Memoirs of World War II

By

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Section 1: The Navy

The following are recollections of incidents and events experienced by me during the period between November 1940 and January 1946 and represent some of the interesting (to me) and/or humorous occurrences that I can recall of my experiences. Whatever I write down in these memoirs are, to the best of my recollection, the facts as the events occur to me now. It must be remembered that I cannot guarantee that every word of these events is absolutely true, but they are as correct as I can make them.

I would also add, I enjoyed all my time in the US Navy and I wouldn't have changed all my experiences for anything in the world. I had never before experienced anything to compare with that time, and still remember those days with great pleasure and pride. When asked of my wartime experience, I am often asked if I was ever scared, and the truthful answer is that of course I was – many times. Anyone who went through the same sort of events I experienced and still insists they had never been scared is either one of two things – too stupid to have understood the risks involved, or else they are simply lying. For me, the worst times were not the actual battle scenes we experienced – because we were too darn busy to think of anything like that, but the waiting times – waiting for the action to commence, or even just putting to sea in dangerous waters where the ship was at risk every minute we were outside port.

Enlisting with the US Navy, October 1940

My first thoughts were to join one of the military services and try to learn a trade, and since my Father had served in the US Marine Corps during World War I, I went to their recruiting offices in Camden, New Jersey, to apply. As soon as I walked in the door of the office, the recruiting Sergeant took one look at me and said, "I hope you are not going to apply to enlist in the Marines." Being taken somewhat aback, I asked him why he made that statement, and he replied that there was no way I could be eligible. When I replied that I was 17 years old, very fit, had a high school diploma, so why was he refusing me, he said it was nothing to do with him, but the Marine Corps Regulations specified that the height requirement for the Marine Corps

minimum 5' 11" to 6"3", and the maximum weight 195 pounds. He very kindly explained that one of the major tasks of Marines was parades and display marching, and the Corps felt it was essential to have uniformity of ranks, hence the limitations as to height. I admit to amazement at this advice, but he suggested I try the Navy. After giving this a lot of thought, I luckily noticed an advertisement in the Camden newspaper a few weeks later announcing a special new program the US Navy was commencing for members of the US Naval Reserve, which was a four year program (the same time as a normal enlistment) which began with a four month training course at a radio school, with pay of $21 per month, followed by eight months on active duty, with the remaining three years on non-active duty as a normal reservist. Following the training school, you would be promoted from apprentice seaman to Radioman third class, with a pay rise to $115 per month and placed on active duty with the fleet. This seemed a pretty good way to go so I decided to enlist.

A few days later, I was chatting with my best mate, Wesley Bishop, who lived across the street from me and who had been my best friend for four or five years, and I mentioned what I was proposing to do about the Navy. He asked me lots of questions about the deal and I showed him the papers that they had given me, and to my great surprise and pleasure, he became very interested in the idea. A few days later he came over and told me he was going to try to enlist, so we decided to go in together that week and sign up. We went down to the recruiting office and spoke to the recruiting Chief Petty Officer, signed all the papers and were duly sworn in to the US Naval Reserve. After a few weeks we were notified to report to the recruiting office again to commence our service. We were then taken by train on 8th of November to The US Naval Radio Training School at

1 - New Naval Cadet, October 1940

a small town named Noroton, in Connecticut, where we were given uniforms and assigned to barracks. The school was a drastically different sort of existence for both of us and for a while seemed silly and a waste of time. We soon got into the swing of things and found the life not only bearable, but quite enjoyable. The PT was tough, but the rest of the school was no real problem. Some of the subjects we had to study were touch typing, (the typewriters had only blank keys to make it more effective) morse code, flag signaling, naval regulations, radio procedures, radio theory and maintenance and lots more to make sure we could fit in on board ship, and look after all our equipment.

Both Wes and I really felt we were doing something worthwhile with our lives and enjoying it at the same time. I should point out that most of the other personnel at the school were also new recruits to the Navy and were still learning their jobs. This also held true for the mess cooks, who prepared and served all our meals. It soon became obvious to us that they were still learning – as an example, one day for our evening meal we were served Jell-O, a trade name for jelly which was served to us at the big table in large tureens, but when someone tried to get some on his plate for dessert he found the big spoon they gave us to use couldn't be forced into the Jell-O. Then someone produced his GI pocketknife, which had been issued to all of us, opened it and found that, with some effort, the Jell-O could be cut into small squares and with a lot more effort, eaten. You couldn't call the stuff flavorful or delicious or anything like that, so most of it remained in the tureen. That only happened once, I'm happy to say, but considering the lack of training the mess cooks had before being inflicted on us, the food really got better and better and no one went hungry. In fact, we all began to look forward to our meals well before our time at the school was over.

2 - Sister Edith, Brother Fred, and I in front of Bus Terminal, Camden Plaza, 1941

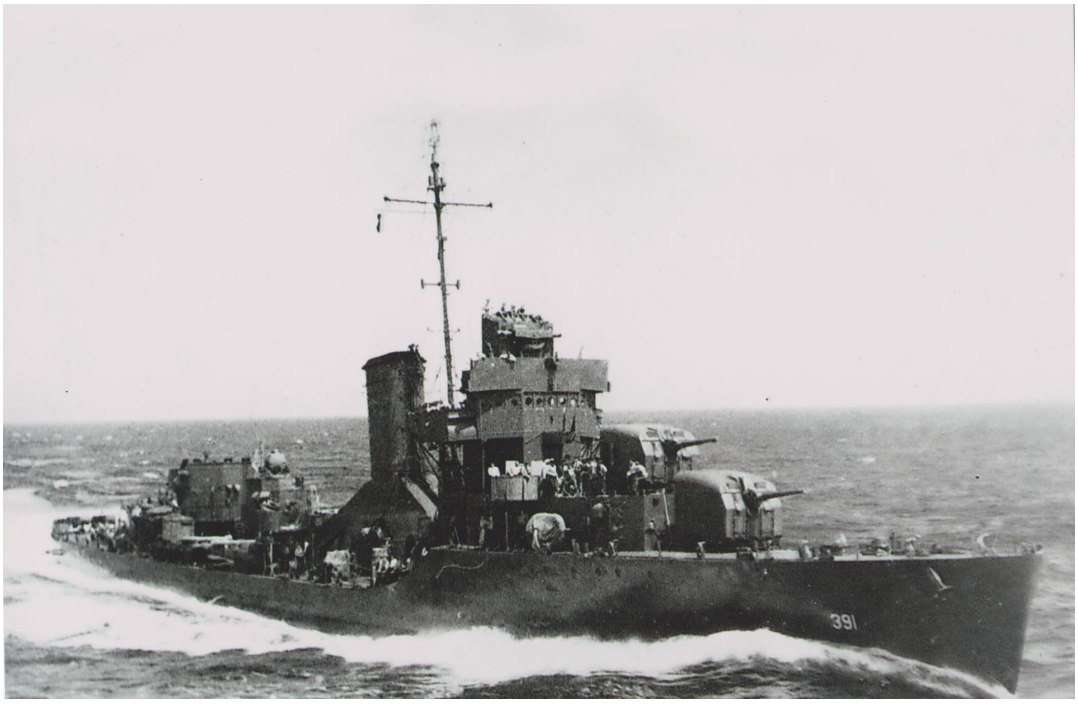
Naval Training Concludes, February 1941

We began the training in November 1940, and finished it in February 1941, after which the whole class at the school boarded a train to transfer to San Diego Destroyer Base, in San Diego, California. Since all the members of the class were going to different ships or stations, we were shipped out in fits and starts, with sailors going all over the Pacific and to stations all over the west coast and Hawaii. Wes was shipped out fairly quickly as he was going to the Battleship USS *Arizona*, while I was in San Diego for a few weeks while they organized my transfer to Bremerton, Washington, where my ship USS *Henley* was being refitted at the Bremerton Navy Yard. I went aboard a fleet oiler named USS *Neches*, on 22nd of February 1941 and arrived on board USS *Henley* on 3rd of March. During the time we were at sea on the *Neches* we were given one of the worst jobs possible on a Naval ship – Holystoning the decks. In those days oil tankers and lots of other ships had wooden planking placed over the steel decks, with the joints sealed with pitch. Needless to say, the timber decks on such ships got very dirty and stained with oil. The way this was remedied was by what was called Holystoning, which involved taking a piece of rectangular shaped sandstone with an indentation in the middle, and a broomstick, along with heaps of water as a lubricant and as a means of flushing away the small slivers of timber that the rough sandstone had removed from the deck. This had to be done manually, with a lot of downward pressure and it turned out to be a really backbreaking job. We got this job, of course because the normal crew of the ship hated it and we had to be given something to do. It was a horrible job.

Assignment to the USS *Henley*, San Diego, 3rd March 1941

3 - USS Henley, DD391

When I reported to the *Henley*, I soon found what a lucky man I had been, to be given a berth on a Destroyer. The *Henley* was a Craven Class, commissioned on 12th September 1938, and had an overall length of 341 feet, a beam of 34 feet 9 inches, a displacement of 1,500 tons, high pressure steam turbines generating 42,800 shaft horsepower. She carried a fuel load of 400 tons of fuel oil, giving her a range of 6,000 miles at her normal cruising speed of 22 knots. Her armament consisted of 16 x 21 inch torpedoes in quadruple tubes, 4 x 5 inch 38 calibre guns which were designed as dual purpose guns, capable of use as anti-aircraft or surface firing, and numerous .50 calibre machine guns.



4 - USS Henley, DD391

Her crew compliment (when placed in service) was 172, but during wartime this was raised to well over 200. She normally carried 4 x 25 foot motor whaleboats, on davits mounted near the break of the fo'c'sle (the forecastle), but these were removed shortly after the commencement of the war and replaced by life rafts.

The *Henley* survived the attack on Pearl Harbor, as well as the initial raid on the Gilbert and Marshall Islands, the Coral Sea battle, the landings on Guadalcanal and the subsequent Solomon Islands campaign, before being sunk by a Japanese submarine off Finschafen on 3

October 1943. Incidentally, I had been transferred from the *Henley* to a PT Boat outfit about 6 weeks before her loss.

With the peacetime complement of 172, she was a lovely ship to serve on. Although I had been very subject to seasickness, I found that after a few times at sea, the sea never again worried me, which was just as well, since those ships moved around very violently, even in just moderate seas. Sailors in Destroyers had two sayings about the ships – one was "she would roll in drydock" and the other was "she would roll in a heavy dew."

These sayings were quite accurate, as I had occasion to experience just before the war started when we had been sent, along with the *Saratoga* and the *Lexington*, on maneuvers west of Pearl Harbor. We had, of course been acting as what was called "plane guard", which involved sailing alongside one of the Carriers while she was landing planes or launching planes. We would be required to follow closely just on either the port or starboard quarter, as long as the maneuver lasted, so that in the unlikely event of a plane going into the water during landing or taking off we were in a very good position to get to the plane very quickly and rescue the crewmen. It was necessary for the rescue to be carried out in a very short time, because naval aircraft sink within a few seconds of hitting the water. Actually, a fighter plane had no flotation except for empty fuel tanks and when taking off, the tanks were always full to the top with fuel. When landing we had a bit of extra leeway because if the plane had any fuel on board when returning from a mission, they could always jettison any remaining fuel on board if they had problems which might have caused a wave off or something similar.

During the return to Pearl Harbor, we encountered a bad storm, which didn't bother the Heavy Cruisers that were normally assigned as part of a Carrier Task Force, because with their length they could ride over two or three waves and run along quite comfortably, while we Destroyers had to plow through each wave, which in this particular storm were enormous. In fact, during the peak of the storm, we had white water breaking right over the top of the bridge, which was some 65 feet above the water line. At this particular time, before the war commenced, we had two motor whaleboats carried on davits from the main deck, one on either side of the ship. Originally the *Henley* had four of them, two on either side, but two had been removed during the time I spent on her before the war broke out. During this storm the boat on the Port side, which had her keel 30 feet above the water line was literally ripped off the davits by the seas and carried away before we could do anything. The boat on the starboard had her strongbacks torn off and almost went overboard as well. Incidentally, the strongbacks were immensely strong braided rope and canvas that were secured to heavy fittings welded on to the hull both top and bottom of the boat and pulled very tight so the boat would not move with the movement of the ship. These strongbacks were snapped off in a way we could not have

imagined, and if the storm had not abated when it did, we would have lost the second motor whaleboat as well. You cannot imagine the ferocity of that particular storm – no one could go out on deck because of the size of the waves that were breaking over the ship. I have a photograph of a Destroyer similar to the *Henley*, not in a storm but just in a heavy swell, showing you how high a sea can break over a Destroyer, and keep in mind, the Destroyer shown in the photo didn't have to cope with force 8 or 9 gales. A gale like we were experiencing would blow you off your feet unless you had a lifeline or a hand railing to hold on to.

When we got back to Pearl Harbor we found that the entire front of the bridge structure from top to bottom and from side to side had been stripped of all the paint, including undercoats and primer, and had to be repainted – no easy task. Obviously, the number one and two gun mounts on the forecastle also required repainting, because they too were completely bare shiny steel. No one had ever experienced a storm the like of that one, and I might add, no one wanted to go through that again. No one on board had been able to sleep, because even if you were able to get to your bunk, you still had to hang on with two hands to remain in the bunk. It was some couple of days, I can tell you. Shortly after this storm it was decided, that, with the gathering storm clouds of war beginning to appear, the Navy decided not to replace the motor whaleboats, but instead increase the number of life-rafts to provide for the possibility of the ship sinking. When the *Henley* was sunk, a month or two after I was transferred to Motor Torpedo Boats, very few of the crew were able to make use of the life-rafts, and as a consequence most of the crew did not survive.

To get back to the story, during the period between me joining the ship and the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese, we took part in quite a few maneuvers. These involved going to sea with a Task Force, usually made up of one or two Aircraft Carriers, a couple of Heavy Cruisers, plus anywhere between one division of Destroyers (four in number, and usually the seventh division, of which the *Henley* was a part), and a squadron of Destroyers (2 divisions plus the squadron flagship, in our case the *USS Selfridge*) usually the fourth squadron. The flagship carried eight five inch .50 caliber guns as her main armament, plus the same complement of torpedoes as the *Henley* (16 tubes of 21 inch torpedoes in quadruple mounts) This made the total number of Destroyers in the Task Force nine.

During these maneuvers we would carry out live firing of our main battery on targets being towed by another ship, and sometimes simulated attacks by aircraft, during which we would fire on a target being towed by an aircraft with either our 5inch guns (which were dual purpose – surface and anti-aircraft) or with .50 caliber machine guns, of which we had four. On very rare occasions we would be required to fire torpedoes at a target ship (with dummy warheads, of course.) These rare occasions always left us very unhappy, because our torpedoes

were just about useless. Fortunately for us, we never had to fire a torpedo during battles, because the only time we had to fire torpedoes was during the rescue of survivors of the Coral Sea Battle, when we were required to sink the *Neosho*, an oil tanker that had been left a battered hulk by Japanese planes. We had been told to sink her, but when we fired a torpedo at her from point blank range, actually heard the torpedo hit side of the ship, but no explosion occurred. We then had another go, but the second torpedo never hit the ship. We had to resort to our 5 inch gun through which we put forty or fifty shells before she finally went down. We learned that US Naval torpedoes such as we carried were completely unreliable and it wasn't until just about the end of the World War II that better torpedoes became as reliable as they should have been from the start.

During these maneuvers, we were also required to carry out our plane guard duties to make sure we could handle real emergencies if they occurred during actual battles. These simulations showed us how little we knew about rescue operations at sea, but, with practice (which we got plenty of) we soon developed a good understanding and became quite proficient at the job. The main thing, it was pointed out to us time after time, was time – if we weren't able to complete the rescue in under a minute, the probability was that the Navy would lose at best one aircrew man. By the time of Pearl Harbor, we were receiving complimentary reports from the Carriers about our proficiency. Fortunately, however, we were never required to carry out a rescue under battle conditions. A few other Destroyers were required to carry out rescue operations during battle conditions, but never any of our Division.

When you consider the woeful torpedoes we were carrying, one can imagine the feelings aboard the *Henley.* Just after the Pearl Harbor attack when we were patrolling outside the harbor looking for submarines, along with four other Destroyers and three Light Cruisers, orders came through from the Commander of the Pacific Fleet, to form up as a Task Force and steam at flank speed in a north-westerly course to intercept the main body of the Japanese Fleet, which had been spotted 300 miles north-west of Pearl Harbor. Upon making contact with the enemy, the Destroyers were to make an immediate torpedo attack, led by the acknowledged fleet expert on Destroyer torpedo warfare, the captain of the *Henley*, and the commander of the seventh division of Destroyers (the same man). I'm sure you can understand our concern when the Japanese Battleships carried 18 inch guns with a range of some 20 miles, while we would have to get within 4,000 yards (two nautical miles) before being able to fire the torpedoes and would have to slow down from our flank speed of 30 knots to less than 15 knots in order to provide enough accuracy to hope to get a hit. As well as those facts, we were also aware of the likelihood of only one chance in 10 of the torpedo actually exploding. We all heaved a sigh of relief, that after two

days of searching (legitimately I must add), we never found any trace of the Japanese and were called back to Pearl Harbor.

Since we had only returned to Pearl Harbor on Friday 5th December, we hadn't had time to restock our ammunition or fuel. We got back to Pearl Harbor with absolutely no fuel oil to use in our main boilers. We were using diesel fuel normally carried for our motor whaleboats, and were just about out of that by the time we moored back to our nest of Destroyers. I have to say we had no problems obtaining supplies of ammunition and fuel oil when we got back. Prior to the attack, the procedure to be undertaken to obtain oil required signatures from everybody up to the harbormaster before getting approval, and even then we would have to wait at least two days before it was delivered. As for ammunition, it was even tougher, and required signatures from the gunnery officer on board the ship all the way up to the chief of staff to the Commander of the Pacific Fleet. It was always a great big hassle!

However, this time we were beating away with sticks the boats coming alongside trying to give us ammo and fuel and other supplies – no paperwork required!

Attack on Pearl Harbor (see Page 140 for service record entry)

I suppose that I should start this series of anecdotes with the start of the major events on December 7th 1941, but first I should mention that on Saturday, December 6th, Wesley Bishop had met me in Honolulu and we visited some friends of mine that day. We had been invited back on the Sunday for a barbecue and picnic and to spend the day with them. We agreed to meet at the liberty wharf in Pearl Harbor at 0900 and proceed to Honolulu (Waikiki Beach, actually). The Japanese attack, of course, prevented us going ashore, and when the *Henley* returned to Pearl Harbor, I heard that the *Arizona* had been sunk with most of her crew being lost, including Wes. Incidentally, Wes was my best pal who had grown up with me in Moorestown, New Jersey, joined the Navy with me in October 1940, and attended the same training school, the US Navy Radio School in Noroton, Connecticut with me. Wes was

5 - Honolulu, 1941

shipped across the US by rail with me, then was assigned to the Battleship USS *Arizona*, at the same time I was assigned to the Destroyer, USS *Henley,* DD391.

Anyway, I had finished breakfast at about 0730 and reported to the radio shack to relieve the duty radioman to allow him to get his breakfast. Unfortunately for him, he never finished his breakfast because at about 0745 General Quarters (battle stations) sounded and he had to report back to the radio shack which was his battle station. At about 0750 a message started coming over air on all available radio frequencies, both on the voice TBS (Talk Between Ships) network and the harbor working network in Morse code – the message read, and I'll never forget it "AIR RAID ON PEARL HARBOR – THIS IS NO DRILL REPEAT THIS IS NO DRILL."

As soon as I was relieved by the normal watch I proceeded to my battle station, first shell loader on number 3 gun, which was a 5inch 38 calibre open mount gun on the after deck hose. I had to go through a short passageway from the radio shack to the hatch opening out on to the forecastle deck, spin open the dogs on the hatch, go through the hatch and then turn after to the after deckhouse. Under normal conditions (peace time maneuvers) it would take some considerable time (up to half an hour) to get from the sounding of general quarters to commencing firing of our five inch guns, but this day our five in gun had been firing for almost ten minutes before I got out on the forecastle deck and just as I finished dogging down the hatch and was still facing forward, the number 2 five inch gun fired from a position trained as far aft as it could, which meant the muzzle was only about ten feet from my face. I could see the muzzle blast and burnt cork and smoke in the air, but so help me to this day, I cannot remember hearing a sound! Then as I turned around to go aft to my gun I looked out on the quarter and saw a plane flying very low, at right angles to the *Henley* but about 1,000 yards astern. This didn't really excite me because it was normal those days for our own planes to carry out dummy air raids on Pearl Harbor, but when the plane dropped a torpedo I almost fell over the side and I remember clearly thinking 'I've never seen our planes dropping torpedoes in the Harbor before". It wasn't really clear to me what was happening until the plane banked away from us and started to climb up and I saw the red circle on the bottom of wings that it started to dawn on me what was really happening. Then, or course, I raced down the ladder from the forecastle deck to the main deck, then down the main deck to the ladder leading up to the afterdeck house. As I was about to climb the ladder, a Japanese plane coming from the stern started to strafe us and one of the Firemen (the Aussies would call him an ERA) came out from under the after deckhouse and scooted along the deck to a hatch that would let him go down another ladder to the fire room where his battle station was. I don't think I've ever seen anyone move as fast as he did and I got the impression that he didn't climb down the hatch like normally did but rather dived down it head first – and the deck of the fire room was about 20 feet below the main deck. The thing that

amazed me was that this man had arthritis, rheumatism and no one knows what else, and normally it would have taken him about tem minutes to get to the hatch from the after deckhouse, then another ten minutes to get the hatch open and laboriously inch his way through it. I just stood there and roared laughing and was still laughing when I go to Number 3 gun – everyone wanted to know what was so funny until I described what I had seen – I'm sure the rest of the crew thought we were out of our minds and under the circumstances I don't blame them.

