on the catapult, took time: we had to get the plane into the exact position to hookup both the cable and the release. There was a line painted on the flight deck that the right wheel of the plane followed to a painted square, where the pilot hit his right brake, and the back end of the plane would swing to the left, onto the catapult.

Sometimes the pilot would hit the brake too soon or too late, and the plane handlers had to move the plane to the proper position. It all took time, so I thought that if I pinned a piece of wood to the flight deck at the spot where the right wheel stopped, and the tail pivoted into place, it might save time. This worked, but then the tail of the plane would swing past the spot, and the plane handlers had to push it back in line with the catapult. So, I decided, to do the same thing so the tail wheel would stop. This worked, and catapulting became a lot easier and faster.

Then, we were ready to see how fast we could launch our planes. Admiral Durgan, shouted down from the bridge, "Miller, we are going to launch all of the planes 15 minutes." Without thinking, I yelled back, "What's the extra 5 minutes for?" He laughed so hard, I thought he might fall off the bridge. We broke the fleet record that day.

It was reported that Allied troops landed on coast of Southern France between Toulon and Cannes, in Operation DRAGOON, preceded by heavy naval gunfire and aircraft attacks. Allied air attacked the Rhone River bridges to delay the German Tanks. Our ships encountered floating mines, German E-boats (similar to our torpedo boats), and remote-controlled boats loaded with explosives and torpedoes with a man inside.

Over 94,000 troops and 1100 vehicles were landed on the first day. After the landings, naval gunfire concentrated their firepower on German coast defense batteries. An Infantry Landing Craft (LCI) was damaged by mortar fire, and two were damaged by mines off RED beach. A tank-landing ship is damaged by a glider bomb dropped from a German bomber, while approaching GREEN beach, and was able to be beached and abandoned.

A sub chaser was damaged when the landing craft ahead of him exploded. The US Freighter Liberty Ship TARLETON BROWN #1040, an Army Transport, was damaged by a bomb and near miss, during a German air raid off St. Raphael. The following day, mines sank 2 of our motor torpedo boats, a minesweeper, and a sub chaser, and an infantry landing craft (LCI) was damaged by a mine.

D-DAY + 1, Comdr. BRENGLE'S plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire and was forced to land in the sea. It was later picked up by the Destroyer KENDRICK

D-DAY + 2, two pilots JOHNSON and FRANK from the KASAAN BAY were KIA, (killed in action), then Lt. ALSTON parachuted from his burning plane and landed safely. Then, two pilots from the KASAAN BAY, ARBUCKLE and BASS, were KIA, and Ensign HOLLAND was shot down. The following day, Lt. Jg. COYNE from our ship was KIA.

On the 17th, the Heavy Cruiser TUSCALOOSA CA-37 is narrowly missed by German shore battery off the coast. Meanwhile, the destroyers protecting our task force off the invasion coast engaged four German E-boats, (these were similar to our torpedo boats). The Destroyer HARDING sank two; the CARMICK and SETTERLEE sank one each. A German E-boat damaged the Destroyer FRANKFORD, and then the damaged destroyer FRANKFORD captured a German torpedo boat.

The next day, a German bomber damaged the amphibious force flagship CATOCTIN during an air raid. Off the beachheads, Minesweeper STEADY was damaged when a broken fire main flooded, jamming the equipment compartment. The Destroyer MACKENZIE lost power on her starboard engine during an attack on a sub contact.

On Aug. 19th, at 5am, we launched four Hellcats on a reconnaissance mission to the Rhone River, where our planes spotted two German bombers heading south at low level. Our planes were

spotted, and the bombers tried to get away but our fighters managed to shoot them both down. The pilots were Lt. Cmdr. John Sandor, Lt. Rene Poucel, and Ensigns David Robinson and Archie Wood

Our fighters regrouped and went after another He-111 German bomber, setting both engines on fire; the plane exploded and crashed. On the way back to the Tulagi, the four fighters shot up a German plane on the ground at an airfield, then destroyed a locomotive and left ten boxcars burning. And on Aug. 20, Lt. CROCKET was shot down and captured.

More reports were coming in: The US Freighter MICHELSON was damaged off St. Tropez by German bombers during the air raid. Then, the Battleship NEVADA, the free French Battleship LARRAINE, and the Heavy Cruiser AUGUSTA, shelled the harbor and German batteries at St. Mandrier, in support of the US Army and free French troops off Toulon.

The Destroyer EBERLE took 140 Armenian prisoners from Porquerolles, France, and a mine damaged Torpedo Boat PT-555. The French vessel attempted to rescue the crew but hit a mine as well. Then, on the 21st, three German Transports Airplanes were shot down during a fighter-bomber attack. Anti-aircraft flack was encountered on almost every mission and 3 of our fighters were lost to flack. Four of our torpedo boats engaged a German ship off Le Havre, and two of the torpedo boats were damaged.

We had a problem with the catapult needing a part that would take weeks to order; but they contacted the seven British escort carriers and were able to find one that offered theirs for us to use. In no time, our catapult was in good working order again.

Two days later, Destroyer ERICSSON captured a fishing vessel attempting to escape Toulon, and took 50 German Submariners as POWs. Our torpedo boats sank 4 German boats loaded with explosives, intending to sink our ships at entrance to Toulon harbor, but the control boat escaped. The German garrison at Marseilles, the sole remaining enemy pocket in Toulon, surrendered.

A mine sank a Minesweeper off Toulon, and later, a mine damaged an aviation supply ship. Off the invasion beaches, a free French Destroyer discovered German manned torpedoes and opened fire. The destroyer LUDLOW joined in and dropped depth charges, destroying 3 of the manned torpedoes and capturing the crews that manned them.