The reason for the quickness of the crew getting the guns into action is fairly obvious when you know what happened on Friday, as we were returning to Pearl Harbor after a training exercise involving firing at targets being towed by planes and ships. Normally, after firing our guns they were stripped, the firing mechanism removed, stripped, greased and then placed in the armory under lock and key. On Friday, December 5th 1941, the firing mechanisms were removed from the guns, stripped, cleaned, greased, then REINSTALLED IN THE GUNS!!! In addition, contrary to normal procedures of returning to the magazines any unused ammunition, not only was this ammunition retained in the ready ammunition chests on deck, but thee chests were filled to capacity!! At the same time gunners mates were kept busy belting up 50 calibre ammunition and storing it on deck alongside the machine guns. All of this was in complete defiance of all normal regulations, and took place on the Friday afternoon as we returned to Pearl Harbor. The result of all this was that the *Henley* was able to commence firing very shortly after the attack started. It has always been a mystery to me why all those previous regulations seemed to be ignored at that time, yet everyone who is questioned officially states unequivocally that we didn't know the attack was coming.

The attack lasted for what seemed like hours but couldn't have, because even though we started the attack with cold boilers, we were under way in less than half an hour (a record for boiler rooms under normal peace time operations) and headed out through the channel between Ford Island and the northern shore of Pearl Harbor. On the way out we could see huge clouds of smoke and explosions, and still the Japanese planes came over. We go out through the harbor just in time to see another Destroyer firing on a Japanese sub that had run aground on a shallow reef just outside the harbor entrance. We patrolled outside the harbor for some time firing at the Japanese planes as they passed overhead but I don't think we hit any. A little later a couple of Light Cruisers came out of the harbor together with a couple more Destroyers and we received orders to form a Task Force and steam north-west at flank speed to intercept the main body of the Japanese Fleet, which, we had been told, had been sighted 300 miles north-west of Pearly Harbor. Our mission was to attack, and if possible, destroy the Japanese, who had several Carriers, a couple of Battleships, dozens of Destroyers, etc etc. Since the commander of Destroyer Division Seven (7) who happened to be carrying his flag on the *Henley*, was

considered the fleet expert on Destroyer torpedo attacks, we were nominated to lead the attack! All I can say is, thank heavens we couldn't find the Japanese!! We really did search hard though, so much so, that when we got back to Pearl Harbor we were running our boiler rooms on the diesel fuel we had on board to operate our motor whaleboats instead of the normal, much heavier oil we normally used for our main boilers. I might add that we had virtually no ammunition left for our five inch guns and precious little 50 calibre ammunition either.

On the way back into the harbor we had to pass within a few fathoms of USS *Nevada*, which had gotten under way during the attack, even though fairly seriously damaged. She was attacked again in the channel and was forced to beach herself, so as not to block the channel altogether. Then when we got further into the harbor we could see a hell of a lot of damage and destruction. I noticed that USS *Utah* (a former Battleship converted to a target ship) had been sunk at her moorings by the torpedo I had seen dropped early in the attack. In fact, she had been moored in a similar position to the mooring used by the Carriers when they were in Pearl, so it was fairly obvious they were looking for the Carriers. As soon as we had anchored in the harbor, the lighters started flocking to us offering us fuel oil, five inch ammunition, .50 calibre ammo, food, etc and no questions asked as to the authority of the issue nor any signatures – only questions such as 'is that all you want?', 'can't you use any more?' and 'we'll come back if you want'.

Previously we had to produce forms in quintuplicate, all signed by the head of the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard, and the Admiral and go through all sorts of rigmarole just to get a few boxes of food, with supplies of fuel and ammunition almost impossible.

It wasn't until almost two weeks later that I finally got confirmation that Wes Bishop could not have possibly survived when the *Arizona* blew up – it sure was a cruel blow for me and for his family.

In writing about the attack on Pearl Harbor, I made particular mention about the extraordinary disobedience to standing orders regarding safety matters dealing with live ammunition and firing pins on 5 inch guns which occurred during our return to Pearl Harbor after being detached from the Aircraft Carrier group on the Friday 5th December 1941, but I couldn't find out why the actions happened. The *Henley* was able to commence firing so quickly on that Sunday, because of the disregard of normal practices. Odd circumstances, particularly since all authorities involved insist to this day, that they had no foreknowledge of the possibility of an attack. I have finally found the reasons behind the actions of the gunnery officer and his part in this story – THEY WERE ORDERED TO DO IT!!!! This possibility had been pre-occupying my mind for quite a while, but I had no idea where the orders could have originated; but now I have had the matter clarified for me.

While researching the section of my memoirs relating to the amphibious landings at Leyte Gulf, I was reading a book from my library entitled "The Battle of Leyte Gulf," which describes not only the Battle itself, but also most of the events leading up to that momentous event, including many incidents prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor. One of the incidents described occurred just before the *Henley* left the Task Force 8, the commander of which was William F. (Bull) Halsey, Jr, who was on board his flagship, USS *Enterprise*. In the interests of authenticity I will quote directly from the book.

> *On 27 November, 1941, nine days before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, ten days before the United States declared war on the Empire of Japanese, and thirteen days before Germany and Italy declared war on the United States-the pilots in the squadron ready rooms of the aircraft Carrier Enterprise were handed a mimeographed sheet entitled "Battle Order Number One." The directive began with the rather startling words, "The Enterprise is now operating under war conditions. At any time, day or night, we must be ready for instant action." The final words on the sheet read, "It is part of the tradition or our Navy that, when put to the test, all hands keep cool, keep their heads, and FIGHT. Steady nerves and stout hearts are needed now." Commander William H. Buracker, the Task Force commander's operations officer, stared incredulously at the mimeographed sheet in his hand for a moment and then ran up the several ladders to the Enterprise's flag bridge where he knew he would find his boss.*
>
> *"Admiral, did you authorize this thing?" Buracker asked, breathing heavily from the hastened climb.*
>
> *"Yes,"came the reply.*
>
> *"Do you realize that this means war?" Buracker asked.*
>
> *"Yes," the Admiral repeated laconically.*
>
> *At that same moment, aircraft in Enterprise's hangar bay were being fitted out with bombs, torpedoes and a full allowance of machine gun ammunition. And the other 12 ships in Task Force 8, including the Henley, then steaming south-west from Pearl Harbor on a mission of delivering aircraft to Wake Island, were fitting out their torpedoes with warheads and breaking out live rounds of gun ammunition.*

"Goddammit, Admiral," Buracker said with obvious exasperation, "You can't start a private war of your own! Who's going to take the responsibility?"

From beneath thick eyebrows, the Admiral's eyes burned brightly as he said, "I'll take it. If anything gets in the way we'll shoot first and argue afterwards."

Nine days later, bombs cascaded from the skies over Pearl Harbor, ending America's last period of innocence and plunged the nation headlong into the greatest war mankind had ever seen. The United States Navy as a whole was not prepared for what happened that day, but Task Force 8, under the command of Vice Admiral William F. Halsey was, and so was USS Henley!

My only regret about the situation I have just described is that even though we were very well prepared for the attack, with plenty of live ammunition in the ready ammunition chests and firing pins already installed in the five inch guns, we were unable to capitalize on our luck and I am quite sure that we couldn't claim any aircraft shot down, although it is very possible we did cause damage to a few of them. In fact, during all my time on board the *Henley*, the only damage we could honestly claim to have done to enemy property would be several Japanese planes we did shoot down during our time in the Solomon Islands and a lot of damage to shore installations during our many shore bombardment assignments and hopefully some casualties among the shore personnel during our bombardments. We couldn't really claim any certain sub-marine kills either, although we felt that we did have a couple of kills out of the many depth charges we dropped. Of course, once I joined the PT Boats we were able to claim much more damage and more casualties because of the intimacy of the contact and the types of engagements we were involved in.

During our re-entry to Pearl Harbor, we had our first sighting of all the damage that had been done to our fleet by the Japanese planes on December the 7th. When we first entered the Ford Channel we found that we couldn't get back to our anchorage by the same route we had used going out. Since we had exited the harbor the Battleship *Nevada* had been able to get under weigh without her skipper and under the command of a fairly junior officer, but after being damaged at her berth and being struck by many bombs as she was trying to get out of the harbor, she started sinking, and to his credit, the junior officer acting as captain of the ship decided to run the ship aground on the northern side of the harbor entrance so that she wouldn't block the channel.

If she had sunk in the middle of the entrance no one would have been able to enter or leave the harbor. This would have been a calamity for the Navy! Since we couldn't go past Ford

Island on the north, we had to pass on the south, which meant we had to go past 'Battleship Row', where all the Battleships had been berthed. We couldn't believe our eyes when we saw all the horrible destruction that had been caused by the Japanese planes.

When we passed the *Arizona* and saw the condition she had been caused, I felt sure that Wes Bishop had very likely been killed during the attack, but of course, I couldn't verify this for some time after we returned to Pearl Harbor. To us, and I'm sure to anyone that saw the dreadful destruction, it would have felt that the United States Navy was almost a spent force. Naturally, it all made us more than furious at the Japanese, and determined to have our revenge as soon as possible.

One of the first things that we noticed on our arrival at Pearl Harbor was the condition of the water we had to steam through to get to our mooring -- it was filthy! – particularly when compared to the normal condition of almost pristine purity which was the normal thing before the attack. Before December 7th there had been very strict regulations in force in the harbor, and the spill of even a cup of oil would have called for an inquiry into the causes, the result of which could have caused considerable and undesirable consequences for the perpetrator. Other very strict conditions to prevent contamination of the waters by such things as sewage, garbage or other such things were in effect, so that, in fact Pearl Harbor had been a beautiful place to visit and to anchor in. Obviously the attack had caused huge spills of oil, both in the normal and burnt condition, as well as wreckage, shell casings, and all the other detritus of battle, leaving the waters in such a mess that the clean up would obviously take quite a long time. Just the normal aftermath of the commencement of war, I suppose.

Many other changes were almost immediately apparent, as well, such as Liberty passes, Approval for supplies (ammunition, food, fuel oil, etc) which previously all required a signature from a senior officer shore, but now only required a signature from the Gunnery Officer, Commissary Officer, or Engineering Officer -- Not even the Commanding Officer of the ship!

I suppose I should clarify the word Liberty – in the US Navy the word Liberty means permission to leave the ship in port for a period of not longer than a few day, and in fact the word indicates that the person granted Liberty must return to the ship on the day of the liberty and may not stay ashore overnight. Any time away from the ship (other than on duty, of course) which entails overnight absence is considered Leave and requires special written approval from the Skipper or the Personnel Officer. Liberty only requires verbal approval from the Personnel Officer.

In any case, liberty for any sailor, at this particular time, was not a consideration to be a possibility, there was much too much to be done aboard ship, not only to repair damage caused by the attack, but also to prepare the ship for war. This involved removing all flammable

materials wherever possible, securing anything that could possibly be dislodged by explosion, checking all compartments for water tightness, all hatches for good fastenings, ensuring that everything topside was secure but reasonably easily removable if required, removing the motor whaleboats, securing life rafts, (as many as needed for the crew) etc, etc. I can't remember all the jobs that had to be done, but it took all hands at least a couple of weeks before the ship was considered shipshape and ready for war. One of the things that was done during this period was the alteration of the anti-aircraft guns and the addition of more machine guns. After this we had to put to sea again to go through all the possible ways we would be required to deal with the enemy when next we confronted him.

In the next few months we would have very rarely any opportunity to go ashore at Pearl Harbor so it was some time before we were able to view the tremendous damage that had been inflicted on our Battleships on Battleship row. We received a very great shock when the amount of damage became apparent, and I was particularly shocked at the condition of USS *Arizona*, where Wes had been. When we were able to get into Honolulu and saw the small amount of damage the city had suffered, I got quite a shock, when I compared it with the damage suffered in Pearl Harbor -there was very little apparent damage to Honolulu and Waikiki Beach.

Incidentally, I never got back to Waikiki to see how my friends there had fared in the attack, so I had to contact their relations back in New Providence, who told me that there had been no problems for them during the attack.

We hadn't long been refueled and gotten our magazines restocked and our fuel replenished when we were sent out with a Carrier Task Force to patrol around Oahu Island, preventing any more surprise attacks.

After an intensive retraining period lasting a few months, we were told that we were to be part of the first attack on Japanese territory by the US Navy of World War II, so we were pretty excited, and after some further training exercises we left Pearl with a Task Force comprising several Heavy Cruisers, six Destroyers, and two Aircraft Carriers, we took off for the Gilbert and Marshall Islands which were situated south-west of Hawaii. We arrived in the vicinity of the target about 0400 and immediately took our station as plane guard on the port side of one of the Carriers. Plane guard Destroyers were placed off the port and starboard quarters of the Carrier to provide quick response in the event of one of the planes going in to the water, either on takeoff of on landing to ensure safety for the pilots of the crashed plane. Incidentally, in all the times we acted as plane guard we never were required to carry out this part of the duty.

We were launching a surprise attack of our own, this time against the Gilbert and Marshal groups of Islands, which were under Japanese control at that time. Our surprise attack was successful, because we saw very few Japanese planes during our attack on the airfields and

military installations there. It was really only a token attack and didn't have much bearing on the war, but it made us feel a lot happier to be able to get a little of our own back.

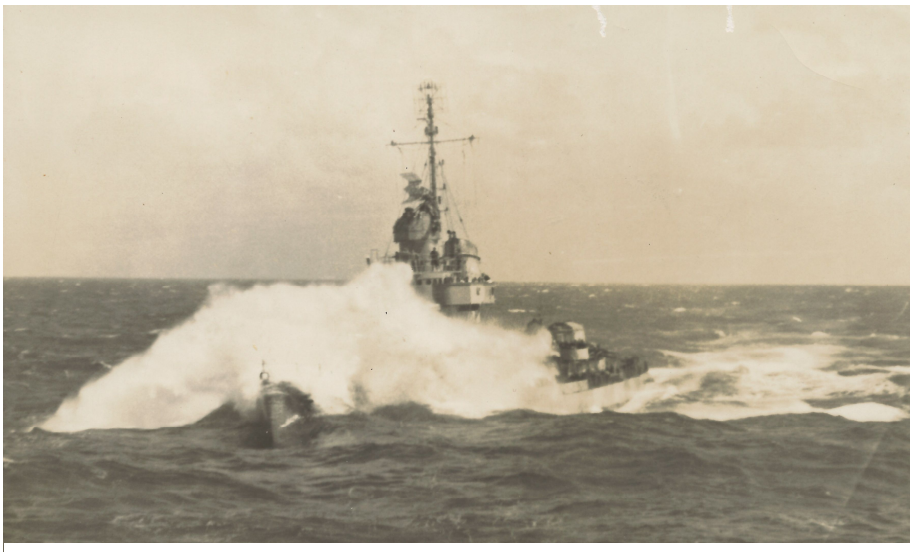
After our return to Pearl Harbor things settled down a fair bit, with our seagoing activities mainly confined to additional training with Carrier Task Groups, comprising aircraft landings, takeoffs and simulated air attacks on the ships by our own planes. We also had a lot of plane guard practice and live firing of five-inch aircraft guns and .50 calibre machine guns on towed aerial targets and towed surface targets. In those days, by the way, there was no radar installed on any of our ships, and in fact we didn't have any installed until just before the Solomon's' campaign – it was installed in Brisbane, using our own lifting equipment because there were no cranes available in Brisbane with the necessary height requirements. The first radar we had installed was search radar only with a PPI scope (Plan and Position Indication) and a bedspring antenna, which gave us a range of several miles. Unfortunately, this radar could not be used for fire control but only as a search tool, so all our ranging jobs had to be carried out optically, using optical range finders, which were difficult to use in seas of any size. As a result, our firing outcomes left a bit to be desired. Be that as it may, the trials were very useful, even if only to let us know our own shortcomings.

Huge Seas

The only incident of note I have mentioned in part previously. It was the voyage we undertook together with an aircraft Carrier, some Heavy Cruisers and some Destroyers from our squadron to ferry some aircraft to Midway Island to reinforce the Marine garrison there against any attack by the Japanese. These aircraft were duly flown off the Carrier and landed on Midway without incident but the situation soon changed as we headed back to Pearl. We had struck huge swells (on the port beam) soon after leaving Midway and shortly afterwards found the source of the big swells – it was an horrendous storm, with winds in excess of 100 miles per hour, huge seas and deluging rain – I had never struck such huge seas, with the tops of the seas being blown off by the gale, virtually no visibility, and no chance of going topside without being bodily swept overboard.

We turned to head into the seas (a dire necessity in such conditions to prevent capsizing) but the distance between the tops of the swells was so long (over 300 feet) that we Destroyers were in dire straits indeed, because the distance between seas meant we would emerge from one sea only to dig our bow deeply into the next one. This meant our pitching condition was such that in one instant our bow would be 30 or 40 feet in the air and in the next was buried roughly the same distance below the next sea. Of course, this meant that when the bow was buried, the stern (and the propellers) would be exposed, causing serious strains on the propellers, the shafts, and the turbines and gearing. The Cruisers were not seriously worried by this problem, nor were

the Aircraft Carriers, because their extra length allowed them to ride over the crests of two or three seas without very much pitching at all. The Cruisers were 600 feet long and the Carriers over 800 feet long compared with the *Henley*'s mere 334 feet length.



6 - Breaking Waves

To add insult to injury, the Task Group Commander on an Aircraft Carrier, decided to get clear of the storm as soon as possible and ordered a speed increase to 25 knots. As a result of this we found, when we got back to Pearl Harbor and could inspect the ship, that not only was all the paint on the forward half of the ship completely stripped off the bare steel, but we had lost one of our 25 foot motor whaleboats from it davits (a position approximately 33 feet above the water line and 150 feet aft of the bow) and the strongbacks holding the other boat on its davits had been carried away during the storm and one of its davits had come adrift. I might add that the whole forward surface of the bridge structure, up to and including the fire control director above the bridge, approximately 60 feet above the waterline was completely bare metal.

Convoy Escort

The main activity which occupied our time between December 7th and the Coral Sea battle was probably the most boring part of my entire career in the Navy; convoy duty between Pearl Harbor and the south-west Pacific taking supplies to places like American Samoa, which, by the way, was one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen, and the people were the loveliest groups of people I have ever met. Not only were the people very attractive physically, but also they were the friendliest, happiest, most gentle souls it has been my privilege to meet anywhere in the world. The Harbor in Samoa was fantastic, as well, and I will never forget the few days we spent in that paradise.

These voyages were of various lengths of time depending on our ports of call and time spent loading and unloading goods and personnel to the ports of call and comprised day after day of slow steaming ahead of or alongside lumbering cargo ships searching for submarines and/or enemy aircraft, who might have evil intentions about our accompanying ships, or indeed,

ourselves. The majority of the ships under our protection were very slow by our standards, being capable of maximum speeds of about 12 knots, while our normal cruising speed was somewhere around 20 knots, and this made for very slow progress.

This slow speed also made the whole convoy much more vulnerable to attack from submarines and required very vigilant attitudes on the part of watch keepers and sonar experts. The sensitivity and overall quality of underwater sound detectors in those days left a lot to be desired. In fact, most detections made by our sonar men was of schools of fish - we wasted quite a few depth charges on poor defenseless tuna and other species during these convoys, but they provided just about all the excitement we had during most of our convoy jobs.

During one convoy, however, we had one bit of excitement that seems funny now, but at the time was far from it. We had taken a convoy into the Harbor at Espirito Santos in Vanuatu and took up a patrol outside the Harbor entrance to protect the ships against any attack by surface ships, when one of the lookouts screamed a warning that a large unidentified ship was approaching our path.

We immediately were called to General Quarter's battle stations and took off at flank speed to intercept the unknown vessel. I happened to be on the bridge at the time and I grabbed a pair of binoculars to sneak a look. What I saw gave me a real scare – all I could see was the superstructure of the ship and this seemed to me to be a copybook silhouette of a Japanese Battleship. At the time, our skipper was called "Fearless Smith", because he was real Gung Ho, if you know what that means. To "Fearless" nothing was too dangerous for him, particularly if it involved doing damage to the enemy, and as a result he was going to attack this Battleship even though it was obvious we wouldn't have a prayer and would certainly be sunk as a result. Everyone on board must have breathed a sigh of relief when we discovered, as we got closer, that what looked for all the world like the superstructure of Japanese Battleship turned out to be a whole bunch of cargo booms made fast to the main mast of a medium sized inter-island trading ship. Our skipper missed his chance to be a hero (probably a dead one).