In the week since the invasion started, we flew 68 missions and 276 sorties. It was considered one of the most successful operations of its kind in Navy history. The planes from both carriers accounted for 1,000 German motor vehicles destroyed. VOF-1 alone, from the TULAGI, accounted for 23 locomotives and 195 railroad cars

This is only a fraction of the total damage done. The Jerrys' attempts to reinforce their beleaguered forces on the Riviera were completely disrupted, not only by the destruction of trains and trucks, but also by damage to roads, railroad tracks, and bridges. Roads were observed jammed for miles by columns of Nazi supplies; this was a perfect setup for the strafing and bombing that followed.

Reports from pilots returning from their raids indicated that the Nazis were doing everything in their power to escape the terrific aerial pounding. Whole trains were observed camouflaged with tree branches. After a time, the Germans gave up most of their attempts to move troops and supplies during the daytime and relied on the cover of night to protect them from being strafed and bombed from the air.

Trucks and tanks that had been moving during the darkness were dispersed during the day, hidden under groves of trees, or in buildings, or protected by ingenious camouflage methods. Much of the supplies were moved in hayracks, under innocent appearing loads of hay.

Trucks had dummy houses built over them, and daylight would find them dispersed in fields looking like cottages to anyone but our low flying Hellcat pilots. Not only did our planes do a lot of damage by bombs and rockets and strafing, but they also spotted targets so big, the guns of the invasion fleet were able to hit their mark and clear the way for our invasion forces. They were instrumental in eliminating some of the Nazi coastal defenses.

In many cases, gun emplacements were completely destroyed in two or three salvoes, brought on target by directions radioed to the Cruisers and Battleships by the pilots, who flew at dangerously low altitudes through thick flack.

On August 21st, the German forces were in retreat before the Allied thrust. Our fliers conducted a devastating attack along the line of march of a German convoy, which snarled the roads for miles around Remouline, France. Then, they topped it off by downing 3 German Ju-52 bombers.

Then, the Aircraft Carriers and Destroyers of TG 88.2 retired to Magdalene, Sardinia, and Propriano, Corsica, to take on supplies and hard-to-find American-style bombs. The crew had to grind the bomb lugs to fit the hellcat bomb racks. Both Carriers were back off the coast of France on the 23rd of August.

Aug. 25, while spotting for the big guns offshore, Lt. Cmdr. BRINGLE heard and felt the antiaircraft shrapnel hitting his aircraft. His engine began cutting out and could not make it back to the TULAGI. He made a water landing and was picked up by the Destroyer KENDRICK.

Aug.26th, the Destroyer MURPHY came alongside and transferred the 3 pilots shot down: Lt. Cmdr. BRINGLE, Lt. CROCKET, and Lt. BROWN, who made water landings. They were picked up by the Destroyer SHUBRICK. Tulagi needed a part for the catapult and borrowed it from a British carrier with the same unit

On the morning of the 30th, both Carriers retired to Ajaccio, Corsica. We were in combat thirteen days. We lost eleven F6F's fighters, but shot down 8 German aircraft, destroyed 825 vehicles (with 334 damaged,) 84 locomotives damaged or destroyed. There were also numerous roads and rails damaged.

David Crockett of VOF-1, our squadron, was shot down and captured by the Germans for 5 days. Then, the German Army of about 500 still in the area, gave up their guns and surrendered to their 24 prisoners, who turned them over to the French Forces. Dave Crockett managed to make his way back to the ship.

Following combat ADMIRAL HEWITT, commander of the Western Naval Task Force, sent Admiral Durgin the following message. "The support given my forces by the ships and planes under your command have been of the highest order. Your complete cooperation with the Army Air Force and gun fire support ships in this operation have been outstanding. You left nothing to be desired. Well done to your ships and gallant pilots."

BRIGADIER GENERAL SAVILLE, commander of the XII Tactical Air Command, added, "Allow me to express my appreciation of the outstanding work which your carrier support force had done, and of their splendid cooperation. I consider the relationship and cooperation of the force to be a model of perfection and to serve as a standard for future operations."

REAR ADMIRAL TROUBRIDGE commented, "The US aircraft, notably the F6F Hellcat, proved their superiority. The high quality of their flying and aircraft maintenance, and efficiency with which US ships were equipped and manned, to say nothing of the superiority of their Naval aircraft, sets a standard well worthy of emulation. Once in the air, our pilots were second to none.

On Sept. 6th, 1944, after taking on supplies and fuel at Oran, we got underway for Norfolk. We arrived the 18th and underwent a quick overhaul. While the ship was being overhauled, we were granted 8 days leave and I headed home from the16th to the 24th. It was great, even if it was only for a few days.

With repairs on the ship complete, we soon set our course for Panama. On Oct.17th, we went through the Panama Canal to the Pacific Ocean. We arrived at San Diego on Oct. 26th, where we took on the U.S. Marine aircraft squadron VMB- 613, with their twin engine bomber aircraft, after their last liberty in Los Angeles, to be transported to Hawaii.

Oct. 29th, we were underway and headed for Hawaii. Without escort, we took action to evade the Japanese submarine that was reported in the area, and we arrived on Nov. 5th. We unloaded our cargo of aircraft at Ford Island. We then headed out to sea to conducted antisubmarine warfare (ASW) and gunnery exercises.

Then on Nov. 24th, we steamed out of Pearl Harbor and formed an anti-submarine task group TG-12.4. They and called us "hunter killers", with the TULAGI and the Destroyer Escorts, SEIVERLING, STAFFORD, MOORE and KENDALL, hunting for enemy submarines as we steamed toward the Marshals and Ulithi, headed for Saipan. We arrived Eniwetok on Dec. 2nd, anchored, and reported in to the third fleet; the next day, we upped anchor and were underway.

Dec. 8th, 1944, our Task Group number changed from TG 12.4 to TG 30.6. We were still hunting for enemy submarines and reached Saipan on the 10th. From there, we headed for the Palaus.

We arrived at Kossol Roads, Palau on Dec. 17th, and still hunting for submarines, made anti-submarine sweeps throughout the area. All through the month of December, we continued antisubmarine activities in the Palaus and Southern Mariana's, then headed back to Ulithi, arriving on the 22nd.