The Battle of the Coral Sea, May 1942

This convoy job was our last for a while, because as soon as we arrived in Noumea harbor and dropped off our convoy we were ordered back to sea to head north to assist the Carrier Task Forces patrolling in the Coral Sea. We got there just in time to be involved in the Coral Sea Battle, which was just starting as we arrived. We were assigned, as usual, to the job of plane guard with one of the Carriers and no sooner had we taken up position (on the port quarter, as usual) than the fighter planes assigned to protect us from Japanese planes started taking off and scrambling for altitude. The battle was without doubt the fiercest we had suffered since Pearl Harbor and we took a hiding! The Japanese planes attacked with great determination and skill

and we were lucky to suffer only one Carrier lost. The enemy, as usual, concentrated on the Aircraft Carriers, since they realized they were the critical factors in the war, so they didn't worry too much about small ships like Destroyers, except to get rid of annoying little pests who were trying to protect their prime targets. In fact, one flight of Japanese dive bombers spotted a US Tanker, the USS *Neosho* who had just refueled the Task Forces and had been sent south to be clear of the battle, escorted by a Destroyer, the USS *Sims*. The Japanese thinking *Sims* was a Carrier, attacked

MOND

DESTROYER SHATTE
BOMB: BLAZING PLANE ON TANKER

By L. J. Fitz-Henry, Courier-Mail Special Correspondent

ATTACKED by waves of Japanese bombers, the U.S. destroyer Sims blew up when a bomb hit her stern, and the naval tanker Neosho, after sustaining 10 direct hits, was totally disabled when a Japanese bomber crashed on her in flames.

Grim details of this action, in which nine Japanese bombers were destroyed, were told to me by wounded survivors when they arrived at an Australian port 10 days after the Coral Sea Battle had begun.

The Sims—loss of which was announced in The Courier-Mail on Saturday—was escorting the tanker. She blew up when a bomb exploded on her stern.

"She seemed to split up the keel and just disappear," one of the survivors from the tanker said.

Jumped Overboard

Even after the Neosho had been hit at least 10 times and a blazing bomber crashed on her deck aft of the funnel, she did not sink. Her partially-emptied tanks kept her afloat, despite a list of 25 degrees. A day after the battle she had to be destroyed by one of the rescuing warships.

When the Japanese bomber crashed in flames on the vessel's deck some of the crew, believing that the end had come, jumped overboard.

Together with men from the Sims they clung to rafts or huddled in one lifeboat until picked up some days later by an Allied warship after having been sighted by friendly planes.

Those who stayed and fought [illegible] were rescued the next day.

day.

3 Air Attacks

Many of the wounded from both ships are still lying in cots in an Allied hospital "somewhere in Australia"—unsung heroes of one of the greatest naval victories in history. They told me the tanker fought off three attacks. Eighteen planes made the first attack simultaneously from three quarters.

All the bombs missed, because [illegible] destroyer escort.

In the second and third attacks the enemy pilots were more daring.

"They simply flew through the barrage to get us," one surviver said. "We got, I think, nine of the buzzards."

Practically all the men on the deck of the tanker at the time of the attack were killed or wounded by bombers. Many of those below decks were badly burnt by flame or scalded by escaping steam.

"I'll never forget that sight. That Jap. must have been mad, because he came straight at us in a perfect dive, just like a dive-bomber," said a survivor.

Sheet Of Flame

"He must have had some unreleased bombs, because there was an explosion and burst of flame when he struck us. I reckon everybody up aft was killed. There was just one sheet of flame across the deck.

"I got it in the leg, and a lot of scalding steam in my face, arms, and chest.

"Our fellows, both at the guns and those on fire duty, had guts. So had the captain. There was no need for orders; everyone did what he had been trained to do."

The story of the privations suffered by those who took to rafts and lifeboats when it seemed that the blazing ship would founder was told by a young engineer.

"I was down in the engine-room when the first hit did this to me (pointing to his injured legs).

Drifted 5 Days

"Half-stunned, I made towards a liferaft, which other members of the crew were preparing to throw overboard. Then the third bomb hit us. I slid across the deck to the edge. The ship listed, and I went overboard.

"The others had floated the raft, and I was pulled out of the water.

"We drifted well away from the ship, and the last I saw of her was a mass of smoke.

"We must have drifted nearly all that day when a lifeboat, occupied by some of our shipmates, took us in.

"We had some food and water and medical supplies. Only one member of our boat died from wounds before we were picked up.

"There were just under 30 of us in the boat. I think we drifted for about five days. The daylight hours were the worst, as the heat increased the pain of my legs. We rationed our food and water, and there was little left when we were rescued."

7 –Brisbane Courier Mail, 15 June 1942

her, causing serious damage but not sinking her. When they attacked again to finish her off, the *Sims* fought

back courageously, so they dropped a bomb on the Destroyer, sinking her almost immediately and killing most of her crew.

In the meantime, the Japanese attacks on the Carriers continued unabated causing serious damage to the other American Carrier but not sinking her. While this was going on, our planes were attacking the Japanese Carrier Forces, some hundreds of miles away, sinking at least one Japanese Carrier and causing serious damage to many other ships. Of course, we didn't know at the time what was happening to the enemy forces since we never actually saw any of the Japanese surface forces; in fact, we never got nearer than hundreds of miles from them. However, the Japanese decided they had had enough, and withdrew not only their Carrier Forces but also the troop ships that had left Rabaul Harbor and were approaching Port Moresby in an attempt to capture that Harbor and set up advance bases in New Guinea as jumping off points to attack Australia. As many historians point out, we lost a tactical battle in the Coral Sea, but we won a strategic battle, which turned back the Japanese tide for the first time in the war.

Rescue of the *Neosho* Crew

Even though the main battle was over, it wasn't finished for the *Henley*. As soon as the Japanese turned around, the Task Force commander sent us in the *Henley,* to try to locate the disabled *Neosho* and pick up survivors of both ships. We had only general locations at which to commence our search but started searching immediately. We searched the reminder of the first day (11/5) but had no success, probably because the location we had been given was drastically in error. We only found this out when we received new instructions so we started off on a new course, only to be told that an unidentified (read probably enemy) Aircraft Carrier was on our track, so we had to change course to avoid contact with the Carrier. We stayed on that course for about 15 or 20 minutes and found an oil slick, which really excited us. The skipper, Captain Austin worked out his estimation of the direction the *Neosho* would have drifted (estimated 270 degrees) and off we went, feeling very optimistic. Just after lunch a PBY search aircraft flew overhead and gave us a course to steer to the *Neosho*. About 1300 we found the *Neosho*, dead in the water and still smoldering, but with quite a few survivors still on board. We launched a life raft to paddle over to the ship and investigate, but at about this time a lifeboat from the *Neosho* appeared from behind the ship and approached us. There was a full load of seriously wounded men in the lifeboat, who were taken aboard and the lifeboat returned to the *Neosho*.

After many trips to and from the disabled tanker to remove the remainder of the survivors the lifeboat was sunk and we were ordered to scuttle the *Neosho*. All the survivors (123) were finally aboard by 1400. We fired one torpedo, which hit her amidships, but as usual didn't explode even though we could hear the impact of the torpedo on the ship. We then fired another, which did explode, but did very little obvious damage. Eventually, we started using our 5inch

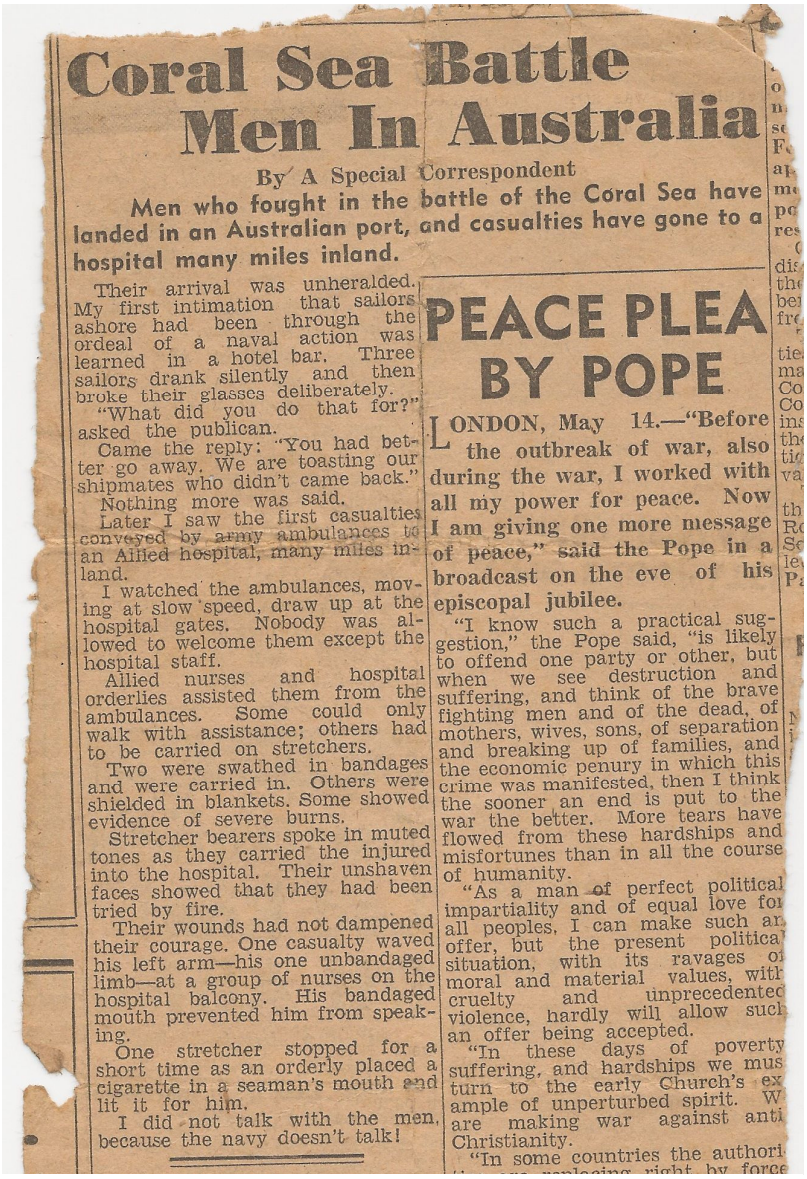
guns, but because she had so many closed tanks, which acted like watertight compartments, we had to put well over146 rounds of 5 inch high explosive shells into her, both at and below the waterline before she gave up the ghost and began to sink. In fact, even after she started to sink we had to wait what seemed like hours before she disappeared. All our time at that location we had been in serious danger if a submarine had appeared, because we had to remain relatively stationary with no real ability to maneuver quickly if a submarine had appeared or if planes had spotted us.

Needless to say, we were greatly relieved when we could finally get underway, but the skipper was worried about a large number of survivors (about 160 of them), who had taken to life rafts and couldn't be accounted for. We headed back along the estimated track of the drift, searching along the way, spending three days, which turned out to be fruitless. We did learn later that USS *Phelps*, another Destroyer, had carried out another search from Noumea and found four life rafts lashed together with four men still alive out of the 68 who were originally on the rafts. We then headed for Brisbane with our large load of badly wounded, mostly badly burned, and suffering seamen. On the way to Brisbane we spotted an oil drum raft with life jackets on board but no occupants. Someone aboard said that they had heard cries for help, so we spent some time searching, but could find no one and continued our voyage to Australia.

Return to Brisbane

During the trip to Brisbane we were called on to carry out a very sad job - two of our wounded passengers had died and it was decided to bury them at sea. Very few of the crew had ever been in the sad position of having to do this chore, so we had to rely on the Navy Regulations and other literature we could find to let us know what to do. The bodies were wrapped in canvas from the sail locker (obviously a misnomer) and had heavy weights attached to ensure the bodies would not float, but would go straight to the bottom. The bodies were then laid on planks held over the rails, a simple but very moving service was held by the skipper, and the bodies were piped over the side. As soon as it was obvious that they were sinking properly the quarters were dismissed and we got underway. Because of the danger of submarines it was necessary to move quickly, the longer we remained stationary, the greater the danger. One of our major problems during the passage to Brisbane was the problem of accommodation for the crew. The survivors, almost all of whom were wounded and/or badly burned, had been placed in bunks in the crew's quarters, since they were easily accessible and had room for the large number of men who had been rescued. We had on board 123 survivors – only 14 of them were from the *Neosho*, and when they were settled in the crew's quarters there was no room for any of the *Henley* crew. I would not have liked to try to sleep in our quarters, anyway, since the stench of burnt flesh was horrible, as anyone with experience of this smell could appreciate. Since our

normal crew was only about 200, made up of 150 crew, the rest included officers and Chief Petty Officers, the problem was that virtually all the enlisted men had no place to sleep, except out on deck with just a life jacket to lie on. I can vouch for the fact that we spent the best part of a week in very uncomfortable conditions, which reinforced the need to get to Brisbane as quickly as possible. However, none of us begrudged the survivors the small comfort they would have experienced from our bunks. Another problem was immediately evident, however, we had no doctor on board, and they were in short supply in the US Navy and were only to be seen on ships like Cruisers and larger. Our only medical staff were Pharmacist Mates, who were enlisted men whose knowledge of medicine was limited mainly to first aid and treatment of minor wounds, and very few drugs were available on board. These facts impacted cruelly on the poor guys we were taking to Brisbane, so, as could be expected, the suffering these guys experienced meant the area around the crew's quarters was somewhat noisy from their moaning.



Coral Sea Battle Men In Australia

By A Special Correspondent

Men who fought in the battle of the Coral Sea have landed in an Australian port, and casualties have gone to a hospital many miles inland.

Their arrival was unheralded. My first intimation that sailors ashore had been through the ordeal of a naval action was learned in a hotel bar. Three sailors drank silently and then broke their glasses deliberately.

"What did you do that for?" asked the publican.

Came the reply: "You had better go away. We are toasting our shipmates who didn't came back."

Nothing more was said.

Later I saw the first casualties conveyed by army ambulances to an Allied hospital, many miles inland.

I watched the ambulances, moving at slow speed, draw up at the hospital gates. Nobody was allowed to welcome them except the hospital staff.

Allied nurses and hospital orderlies assisted them from the ambulances. Some could only walk with assistance; others had to be carried on stretchers.

Two were swathed in bandages and were carried in. Others were shielded in blankets. Some showed evidence of severe burns.

Stretcher bearers spoke in muted tones as they carried the injured into the hospital. Their unshaven faces showed that they had been tried by fire.

Their wounds had not dampened their courage. One casualty waved his left arm—his one unbandaged limb—at a group of nurses on the hospital balcony. His bandaged mouth prevented him from speaking.

One stretcher stopped for a short time as an orderly placed a cigarette in a seaman's mouth and lit it for him.

I did not talk with the men, because the navy doesn't talk!

PEACE PLEA BY POPE

LONDON, May 14.—"Before the outbreak of war, also during the war, I worked with all my power for peace. Now I am giving one more message of peace," said the Pope in a broadcast on the eve of his episcopal jubilee.

"I know such a practical suggestion," the Pope said, "is likely to offend one party or other, but when we see destruction and suffering, and think of the brave fighting men and of the dead, of mothers, wives, sons, of separation and breaking up of families, and the economic penury in which this crime was manifested, then I think the sooner an end is put to the war the better. More tears have flowed from these hardships and misfortunes than in all the course of humanity.

"As a man of perfect political impartiality and of equal love for all peoples, I can make such an offer, but the present political situation, with its ravages of moral and material values, with cruelty and unprecedented violence, hardly will allow such an offer being accepted.

"In these days of poverty suffering, and hardships we must turn to the early Church's example of unperturbed spirit. We are making war against anti Christianity.

"In some countries the authori

8 – Brisbane Courier Mail, 15 May 1942

At this stage we had no one on board who had ever been to Australia, so we had no one who could help us find our way into Brisbane, although we did have a few large scale charts and sufficient information to let us know we had to enter Moreton Bay from the northern end, near Caloundra. Obviously we were in a hurry to get our wounded men into hospital as soon as possible; we were approaching the coast at flank speed (about 25 knots) we assumed we could hold the same speed right through Moreton Bay. As we neared the coast, we suddenly saw a

signal light flashing madly from what it turned out was the Port War Signal Station on the heights above Kings Beach. What we saw stopped us in our tracks (so to speak) because the signalman at the station kept repeating the same 5 letters - M I N E S!!! The officer of the deck immediately signaled the engine room for “Full Astern” which caused the ship to slow rapidly. Eventfully, we gathered enough information from the signals to cause us to stay in virtually the same position until a small boat came racing out to us with a pilot on board, who very carefully navigated us through the mine fields, across Moreton Bay and up the Brisbane River to New Farm wharf where we tied up, breathing large sighs of relief all round.

Unfortunately, I can’t remember what time of day it was when we finally got settled down at our moorings, but I do remember that there were a lot of ambulances and service personnel on the wharf to greet us and to take the survivors off our hands. I’m sure that the men we brought back with us were pleased to find themselves ashore, with expert medical help on hand to tend to their grievous and painful injuries. We were also pleased to be able to reclaim our quarters, even though it was necessary to replace all the bedding, including blankets, sheets and in most cases mattresses, which were badly fouled from the wounds of the survivors. In fact, these replacements did not become available until a day or two after our arrival in Brisbane.

The captain, however, had one very important job for the navigation officer, before anything else. He instructed his navigation officer to contact the Australian Naval Authorities in Brisbane and obtain the latest charts covering Moreton Bay and the approaches to Brisbane, and to also obtain the same information about all major ports in Australia, so that there would not be a recurrence of our troubles on our first approach to Australia. This chore was accomplished on our first full day in Brisbane, much to the relief of all on board. Because of all the problems of replacing the crew’s bedding and obtaining food and fuel, all hands were kept very busy for the first couple of days and no liberty was granted for a few days after our arrival. I was fortunate enough to be on the first watch to be granted liberty, but we were not allowed off the ship until almost 1800 hours, by which at that time of year darkness had fallen. During our time at New Farm Wharf, we had a lot of sightseers, some of whom had been willing to chat with us, so we had asked them about Brisbane and how we could get to the city. We were told that trams came to the Wharf fairly regularly and that any tram we saw would be going back to the city. We were advised to catch one of these trams and ask the conductor to let us off at the Post Office, which was in the middle of the city.

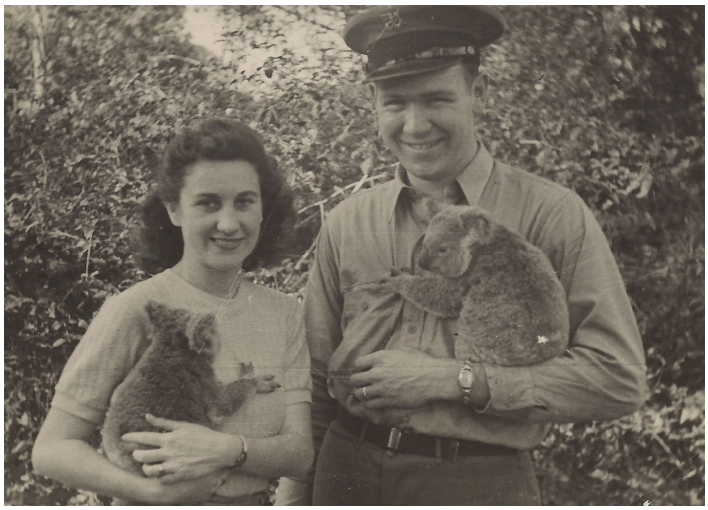
After being dropped off at the Post Office, we started walking up Queen Street, but our first impressions of Brisbane were very unfortunate; things looked very bleak and dismal as the city was in what was called “a brownout” which to us appeared to be a blackout – there were no street lights on, no lights on in all the shops we saw, and many of the shops were boarded up – what a terrible impression this made on us. I was with a couple of mates and after we had walked a couple of blocks, I had to say something to my mates about a very puzzling thing that was bothering me. I turned to them and said something to the effect that the Australian people must have been suffering some sort of plague, or else war casualties were seriously reducing the population. The reply was “Why do you say that?” My answer was, “Haven’t you noticed the number of Casket Shops along the main street—it also appears that there is no shortage of money here—all of these Casket Shops are advertising golden caskets. Have you ever seen a golden Casket, except perhaps in an Egyptian movie?” I should point out that in the US the word casket has only one meaning - a coffin. You might be able to understand my consternation on seeing those shops. It was several days later, when I had my next liberty that all was made clear to me, but it did cause me some confusion for a while.

I soon discovered to my great delight, that the people of Brisbane were very friendly, easy-going, and very hospitable, so much so that almost the entire crew, once they met the locals, started receiving invitations for all sorts of things - dinners, barbecues, parties, dances, all sorts of gatherings, you name it, we were invited - it really was great.

9 - Koala's at Lone Pine Sanctuary,Brisbane, 1945

A few days after we had arrived, a couple of articles appeared in the local paper about the survivors from the Coral Sea Battle, who had been drinking in a local pub and toasting their dead shipmates, and when I enquired where I might get copies of the articles I was directed to the offices of the *Courier Mail* Newspaper in Queen Street, almost opposite to the Post Office. When I arrived at the advertising counter, I made my request to a very attractive young lady who was in charge of the counter, and duly paid for and was handed two editions of the paper with the articles in them. It turned out that the young lady who served me, Doris Lydia Lambe, was to become my first wife after an acquaintance of some three years, during which time I took part in the Solomon Islands campaign, 18 months of duty

in PT Boats in New Guinea, and the Philippines campaign. My subsequent marriage took place in Brisbane on the 5th of May 1945.



10 - Doris and Myself, Lone Pine Sanctuary, Brisbane, 1945

The *Henley* was assigned to the 7th Fleet, under the command of Admiral Thomas Kincaid, along with the rest of the 7th Division of Destroyers, the *Helm*, the *Bagley*, and the *Blue*, and from that time, until I was transferred to PT Boats in New Guinea, we remained a part of the 7th Fleet. As well as the 7th Destroyer Division, the 8th Destroyer Division, USS *Chicago*, and a few other ships, including other Cruisers were assigned to Kincaid and the 7th fleet.