On December 28th, our Task group now called TG 77.4.13, departed Ulithi to provide ASW (anti-submarine warfare) support for the Lingayen Gulf landings. Our group anchored at Kossol Roads in the Palau Islands the following day.

CHAPTER 8: INVASION OF LINGAYEN GULF

On the first day of the New Year, 1945, we were underway in company with 8 other Escort Carriers, headed for Lingayen Gulf and the impending invasion of Luzon. Meanwhile, the Japanese had assigned more than 100 suicide planes ready to attack our task force.

Jan. 3rd, as the convoy passed through SURIGAO STRAIT, we could see lights on both shores and wondered if they were Japs watching us, as we continued into the MINDANAO SEA. In the following three days, the kamikazes took their toll: the Escort Carrier MAKIN ISLAND had a near miss from a kamikaze, and another suicide plane was shot down and narrowly missed trying to dive on the Aircraft Carrier LUNGA POINT.

Jan. 4th, we spotted a single plane lagging behind a returning squadron, and quickly notified their ship. They replied that it must be one of theirs, and his IFF identification gear was not working. Moments later from our ship, we saw a kamikaze dive straight down into the Aircraft Carrier OMMANEY BAY; a few minutes later, they reported that an unidentified object just went through their flight deck.

The Destroyer BELL was damaged and lost 2 men when the war heads exploded, as it tried to help fight the fires that were burning on the carrier. With the carrier's damage beyond repair and with losing 93 men, the Destroyer BURNS was ordered to sink her, after the crew was removed. Then, a kamikaze hit the Freighter DYCHE (carrying bombs and fuses), and the whole ship blew up. Debris from the explosion damaged the Oil Tanker PECOS and a minelayer, and a near miss bomb damaged the Seaplane Tender HALF MOON.

Jan. 5, the following day, the enemy air attacks continued on the convoy, as it steamed through MINDORO STRAIT and into the SOUTH CHINA SEA. An Infantry Landing Craft was damaged by a kamikaze, and the Sea Plane Tender OREA and Tugboat APACHE were damaged by near misses.

Although fighters from the carriers shot down 2 Jap bombers, other enemy aircraft managed to get through the gunfire of our convoy. The black puffs of smoke from exploding shells filled the sky, and it seemed impossible that anything could fly through it.

Two more were shot down, but one managed to crash into and damage the Cruiser LOUISVILLE, causing 4 dead and 17 wounded. Others managed to damage the Aircraft Carriers MANILA BAY, with 14 killed and 52 wounded, and grazed the Aircraft Carrier SAVO ISLAND. The Destroyer HELM had 5 wounded. Suicide bombers also damaged the Australian Cruiser HMAS

AUSTRALIAN, and it was forced to withdraw. The Destroyer HMAS ARUNTA had a near miss and had 2 men killed. It was also a part of our convoy.

Japanese destroyers approached our minesweeping group but were turned away when Destroyer BENNION, Australian Frigate HMAS GASCOYNE, and Sloop HMAS WARREGO, arrived on the scene. Planes from TG 77.4, our carrier group, sank the Japanese Destroyer Momi, and damaged the enemy Destroyers Hinoki and Sugi.

Later that day, a little before 6 pm, eight enemy planes attacked, coming straight at us with the sun behind them. With our three Destroyer Escorts protecting us, STAFFORD, GROSS and MOORE put up a tremendous barrage of fire; four of the enemy planes turned away and the remaining four continued to dive at us. The Destroyers managed to shoot down three of them, but the fourth kamikaze managed to crash into the starboard (right) side of our Destroyer Escort STAFFORD, that was protecting our aircraft Carrier TULAGI. Then, the STAFFORD began to lose way. We don't know how many lives were lost or injured in saving our ship.

Jan. 6th, two enemy fliers were shot down, but one managed to damage the Heavy Cruiser LOUISVILLE (CA-28) again, with 42 dead and 125 wounded. Another one damaged the Destroyer HELM, and the Escort Aircraft Carriers SAVO ISLAND and MANILA BAY, with 14 dead and 52 wounded. They managed to put out the fires, and then suicide planes damaged the Australian Cruiser AUSTRALIA, with 25 dead and 30 wounded. The Destroyer HMAS ARUNTA was also damaged.

Japanese suicide plane attacks intensified against our Lingayen Gulf invasion force; kamikazes damage the Battleship NEW MEXICO, killing members of the British military, with 29 dead and 89 wounded. They also damaged the Battleship CALIFORNIA, with 44 dead and 155 injured.

Also damaged were the Light Cruiser COLUMBIA, with 13 dead, including 3 survivors of the aircraft carrier Ommaney Bay, and 44 injured; and Destroyer SUMNER, 14 men dead and 19 wounded. Kamikazes attacked the minesweeping group, sinking Minesweeper LONG, damaging Minesweeper SOUTHARD, and Transport BROOKS. 3 men were killed and 11 were wounded.

Four enemy aircraft attacked the Destroyer WALKE. One crashed into the ship's bridge and its gasoline set the bridge on fire, seriously wounding the commanding officer, Commander George F, Davis. We found out later that despite his serious wounds, he remained at his post, commanding his ship amidst the wreckage. He was carried below only when assured that his ship would survive. He then died within the hour.

The Tanker COWANESQUE was damaged by a kamikaze, with 2 dead and 2 wounded. Also, a minesweeper was damaged by a near miss. The next day, reports of enemy aircraft in the area become more frequent, and late in the afternoon, a suicide plane was shot down while trying to dive into the aircraft Carrier LUNGA POINT. Metal fragments of the downed Jap suicide plane injured 2 crew men.

Jan. 7th, our planes from carrier group TG 77.4, under Admiral Durgin, begin pounding Japanese defenses of Lingayen Gulf. Enemy air attacks continued: Minesweeper HOVEY was sunk by an aerial torpedo, with 24 dead and 24 survivors, and the Minesweeper PALMER was sunk by a bomb, with 2 dead, 38 wounded, and 26 missing. And kamikazes damaged the Attack Transport CALLAWAY, with 29 dead and 22 wounded. The Destroyer SEIVERLING scared off a single enemy plane headed in our direction.

Jan 8, Jap kamikazes continued attacking our invasion force by damaging the Escort Aircraft Carriers KITKUN BAY, with 1 dead and 16 wounded, and KARDASHIAN BAY, hit by a Jap suicide plane. And a suicide plane crashed close to the Cruiser AUSTRALIA again, ending her support for the day with 14 dead and 26 wounded.

Jan. 9th, D-DAY, LINGAYEN GULF INVASION: when landings began at Lingayen Gulf, we launched our planes for air strikes on land targets, anti-snooper patrols, and air cover for the convoys. The troops encountered little resistance, but Japanese air attacks and demolition boats loaded with explosives aimed at our ships and continued to attack our invasion force off the beaches.

Then, two kamikazes crashed into the Cruiser COLUMBIA, killing 13 and wounding 44 men, and the Destroyer Escort HODGES was damaged. They also hit the Australian Heavy Cruiser HMAS AUSTRALIA again. They hit it 5 times, and it was finally sent to the rear area for repairs. Friendly fire also damaged the Battleship COLORADO. Japanese demolition boats damaged the Transport WAR HAWK, killing 61 and wounding many. 2 tank landing ships were also damaged.

The following day, Japanese assault demolition boats infiltrated the transport area off Lingayen, sinking a mortar landing craft and a gunboat landing craft, damaging Destroyers ROBINSON and PHILIPS, and also damaging a tank landing ship.

Japanese air attacks against the fleet off Lingayen continued, damaging the Destroyer WICKES, with 15 wounded. A kamikazes wing damaged Destroyer Escort WILSON, with 6 dead and 7 wounded. And the Attack Transport DUPAGE had 35 dead and 136 wounded, with 5 blown over the side and picked up by a destroyer.

On Jan. 12th, we supplied air support for the Lingayen Gulf beachhead. The next day, our port battery shot down a suicide plane, which was headed straight for our carrier. Before it crashed into the sea, the Jap plane crossed astern to our starboard and attempted to dive into an alternate target.

Suicide planes also damage the destroyer escort, SUESENS as she was rescuing survivors, which had already been damaged by a suicide plane, with 11 injured. And the Destroyer Escort GILLIGAN was hit by a kamikaze, with 12 dead, 13 wounded, and 10 men missing

The next day, kamikazes continued their attack against the Lingayen invasion force: a suicide plane managed to get through our air cover, crashing and damaging the Escort Carrier SALAMAUA, with 15 dead and 88 injured. About ten minutes later, another Jap plane was shot down.

Jan. 15th, several enemy flights had been coming and going all day. At 9am, they attacked the airfield. Then, at 11am, our planes destroyed railroad cars on a siding, and one exploded. Next, at 1:45pm, they attacked 40 or 50 camouflaged motor vehicles; two exploded and the rest went up in flames. At 3:15pm, our planes attacked another Jap convoy of trucks in the mountains; one exploded, damaging 2 of our low flying planes and forcing one to crash in the water. It was picked up by a destroyer. One of the crew, Petty Officer Fant, suffered head, mouth and leg injuries.

Jan. 16th, our planes were raising hell by destroying buildings, ammunition dumps, and 4 trucks on the road that they left demolished. Then in the afternoon, they hit a Jap camp with 30 or 40 buildings, destroying several. Then, on Highway 5, they left five trucks in flames and damaged seven. They also hit four buildings, setting two on fire. Two of our planes were hit by anti-aircraft fire but managed to return safely.

On Jan. 17th, our planes were sent to destroy a bridge crossing the Agno River; then, at 6:52 pm, Tulagi was detached and to report for further duty. The Army Air Force assumed responsibility for direct air support of American operations in Lingayen Gulf. From Dec.13, 1944, to Jan.13, 1945, we had 24 ships sunk, and 67 damaged by kamikazes

BATTLE OF BATAAN

Next, our TULAGI fliers turned their attention toward the Battle of Baton, off the Zambales coast of the Philippines, where they provided cover and support for the protection of forces that came ashore at San Narcisco. This is where the Japs decided to make their stand in the rugged Zambales Mountains at the base of the Bataan peninsula. From Jan. 29th to 31st six-escort carriers of TG 77.4 flew air cover and support of landings at San Antonio, near Subic Bay, the following day, they gave air cover to Grande Island and, on the 31st, Nasugby off Manila.

On Feb. 5th, we arrived at Ulithi after a grueling period of sustained flight operations, during which our planes had been in the air for all but two of 32 days.

CHAPTER 9: INVASION OF IWO JIMA

Feb. 19, 1945, I left Ulithi with squadron VC-92 and was ordered to pick up replacement planes. On Feb. 20, we arrived in Guam and picked up 42 replacement planes, 41 pilots and 40 air crews. On Feb. 21, we left Guam, our crews giving all replacement planes a 30-hour check, inspecting and servicing them, making them ready for service. We also conducted hunter-killer exercises in support of the assault on Iwo Jima, before joining a task force in the area of Varnish, west of Iwo Jima.

Feb. 23, the replacement planes were distributed to several of the carriers. Three days before the invasion, the weather was not very good; the island was to be bombarded. On the second day before the invasion, the Jap shore batteries hit the Heavy Cruiser PENSACOLA 6 times from shore batteries, killing 17 and wounding 119. Also, the destroyer LEUTZE was hit but remained until completing her mission. All 12 gunboats that were there for the protection for the frogmen of the underwater demolition team were also hit.

Our Task Group 52.2, under Admiral Durgin, began the campaign with 12 Escort Aircraft Carriers. We carried out strikes on Iwo Jima's shore defenses to reduce their resistance to the upcoming invasion. Our task force was joined by 16 Aircraft Carriers, 8 Battleships, and 15 Cruisers, including their flag ship the Cruiser INDIANAPOLIS. The Battleships and Cruisers with the carrier planes started to give Iwo a good pounding. The Escort Destroyer BLESSMAN was hit by bomb, leaving 42 dead and 29 injured. Help came to extinguish the fires.