For quite a while our duties consisted of training with the Australian fleet, which at that time mainly consisted of the HMAS *Australia*, the HMAS *Canberra*, the HMAS *Hobart*, the *Arunta* and *Warramunga* and some corvettes and other ships that we did not see much of.

We also engaged in some convoy work between Australian ports such as Sydney, Melbourne, Townville, Cairns, and Rockhampton. At one stage, we had been dispatched from Brisbane to Sydney to pick up a convoy, but when we were only about 12 hours out of Sydney we received an urgent order to return to Brisbane as fast as possible to assist in rescue work and submarine search off the mouth of the Tweed River, where a hospital ship, USS *Centaur*, had been attacked with torpedoes by a Japanese submarine, but, of course, we were much too late to do much to help in either of those assignments. As you can imagine, we were horrified and disgusted by the whole affair, since we had been told that the *Centaur* had been fully illuminated with floodlights trained on the Red Cross emblem painted on her sides, completely identified in accordance with international conventions and visibility had been unrestricted, so there was no chance of the submarine mistaking her for anything but what she was—a hospital ship!

11 - Shore Leave, Dunk Island, 1942

While the *Henley* was operating in North Queensland waters we would call into a few places to purchase some provisions or just to show the flag. Very seldom did the crew get to go ashore – a case in point would be Palm Island, an Aboriginal settlement. However, in those days, Dunk Island was virtually uninhabited, and a small number of the crew were allowed ashore for a bit of a break. We took with us a net and managed to net a fair number of edible fish which were fired up by our mess cooks and were very much enjoyed when we returned to the ship. Of course, while we were ashore we found the warm tropical waters very refreshing.

Orders for Wellington New Zealand, July 1942

We had been hearing rumors for some time that the Japanese were planning an important move to cut off the convoy route between Australia and Pearl Harbor so that Australia would be of no use to the US as a jumping off point and as a supply and training location for any attack on Japanese held areas, so our next move was not much of a surprise. We received orders to proceed to Wellington, New Zealand, to pick up a convoy. We weren't told any further details of the convoy until we arrived in Wellington, when we found out that the convoy we were to escort consisted of troops of the 1st Marine Division, plus the rest of the 7th Fleet, to take them to a remote island for some further training in beach landing. We were then to proceed to Guadalcanal and Tulagi in the Solomon Islands to regain control of the Solomon's, as the first step in driving the Japanese out of those islands.

When we arrived in Wellington Harbor in late July, in company with the *Australia*, the *Canberra*, the *Hobart*, and the rest of our Destroyer Division, we had no idea what to expect the place to be like, and when some of us were given liberty we went ashore with no preconceived plans. The first impressions we received were of a fairly drab city with narrow streets, brick buildings and not very many interesting places to see, until, that is, we had gone a few blocks up the very hilly main street, when we discovered a dangerous looking crack right along the main street and right in the middle. It appeared to be of fairly recent vintage, and the first person we spoke to told us the origin of the crack - it seems that the day before we arrived there had been an earthquake – according to locals this was a not unusual occurrence in the area and they did not seem to be too worried about it. As we progressed up the street I noticed a tanker truck next to the kerb with a hose connected to a fitting in the footpath. I assumed they were delivering fuel oil to the adjacent building, presumably for central heating purposes, so didn't take too much notice.

A bit further up the street we came across a pub, which was open for business. My mates were all drinkers and decided it was time for a beer or something similar, so we went in and fronted the bar. The bartender rightly assumed we were from the warships anchored in the Harbor and asked us where we were from. When we told him we were Yanks he got very friendly and offered to buy us a drink. Most of my mates were drinkers, but at that stage of my life I didn't drink and said so, but unbeknownst to me my mates winked at the bartender. I asked for a soft drink and the bartender got a bottle down from the shelf and said, "You'll like this, it's a fruit drink – it's a bit sweet but I'm sure you'll love it – try it..." Naturally, I decided that I didn't have anything to lose. Boy! How wrong I was. I took a sip, and the flavor was lovely – a fantastic cherry flavor. I proceeded to drink it down and asked for another. After a short time the result of the first glass (about 8 ounces of cherry brandy – undiluted) began to take effect and I wasn't feeling any pain, but plenty of after effect. I didn't have anything more to drink after that

but was still feeling the effect for some time. At about that time I asked the bartender if most places in Wellington had central heating, as the pub obviously didn't, going by the temperature in the bar. He asked me why I asked the question and when I told him about the tanker delivering fuel oil to the building down the street, he started to laugh. When I queried him about that he told me "That tanker wasn't delivering fuel oil, it was delivering BEER!" It seems that at that time virtually all the beer from the local breweries was delivered in bulk by tankers, pumped into tanks in the cellars of the pubs, then pumped up to the taps in the bar and thence into the glasses. I had never heard of such a thing, nor had my mates, so it became a topic of conversation for a while when we got back aboard ship.

Departing Wellington, New Zealand, July 1942

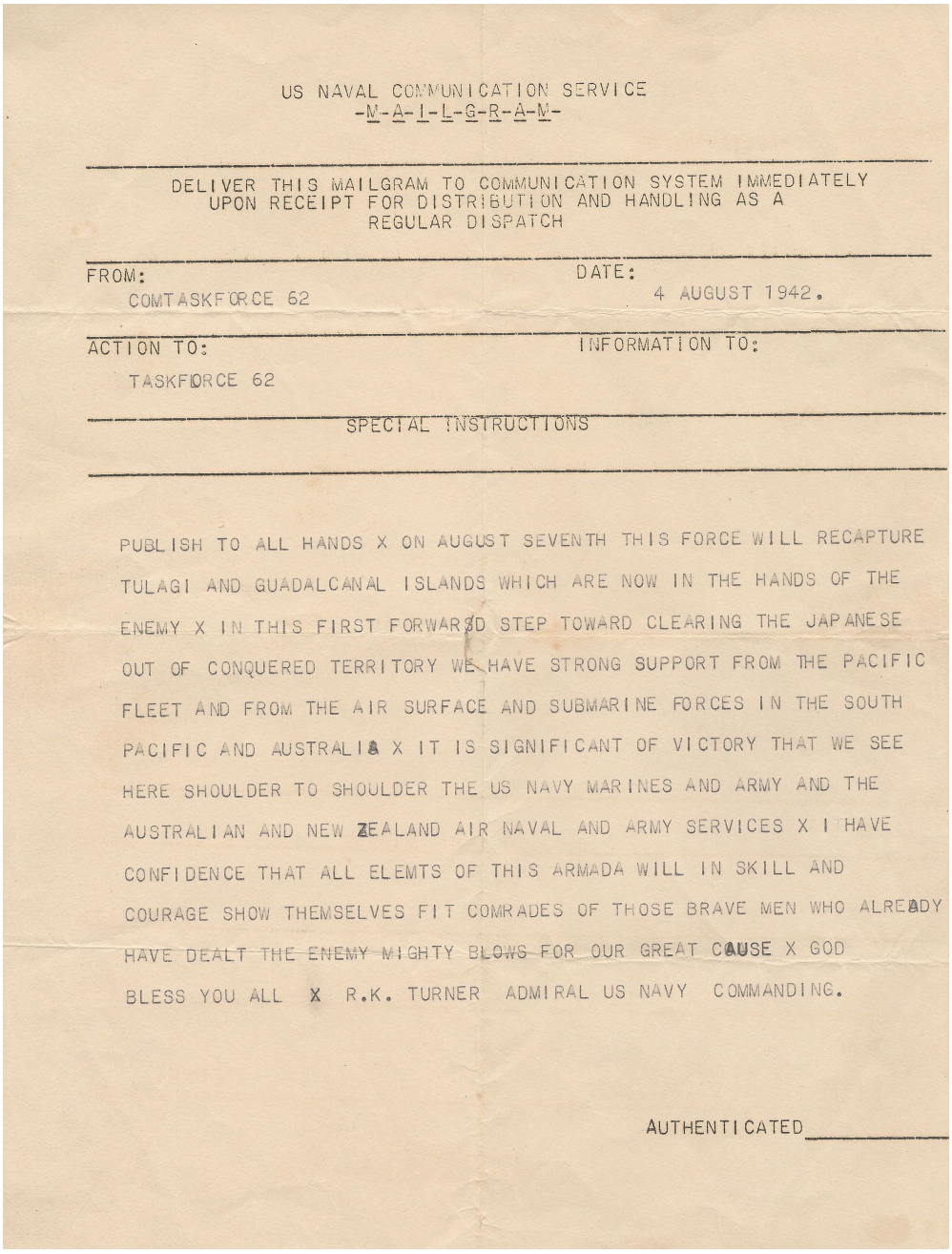
We departed Wellington on 22nd July. The reason for our visit to Wellington, we were eventually told, was to allow the troop ships we had escorted to the port to take on board Marines of the US 1st Marine division, escort them to Guadalcanal and Tulagi, carry out shore bombardment, and then protect the other ships, eventually escorting the Troop Carriers back to Noumea. Prior to taking the Marines to the Solomon's, we had to take them to an island, a place called Koru, which was about 375 miles south of Fiji. We patrolled off the beaches while they carried out practice beach landings. Those rehearsals went off, but not without lots of problems. The coral beaches of Koro proved almost impossible to land on and to compound the problem we were under strict radio silence so that it was impossible to coordinate air and troop movements. These problems seemed to be a bad omen for the ultimate landings in the Solomon's, so when we finally set sail for the first major operation to drive the Japanese back from their captured islands it was in a rather subdued and unhappy mood. Fortunately our luck seemed to have changed since we made the entire voyage to Guadalcanal and Tulagi without any apparent problems and, more importantly, without the Japanese spotting us.

Guadalcanal, August 1942

13 -USS Elliott on fire, Aug 1942

We approached our assigned landing areas from the west, through the gap between Guadalcanal and Russell Island and sighted Savo Island about 0200 hours on the 7th of August, 1942, and fortunately for us, the sky was heavily overcast, with frequent heavy rain squalls, so we were not detected by the enemy. We began bombarding the beaches at about 0600 and had no problems with enemy fire. There was very little initial resistance to the landings on Tulagi, Tanambogo, or Guadalcanal, but soon afterwards some stiff resistance developed, requiring the *Henley* to resume shore bombardment against the island of Tulagi. Although enemy resistance was slight early on the 7th, the Japanese responded very quickly with air attacks on the ships and landing areas, but fortunately we had very good information on pending attacks from the very efficient Coast Watchers who gave us plenty of warning of the arrival of the Japanese planes, including numbers, estimated arrival times, etc., which enabled all ships to be underway by the time the planes arrived, and thus able to maneuver and be ready to fight them off. There were two attacks on the 7th, but ship losses were few, although a Destroyer from our squadron, USS *Mugford*, and another, the USS *Jarvis*, from the 8th Division was badly damaged. The *Jarvis* was returning, unescorted, to Noumea later, but was sunk by a Japanese submarine en route and was never properly accounted for. One other ship, USS *George F Elliot* was set on fire when a Japanese plane crashed on her and she was beached as a total loss.

12 -USS Elliott on fire, Aug 1942



US NAVAL COMMUNICATION SERVICE
-M-A-I-L-G-R-A-M-

DELIVER THIS MAILGRAM TO COMMUNICATION SYSTEM IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIPT FOR DISTRIBUTION AND HANDLING AS A REGULAR DISPATCH

FROM: COMTASKFORCE 62

DATE: 4 AUGUST 1942.

ACTION TO: TASKFORCE 62

INFORMATION TO:

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

PUBLISH TO ALL HANDS X ON AUGUST SEVENTH THIS FORCE WILL RECAPTURE TULAGI AND GUADALCANAL ISLANDS WHICH ARE NOW IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY X IN THIS FIRST FORWARD STEP TOWARD CLEARING THE JAPANESE OUT OF CONQUERED TERRITORY WE HAVE STRONG SUPPORT FROM THE PACIFIC FLEET AND FROM THE AIR SURFACE AND SUBMARINE FORCES IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC AND AUSTRALIA X IT IS SIGNIFICANT OF VICTORY THAT WE SEE HERE SHOULDER TO SHOULDER THE US NAVY MARINES AND ARMY AND THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND AIR NAVAL AND ARMY SERVICES X I HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT ALL ELEMTS OF THIS ARMADA WILL IN SKILL AND COURAGE SHOW THEMSELVES FIT COMRADES OF THOSE BRAVE MEN WHO ALREADY HAVE DEALT THE ENEMY MIGHTY BLOWS FOR OUR GREAT CAUSE X GOD BLESS YOU ALL X R.K. TURNER ADMIRAL US NAVY COMMANDING.

AUTHENTICATED

14 -US Naval Communication Mailgram

Tanambogo Island

On the 8th of August 1942 we were called on by the Marines to carry out some additional bombardment against some stubborn Japanese troops on Tanambogo Island, which unfortunately didn't have quite the effect on the Japanese that everyone expected, but did assist the Marines enough to allow them to clear out the enemy from some of his strongholds.

The next important event took place late on the afternoon of the 7th of August, when the Japanese Vice-Admiral Mikawa headed for Guadalcanal with seven Cruisers and one Destroyer at about 2000 hours. At about 1030 hours on the 8th of August, an Australian Hudson aircraft near Kieta Island spotted this group of Japanese ships. The pilot was having radio problems and could not report the sighting until he returned to base at Milne Bay at about 1245. For some reason the report was delayed and did not reach Admiral Turner until about 1800 hours, but because the report identified two of the ships in the group as Seaplane Carriers, the Admirals decided they were going to Santa Isabel Island or Shortland Island in order to undertake air attacks from there on the 9th. Neither of the two Admirals expected a surface attack from the reported ships. When night fell on the 8th of August, Admiral Crutchley divided his ships into three separate groups, the Southern Group, made up of the Cruisers *Australia*, the *Canberra*, the *Chicago* and the Destroyers, *Henley*, *Bagley* and *Patterson*, who were to block the entrance to the Sound between Cape Esperance and Savo Island, the Northern Group, made up of the Cruisers *Vincennes*, the *Quincy*, and the *Astoria* with the Destroyers *Helm* and *Wilson;* and the Eastern Group, made up of the *San Juan*, and the *Hobart*, Destroyers *Buchanan* and *Monssen*. The Destroyers *Ralph Talbot* and *Blue* were to patrol the channel north of Savo Island to give early warning of any enemy ships approaching from the north. These two Destroyers were chosen for this task because of their reported efficiency and proficiency with the recently installed search radars. Unfortunately, this ability did not help much in the battle that followed.

Departure of the Task Force 61

While all this was taking place, a rather dubious and dangerous decision had been made. Admiral Fletcher, in command of our covering force of three Aircraft Carriers, the *Saratoga*, the *Enterprise*, and the *Wasp* along with the Battleship *North Carolina* plus escorts, requested approval to withdraw, along with all the transports. He stated that he was short of fuel, that his fighter aircraft available was down by over 20% and he could not afford to hazard Task Force 61 by allowing it remain off the shores of Guadalcanal. In fact he had enough fuel for several days, the Japanese planes had been beaten off, and most of his ships were completely undamaged. This approval was given by Vice-Admiral Ghormley, whereupon, Admiral Turner, in charge of the landing forces, bitterly referred to this action as “this desertion of the vital parts of the force”. One of the worst effects of this withdrawal was that it also included most of the cargo ships that had been trying to unload ammunition and supplies for the troops who had been landed on the islands. In fact, the entire landing had been somewhat of a FUBARBE, a common expression in naval circles. It was usually spoken as FUBAR BAKER EASY, which means (almost) Fouled Up Beyond All Recognition By Experts. The cargo ships and landing craft had done a fantastic job landing supplies and ammunition on the beaches, but it seemed as though no one had given

any thought to shifting the goods from the beaches, and as a result, the landing craft had nowhere to unload their new batches (actually there wasn't even anywhere for the landing craft to get on the beaches), so less than half the supplies were still on the ships waiting transport to the beaches. This situation, of course, meant that it was very likely that the troops would be in a very bad way within a short time. When Ghormley approved Admiral Fletcher's request it meant that all the supplies on board the ships would leave the Solomon's with the Task Force and not be available for the Marines on the Island.

As well as the shortage of supplies arising from the departure of the Task Force, the second major concern was the loss of air cover and heavy naval power from surface ships. Ghornley very generously agreed to leave behind the mixed American and Australian Cruiser group, consisting of the HMAS *Australia*, the HMAS *Canberra*, the American Cruisers, *Chicago*, *Vincennes*, *Astoria*, *Quincy*, together with six Destroyers, including the *Henley*.

At about 2030 hours on the 8th of August 1942, Admiral Turner summoned Admiral Crutchley to a conference on board his flagship, which was anchored off Red Beach on Guadalcanal, rather than lower a boat, which was time consuming, he decided to move the *Australia* to the flagship. This meant taking *Australia* out of line and assigning temporary command of the group to Captain Bode, from the *Chicago*.

In the meantime, the Japanese commander, Vice-Admiral Mikawa, had proceeded down the Slot, the area down the middle of the Solomon Islands chain, and steamed right past the twopicket Destroyers *Blue* and *Ralph Talbot* and between Cape Esperance and Savo Island, into what is now called Iron Bottom Sound, before launching scout planes from his Cruisers. Many ships heard these planes, but because there was no alarm they assumed they were friendly planes and took no action. At about 0130, Mikawa ordered his Cruisers to open fire with torpedoes and continued steaming towards the allied ships. About 10 minutes later, USS *Patterson* broadcast a radio message, "Warning, Warning, strange ships entering Harbor."

Sinking of the Canberra, Quincy and Vincennes

At almost the same time, the Japanese floatplanes dropped flares on allied ships. Unfortunately the warning from the *Patterson* was missed by most of the other ships because of static, so it didn't act as the alert it should have. As soon as these brilliant flares illuminated our ships, at least two of the Japanese Cruisers opened fire at point blank range on the *Canberra*. Most of the allied sailors were confused, thinking that it was submarines or planes attacking, but they were soon relieved of that idea when the Japanese shells began to hit their ships. The Japanese ships illuminated our ships with searchlights and very deliberately started to pound them with shells and more torpedoes. Apparently, their first aiming points were midships, where our ships scout planes were located together with supplies of gasoline, which soon caught fire,

which meant no more flares or searchlights were needed as aiming points. They sure made good use of the light the fires provided. The Japanese gunners were very effective, since the *Canberra* was struck very heavily immediately and within minutes was dead in the water, listing heavily to starboard and ablaze from stem to stern. The *Chicago* was hit with a torpedo which blew her bow off and put her out of the fight immediately. The fighting to the east and north of Savo Island started at about 0150 when a Japanese Cruiser fired four torpedoes at the Allied ships and all the Japanese ships started firing their guns at the Allied ships.

I have to admit that those Japanese gunners were very, very good at their jobs, much better than our gunners. Actually, very few of our ships were able to fire at the Japanese ships at all, much less have any hope of sinking them. The *Quincy* was one of the best of our ships from that point of view, but it turns out that there was very little damage done to any of the enemy ships that night, and the *Quincy* was left a blazing wreck and she capsized and sank at about 0230. The *Vincennes* was so heavily shelled that she capsized and sank only about a quarter hour later. It turns out that, even though we took a hiding from the Japanese Cruisers, we were lucky that Mikawa decided to turn around and leave the area instead of carrying out his primary mission, which was to wipe out the landing force, ships and soldiers, which he could easily have done because we had virtually no forces left to stop him. Fortunately, he didn't know that *Fletcher* had departed the scene and was expecting aerial attacks from the Carriers early in the morning and wanted to get far enough away from them to make it difficult for them to attack his force. The *Astoria*, which had been left burning by the Japanese, had an explosion in a magazine and sank at 1215, and the *Canberra* had to be sunk by Allied ships at about 0800. In addition, several of the Destroyers had suffered damage, some quite heavy and there were some quite heavy casualties.

Japanese casualties were very light and very few of their ships suffered any damage, although one of their Heavy Cruisers, the *Kako*, was sunk on its way back to Kavieng by a small American submarine, S-44.

Incidentally, after the *Canberra* was disabled and on fire, I went topside on the *Henley*, and if I had been carrying a standard .30 calibre rifle, I could have been able to put a bullet through her smokestack, we were that close.

The next morning when we got our first good look at the *Chicago*, we couldn't believe she could have remained afloat after the damage she had sustained during the battle during the night. Her bow appeared to have been blown off to almost a third of the way aft and what remained seemed to have sustained severe damage; so much so that everyone on board the *Henley* was convinced that the only way she could go to sea was to go astern the whole time.

We didn't think they would be able to shore up the remaining bulkheads that were exposed to withstand even the slightest seas. Boy, she sure was in a mess. We never did find out how she managed, but obviously she did, because she got involved in a surface action a few months later in the Solomon's campaign and eventually was sunk during this action.

15 - Japanese plane attack, 1942

For the next few weeks, we were involved in fighting off Japanese air raids, which were a daily experience as the enemy was sending large numbers of planes down from Rabaul, being mostly torpedo planes and dive bombers, along with a few fighter planes as escort. Fortunately our friendly coast watchers further north along the Solomon's were really on the ball and very rarely missed out on giving us plenty of warnings as to the time of arrival, types and numbers of aircraft, and any other information they thought we could use. The only drawback in these warnings was the fact that they gave us not only several hours to get ready for the attacks, but also several hours to sweat it out waiting to have our lives in serious danger once again. As you might imagine, this did make the time between the warnings and the actual arrival seem almost an eternity and did cause a lot of wear and tear on our nerves.