D-DAY: IWO JIMA INVASION

Then on D-Day, Feb. 19th, 1945, the rough sea and strong undertow damaged many of the Higgins Boats as the Marines reached the beaches. The following day, bad weather and strong winds disrupted the landings, but naval gunfire and our carrier planes continued to give cover to the Marines on the beaches.

In the afternoon, the brand-new Battleship WASHINGTON arrived and joined in the shelling with her 16in guns. This caused landslides that blocked many of the caves where Japs had been shooting at the Marines. With weather conditions improving, Marines continued to land on the beach.

From Feb. 19th to Mar. 11th, 1945, we flew missions in direct support of the Marine ground operations, and neutralized airstrips in the Bonins. On Feb. 21st, two kamikazes hit the Escort Carrier BISMARCK SEA. A tremendous explosion rocked the ship, and about an hour or so later, it rolled over and sank, leaving 318 dead and 99 wounded. The destroyers rescued 605 men. Thirty of the Destroyer

EDMONDS crew went over the side to help rescue the wounded and exhausted men in the water, from the carrier.

Late on the 21st, just before 4:30pm, the Aircraft Carrier SARATOGA picked up on her radar about 20 to 25 planes, 75 miles out, approaching from the northwest. Since their planes were returning from patrols, these planes were first identified as friendly.

About 20 minutes later, she sent six fighters to investigate, found them to be the enemy, and shot down 2 of them. About 10 minutes later, six planes came out of the low clouds: 3 bombs hit in 3 minutes, two planes hit her starboard side, and two crashed onto her flight deck.

The attack left 123 dead and 192 wounded. Later, I was able to land her 6 fighters. By 6:45, the fires were under control. Then, a few minutes later, 5 Jap planes were attacking her; four were shot down. With the fires under control, she was escorted back to Pearl Harbor. Also damaged were two tan-landing ships, the Cargo Ship KEOKUK, and mortar-damaged a tank-landing ship.

On the 23rd, Japanese shore batteries damaged 5 tank landing ships (LST). They also damaged a minesweeper and sub chaser. The following day, enemy shore batteries damaged a tank landing ship (LST), and the day after that, shore batteries damaged another tank landing ship.

Off Iwo Jima, on Feb. 26th, planes from the Escort Carrier ANZIO sink a Japanese submarine. The following day, Jap shore batteries damaged an attack cargo ship and a tank landing ship, and mortar fire damaged another landing ship.

The next day, the Aircraft Carrier LANGLEY was attacked by Jap bombers and sunk with 16 dead. Jap bombers damaged the destroyer BENNETT. The destroyer TERRY was damaged by shore battery and was put out of action and a landing ship.

Then on March 1st, we joined a task force in area Varnish, west of Iwo Jima, where we supplied air support and antisubmarine patrols. On Mar. 3rd, our planes bombed and rocketed Omura. One of our planes was hit by flack but was able to return to the ship.

That afternoon, the planes from the aircraft carrier NATOMA BAY shot down a Jap bomber headed for us. Then at 8:49 pm general quarters sounded: Jap planes were 60 miles away and closing. They were chased into the clouds and disappeared.

Mar. 5th, our planes were launched to support the Marines on the beach and 8 replacement fighters were flown to the aircraft carrier Anzio CVE-57. Then, at 6:20 pm, our planes were scheduled for night flying, anti-sub security at Iwo.

Mar. 6th, 6:56 am, our night flying was completed with negative results, and we rejoined Task Group 52.2.1. The next few nights, we continued our night flying; then, on the 9th, one of our planes had to make a wheels-up landing at the captured air field

On March 11th, we departed for Ulithi. We learned later that around 6,800 Marines died, and over 19,000 were wounded on Iwo Jima. We arrived at Ulithi on March 14th, where we prepared for the invasion of the Ryukyus. Then, at the end of March, we proceeded to Okinawa and were assigned antisubmarine patrol, as well as direct support, of the landings on the beaches.

THE INVASION OF OKINAWA IN THE RYUKYUS

We heard the Japs had hundreds of suicide bombers waiting for us as they did off Leyte, when over 50 Kamikaze planes sank the Escort Aircraft Carrier ST. LOUIS, damaged the 3 large Escort Carriers SANGAMON, SUWANNEE and SANTEE, as well as the 3 small Escort Carriers WHITE PLAINS, KALININ BAY, and KITKUN BAY. In all, seven Aircraft Carriers were hit, 40 other ships were damaged, and five were sunk.

Mar. 12, US aircraft east of the Ryukyas sank 2 Japanese gun boats. The first landing in the Ryukyas—on the Kerama Islands, 15 miles from Okinawa—was taken 6 days before Okinawa with 30 dead and 80 wounded Marines. Then, one day before, the island of Keise Shima, 11 miles from Okinawa, was taken.

March 23rd, the heavy guns opened up and air operations began against Okinawa: 10 Battleships, 9 Cruisers, 23 Destroyers, and 117 rocket gunboats. Tor two days, the minesweepers were busy clearing the way for the invasion force.

On Mar 24, 1945, TF 58 began pre-assault strikes on Okinawa. The Japs struck back and attacked with Kamikazes, bombers, and Baka flying bombs, which seriously damaged the Aircraft Carrier FRANKLIN, leaving 807 dead and 487 wounded. They were also able to score hits on 4 more carriers.

The next day, the Transport GILMER was damaged by suicide plane, with 1 dead and 3 wounded, the Transport KNUDSEN was hit by a horizontal bomber. Also, the Transport BARRY was

damaged and the BATES was sunk by kamikaze attacks, with 21 dead, and the Destroyer Escort FOREMAN was damaged by a suicide plane.

Our group TG 52.1, under Admiral Durgin and his 18 Escort Carriers, conducted pre-assault strikes and supported the first landings in the Ryukyus. Then, we joined in the pre-assault strikes on Okinawa Mar. 27th to 29th, supporting the landings, and flew close support for operations ashore.