In fact, I might point out that when I first joined the Navy I didn't drink nor smoke (never had) and at the time of the Solomon's campaign I still hadn't adopted either of those vices. Unfortunately, the excessive stress we encountered during the long waits to be attacked soon got to me and I allowed myself to take up smoking to try and calm my nerves. I started smoking with a pipe and before too long I found the pipe too much trouble and took up cigarettes. I suppose one of the reasons I switched to cigarettes was cost; at that time we could buy cigarettes from the ship's store for 30 pence a carton of ten packs - obviously just three pence a packet. I have to admit that I didn't quit until about 1970, hadn't even tried. I'd been to a meeting with about a dozen

16 - Anti-aircraft fire, 1942

important local authority and state government officers and when I got back to my office at lunch time I had a desk full of reports I had to complete so I put my head down and worked. The next thing I can remember is sitting back in my chair and looking at my watch – it was 1645 hours, and I suddenly realized I hadn't had a smoke for over 4 hours. I put my packet in my pocket and decided to see how long it would take me to light up another one. Three months later I threw away the dried out cigarettes and haven't had another one since – it was that easy. Unfortunately, I have found that the time I did smoke has had a very bad effect on my heart and circulatory system.

Shore Bombardment

One of the other chores we were called upon to carry out during this period was shore bombardment. It seems we were considered pretty good at it so we were given the job fairly regularly. Since we weren't really on General Quarters during these times, it didn't require me to sit in the emergency radio room all dogged up and alone so it didn't really affect me. This reminds me of what now seems to be almost hilarious, but at the time it scared hell out of me. We had gone to general quarters battle stations one at about the same as most days, following the warning about the coming raid and I was locked up in the emergency radio room as usual. I might point out that during these raids, I could always tell when a Japanese plane got reasonably close to the *Henley* by the fact that the .50 calibre machine guns, directly above my head and only separated from me by a steel deck, would open fire, with, I might add, the resultant clamor of a jackhammer. Directly behind me, only about three feet away, was the opening of an air vent to provide ventilation while the room was closed up. Also, while we were in the tropics, where there was very little ventilation in our sleeping quarters, a couple of us were used to sleeping in the open on deck just outside the radio shack and in the morning we would roll up our sleeping gear (comprising a single mattress and a sheet and a light blanket) and shove them on to the cupboards above the radio receivers, which were above the desk containing the typewriter.

This particular day the advice we had was that the attack was going to be a bad one, so we were not feeling real happy about the situation. The attack started and we were racing around the other ships trying to protect them and suddenly had the ship thrown into an emergency turn to starboard, which made the ship heel over very hard to port. At the same time the .50 calibre's above me opened up and almost simultaneously two other events took place. Firstly, the number 3 five inch gun, which had been trained as far forward as possible, which put the muzzle about 5 feet from the outlet of the vent behind me, fired at a Japanese plane, the shock of which caused the rolled up mattresses above my head to come loose and fall directly on the top of my head. I can't really describe my actions without hand and arm motions, but when you realize that when the bedding hit my head it unrolled covering the whole upper part of me almost down to the

waist. The only thing that entered my head at this stage was that a bomb had hit us and the radio shack was wrecked. You may be able to imagine my actions to try and get out on deck so I was able to un dog all ten dogs so fast that when I got out on deck I found myself completely weak and in somewhat of a dither. A dog is locking device consisting of a lever, which when pulled down forces the hatch closed and the hatch is sealed and cannot be opened until all the dogs are released.

Needless to say, it wasn't a bomb after all but I felt as though I had been through a bomb strike – I was too frightened to go back into the emergency radio shack for some time and when I did, I refused to close the hatch and spent the rest of the duration of that particular air raid with the hatch wide open – a violation of standing orders that would have resulted in an entry in my record if an officer had happened to notice. Fortunately, that didn't occur, so the only punishment I suffered was sarcastic comments from my former gun crew for quite some time thereafter. It took a while for me to feel confident about spending my time during general quarters with the hatch closed, but I began to feel that closing the hatch was better than being censured and probably suffering some sort of serious consequences.

These air attacks became daily occurrences for most of the time we spent in the Guadalcanal-Tulagi area and the only thing we had going for us was the advance warning we kept getting from the coast watchers up the Solomon chain of islands – I can't really say too many good things about those guys, as you know they were putting their lives at risk every day to give us better chances to keep our lives. They were very brave men and I can honestly say that we considered them to be the real heroes of the campaign.

Attack on USS *Blue,* 22nd August 1942

We were periodically detached from the Task Force and sent, normally to Noumea, to escort convoys of troop ships and cargo ships full of reinforcements and supplies to the troops fighting in the jungle. Of course, when we left the battle area to go to Noumea, we generally escorted empty ships back to the safer places like Noumea, and they would then join larger convoys back to Pearl Harbor or to Australia to reload. On one our trips back to the Solomons, on August 23, for some reason I never discovered, the COMDESDIV 7 (Commander, Destroyer Division 7), who normally flew his flag from the *Henley*, decided to shift to USS *Blue* and of course that meant that the *Blue* took over the lead position when we were in column. As we approached the Iron Bottom Sound area we heard a terrible explosion directly ahead of us. The explosion we heard was the sound of a torpedo hitting the stern of USS *Blue*. We had been at general quarters ever since we entered the Solomon's so we were ready for anything, but it was a severe shock when the torpedo struck because there were no surface ships nearby and our sonar hadn't given us any warning of submarines – the sonar in those days was not what you could call

perfect. When we spoke to the *Blue* on TBS (Talk Between Ships) they told us that they were completely disabled and that there was no way they would be able to get under way. When we approached them and could see her clearly we could understand why. They then told us by blinker that the torpedo had struck them on the port side just aft of the afterdeck house and there was no part of the ship left between the after deckhouse and the stern. That meant they had no rudder for control but more importantly they had no propellers left, both port and starboard propellers had been blown off. Fortunately for them the explosion had just missed the after magazines which held 5 inch shells and powder cases for the number 3 and 4 guns, plus all the spare 16 inch torpedoes and .50 calibre machine gun ammunition, PLUS all the spare depth charges. The only thing separating the magazine from the next compartment aft was a thin 5/16-inch steel bulkhead, so how lucky can you be! If this magazine had gone off it could have seriously damaged the *Henley*, maybe even sunk us since we were closed up to within a thousand yards at the time. The survivors of the *Blue* told us there had been no surface ships anywhere near us at the time of the torpedoing so it had to have been a submarine torpedo that did the damage.

Incidentally, while I was reading a book about the war entitled '*The War with Japan*' written by Charles Bateson, an Australian author, who originally came from New Zealand, it stated that the *Blue* was torpedoed by a Japanese Destroyer, the *Kawakaze*, and was scuttled. Well, we certainly scuttled her, but the statement that she was sunk, by the Destroyer was certainly incorrect, just one of the minor errors I have found in almost every war history I have read.

As to the scuttling of the USS *Blue* – that was quite an interesting story. The division commander transferred back to the *Henley* along with virtually the whole ships' company of the *Blue* and it was decided to seek permission to scuttle the *Blue*, since this was a decision beyond the authority of a lowly Commander in the US Navy. As the senior radioman on board, the skipper gave me instructions to send the request to a shore radio station on Guadalcanal, which wouldn't have been more than a few thousand, yards away (if it had been daylight we could have seen the aerials from the bridge). Initially, I tried to contact them on low power on the 2000 kc band, then on higher power, but no success. I might point out that I was trying to get them on low power and low frequency to avoid Japanese interception and the possibility of RDF equipment being used to locate us. I then tried to raise Noumea and even with higher power and higher frequency band had no luck either.

Finally, I got a very weak reply, which I had difficulty reading and decided to keep trying for either Noumea or even Australia (Radio Belconnen). A little later (only a few minutes) I received a signal that was so strong it nearly lifted the earphones off my head. They told me they

had my signal 5x5, which by Naval understanding meant perfect signal strength and perfect readability, and said they would relay my message to Pearl Harbor. After short consideration I agreed and sent the signal. By the way, it was encoded using the code machine (called an ECM) and prefixed by the priority grading "O", which was the highest priority available and stood for URGENT. It was the first and only priority rating O message I ever sent in my Naval career. It had to be O rated because we were expecting the arrival of the Tokyo Express (the almost daily arrival of heavy Japanese surface units in Iron Bottom Sound) at any minute and we were only three Destroyers, which wouldn't have had a ghost of a chance against Heavy Cruisers, and/or Battleships, which usually formed the daily express.

I have to give credit to the Navy communication system, because we received a reply within 30 minutes of Washington advising me that they had received my message and would relay it on. This is pretty good going, since they had to send it on to Pearl Harbor, Pearl Harbor had to set up their ECM, decode the message, get the plain language copy to the action officer, who then had to make the decision required, encode their reply, get the coded message to the Fox station to put it in the air and send it out – all in about 30 minutes. Believe me, everyone aboard the *Henley* breathed a sigh of relief and the skipper immediately ordered us to scuttle. The first attempt was another torpedo, which missed - from 3000 yards! The second torpedo hit - we actually heard the thump – but didn't explode – another one of those. It was finally decided we would have to sink her with gunfire. I can't remember how many 5 inch shells we put into her but it was well in excess of 40 rounds. One of the shells started a `small fire on board so we had to wait until the flames went out before we could leave.

All the time between the original torpedo strike and the fire on board the *Blue* went out, we were in a state of constant panic and as soon as the fire was out, we took off in a great hurry. We hadn't gotten more than a few thousand yards away from the spot when a star shell illuminated the spot where the *Blue* had been - it was fired by a Japanese Heavy Cruiser, one member of the Tokyo Express, so we jumped straight to flank speed before the Japanese could find us. I should add that as soon as it was determined what the situation on-board *Blue* was the Division Commander ordered the remaining Destroyers to return south to the southern end of Guadalcanal and await further orders.

This was another case of my good luck because if the COMDESDIV hadn't decided to fly his flag in *Blue* it would have been the *Henley* that took the torpedo, and it could easily have sunk us. The chance of having a torpedo strike in such a position so close to the after magazine and not explode the magazine was very remote. We were never given any reason to explain his actions, but that is just one of prerogatives of rank, I suppose, they don't have to explain their

actions to the rank and file of seamen and petty officers, although I suppose they would to their superiors.

The Battle of Guadalcanal

This was enough excitement for that particular day, so we proceeded south and established a temporary patrol area south of Guadalcanal to wait further orders. Eventually, we received orders to wait until daylight (when the Tokyo Express normally took off for Rabaul) and return to the vicinity of the landing area to await instructions from the Naval Officer In Charge (NOIC) in the area. Our instructions made no mention of the sinking of the *Blue*, but ordered us to patrol the waters of Ironbottom Sound until further orders (a very common type of instruction in the hectic conditions still in existence in this area). We eventually were ordered to escort some cargo vessels and Troop Carriers, which had been unloaded, back to Noumea, and await further orders from the NOIC in Noumea. Thus we moved back into our routine escort duties for goods and troops between Noumea and the fighting in the Solomon's. This formed a large part of our duties for a while, interspersed from time to time with forays into some of the more remote parts of the island chain to intercept, and hopefully, sink any enemy vessels we encountered.

Unfortunately, I can't be much more explicit than this, because most of our encounters were at night, and all of them were very hectic and confused, not to say impossible, to describe. I haven't any idea what ships we encountered, much less how many of them we damaged or sunk, I can only say that we fired lots of ammunition and saw what we thought (and hoped) were hits, but I can't say for sure that we sank any. This may seem a strange statement, but under the conditions that existed, I feel sure that no reasonable person could make any more definite claims. The only thing I can say for certain was that we suffered very little damage from several months of this confused type of warfare and that, thankfully, none of our crew was killed and the only injuries suffered were minor, with no one requiring more than first aid.

There were several reasonably major naval battles that took place in the next few months together with a large number of minor encounters, because the Japanese were continually sending reinforcements down the Slot to increase their troops trying to overwhelm the American forces ashore on the islands, mainly Guadalcanal. They sent their troops down on Destroyers, Cruisers, Seaplane Carriers, Torpedo Boats, and in fact, anything that would float, often discharging fuel, ammo and other supplies overboard in fuel drums, hoping the drums would drift ashore and be picked up by their Japanese troops on shore. Their supply problems were really severe and they tried all sorts of plans to get supplies to their men. In addition, Henderson Field was a real problem for them, firstly because the planes attacked their ships, and secondly, they desperately needed air support for their own ships and troops, and of course, while the

Yanks had the field the Japanese couldn't use it. Japanese ships were regularly in Iron Bottom Sound, anything from Destroyers to 14-inch gun Battleships almost every night shelling the field.

Two of the major naval battles that developed in this period were the Carrier battle of the Santa Cruz Islands on the 26th of October and the three day battle of Guadalcanal around the 11th and 12th of November. The battle of Santa Cruz was probably of greater long time significance since it put two large Japanese Carriers out of the war for 8 or 9 months. The other major effect of the Solomon Island campaign was the enormous losses Japan incurred in planes and more importantly, pilots during this part of the war.

The battle of Guadalcanal was in fact two separate battles; in the first of which the Japanese Battleship *Hiei* was so badly damaged that American Carrier planes were able to punish her so badly that she had to be scuttled. The second battle was between Battleships USS *South Dakota*, USS *Washington*, and the Japanese Battleship *Kirishima.* Within seven minutes the radar controlled guns of the *Washington* turned the *Kirishima* into a flaming hulk, while the electrical system of the *South Dakota* failed and she was so badly damaged that she had to be sent back to the States for repair.

All in all, the Solomon Islands campaign was a resounding strategic victory for the American forces, with approximately 25,000 Japanese were killed on Guadalcanal as against American losses of 1,600. Losses of aircraft for the Japanese with aircrews are variously estimated at between 600 and 900, which were very high, much higher than the Japanese could expect to replace quickly.

The *Henley*, along with the *Helm* was detached from the South Pacific Forces and re-assigned to Task Force 44, under Rear-Admiral Crutchley. Task Force 44 was subsequently reorganized into two Task Groups, T.G. 44.1 comprising *Australia*, *Phoenix*, and *Hobart* and T.G.44.2, comprising *Selfridge*, *Bagley*, *Henley*, *Helm*, and *Patterson*. With the new organization of Task Force 44 (subsequently renumbered 74) the Destroyers and Cruisers of the Task Force were retained in their squadron duties in the Coral Sea because of their assignment to protect participants in Project Lilliput, which required a force of at least one Cruiser and three Destroyers continuously at sea south of New Guinea and the remainder based at a reef anchorage at short notice for steam. The *Phoenix*, along with the *Mugford*, *Patterson* and the *Helm* set sail to patrol in a rectangle embracing the south-east tip of New Guinea, and Cooktown on the Cape York Peninsula. The remainder of the ships in the group, the *Hobart*, *Selfridge*, *Henley* and *Bagley* were based in Challenger Bay in the Palm Islands. Until the end of the year, these two groups of ships would reverse assignments so as to maintain a continuous patrol in this section of the Coral Sea. Incidentally, Project Lilliput was intended to "to cover reinforcement, supply, and

development of the Buna-Gona area upon its anticipated capture". It was decided that the first convoy of nine ships would be loaded in Australia and sail for Buna via Port Moresby and Milne Bay.

In December 1942, a PT Boat Base was established in Milne Bay consisting of four boats. Later in the month, the four PT Boars based themselves further forward at Tufi in Maclaren Harbor, about 200 miles north-west of Milne Bay, although the main base in Eastern New Guinea remained in Milne Bay for quite some time. In fact, when I first arrived in New Guinea after being transferred to the PT Boat outfit, I was based in Milne Bay, and this remained our main base until I was transferred to Admiral Kinkaid's staff, but more will be said about that later in these memoirs.

Battle Station Shell Loader

I have mentioned the fact that my battle station was first shell loader on the number three 5" gun but have not given any idea what sort of action this assignment entailed, so I thought I should do so. The 5" guns on the *Henley* were 38 calibre, which means their purpose was twofold. The primary function was surface action, which means firing at surface ships. Their secondary function was as anti-aircraft defense, which, with the preponderance of naval warfare being carried out by Aircraft Carriers, became more nearly the main function of our guns. The major difference between surface action guns and anti-aircraft guns was barrel length and limitations of elevation angle. Surface action guns require longer barrels because of greater range and much better accuracy and are not required to elevate beyond about 45 degrees above the horizontal. Anti-aircraft guns, on the other hand, require being elevated as close to 90 degrees above the horizontal as possible to enable them to fire at targets directly above the ship. 5 inch guns, used primarily for anti-aircraft purposes, have guns of 25 calibre, while surface firing guns have guns of 50 calibre.

All 5 inch guns in the US Navy were loaded and fired in the same manner. The projectiles and powder cases were separate units and were loaded into the guns by two different men, but virtually simultaneously. This may seem impossible but, in fact, was a very efficient system. The breech block of the gun was not hinged as were so many of the artillery pieces used by Army and Artillery units, but instead, opened vertically by sliding up and down on tracks. Directly behind the breech was a trough, the same size as the projectile and the powder case. The powder loader was handed a powder case by another man, part of the ammunition train, was placed in the trough just ahead of the ram and he held his hands on the top of the case until the shell loader had placed his projectile in the trough in front of the powder case and lifted his hands. As soon as the shell loader lifted his hands, the powder case loader lifted his hands, and the gun captain, who was standing behind the gun, tripped the rammer, which shot quickly ahead

and forced the projectile and powder case into the breech of the gun. The passage of the powder case over the breech block released the breech block, which then closed the breech of the gun and caused the gun to be armed. If we were firing at surface ships, the guns were generally fired in a salvo by the firing control tower above the bridge; or if we were firing at aircraft the firing key was closed and locked and the gun fired as soon as the block sealed the breech. In either case, the firing of the gun automatically opened the breech and ejected the powder case so that the gun was ready to be reloaded.

In some cases, control of the gun could be completely under the control of the gun captain and could be fired directly by local control. When we were firing at aircraft the fuse settings on the projectile would be controlled by the firing control director who transmitted the settings to the fuse setter on the gun. The ammunition train handling the projectiles would place the projectiles in the fuse setting mechanism; spin a control, which transferred the setting to the fuse on the nose of the projectile. The shell loader would spin around to the fuse setter directly behind him, step on a treadle to release the projectile, then turn around again and place the shell into the trough, then lift his hands, which was the signal for the powder loader to raise his hands, which was the signal for the gun captain to close the firing key.

The reason I was given the job as first shell loader in the first instance was my size and also my physical condition. I had been in very good condition when I joined the Navy, then had been kept in good condition during my Naval training school days, and was able to carry out the job quite easily - more so than many of my shipmates. In those days I was 5’ 17 ½” tall, weighed about 220 pounds without much fat; so it must have convinced the officer I could handle the job. I might add that each projectile weighed approximately 90 pounds, and since we used to be able to maintain a firing rate of over 30 rounds a minute, it took a lot of effort to continue firing at such a rate. Incidentally, the ammunition hoists, which brought the ammunition from the armory three decks below the guns to our level, could not handle this rate of usage, so we had to supplement the ammunition from the ready ammunition chests, which were situated on the after deck house, alongside the guns. In peace time, these chests were always empty (for safety reasons and in accordance with Navy Regulations), but once the war started, they were always kept full of live ammunition. There were two ready ammunition chests on the after deck house, one for powder cases and one for projectiles, each chest holding 100 rounds, so during the war there was always a fair supply of ammunition right alongside the guns for urgent needs. I might add, that during lulls in firing, the ammunition hoists were kept running, with any surplus rounds being put in the ready ammunition chests ready for the next bout of firing

A point of interest regarding the 5 inch guns on my ship is that the two forward guns, number 1 and 2 were enclosed gun mounts, while the two aft guns were open mounts. The only

reason the two forward guns were enclosed was to give the crews protection from the effects of heavy seas washing over them during heavy weather. I've included some photos showing the conditions that can occur on the forward part of the ship while underway during conditions of high seas. Another problem that occurs during bad storms is that the gun crews would have no place to go for shelter from the rain even though the ship may be at battle stations during morning or evening standby situations. Every day while at sea during the war, we were called to general quarters (battle stations) from just before dawn for until an hour after dawn; then from just before dusk until about an hour after dark. This was because these two times were the favorite times for surprise attacks by submarines and/or planes, so the Navy required the calling of general quarters at these times whenever a ship was at sea anywhere in the world. The gun crews on numbers 3 and 4 guns had shelter available from the after deck house very close by, so it wouldn't cause much trouble for those gun crews sheltering during heavy storms. Of course, if we were under attack or attacking the enemy ourselves, we would get drenched because we obviously couldn't leave our gun stations during those times.

I often hear people who look at photos of Destroyers and other smaller ships with enclosed gun mounts talking about the "turrets" and they obviously think these gun mounts are turrets. In fact, a turret is a gun mounting that is supported by a large cylindrical support which is housed in an enclosed cylinder supported by the main structure of the ship and which is heavily armored to protect the gun and crew. The gun itself is held by the cylinder, which rotates with the gun and extends though several decks, generally almost to the keel of the ship, and the enclosed gun mounts are merely bolted to the reinforced deck. The enclosure is not armor plated, but is merely a steel weather protection for the crew during heavy weather. Battleships and some Heavy Cruisers are the only US Navy ships to have turrets.

Another interesting point of differences between US Navy ships and the British and Australian ships was that the US Navy ships did not issue anti-flash gear to their crews while the other navies did as a matter of course. I'm sure you have seen photos of Australian and British Navy crews wearing hoods over their heads and long sleeved gear over their bodies. Well, that gear (normally colored white) was designed to prevent flash burns from the effects of explosions and the resultant high heat generated by bombs and naval shells exploding in their vicinity during battle. In the tropics, where we spent the war, we were normally dressed in short sleeved skivvies (like a T shirt) and blue jean trousers, with only a helmet or a white Gob cap.

I actually enjoyed my battle station for a number of reasons, the primary reason was that we were so busy during action that there was no danger of being frightened – we were too damn busy! Another of the reasons was the comradeship and good feeling between shipmates that was created, especially during battle, but additionally there was great competitive spirit between all

the gun crews. We had to train on a dummy gun and naturally, every gun crew tried to outdo the other crews on the dummy gun. I have reason to be proud, when I remember that the crew from number 3 guns almost invariably took out the competition for the fastest crew and was the crew who could keep up the pace for the longest time.

I remained number one shell loader on number 3 gun until just before the Solomon Islands campaign, when the Navy Department found that they were no able to get enough Radiomen to man the new ships that were pouring from the shipyards and they decided to send out a directive to all ships and stations that from that date no Radioman could be allowed to have a battle station at which his hands could be damaged. Their reasoning was clear – any damage to a radioman's hands would end his usefulness in his major responsibility – sending and receiving radio messages and of course typing was a vital part of that responsibly. I hated the idea, because it meant I could no longer be with my best mates during battle, but instead of being very active during action, I had to sit down by myself and maintain radio communications for the ship in the emergency radio room – and think about what was happening and what could happen to me – I hated it! The only good thing it did for me, was it exempted me from any 'All hands' calls. All hands call stands for the taking aboard stores and ammunition by all sailors. Previously this had meant 'ALL Hands'. Incidentally, the emergency radio room was on top of the after deck house and was a small room containing two radio transmitters, two radio receivers, a desk with a typewriter and one chair. There were no portholes or windows and the only hatch was secured by 10 dogs. This was a very claustrophobic situation, particularly during battle situations, and after spending most of my service aboard in the open air and having at least a little control over my fate, it seemed not a very satisfactory battle station.

Career Setback; a Change in Direction

It was during the Coral Sea patrols mentioned above that the first and only set back of my Navy career occurred. At the time of this setback I had the rank of Petty Officer First Class, and since I was in a specialist rating, the actual title was Radioman First Class, and at this rating on board a Destroyer, I was the senior Radioman on board. Because of this, whenever I was present in the radio shack I was automatically in charge and therefore responsible for any and all events that occurred in my presence (one of the normal responsibilities of rank). Anyway, I had been present during part of one watch in the shack and one of the most important jobs of any watch keeper was the safety and keeping of secret documents. Unfortunately, the watchkeeper who was on duty during this particular watch neglected to account for the handover of a particular secret document to his relief and amazingly, his relief forgot to check the situation. Not surprisingly, when an occasion arose requiring the use of this document, it couldn't be found. This might not have really mattered, since we were in the middle of the Coral Sea when the loss was noticed and

the only thing that could have happened to it was that it had been incinerated with all the waste papers from the waste basket, which was done by a junior rating at the end of each watch. It was obvious to me that this had happened, but the skipper was very strict and decided he had to take some action to punish someone, and as in any organization such as a Navy, the senior rating present had to accept the blame – ME. I couldn't really complain, since I knew the rules, so the decision was made to punish me, even though the skipper agreed with me as to what had happened to the document. I was therefore demoted from Radioman First Class to Radioman Second Class. There was one good thing that resulted from this setback, and that was due to an unwritten rule that if a man was demoted he was entitled ask for and almost invariably be given the first transfer when a request came to hand from the higher authorities for a transfer to any other assignment.

Transfer to PT Boats

It was because of this unwritten rule that I was able to ask for a transfer to the PT Boat outfit when the PT Boats needed a Radioman Second class. I never regretted that transfer during my entire service in that outfit, except for a short time during which I suffered from kidney stones while in New Guinea waters. I would find it difficult to choose any particular posting I enjoyed most during my naval service, but PT Boats would have to be very close to the best. It was very uncomfortable at times, but never boring, and I very much enjoyed the intimacy of the small boats. I really cannot understand how other sailors in the Navy could stand the big ships, some with literally thousands of other sailors in such close proximity and living in each other's pockets all the time. In any case, as soon as my "time in rank" had passed I was able to attain my old rank of Radioman First Class without difficulty and as soon as I had my "time in Rank" expired, I managed to pass the exam and moved on to Chief Radioman, which is the top job in the Navy in the enlisted ranks, so the punishment I received was not really too severe after all. I must say, however, that my first thought was one of resentment, but not against anyone but myself for being so careless.

This lift to Chief Radioman did not occur until I finished my time in PT Boats, so I'll continue my discussion about my service in the small boats and come back to that later in my memoirs.

During our time spent based in Challenger Bay, we occasionally called into mainland Australian ports for supplies, mail, and other necessities, sometimes to Brisbane, but more commonly into Townsville. On one of our visits to Brisbane the ship received a request from the Naval headquarters for a Radioman Second Class to be transferred to the PT Boat Base in Milne Bay, New Guinea for duty. I put in for a transfer and the powers that be seemed to think this was a fair idea and immediately approved my request. My papers were accordingly completed and I

was released from duty on the *Henley* forthwith. My transfer papers originally stated that I was being transferred to the PT Boat base at Cairns, Australia, which surprised me since I had been told that I would be going to New Guinea. Further investigation revealed that my stay in Cairns would be brief as the base was being moved to New Guinea shortly. It was during my trip (by rail) to Cairns that I got my first experience with Australian trains. I can't really be too tough on the Railway Department since it was war time and being a civilian train with relatively no priority, we were sidetracked quite regularly to allow priority goods and passengers to go through. As well as these frequent interruptions to our journey, we experienced several lengthy delays due to engine failure – in fact, three of the engines used to move us to Townsville broke down and we had to sit in our carriages until a replacement engine could get to us to allow us to continue our journey. I should point out that there were no sleepers and the seats were very straight-backed and very hard. The upshot of all these delays was that we were over three days late arriving in Townsville. Because of the delay I had missed my connection to Cairns and had to spend several days in lodgings in Townsville.

Because of my naval experience I was temporarily assigned to the Naval Depot on the Ross River for duty. The first day when I reported for duty I was required to assist in a search for a sentry who had gone missing from some small boats moored in the River while on sentry duty. After a few hours of search we found him in the water, where he had apparently fallen and had drowned. Along with two other Australian Navy ratings I had the unpleasant job of recovering the body from the water and placing him in an ambulance. He had obviously been in the water for several days and the body was in an advanced state of decomposition - not a very pleasant job to lift him from the water and get him into the ambulance. Then a few days later after I had boarded the train for Cairns, we suddenly ground to an emergency stop. When I got out of the carriage, I was met with the sight of a dead passenger who had fallen from the train and been run over by the train. I'll never forget my first visit to Townville!

After helping with the placing of the body in another ambulance, I finally resumed my many times interrupted travel to my interim destination, Cairns, and without too much further drama arrived in this lovely city. I was met by a sailor from the base in a jeep and taken to the base where I reported to the Officer of the Deck who welcomed me and directed me to my quarters. Some of my shipmates gave me a brief tour of the camp. It was only a small area so that didn't take long. Everything in the camp was fairly primitive since the camp was only temporary, with the knowledge that we would fairly shortly be closing the place down and moving to New Guinea. In typical Naval fashion, the time period between my arrival and our departure for overseas, which was expected to be a matter of days, turned out to be weeks, then some more weeks and eventually turned out to be almost two months. In fact, the delay

continued on until we were finally used for training for frogmen in infiltration tactics, which caused quite a stir in the camp when the frogmen theoretically took over the whole camp in a very successful operation, much to the dismay of our security section.

Eventually an Australian corvette turned up at our jetty to take on board all the US Navy personnel with their personal gear, plus some official cargo, and ferry us to Milne Bay. This gave me my first knowledge of the conditions the poor seamen who manned small ships in the Australian Navy had to put up with. I thanked my lucky stars that I was serving in the US Navy. All the enlisted men had to sleep in hammocks and these had to be taken down every morning and stowed away, and I never did get used to sleeping in a hammock. The corvette, although classed as a seagoing vessel, seemed too small to be putting to sea in any kind of rough weather, and during the crossing from Cairns to Milne Bay I sometimes thought we should have stayed in port. Much to my surprise she managed to survive the heavy seas and got us to port again.

My next surprise was when I saw my first PT Boat tied up at the wharf at the Base. Having read a bit about the PT Boats and heard a bit more from scuttlebutt, I wasn't really expecting anything grand, but even so I was shocked to see my first example in the flesh, so to speak. They looked tiny, (in fact most of the boats at the base were about 70 feet long) and were dirty and looked very weather-beaten and under the weather and appeared to me at first glance to not only not battle worthy, but not even seaworthy. At this stage I didn't know that most of them had just traveled under their own power either from Noumea or the Solomon's and obviously had suffered during the trip. Incidentally, the term "scuttlebutt" is naval slang for gossip, and derives from the name of drinking fountains on board ship, which are called scuttlebutts, where seaman tended to gather and gossip about events aboard.

It turns out that my first impressions were seriously wrong, as is often the case, and within a matter of weeks all the boats were shipshape again and leaving the base almost every afternoon on patrols up the New Guinea east coast to intercept Japanese re-supply and reinforcement boats. I should point out that this was our main task during most of my service in PT Boats in New Guinea. Before I continue my description of what that task involved, I should give a brief run down on what these boats were like. As I mentioned above, most of our boats were about 70 feet long, were built of marine plywood, with a maximum thickness of half an inch, including the bottom of the hull, they were completely flat bottomed and had no deadrise. For this reason, they were extremely hard riding, even in the slightest of seas, and we had to endure with bent knees, to soften the shock when the bow left the water and crashed down again. Believe me, they were the hardest riding hulls I have ever had to suffer. In one lot of heavy seas we had one sailor come back to base with a dislocated knee from just such an impact. The boats were fitted with three V-16 Packard petrol engines which were fitted with silencers with special

arrangements made to convert the exhausts from silencers to straight pipe exhausts to improve the power fed to the props. For normal patrol work, where silence was very important, we would run on the center of the three engines, with silencers in operation, but when power was more important than silence, all three engines without silencers were used for maximum power and of course, maximum speed was vital. When these boats were first built and tested on Long Island Sound, they were capable of maximum speeds in excess of 70 knots. Please note that when first built they were fitted with two twin mount .50 calibre air cooled machine guns in mounts capable of rotating through 360 degrees, 4 x 12 inch torpedo tubes and several .30 calibre demountable air cooled Lewis machine guns. Experience showed, however, that this armament was completely inadequate against the targets the boats encountered in the south-west Pacific area, and additional and more powerful guns were subsequently fitted.

Modifications to the PT Boats

When the boats first arrived in New Guinea and commenced their attacks on the Japanese re-supply and reinforcement boats, the Japanese boats were normal landing craft similar to the US Navy LCPs and LCVs and none of these types of craft carries any armor, so they were easy meat for our .30 and .50 calibre machine guns. After a short period of easy pickings, things suddenly deteriorated, as the Japanese started fitting their boats with armor plating, thus making them less vulnerable to our guns. When this happened we had to solve this problem, and the first step was to attempt to procure some heavier armament. The first choice was 20mm cannon, but unfortunately 20mm cannons were in very short supply and consequently delays occurred. Then when we finally were able to get some, the existing .50 calibre rotating mounts had to be modified to take the 20mms, and then tested, etc. It was also decided to retain the .50s and mount them elsewhere in the boat, which delayed things even more. Eventually, of course, the modifications were completed, and we could once more be effective in dealing with these boats. Not long after, we started taking big tolls of the Japanese landing craft.

These maneuverings continued for most of the time I served in PT Boats in New Guinea waters. Before I transferred out of the outfit, we had tried all sorts of ways to overcome the armor plating and the increased size of the boats the Japanese were using. Other suggestions included mounting a 80mm cannon on the bow, then negotiating with the air force for supply of some of the 75mm cannons they were mounting in the twin engine bombers for air to ground attacks. But the Air Force was apparently having their own problems getting supplies of them and were not at all interested in supplying any to us. Someone then had a brainwave and suggested trying an 80mm mortar mounted on the bow. The carpenters constructed a three-foot square platform of 3” by 3” hardwood timber on the half-inch plywood decking and mounted the mortar on that. We took the boat out to sea, fired one round from the mortar, and then proceeded

back to base where a crane was used to winch the mortar and its platform out of the officers quarters. The 37mm cannon went back. That was the last attempt to increase our firepower (at least as far as I know).

One of the problems that began to plague us after all these alterations to our armament, has to do with the maximum speeds we could achieve with our now heavily armed boats. They could now deal reasonably with the enemy boats (once we got within range) but one of the major advantages we should have had over enemy craft, was our high speed, but this was now no longer available to us. The weight of the new armament, plus the weight of the extra crew needed to operate the guns, plus the weight of all the ammunition, plus the eight depth charges, which were installed for the Solomon Islands campaign, plus the extra fuel to run the heavier boat all contributed to higher fuel consumption, but also contributed to lower speeds, as did the marine growth on the hulls. In fact, in places like New Guinea waters, marine growth, such as salt water weed and barnacles can completely cover the hulls of boats in a matter of weeks, wreaking havoc with the performance of such boats, reducing speeds by up to 20%. Under conditions such as occur in tropical waters and in nutrient rich areas such as near mangrove lined shorelines, with high performance boats such as PT Boats, it can be necessary to remove any such boats from the water at least once a month for defouling if you want to retain performance. All the above factors combined to leave us with boats which came nowhere near the same top speeds as the same boats displayed in the cold waters of Long Island Sound. In fact, the fastest boat in the entire outfit was capable of only just over forty-five knots, as opposed to the average speed of all boats tested in Long Island Sound of 73 knots. Actually, most boats in New Guinea were flat out reaching 42 knots. Unfortunately, it was not possible to defoul more than a few boats each week, so that the normal time between defouling operations on any particular boat was often in excess of two months.

The PT Boat Routine at Kana Kope

Most of the time I spent in PT Boats we would leave our moorings just before dark, proceed to our assigned area at normal cruising speed (about 20 knots) slow to about 10 knots, rig for silent running and cruise along the coast fairly close to the beach, usually some 2,000 to 3,000 yards out, and set a watch of the best sets of eyes we had on board. If anything was spotted we would switch to straight pipes, start up the other two engines and man all guns in readiness to attack. Generally, the noise of the engines would spook the guys on the target boat and they would turn tail and run. If they were closer to the beach than we were they generally would head for the beach, but our major objective was to get inshore of them and force them away from the beach. That way we could almost always sink them and prevent them landing supplies or reinforcements. If they managed to get inshore of us we would still hit them with 20mm and .50

calibre and either set them on fire or seriously damage the boats and make them no longer able to go to sea. One of the most serious problems we struck initially was the attitude of the average Japanese fighting men. They refused to stop fighting and refused to surrender, so almost invariably they tried to prevent capture. The ploy quite often involved the swimmers holding a gun of some sort hidden from us until we pulled up alongside them to try and take them aboard, then showing the gun and trying to shoot us. Another of their tricks involved hand grenades. They would wait until we started to pull them out of the water, then release the trigger mechanism of the grenade, which had previously had its safety pin pulled out. We had quite a few men injured, most seriously, before it was decided to protect our men at all costs. Instructions were received (in writing) that we were no longer allowed to pull enemy combatants from the water under any circumstances, but, unless it was deemed impossible for any swimmers to reach shore (and act as a reinforcements) they were to be treated as armed combatant troops and prevented from reaching the shore by any means necessary.

We had quite a few “interesting” incidents during our daily patrols including one I will never forget – it involved a Japanese shore based 3” gun near Buna, which spotted us as we cruised along looking for landing craft, as was our normal practice. We had no idea the gun was near until it started firing at us. I don’t think I have mentioned this, but it is very often possible to see a large projectile coming towards you, providing it is coming straight at you – this is true, believe me, I had previously witnessed this with large diameter shells, but never with a 3” shell. Anyway, these gunners were pretty good, and after the first shell they fired, they really had the range, and the second shell they fired really had us covered. I could see it plainly and knew we were going to cop it. All I could do was stand there and wait. It didn’t take very long before the shell struck just forward of the bridge. I was expecting the worst, but all that happened was I heard a thud and the boat shook, but about a second or so later there was an explosion in the water several hundred yards off the starboard bow. When we stopped shaking, we inspected the boat and found that the shell had hit the port bow, gone right through the half-inch plywood, through the officer’s quarters (in the bow) punched a hole in the port side and finally exploded when it hit the water on the port side. A few feet either way it would have hit something hard enough to explode and the whole boat (and most of us) would have been history. During discussions later with crew members of other boats it turned out that exactly the same lucky breaks had been experienced by several other boats in the squadron. When discussing damage to boats, it must be realized that those big Packard engines used high-octane petrol, and it does not take much to cause this stuff to explode; several thousand gallons of high-octane petrol creates a serious amount of fire and explosion.

On another occasion, we were patrolling along the coastline of the island of New Britain and entered a small bay to investigate some reports of enemy activity in the vicinity. As we entered the bay, we were suddenly illuminated by a very bright searchlight, but just as quickly as it lit us up it went out and some machine guns opened up on us. We were already at general quarters so we replied with our 20 mm guns and .50 calibre machine guns. Almost immediately we saw a ship, which turned out to be a Japanese Destroyer, moving almost directly at us. We thought it was trying to ram us, but it passed by on our starboard side, fairly closely, and continued out of the bay. By the time we were able to reverse direction (we had been traveling very slowly and thus couldn't turn very quickly) the Destroyer had exited the bay and was heading out to sea. We tried to catch her so we could try a torpedo, but she just took off and even with all our three engines flat out she just ran away from us. We finally had to give up the chase and continue on our patrol. Queries to the Navy offices in Australia revealed that some of the newer Japanese Destroyers had been built very lightly, with thin hulls and could make over forty five knots - we could vouch for their speed after our night encounter off New Britain. We could only assume that the skipper of the Destroyer either panicked or, judging from our volume of fire and the calibre of our guns, thought we were much bigger than we were. Whatever the reason, we weren't upset by the fact that he took off – he had much bigger guns than us and could accept much more damage than we could.

There were many other serious problems that we struck during our routine patrols, including fleets of landing craft instead of only one or two, and they eventually carried heavy machine guns, which could have caused lots of problems if they had been able to use them effectively. One of our best weapons was surprise – normally, as I mentioned above, we patrolled using one silenced motor, and the small amount of noise produced by this engine was generally masked by the sound of the engines in the landing craft we were stalking, thus making our approach almost unnoticeable, so that the first knowledge of our approach was the sound of our guns, by which time the damage had been mostly done.

During one of our expeditions up the coast, we pulled in to a Japanese jetty in the vicinity of Lae, just to stretch our legs, and I was able to go ashore for a while. The Army had been in the area for only a day or so, but I didn't see anyone anywhere near the jetty, so I decided to have a little look around. As I strolled along I noticed the body of a Japanese officer lying near a tree. I very carefully approached him and spotted a handgun on his belt, with the gun itself almost out of its holster. Being very aware of the Japanese love of booby traps, I cut a small sapling down with my knife, and standing behind the tree, managed to pull the gun out of the holster. Nothing happened, so I gingerly approached around the tree, cut the officers belt, picked up the gun and

its holster and started back for my boat. I hadn't gotten more than a few yards away when a very stern but American voice said "Don't move and raise your hands!"

I obeyed and was confronted by an American sergeant who started abusing me for being in a very dangerous area, which was lousy with Japanese snipers and completely out of bounds to everyone. I explained who I was and where my boat was, so he became very friendly and we had quite a chat after he took me to a safer area. He then escorted me back to my boat, he shook my hand and wished me well as I did him. When I got back to the boat I found that I had a brand new German Luger 9mm automatic pistol, one of the best side arms ever made up to that time. I subsequently did a fair bit of practice with the gun and found it to be the easiest to use pistol that I had ever seen. In fact I was eventually able to put 6 out of a possible 8 rounds into a 2" circle at fifteen paces. It sure was a fine gun and I hated leaving it behind in the States when leaving for Australia. My Mother eventually gave it to my younger brother, and to my knowledge he still has it among his collection. I'm sure it doesn't have as much sentimental value to him as it did to me.

New Guinea and The Base at Kana Kope

As I mentioned above, we normally left base at Kana Kope just before dusk and arrived at our patrol area at about dark, which meant that we would be in position before the Japanese boats arrived. Unless something drastic happened and we took some damage to the boat, which required immediate attention or one of the crew was injured beyond the stage of just requiring first aid, we wouldn't return to base until after dawn. I think a brief description of the base and the conditions of our lives on the base are worthwhile at this stage.