INVASION OF OKINAWA

D-Day, April 1, 1945: the next morning at 0830, the invasion began. We resumed our station off Okinawa, providing planes for air strikes called in by ground observers, and running photo reconnaissance and patrol missions. Then, on April 3rd, four Jap bombers attacked our formation; but lucky for us, all were shot down. We had several alerts during the day and our combat air patrol (CAP) shot down 12 enemy planes. The air action very intense in the afternoon and evenings.

The assault included 81,165 Marines, 98,567 Army, and 2,380 Sailors, on 77 Transports and 168 LST's. D-Day plus six, the largest ever: 300 kamikazes planes attacked our ships, and the world's largest Battleship, Yamato, was detected coming to attack our ships

Kamikazes attacked every day, with from one to twenty suicide planes between March 26 and the end of July, ten mass Kamikaze attacks were made. The first was on April 6 and had 355 planes. The second big attack was on April 12 and included 185 kamikazes, 45 Torpedo Bombers, and 150 fighters.

April 6th, while anchored at Kerama Retto Bay for rearming, a Japanese air attack penetrated our air defenses over the harbor. I was standing on the flight deck watching the kamikaze coming through all that firepower, and he kept right on coming, straight at me. Everything seemed to be in slow motion. There was no way he could miss. I took my log out of my pocket and wrote, "This is it." I knew it was the end, and I was going to die.

The ship had started to fire at about 4,000 yards, but the Jap plane just kept coming straight at us. Then, at the last second, the pilot must have been hit, because his right wing dropped just a little and the plane turned aside, barely missing us. He crashed into a landing craft and the flames shot 200 feet into the air. Minutes later, we shot down another Japanese plane, but the third one managed to get away. For me now, every day I lived after this was a bonus. It just wasn't my time to die.

Apr. 7, our task unit was alerted several times during the day, as we continued air support at targets and shot down two enemy bombers over Okinawa in the afternoon. The next day, the Destroyer EVANS shot at and sank a mine which did not explode.

Apr 12th, the Destroyer ABELE was the first ship sunk by the Jap-piloted Baka bomb, with 94 killed, and the Destroyer STANLEY was near-miss by Baka bombs and kamikaze. The high-speed minesweeper JEFFERS was damaged by Baka bombs carried to within 12 miles of the target by a Jap medium bomber.

Then, on April 13th, we launched a special strike against the airfields of Miyako Jima and began antisubmarine operations along the shipping lanes approaching Okinawa. Then, we got the news that our president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, had died.

April 16, Ie Shima was invaded, and the airfields were secured. April 19, Battleships, 6 Cruisers, and 6 Destroyers bombarded Okinawa, followed by the largest single air strike, with 650 Navy and Marine planes attacking enemy positions with napalm, rockets, bombs, and machine guns.

During the period between March 26 – April 30, twenty American ships were sunk and 157 damaged by enemy action. For their part, by April 30, the Japanese had lost more than 1,100 planes to Allied naval forces alone.

CHAPTER 10: GERMANY SURRENDERS, THE WAR ENDS SEPT. 1945

AS REPORTED IN THE DAILY NEWS: "A WEEK THE WORLD WILL NOT FORGET"

Sunday: death of Benito Mussolini. Tuesday: Death of Adolph Hitler. Wednesday: Berlin falls, German armies of northern Italy and western Austria, about 1,000,000 men, surrender. Friday: German armies of the north capitulation. (Still to come would be The Liberation of Norway, The Surrender of the Germans of the Southeast, and V-E Day.)

GERMANY SURRENDERS MAY 7TH 1945

May 11th, the aircraft carrier BUNKER HILL was hit by 2 kamikazes and bombs, with 600 total casualties. There were 352 dead, 41 missing, and 264 wounded, with fires raging.

Luckily, we missed the typhoon in the Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands area. We were safe in the protected harbor. June 2nd, 32 Jap planes were shot down and no ships were hit. We lost 2 planes in a collision; one pilot was rescued. Then, on June 3rd, four Jap bombers attacked our formation. But lucky for us, all were shot down.

The next day, we resumed our station off OKINAWA, providing planes for air strikes called in by ground observers, as well as running photoreconnaissance and patrol missions. From Apr. 3rd to June 7th, three Escort Carriers, WAKE ISLAND, SANGAMON, and NATOMA BAY were hit.

June 9th, the Destroyer Escort GENDREAU was damaged by Jap coastal defense guns off OKINAWA, with 2 dead and 2 wounded. Also, the Aircraft Carrier WAKE ISLAND was attacked by a near miss of 2 kamikazes only 10 feet away, exploding and tearing a hole below the waterline that was 45 feet long and 18 feet wide. The hull plates buckled, and the compartments flooded, but they were able to proceed on one engine. By 9:40 pm, repair crews had the ship steaming on both engines.

The Aircraft Carrier SANGAMON reported enemy planes 29 miles away. Land-based fighters intercepted and shot down 9. Then, at 7:33 pm, a kamikaze dropped his bomb and crashed through the flight deck, leaving 11 dead, 25 missing, and 21wounded. By 11:20 pm, the fires were under control and she was able to return to Kerama Retto, under her own power.

At 6:35 am, the Aircraft Carrier NATOMA BAY had a Kamikaze explode and tear a hole 12 by 20 feet on her flight deck, killing one and wounding 3. Fires were extinguished and damage control made temporary repairs and were able to schedule flights at 10:30 against Miyako Jima. Then, on June

13th, we launched a special strike against the airfields of MIYAKO JIMA and began antisubmarine operations along the shipping lanes approaching OKINAWA.

Then, on June 21st, the island was declared secured; but, then the destroyer escort HALLORAN was damaged by a suicide plane, leaving 3 men killed. The escort carriers were on the line from March 24th to June 21st. At Okinawa, we had been attacked by 2,000 suicide planes, manned rocket powered OKHA flying bombs, Suicide Boats loaded with explosives, and Suicide Swimmers carrying explosives.

36 ships were sunk and 368 were damaged, leaving 4,900 men killed, 4,800 wounded, and 763 aircraft lost. Total casualties for Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard and the Merchant Marines was over 75,000. The total strength of the Allied fleet at Okinawa was 1,600 ships, including 40 Aircraft Carriers, 18 Battleships, 32 Cruisers, and 200 Destroyers. Then, on June 22, 1945, we were ordered to San Diego for maintenance and repair.

* * * * *

On July 12, 1945, the Elizabeth, New Jersey, *Daily Newspaper* announced: "I. Robert Miller, a resident of Elizabeth, has been awarded the Navy Commendation Medal for outstanding performance of duty during the invasion of southern France."

* * * * *

After our long tour of duty, we arrived at Guam. A few days later, we departed the Marianas, bound for San Diego. We remained on the West Coast throughout the summer, undergoing overhaul, trials, and training. Then, one day, much to our surprise, we were handed an invitation, it read as follows:

INVITATION

THE COMMANDING OFFICER, OFFICERS AND CREW
OF A UNITED STATES MAN OF WAR

EXTEND TO YOU A CORDIAL INVITATION TO ATTEND THE
SHIP'S DANCE AND BUFFET LUNCHEON
TO BE HELD AT THE
SAN DIEGO CLUB, SIXTH AVENUE AND A STREET
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

FRIDAY, JULY 6, 1945 ----- MONDAY, JULY 9, 1945

ADMISSION BY: W. V. DAVIS JR., CAPTAIN, U.S. NAVY
INVITATION ONLY: COMMANDING OFFICER

Half the ship went to each dance, some went to both; we all had a great time

THE WAR IS OVER: Sept 2, 1945

On Sept. 4th, two days after the war ended, we were underway from San Diego for Hawaii. When we reached Hawaii on Sept. 13th, I was told I was to be transferred. Before I left the ship, I was told that if I were to sign over for 4 more years, they would send me to Officers Candidate School. (I regret to this day that I didn't say "yes".) So, I left the ship.

The TULAGI got underway and headed out to sea, being extremely careful and alert to the possibility of Japanese submarines not aware of Japan's surrender or wanting to end the war with one more kill. The aircraft carrier headed to the Philippine Islands as directed and took on a load of planes for transportation back to the States, after a stop at Pearl in October.

Then, returning to San Diego in January 1946, her cargo was unloaded, and she reported to the 19th Fleet at Port Angeles, Washington. And on Feb. 2nd, she was inactivated, and, finally, on April 30th, 1946, she was decommissioned.

The Tulagi earned 4 battle stars; this did not include Jap submarine attacks, kamikaze attacks with planes, attacks by suicide exploding boats and by suicide swimmers, at the Philippines and Okinawa, with ships all around us, damaged or sunk with loss of life.

* * * * *

An excerpt from *The Press,* dated January 23rd, 1945, read:

LITTLE ESCORT CARRIERS

"Luzon Island: America's newest offensive weapon in the Pacific, has passed its final test. The weapon is the common place, comparatively inexpensive, quickly built "little Escort Carriers". There is a whole fleet of them in combat, not just convoying.

"They plunged hotly and successfully into the Luzon assault after fighting vicious Japanese air attacks on their convoys. Although slower and more venerable than big Essex type carriers, nearly all of them were able to continue on the job of protecting ships and striking hard at the enemy, in the air and ashore.

"Most of their nearly five thousand sorties in twelve days' action were convoy protection, yet despite that task, their planes also destroyed ammunition dumps, trucks, tanks, bridges, armored cars, railroad cars, and pill boxes, and bombed enemy troop concentrations and artillery positions. Like the big carriers, "the Jeep group" can operate separately or united in one big striking force.

"They proved their sea worthiness in the Atlantic, Mediterranean Sea, and in the stormy South China Sea. One of the jeep's principal values is to permit dispersing of forces so one attack cannot wipe out all. Let one bomb strike an Essex flight deck and scores of planes were rendered immoveable until the damage is repaired. Let the same bomb hit a jeep and less than half as many planes were made Idle."

* * * * *

After two weeks at Hawaii, on Sept 18th, 1945, I was transferred to the USS CHLORIS ARVE-4, Aviation Engine Repair Ship that was commissioned On June 19th, 1945. So, I packed my gear and off I went on a new adventure. This ship was formally LST-1094 and was equipped to do any major aircraft engine overhaul. The ship was 327' long, 50' wide, and travel at a speed of 9 knots. It had one 3" antiaircraft gun, 1 – 40mm gun, and 6 - 20mm guns. Our crew consisted of 7 Officers and 104 enlisted men.

It was a rough crossing, heading for the Panama Canal. After several days of bobbing up and down and swaying from side to side, we finally reached Panama. It took us a whole day to go through the canal; then, we headed out into the Atlantic Ocean. If we thought the Pacific was rough, this was worse. We found out we were headed for Norfolk Naval Base. We finally tied up to the pier, and as I went ashore, it felt as though the sidewalk had the same motion as the LST.

On Oct.25, 1945, I was transferred to the Receiving Station, NOB (South Annex), in Norfolk, VA. My transfer read, "Have accumulated 39 points." (I had no idea what that meant.) It also read, "Continuous service outside continental limits of the U.S., 22 months." I was to report to Naval Receiving Station, Brooklyn N.Y. on Dec. 14, 1945.

It ended up that I was going on leave for 30 days, so off I went, heading for home. I didn't call, so my arrival home would be a surprise, and I would be home for my birthday, which was Dec. 7th. The days went by so fast and, before I knew it, it was time to head back to Brooklyn.

Then, on December 13th, I reported in to the Naval Receiving Station in Brooklyn, NY, and was assigned a bunk and locker in the barracks. While there, I learned to drive a big full size Navy bus, a trailer truck, and a command car. I was ordered to pick up Officers at Floyd Bennett Air Field and take them to any destination they requested.