The base was at the south-eastern extremity of New Guinea, just at the entrance to Milne Bay and couldn't be reached except by sea. There were no roads into the camp from anywhere, and as far as I could find out, there weren't even any native trails leading into or out of the camp. The base was situated in a small bay that had fairly deep water right up the beach all around the shore and reasonable sand beaches on all sides. The Seabees had visited the bay and constructed a good set of wharves for the boats to moor at, together with well-equipped workshops for maintenance and repairs to the boats. They had also erected several reasonably large mess halls and office buildings to cater for normal administrative duties, being careful not to clear the jungle completely, so that camouflage work could be kept to a minimum. Of course there were ablution blocks, including heads, with septic included, and provision for water supply. The area was not entirely cleared of jungle, nor was there no separate buildings for sleeping quarters. Our bunk houses consisted of timber floors erected about 18 inches above the natural ground level, with a canvas roof and space for about 12 to 16 cots (camp stretchers), which were fitted with removable mosquito nets. The space between the timber floors and the virgin jungle would have

been three feet at most – I could almost reach out when I was lying in my cot and touch the vegetation. There were times when I got a bit concerned at the possible incursion of animal or insect life into the tent; however, usually by the time we got in from patrol, we were too tired to worry about anything but sleep. The tents had been erected in an area surrounding the mess halls and other administrative buildings, so that we formed a cushion between them and the outside world. In fact, I can't remember seeing anyone around the area, not even natives, in the whole time I spent at the base.

There were other buildings I haven't mentioned, including a small hospital, which had quite good facilities considering our isolated location, and a Radio shack, which in keeping with the camouflage requirements was literally a hole in the ground, dug by the Seabees, and fitted with some very good transmitting and receiving equipment. Of course there were storehouses containing non-perishable food and other necessary stores, plus quite extensive freezers for perishable food, petrol storage, fresh water tanks, ammunition, oil, etc., etc. This no doubt sounds like a very sizeable and extensive base, but it wouldn't have covered the area of a football field. The wharves could have accommodated some 8 to 10 boats at one time so it was generally necessary for some boats to be anchored out in the bay during their time spent at the base.

I must say, the mechanics and other sailors responsible for the upkeep of the boats not only knew their jobs, but also carried them out exceptionally well. I can't remember a single instance during my entire service where a boat broke down and had to be towed back to the base, or otherwise got into trouble because of faulty equipment or bad maintenance. I know that I really appreciated the fantastic job those guys did, especially in the primitive conditions they were facing. I must also express my deep appreciation for the really fantastic food we had in the jungle. There was always plenty of exceptional food, with an unbelievable variety available.

Of course, there were some faults that could be somewhat annoying, but most of which had nothing to do with the Navy, and couldn't have been avoided. One of the most worrying problems was the mosquitoes – they were huge – and what's more couldn't be avoided unless you were in one of the buildings, which were all screened, as a result of which, the hospital corpsmen, at the insistence of the Doctors in Brisbane, instituted a system of malarial protection for all hands. The system consisted of one corpsman who, supported by a chief Boatsman's Mate arrived before the evening meal at the only exit from the mess hall, with a supply of atabrin tablets. Everyone trying to leave the mess hall after his evening meal was stopped at the door, had an atabrin tablet literally thrown into his mouth and was ordered to "swallow it!" he was watched very carefully by both the men at the door to ensure compliance. This may seem a bit drastic, but if you have ever had an atabrin tablet thrown into your mouth and couldn't swallow

it immediately, you would know why it was necessary - they are the most horrible thing I have ever tasted. Try thinking of the bitterest thing you have ever tasted, then try to think of something tasting several hundred times more bitter than that. Until that time I could not swallow a tablet of any kind without water, but I soon learned to swallow them dry! Incidentally, no one was exempt, not even the officers. After a few months, your skin began to develop a yellow tinge, which deepened with time of exposure to atabrin, until it was quite a bright and definite yellow color. The treatment must have worked because after 18 months of exposure to malarial mosquitoes I never developed malaria, although shortly after I was transferred to COM7THFLTFLAG (Commander, 7th Fleet Flag) I suffered a severe high fever, was put into hospital and was put through test after test to try and prove I was suffering from Malaria, but was eventually told that I had Dengue Fever but not Malaria. To the best of my knowledge, no one was ever put into the base Sick Bay suffering from Malaria.

My sojourn in New Guinea waters did have one serious effect on my health that continued on into my later service, and, in fact, even after I returned to Brisbane subsequent to receiving my university degree, I had further recurrences of the problem. This problem, which caused me more pain than anything else I had endured in my whole life, was kidney stones. It hit me while I was still serving in the PT Boats and left me completely useless for any activity at all. Then when the attack finished, apart from complete exhaustion, it had no further effect on me. I was unfortunate to suffer further attacks several times in New Guinea and after each subsequent attack I was told that if I had another attack they would send me down to Brisbane for x-rays and possible further treatment, but after the third attack I gave up hope of a holiday in Brisbane. No one has been able to explain to me what caused the illness and I am still wondering why. Strangely, after being admitted to sick bay on quite a few occasions, my medical record makes no mention of those episodes, at least that is what the American Veteran's Affairs told me when I applied for my American Disability Pension. Strange, isn't it?

I can't state the exact timing of my transfer from PT Boats to the staff of Admiral Kinkaid, since my discharge papers give no indications of any dates except my enlistment date and my discharge date, and I can't remember dates with much accuracy and am awaiting a reply to my recent letter to the US Navy Department requesting a complete copy of my service record. The only thing I am sure of is that it took place not long before we carried out the landing in Dutch New Guinea at Hollandia.

I meant to mention before I finished the description of the conditions at the base that there was no air conditioning at the base. In fact, I never experienced air conditioning once during my service in the Navy. None of the ships I served on and none of the shore stations were equipped with air conditioning, and very few even had fans to move the air around, so from that

point of view we had to put up with the ambient conditions no matter where we were. This was not a matter of extreme concern for us on board ship because we were usually moving across the water and creating our own breezes, but conditions in New Guinea, together with the mosquitoes, were a different kettle of fish (and mosquitoes) and we did notice the difference. With the proximity to the jungle, there was little breeze to be had and the humidity was extreme, so we were very pleased when the time came for us to go to sea in the late afternoon. Of course, there were times when we had to spend the night on shore and experience the problems of trying to sleep under uncomfortable heat and humidity.

It was on one of these nights when I had a rather unusual experience, which probably would have been unique to a base such as Kana Kope. A few of my shipmates had gotten together and arranged what they described as a "get together" after dinner to have a yarn and some cocktails. Since I was very aware of the Navy policy regarding alcohol, which was that no alcohol, except medicinal type, was permitted any time on any ship or any shore station, I wondered what the "cocktails" would be. Once the get together commenced I soon found out what it was all about. Among the stores that were held on the base were supplies of fuel for the torpedoes we carried -- this fuel was not just any alcohol, which in normal drinking spirits is about 40 or 50 proof, but what is known as absolute alcohol which was 200 proof. Someone had procured, most likely illegally, a supply of the REAL torpedo juice, absolute alcohol, together with large quantities of icy cold grapefruit juice. The recipe for the cocktails consisted of about a quarter of an inch of torpedo juice in the bottom of a large tumbler and the rest of the glass filled with cold grapefruit juice. The grapefruit juice was stated by the organizers as a source of vitamins and nutrients to help prevent such possible ailments as scurvy, among other such vile conditions. I can assure you it wasn't there to disguise the taste of the torpedo juice, because it was virtually tasteless. One of the good qualities of the alcohol and the grapefruit juice was that no matter how drunk you got, you never seemed to have a hangover, because the alcohol was so pure. Possibly the effects of the cocktails on your sobriety helped to prevent one of the after effects of normal intoxication, because after only a very few of the cocktails you were in such a condition that you couldn't manage to hit the deck with your hat, which is a very serious condition indeed.

The lack of a resultant hangover was one of the main reasons that most PT men who were lucky enough to get sent down to Australia on leave took with them a supply of torpedo juice for drinking purposes while they were in Australia. Another of the reasons for taking their own supplies was that the only supplies of alcohol in reasonably good supply was some stuff we used to call "petrol" it was named Corio, but the stuff tasted like petrol, and the Nickname came from COR10 (COR ten) which made our name for the stuff fairly obvious. Incidentally, proof that you

really couldn't hit the deck with your hat was that the day after one of those sessions a lot of guys spent a long time trying to find their hats.

Characters of the PT Boat Crews

While based at Kana Kope, I met quite a few notable characters, such as an old salt who had spent quite a long time in the service, who was very well versed in astronomy, and periodically gave a few of us tuition on his special interest. We would go out on the Jetty and he would point out to us some of the many constellations visible in the clear, clean sky and tell us the origins of the names and the reasons for the names. I found this very interesting and indeed fascinating, and have retained an interest in the subject ever since. He was a real gentleman and an excellent teacher about his hobby. Another character I enjoyed was a hillbilly guy from Kentucky, who would have us roaring with laughter, mainly because of his sayings, but also because of his dry humor. He had an endless repertoire of jokes, mostly rude, some crude and also some very clever stories about people he had known, and things that had happened to him. He really looked the part of a hillbilly and he had an accent which could only have come from the hills and he acted the part to perfection.

Most of the guys in our PT outfit were quite young, including the officers, but I suppose when you consider that all new recruits at that time had to be between 18 and 35 years, you would have to assume that the majority of Navy men would fall into that age grouping. I became quite friendly with a lot of the officers who actually served in the boats and found them interesting types. At this stage of the war a number of men with University degrees were being recruited and immediately commissioned as officers. Apparently the Navy considered the possession of a degree would show maturity sufficiently advanced to warrant giving those guys an authority over other less qualified men, and, in fact, officers who attended Annapolis Naval Academy would receive a University degree upon graduation. As well as this, they could then tap into a large selection of highly trained and qualified men who were desperately needed for the normal operation of an organization, which was becoming more technically oriented at an increasing rate. The only problem with this decision was the lack of knowledge and training in the field of seamanship, and these new officers had a few problems, which could have been and were cured by those NCO's who really ran the Navy anyhow, the Chief Petty Officers. It was a fact, universally acknowledged by both NCO's and commissioned officers that the CPO's were the backbone of the Navy and did literally run the Navy.

Most of the officers in the PT Boats were practical men and, in fact, had been involved with small boats in civilian life, so lack of seamanship training was not a problem for us. I was able to have a pretty good rapport with a lot of the officers and I feel we all received very useful knowledge and other benefits from the interchanges. The officers and I were from the same age

grouping, since I had been in the Navy for four years, commencing immediately after graduating from High School, while most of them spent the same four years at University, so there were many similarities between us.

The main difference between our backgrounds was that I spent those four years undergoing practical on the job training, while their training had been mainly scholastic in nature.

I should point out that each boat in our squadrons carried a crew consisting of two or three officers, plus a complement of 8 to 12 enlisted men, depending on how many were required to operate the armament, the radio gear, and the engines, and also depending on how many men were actually available. We did have problems due to shortages of certain types of specialists.

Transfer to Admiral Kinkaid's Staff

I have mentioned my faulty memory before, and because of it I am unable to state at this time when my transfer occurred, but I am sure that I was transferred from PT Boats in New Guinea to Admiral Kinkaid's staff sometime in early 1944. At any rate, I received orders to proceed to COMSOWESTPAC headquarters in Brisbane, which was in the AMP Building, on the corner of Queen and Edward Streets, on the tenth floor, but when I reported to that location, they had no notice of my impending arrival. Not surprising, I suppose, since the tenth floor held General MacArthur and his staff. It turned out that I should have been sent to the 9th floor, where Admiral Kinkaid was stationed as COM7thFLTFLAG. I was duly signed in and followed all the usual procedures of being assigned quarters and being recognized as a member of the establishment. I was assigned my duties, which included watchkeeping along with normal administrative duties and settled into my new assignment. It sure was good getting back to civilization again.

It was during this period in Brisbane that I suddenly developed a very high fever, which required several weeks' hospitalization. I was admitted to the small hospital the Navy had established in New Farm and submitted to what seemed like endless tests, which included lots of blood tests, X-rays, heart studies etc., etc. After several weeks of this sort of treatment, my Doctor gave the verdict to me. They had suspected Malaria, but the tests had eliminated that and it was decided that I had Dengue Fever. All I was sure of was that it was a hell of a tropical fever that I never wanted to suffer again. I spent several months in Brisbane organizing myself and my immediate staff for our next important job, which turned out to be the assault on Hollandia, in Dutch New Guinea. Eventually some of us were flown to Manus Island and sent to join the flagship of the 7th Fleet, USS *Wasatch*, and *AGC 9*. Shortly after we joined our new ship, we were advised that the landings at Hollandia would take place soon.

Landing at Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea, April 1944

In the early morning hours of April 22, 1944, the preliminary bombardment commenced and not long afterwards the first troops landed. The initial resistance was only slight, but there were quite a few problems once the troops got established on the beaches.

Initially, two beaches were to be established simultaneously, the first at Tanahmerah Bay and the second at Humboldt Bay, about 25 miles further west. After meeting only light and sporadic rifle fire the landings at Tanahmerah Bay bogged down, after finding the beach surrounded by swamp and a secondary beach, a coral reef, both of which caused problems. The road from the beach to their main objective, the Lake Sentani Plain, was narrow and mostly a mere track and wound across the hills in a series of hairpin bends with slopes and grades as great as 60 degrees. These problems began to cause serious congestion on the small beaches and caused the main effort to be transferred to Humboldt Bay. Despite these problems, the troops were meeting very little Japanese resistance, using at one stage over 3,000 combat troops to hand carry supplies up the track where they captured the Hollandia airfield on the 26th of April. That was fine accomplishment under atrocious conditions. On the same day, another division of the same army made an amphibious crossing of Lake Sentani and captured the Cyclops and Sentani airfields.

Establishing a base at Lake Sentani

This virtually ended the action at Hollandia, and the Seabees lost no time in establishing all weather connections between the beaches at Tanahmerah Bay and Humboldt Bay at Lake Sentani, where Macarthur and Admiral Kinkaid soon set up their headquarters. Kinkaid immediately set up his communications personnel in permanent accommodation on the shores of the Lake. It turned out to be almost ideal, because the Lake was elevated well above the sea level of the beaches and the jungles and provided a very healthy and enjoyable climate for all the staff fortunate enough to be stationed there. We couldn't swim in the lake because of crocodiles, but there were a few small streams feeding into the lake that were quite safe, and beautifully cold, which we managed to enjoy.

We considered our situation unusually fortuitous and spent a few months luxuriating in what was to us almost the ultimate in living conditions, considering that we were very near the equator and almost surrounded by jungle. However, all good things must come to an end, but, before we leave Lake Sentani and its comforts, I must tell you about one of the hardships that we suffered, although today it wouldn't be a hardship at all. When I joined the Navy I had never smoked, but during the Solomon Island Campaign, due to the high pressure stresses we encountered, my nerves really got me down and I let myself be talked into taking up the horrible weed. Normally, supplies of tobacco and/or cigarettes were in plentiful supply, no matter where

you were in the Navy. When we first arrived at Lake Sentani, the PXs had plentiful supplies of these things, but about a month later, the shops had not had any additional supplies, so shortage began to occur. Obviously, the most popular brands of cigarettes ran out first, such as Lucky Strikes, Chesterfields, Pall Malls began to be rationed, then they also ran out of the less popular brands, and finally the only cigarettes available were a brand called Old Golds. I had never tried them, but with no choice I began smoking them. After about a couple of weeks I found I was losing my voice and a few days later I couldn't make a sound. I had to suffer for about a week from nicotine withdrawal until finally fresh supplies arrived and I got back to normal. The same thing happened a month or so later and I went through the loss of voice, nicotine withdrawal etc until fresh supplies again arrived and my voice returned to normal. Fortunately, that sort of thing never occurred again during my smoking career, but be sure I never again carried a pack of Old Gold cigarettes in my pocket. Incidentally, in those days I used to smoke at least two packets a day (40 cigarettes). Of course, in those days we used to be allowed unlimited cigarettes from the Navy for 3d per packet, or 2/6 for a carton of ten packets.

One of the most important parts of our work while at Lake Sentani was the planning for our next big operation, this time Macarthur's theme song invasion, the invasion and recapture of the Philippine Islands. This was obviously going to be a very big operation indeed, and required considerable planning, especially communication planning, and as a Chief Petty Officer on Kinkaid's staff, I had lots to do.

Planning for Operation King 2, Invasion of Leyte Gulf

Just to give you some idea of what was involved in planning something as big and as involved as Operation King 2, as the Leyte Gulf invasion was called, I should indicate the size of it all. The recently increased size of the 7th Fleet (Kinkaid's command) had gone from a handful of Submarines plus their tender, plus a few Destroyers, a few Australian Cruisers, some Troop Transports and a couple of auxiliary support ships, to a total of over 700 ships, including 157 combatant ships, 420 amphibious ships, 84 patrol, minesweeping and hydrographic craft, and 73 service vessels. Included in the combatant ships were six old Battleships, four of which, the *Pennsylvania*, the *Tennessee*, and the *Maryland* had been heavily damaged in the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the *West Virginia* which had been sunk in the same action, but repaired and back in action. Also now included in the reborn 7th Fleet were 18 Aircraft Carriers – not super Carriers such as the *Lexington* or *Saratoga*, which were designated as CV's, but a new class of Carrier classified as CVE's, or Aircraft Carriers, Escort type, which carried only about 27 planes, instead of the over 100 planes carried on board. A third class of Carrier had been designed at that time, classed as CVL or Aircraft Carrier, light, which carried about 50 planes, but Kinkaid didn't receive any of the other classes of Carrier, which were all assigned to battle squadron types of

fleets. In addition, Kinkaid got numerous amphibious type ships, some Cruisers and quite a few Destroyers and Destroyer Escort types, bringing his fleet up to the 700 plus ships he commanded during the Philippines campaign.

The job of preparing the plan to coordinate the entire operation was given to Captain Charles Adair, and believe me it was some gigantic task. The plan involved not only the 7th Fleet with all the land troops this fleet had to transport, land troops to be maintained with ammunition, food, etc., but also the huge support fleet of Aircraft Carriers, Battleships, Cruisers, Destroyers and ancillary vessels commanded by Admiral Halsey. This support group included at least eight CVs, eight CVLs, six Battleships, fifteen Cruisers, and forty-eight Destroyers. The Battleships were all newly constructed and modern, as were the Carriers. The final plan was over an inch thick and it took four pages just to list who would receive copies, six pages told the many commanders where they fit into the organization, seven pages described their tasks and functions, and twenty five pages described the movement schedule for all units.

Finally, there was a twenty five-page communications plan that listed, among other things, all the radio frequencies and call signs to be used. This last plan was the section that concerned me, since the *Wasatch* was the communications center for controlling and coordinating all communications for the operation, and, since I was a Chief Petty Officer in charge of Kinkaid's communications section, I had to make sure there was no foul up in any of the day to day operation of the whole communications operation. My days were really full from the time we received the plan until after the total operation throughout the Philippine Islands was finished. It was a real challenge, I can tell you, but at the same time, there was a great feeling of satisfaction after it was completed, and well worth the effort. In fact, I feel sure the offer I received when I decided to request my discharge from the Navy in 1946 of a transfer to a special school which would ensure my promotion to Warrant Officer was in a large part the result of the part I played during my service under Admiral Kinkaid. Incidentally, the rank of Warrant Officer was the most highly prized job in the peace time Navy, and I was sorely tempted, but I was more interested in attending University and earning my degree so that I could attain my greatest ambition in life. Fortunately, with the advent of the new legislation I was able to attend MIT (The Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and receive my degree, so I never really regretted that decision.

The planning for Operation King 2 took a lot of work and was very intricate, but there were a few glaring problems that were either missed or deliberately ignored. The major one was the separate command chains that existed between the 3rd Fleet and CINCPAC (Admiral Nimitz) and between the 7th fleet and COMSOWESTPAC (Macarthur). This meant that Halsey reported directly to Admiral Nimitz but Kinkaid reported directly to Macarthur. Incidentally,

responsibility for the entire operation had been given to Admiral Kinkaid, but he came under the command of COMSOWESTPAC,

So the command structure was really a mess. Kinkaid (and Macarthur) had no direct access to Halsey and of course no control over him. This was to lead to one of the most serious problems (and the most dangerous) of the whole operation and could have led to a lengthy prolongation of the entire war. To add to this problem, a somewhat misleading radio message to Halsey and a misunderstanding could easily have resulted in the loss of a lot of ships and their crews, but I will deal with these problems later, in the section that concerns the fighting that resulted from the faulty planning. Incidentally, one of the ships that could have been destroyed was USS *Wasatch*, the ship I was serving on at the time.

Movement to the Philippines

The communications staff who had been stationed at Lake Sentani were transferred to the *Wasatch* in a group and settled in to prepare for the big move. Shortly after we went aboard and managed to get settled in, we got underway and moved away from Humboldt Bay heading north toward the Philippines. We got underway about dusk and managed to get a fair bit of sleep, despite the worries about the invasion.

Waking up about 0600, I went up on deck for a breath of fresh air before breakfast and what I saw really stunned me. I had never seen so many ships together in one convoy in all my life – everywhere I looked there were ships – out to the horizon in all directions, and in all shapes and sizes. I couldn't believe my eyes, and despite knowing how many ships Kinkaid now had under his command, I still found it hard to accept. To give you some idea of what a sight it was, I'll give you some idea of the extent of the area of ocean involved, by telling you how far away the horizon was to me from the main deck of the *Wasatch*. My eyes would have been almost 60 feet above the waterline and according to the formula, S=1.42 V H, where S stands for the distance of the viewer from the horizon in statute miles and H stands for the distance of the viewers eyes from the ground (or in my case from the sea level) the horizon would have been eleven miles, so the total area I could see was over 120 square miles, and was literally crammed with ships. If you are any sort of seaman and want the distance to the horizon in nautical miles, replace the multiplier by 1.23. In actual fact, since the bridges of most of the ships in the convoy would have been about 50 feet out of the water I could see additional ships at least 9 ¾ miles further away, or a total of over 20 miles. Remember that the formula gives the distance to the actual horizon, i.e. the waterline of the ships. In any event, the size of the convoy was really mind boggling, and remember, this convoy didn't even include any of Halsey's 3rd fleet, which contained the main body of the fighting ships who were to join us at Leyte Gulf. I can't remember when or where some of the other support ships joined the convoy, because I was kept

busy on tasks involving final preparations for the flood of radio messages that would start as soon as we were allowed to break radio silence, which occurred as soon as the first shore bombardment commenced.