One day, during a blinding snow blizzard, I was told to pick up an Admiral at Floyd Bennett. I managed to get on the belt parkway, passing all the stalled cars, and managed to get to the airfield, only to find out the flight had been canceled. By then, the snowplows were out doing their thing, so the trip back to the Receiving Station was not as harrowing.

On Dec. 26, 1945, the Navy Receiving Station in Brooklyn, N.Y., issued me transportation orders to Naval Air Station, Atlantic City, N.J. FFT VPB-101, via Penn. R.R. by coach. They gave me $1.00 for meals and $.30 for transfers.

My records were handed to me, to be delivered to the officer in charge. I reported the next morning at 0800 on the 27th and was surprised to see that the Navy had a squadron of B-17 Bombers. The Navy called them PB-1W's. They were 4-engine bombers with radar mounted in their bellies. I was seeing a squadron of three B-17s, which flew into the eye of the hurricane.

The squadron Commander was L.A. Dodson, and the executive officer was R. H. Wood. Just 9 days later, on January 5th, 1946, we received the first PB-1W. These were B-17 bombers that were modified with APS-20 and APS-53 air search radar installed in place of the bomb bay.

The next thing we knew, only a month later on February 4th, we received orders to move the squadron to Floyd Bennett Airfield in Brooklyn, NY. I was given the job of setting up a complete workable machine shop, capable of making any part the squadron needed to maintain the planes and equipment.

They sent me to every government facility in the area to pick up the pieces of equipment I needed. One by one, I managed to round up most of the pieces I needed—all except the one piece I really wanted: a Bridgeport milling machine.

I picked up a South Bend bench lathe for small work, a LeBlonde lathe for larger work, a Cincinnati milling machine, a shaper, a planer, and all the rest of the things necessary to make a

complete machine shop. I was given a nice-sized room off the hangar to set up all the machines, including wood-working machines built around a Dewalt radial arm saw. It all worked out great.

Mar 4th, flight tests and training on radar equipment began on the APS-20 and APS-53. Results showed it was the best surface radar in operation to date. Then, on Apr 15th, the squadron designation changed from VPB-101 to VX-4 (Experimental).

Sept. 14, 1946, the first hurricane flight of 5 hours was made by one of our planes, a PB-1W, flying out of Floyd Bennett.

On Sept. 18th, the squadron was moved to the Naval Air Station, Quonset Point, Rhode Island. We had to leave our new machine shop there in the room off the hangar.

* * * * *

It seemed that with the Cold War with Russia heating up, there was a need for an airborne early warning system, in addition to the DEW line and picket ships that were deployed in the Atlantic Ocean. VX-4 was redesignated as Airborne Early Warning Squadron 2 (VW-2).

Next, I was transferred to the Separation Center and, on January 22nd, 1947, I was honorably discharged.

I dedicate this to my children and all my family, so they know what freedom cost, and what part their father played in keeping this country safe.

See the following photos, pages 73 to 76

Page 73

LOCKING TAIL WHEEL ON THE TULAGI FLIGHT DECK
DURING THE INVASION OF SOUTHERN FRANCE

Page 74

RECEIVING THE NAVY COMMENDATION MEDAL FOR OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE OF DUTY DURING THE INVASION,

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MOST OF THE MEDALS AND RIBBONS I EARNED

Page 76

PHOTO TAKEN IN FRONT OF THE HONOR FLIGHT SIGN


NAVAL AVIATION
NEWS
F6F-5
Jap Electronics
Integrated Program
Bomb Arming Wires
Feb. 1, 1945
RESTRICTED
SHARE THIS COPY


NAVY/USMC COMM
COMBAT ACTION
UNITED STATES NAVY
PRESIDENTIAL UNIT
NAVY/USMC COMM
AMERICAN DEF SER
AMERICAN CAMPAIGN
EUROPE-AFRICA-ME
ASIATIC PACIFIC CAMP
WWII VICTORY
PHILIPPINE LIB
FRENCH LIBERATION
FR. LEGION OF HONOR
U.S. NAVY
COMBAT VETERAN
PHILIPPINE PRES UNIT
SHELLBACK
HONORABLE DISCHARGE

BIOGRAPHY

Robert (Bob) Miller grew up in Long Island, New York, and was the fifth of five children. Like most boys his age, he built a crystal set and model airplane. At the age of 13, he joined the Junior Naval Reserve (later known as the American Nautical Cadets.

When Bob was in high school, his family moved to Brooklyn, NY, where he attended the Delahanty Institute for Machinists. He then enlisted in the US Navy in January 1941. While in the navy, Bob served as an Aviation Machinist Mate, repairing and maintaining Pratt & Whitney radial engines on various aircraft, including the Grumman F4F Wildcat. He also served as Plane Director, as well as Petty Officer in charge of Plane Directors on the flight deck.

During WWII, Bob took part in Operation Torch (the Invasion of West Africa), Operation Dragoon (the Invasion of Southern France), the Battle of Guadalcanal, the Invasion of Lingayen Gulf, the Battle of Bataan, the Battle of Iwo Jima, and the Battle of Okinawa. He served on the USS Raven (AM-55), the USS Suwannee (CVE-27), the USS Chenango (CVE-28), and the USS Tulagi (CVE-72).

For his service during WWII, Bob was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal, the French Legion of Honor Medal, the Liberation of France Medal, the Presidential Unit Citation, and the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon, as well as several other ribbons. He was honorably discharged in 1946.

Following the war, Bob moved to New Jersey, where he met his wife on a blind date. They had three children, two boys and one girl, which they raised in Queens, NY, and on Long Island. He coached little league, was a Scout Master in the Boy Scouts, and became a Scout Leader when his daughter joined the Girl Scouts. He worked on a mockup of the Republic F-105 Thunderchief, then worked at Herman's World of Sporting Goods for 25 years.

Following his retirement from Herman's Sporting Goods, Bob moved to Florida, where he became actively involved in the Fort Lauderdale Archery Club. He also received his pilot's license at the age of 60.