Of course, we had no doubt that the Japanese knew we were coming, because obviously it would be impossible to keep an operation the size of that one secret for long. Anything that would take up several hundred square miles of ocean would be certain to be discovered by scout planes or submarines or even fishing boats and we were sure someone knew we were coming. Another factor in us feeling confident that they knew we were on the way was the speed of the convoy, which was controlled by the slowest vessel in the convoy, and some of them were unable to proceed at anything over 9 or 10 knots, which seemed to us to be almost stopped and dead in the water. We weren't worried about our safety from submarines or planes, because we were just about in the middle of the whole mass of ships, and we were the command ship for the operation, so we were protected as well as possible. In addition some of the really slow ships met us at sea fairly close to Leyte Gulf because they had to come much further than we had.

Landing at Leyte

Prior to the actual assault on the beaches of Leyte, it was necessary to carry out mine sweeping operations in the approaches to the gulf and surrounds, so on the afternoon of October 17th the mine sweeping commenced, carried out by several Australian ships together with ships of the US Navy. These sweeps continued for several days, and continued even after the first troops landed on Leyte Island on the 20th of October. At about 0830 on the 20th, the shore bombardment commenced, with all the pre World War II Battleships leading the way with their 16 inch guns, followed by the 8 inch guns of the cruisers an the 5 inch guns of the Destroyers – it really was an awe inspiring sight (and sound) and continued until it seemed there could be no left alive within miles of the beach. In fact there was little or no resistance on the beaches of Leyte Gulf. The *Wasatch* was lying off Tacloban Beach during the first couple of days of the invasion and only moved a short distance away once the landing forces were well established. We had only one 5 inch gun on board so we took no part in the bombardment.

By the end of the first day, the landing forces had secured about 5 miles of beach and had moved over a mile inland against very light opposition. On the second day, after it had been established that there were no enemy troops within miles of the beach, a landing craft left the *Nashville* for the beach and the most famous film and photographs of the Philippines campaign were taken by photographers who were waiting on the sand and had been there for some hours. The occupants of the boat were, of course, General Macarthur and members of his staff. There was waiting for him also a sound recording team and he made his "famous" statement to the

world, “I have returned!!!” I’ll make no further comment on that incident, except that it almost acted on me as if it had been an emetic.

During our stay in Leyte Gulf we weren’t subjected to any enemy attacks except for a few very weak attempts at air attacks until a few days later, after the Battle of Suragao Strait, when the Japanese came though the San Bernadino Strait and sent everyone who was present in the vicinity of Leyte into a flat spin.

Even though the air attacks up to this stage of the Leyte Gulf landings were occurring rarely, they did cause us some misgivings, because they included our first experiences with the Kamakazi attacks, which shortly after our exposure to them became the norm instead of the exception. I can assure you that it is a terrible feeling to know that if you don’t kill the pilot before he gets close or put his plane out of control your likelihood of being killed is almost certain. This is a situation you never get used to nor appreciate. The only reason our casualties in ships and men remained at a low level and our morale remained high was the knowledge that the Japanese didn’t have many serviceable planes available in the vicinity of the Philippine Islands at that time. I must give Halsey a lot of credit for this, because his Carrier Planes had done a great job of knocking out the airfields in the Islands and at the same time damaging or destroying most of the planes based in the Philippines. In fact, for several weeks before the initial landings, his Carrier Groups had been engaged in literally non-stop raids all over the entire island group, as a result of which the enemy had very few serviceable planes, but more importantly, very few trained pilots, a fact which was to leave the Japanese Air Force almost useless as a force to be considered for the rest of the war.

Before I leave the discussion of the landing on Leyte and the subsequent operations in the Gulf, I must make some comments on the pre-landing preparations, which preceded every landing operation. I am referring to the initial (and continuing) bombardment of the landing beaches, both by aircraft and by Naval shellfire. I’m sure most of you would never have witnessed nor been involved in anything like the sort of mayhem that can be produced by a well planned and carried out bombardment such as that produced by literally hundreds of planes, by both strafing and bombing, and a large number (hundreds, including Battleships) each firing broadsides from their main batteries, which were made up of either 10 or 12 naval guns with bore of 14 to 16 inches, each shell weighing several tons and holding close to a ton of high explosive. During this sort of firing the shells used were high explosive, which means they did not have armor-piercing cores of especially hardened steel which would have been necessary if they had been firing at other large heavily armored ships like themselves. The fact that they didn’t have the large conical armor-piercing slug inside the shell, allowed a larger powder charge to be placed in each shell.

In fact, because these Battleships were included in the landing fleet, their normal complement of armor-piercing shells was very strongly biased in favor of the high explosive shells as against the armor-piercing type. This fact could have had some very serious consequences during later developments in the naval engagements which eventuated, but fortunately for us, the Japanese Admirals in charge of a large Fleet of Battleships and Heavy Cruisers let us off the hook, a situation which I will describe later in this account. As well as the Battleships, virtually all the other ships of the line, Heavy and Light Cruisers and Destroyers all took part in the pre-landing bombardment. Incidentally, the Heavy Cruisers carried up to 9 only 8-inch guns and displaced approximately 12,000 tons; the Light Cruisers carried up to 15 only 6-inch guns and displaced up to 10,000 tons. The main difference between Light and Heavy Cruisers was in the size of their guns, 6-inch versus 8inch and not in the displacement. By the way, the mass of a ship is never given as weight, but instead by displacement, which is really exactly the same, because displacement indicates the weight of the water the ship displaces as she sits in the water. Since each ship fires a broadside under these situations as quickly as they can and not all ships of the fleet can reload at the same rate; the smaller the size of the guns the quicker they can be reloaded. The guns are firing at different times, but because there are so many ships involved, the noise, which is deafening, is just about continuous. Incidentally, Battleships with their 14 inch guns can fire two to three salvos per minute, while the 5 inch guns for which I was a shell loader for most of my service on the *Henley,* could regularly manage 30 salvos per minute. The six and eight inch guns of the Cruisers were somewhere in between. As you could imagine, the havoc this bombardment wrought on the beachheads was quite horrendous, to say nothing of noisy.

In any case, after the bombardment was lifted to strongpoints further inland, the landing craft started their normally very dangerous journey to the beaches of Leyte Gulf, and met virtually no resistance, which was limited to light rifle fire but no artillery and very little machine gun fire. As a result, progress was very swift and within a couple of hours the majority of the members of the landing force had manage to take control of the best part of a mile of country back from the beaches.

This was in very sharp contrast to the slaughters that occurred on quite a few of the landing areas on many of the islands in the western Pacific. In fact, the landings on all the islands that we attacked in the Philippines were lightly defended, and serious resistance on land only occurred after the landings at Lingayen Gulf on Luzon. Even on Luzon, there was very little resistance to the actual landings, and the only serious fighting occurred during the advance from Lingayen Gulf south to Manila. The Navy was the only part of the armed forces that took part in

the Philippines campaign to suffer many casualties and sinkings until the attack on the island of Luzon.

The Battle of Surigao Strait, Oct 1944

But back to the Leyte Gulf part of the campaign and the Battle of Surigao Straits. As soon as the Japanese high command realized we had landed on Leyte, they put into action a plan they called SHO ICHI GO, meaning Operation Victory One. The Japanese Navy told the Japanese Army that this plan was to be an all-or-nothing operation and that the Navy would succeed in stopping the American invasion of the Philippines or die trying. This plan received quite a bit of resistance in the higher echelons of the general staff in Tokyo, but when the chief of the Navy's operations section said, "Please give the Combined Fleet the chance to bloom as flowers of death." The room was very quiet as he added, "This is the Navy's earnest request." After further discussion the Emperor approved the execution of SHO ICHI GO.

The Japanese Operation SHO ICHI GO involve basically three parts, and successful completion of which required very accurate timing and relied heavily on surprise and was very complex plan, and in fact, very nearly succeeded. The three parts of the plan comprised firstly a pincers attack by two separate and huge Fleets of Battleships and Heavy Cruisers which were intended to enter Leyte Gulf, one from the south through Surigao Strait and the other from the north via the Sibuyan Sea and the San Bernadino Straits, and finally an attempt with the use of Battleships and Aircraft Carriers to decoy Halsey's Fifth Fleet away from their assigned position to protect the Northern flank of our landing area in Leyte Gulf so the other two fleets would have unfettered reign to destroy the landing force and all the ships in Leyte Gulf.

The description of all the action that took place during the Battle of Leyte Gulf would be very confusing unless I split it up into the three different sections since several of the actions took place at much the same time. Since the major surface action (and the major damage to the Japanese Fleet) took place in the Suragao Strait, I'll begin with that. Almost all of the Japanese Fleet that was available to take part in the operation was at that time in Brunei, under Admiral Kurita, carrying out minor repairs but more importantly, refueling from the local oil supplies. Admiral Kurita had decided to split his forces into units in order to achieve the pincer movement that Operation SHO ICHI GO required. He sent one unit, the most powerful one consisting of Ugaki's Battleship Division One, with himself as Commander, with Heavy Cruiser and Destroyer Escort, north through the Palawan Passage, the Sibuyan Sea, and the San Bernadino Strait to act as the northern part of the pincer. The smaller unit, consisting of the Battleships *Yamashiro* and *Fuso*, plus the Heavy Cruiser *Mogami* and four Destroyers, under the command of Admiral Nishimura on the shorter track through the Sulu Sea, the Mindanao Sea and Surigao

Strait to form the southern part of the pincer, together with another smaller force, which would time itself to arrive at Surigao Strait at the same time as Admiral Nishimura's force.

As a matter of interest I can tell you that two Battleships with Battleship Division One were of the Yamato class, the biggest surface warships ever built and much larger than any warships available to the American fleet. A comparison of these Yamato Class ships with the American ships is enlightening. The Yamato Class ships were 862 feet long (almost three entire football fields), compared with the American North Carolina class, which were 728 feet long. They displaced 70,000 tons compared to the North Carolinas 40,000 tons. They carried 18.1 inch guns compared with the North Carolina's 16 inch, while the weight of their projectiles was 3,200 pounds compared to the North Carolina's projectiles which were half a ton lighter. The blast from these guns was so fierce that any crew member on the weather deck ran the risk of having their clothing torn from their bodies and of being knocked unconscious. The ships boats had to be kept in fully enclosed specially built hangars to prevent them from being damaged by the blast. They carried especially hardened 16-inch thick armor plate on the sides of the ship, and all in all seemed to follow the Japanese Naval designer's claim of being unsinkable. The total make up of Battleship Division one was five Battleships including the two Super Battleships, ten Heavy Cruisers, two Light Cruisers, and thirteen Destroyers – an altogether very powerful force, and one to be reckoned with.

The approach of the southern Japanese force to the Mindanao Sea had been detected by US aircraft and Kinkaid knew he would have to stop them on his own and rely on Halsey to protect our northern flank, as he had been instructed to do. So Kincaid sent all his Battleships (six), Heavy Cruisers (eight) and Destroyers to block off the Japanese Fleet at the northern end of Surigao Strait. He also sent all of his torpedo boats to be stationed in the strait itself as an early warning force and also to attack the Japanese ships as they proceeded up the strait. The configuration of the islands and the strait itself lent itself to the ideal ambush situation, and Admiral Oldendorf, the commander of the Battleship group took advantage of this to plan his battle. The strait runs almost due north and south and with the Islands of Leyte itself to the west and Dinagat to the east he was able to station his Battleships in a line across the northern end of the strait, so that he was in the ideal position to carry out the classical maneuver of crossing the "T". Since ships by necessity are long and thin, more guns can be mounted along their sides than on either end. Therefore, it is a fact that the ideal position for one ship to another when in battle is to place one's ship 'broadside' to the enemy's bows or stern. If you can imagine an aerial view of the situation, you can see that the two ships form the letter T with your forces forming the cross bar while the enemy ships form the shaft of the letter. With this way, the capping vessel has all the guns along one side clear to fire on the other ship, while the enemy ship can only

bring to bear the guns on her bow. This is obviously a great advantage to the ship that is actually crossing the T. It should be obvious that a similar advantage ensues when instead of a single ship in each position; you have two columns of ships.

However before the Japanese ships could be caught in this trap, they had to survive a prior gauntlet of attacks by torpedo boats and Destroyers that lay in wait for them along the strait. Kinkaid had thirty-nine PT Boats at his disposal and he used them all, at various points along the strait. Unfortunately, they didn't do any major damage to the enemy ships, but they caused the Japanese a lot of confusion and also were able to keep Oldendorf advised of the composition and positions of all the ships in the strait. This was of great value to him and was worth the very minimal losses in boats and men. As the Japanese Fleet neared the northern end of the Strait the Destroyers started to get into the battle with their torpedoes. Fortunately, by this stage of the war the American designers and manufacturers had made some much needed and overdue modifications to our torpedoes and they finally could be relied on much more than they were at the onset of the war. The Destroyers, with quite a bit of damage and at least one Destroyer sunk, managed to get some very good results against the Battleships and Cruisers of the Japanese Fleet.

This part of the plan worked beautifully, since Halsey took all his Carriers and Battleships and Heavy Cruisers to the north-west to intercept the large Fleet of Carriers and Battleships. Obviously, he didn't know that the Carriers had virtually no aircraft on board to do any damage to any US ships, and no trained pilots to man the few aircraft they had, and his actions left the entire landing force at the mercy of the Japanese Battleships, two of which were the biggest naval ships ever built, and several Heavy Cruisers. The only fighting ships we had available to defend the landing force and the men ashore on Leyte were a few Escort Carriers, armed with only five inch guns and whose aircraft had only HE bombs designed for close support of ground forces (no torpedoes or armor-piercing bombs) and a few Destroyers and Destroyer Escorts with a maximum size guns of 5 inch. In fact, because the US Navy didn't consider it possible to stop the Japanese Fleet, USS *Wasatch* (with one only 5 inch gun) was designated as Harbor Defense Ship and we were ordered to make ready for our job.

Of course, at this time we weren't getting all the battle information in real time, but we were able to get some sort of idea of the progress of the battle from intercepts of the transmissions being made by the involved vessels and we did get impressions that not much success was being achieved by the PTs, so we were starting to get a bit concerned. However, once the Destroyers became involved things started to look a bit better. There were quite a few Destroyers stationed in the strait to ambush the Japanese ships, and when the PT Boats had withdrawn, two groups of Destroyers deployed in the strait commenced their part of the attack.

Three Destroyers, led by the *Remey* headed down the eastern side of the strait and the other group of two, led by the *McDermut* went down the western side. Both groups were travelling at about thirty knots but of course when firing tin fish, it was necessary to temporarily slow to about 20 knots. Both of the Destroyers in the Western Group fired complete salvoes of ten torpedoes, making this area of Surigao Strait a very dangerous bit of ocean to be traveling in. The crews of all the Destroyers then engaged in an exercise invariably carried out when firing torpedoes, keeping an eye on a stopwatch. This device is actuated by the gunner's mate in charge of each bank of torpedoes and knowing the speed of the torpedoes through the water and the distance to the target they could tell exactly when the weapon would arrive at the target's position. Just when the torpedoes should have reached the targets, the crews of the two western ships were startled by several salvoes of huge shells fired by the Battleships they were trying to sink. However, shortly after these shells arrived, they were thrilled by another but much larger explosion – their torpedoes had hit their targets. In all, these first salvoes of torpedoes had claimed three hits, one of which was on a Destroyer. In all there were almost fifty torpedoes fired by those five Destroyers and this produced at least six detonations.

Having served on a Destroyer for most of my time in the Navy and suffered the problems with poor torpedoes, I was considerably relieved to hear of their successes in this battle. Believe me, those guys in the PTs and Destroyers received all my commiserations regarding the problems we had had and I was thrilled when the results stated coming in. After firing their torpedoes, these Destroyers took off back up the strait to escape the murderous shellfire of the Japanese ships, and shortly afterwards several more groups of Destroyers went after the Japanese, with similar results. These ships scored a large number of hits on the Japanese ship, including several on the two Battleships (at least two hits on the *Yamashiro*) and Cruisers.

While this was going on, the Battleships and Heavy Cruisers had commenced firing their main batteries, and aided by improved radar control, had been devastating. In fact, by the time the Japanese Fleet reached the northern end of the strait, only three ships remained, the Battleship *Fuso*, the heavy Cruiser *Mogami*, and the Destroyer *Shigure*, the rest of the formidable enemy force was sunk, or scattered around Surigao Strait as limping or totally disabled wrecks. A small Japanese Force under Admiral Shima, which was supposed to join Nishimura's force before it entered the Strait appeared in the strait at about this time, but after its flagship collided with *Mogami*, turned south and tried to escape. Unfortunately for them, they were subsequently attacked by Carrier Aircraft and except for Destroyers; all ships in this force were destroyed.

The battle of Surigao Strait was the most successful naval battle between surface forces in US history, with Japanese forces losing two Battleships, three Cruisers and four Destroyers,

with an American loss of one Destroyer, one PT Boat sunk and several PT Boats damaged. The exact casualty figures for the Japanese forces cannot be determined, but it is certain to be many thousands; the American forces lost only 39 men, with another 114 wounded. Most of the American casualties were aboard USS *Albert W. Grant,* a Destroyer which became disabled by engineering problems and was attacked by other American ships (who mistook her for an enemy ship) and she finally sank. As well as being such a crushing victory, this was to be the last of the great naval gun and torpedo battles ever fought, so it will be long remembered, particularly by those who took part. Although we, the *Wasatch* crew, didn't actually take part in the battle, we were involved indirectly and could see the explosions from on deck and hear sounds which were unmistakably those of heavy guns and torpedoes. When we got the details of the battle a day later, we were not only thrilled by them but also astounded as to the magnitude of the victory. Unfortunately, we weren't long in being thrown into complete confusion and, in fact, despair as the Battle of Leyte unfolded further.

The Japanese Northern Fleet moves to San Bernadino Strait

The battle of Surigao strait took place during the night of 24th and 25th of October 1944, but other major actions also were taking place during and just before that same night, that involved aircraft and submarines against the Japanese Northern Force, which was by far the most powerful of the fleets attacking the US forces in the Philippines. This fleet left Borneo and steamed north-eastward through the Palawan Passage, the Mindoro Strait into the Sibuyan Sea, heading for the San Bernardino Strait, intending to attack the American ships in Leyte Gulf, and so wipe out the entire landing force. Unfortunately for them, there were two American submarines waiting west of Palawan Island near a section of the Sibuyan Sea marked on charts as "Dangerous Ground," meaning just that, an area of reefs and shallow water which had not been surveyed and should be entered only with great care.

The 22nd of October was to be their last on this particular patrol and they were making preparations to set sail for their base in Australia. Since they had just received a report of a convoy of ships heading in their direction, decided to delay their departure until they could have a chance of sinking a ship or two. This convoy of ships turned out to be the Japanese Northern Force, which included five Battleships, quite a few Heavy Cruisers plus Destroyers; their decision was a fateful one. The two Submarines, USS *Dace* and USS *Darter*, both surfaced and held a conference about their plans. They still had no idea what the convoy consisted of, but were soon enlightened. Shortly after midnight, both submarines established radar contact with a large group of enemy ships. As soon as the radar contact had been established, they made radio contact with their superiors and alerted them to the huge fleet of ships they were stalking.

After several hours of stalking, the submarines were in a favourable position to attack and began firing spreads of torpedoes. The *Darter* was first to open fire using a spread of six torpedoes (she had only six torpedo tubes on her bow and four on her stern) so after firing all her forward torpedoes she had to swing around to bring her stern tubes to bear on the Japanese ships. After the normal run time had expired there were five explosions caused by hits on two Heavy Cruisers and soon thereafter another hit was made on another Cruiser. All three of the Cruisers eventually sank, but the Japanese commander decided to speed up and leave the Submarines behind, leaving two Destroyers to escort the crippled Cruiser *Maya* back to safety. This was a surprise to historians who reviewed the action after the war finished, because these Destroyers would have been necessary to him at a later action and the *Maya* was doomed anyway. In any case the loss of three Cruisers and two Destroyers to his command was a serious blow to his planning at this stage. These losses were the least of his worries as the action in the Sibuyan Sea continued. As would be expected, the Escorting Destroyers tried to exact some revenge by attacking both submarines with depth charges. They carried out numerous depth charge attacks, and caused serious concerns among the crews of the subs, but only managed to get some near misses, but no damage to them of any consequence.

By the time the action described above had finished it was almost dawn and the Japanese Fleet had disappeared from the radar screens of the submarines, except for the crippled *Maya* and her Escorting Destroyers. The American skippers decided to have a go at sinking the crippled ship, but couldn't get near enough for a torpedo attack, so they decided to move away from those ships and surface for another conference. Unfortunately, the *Darter* sent a message to the *Dace*, "We are aground!" This was a serious consequence, so a decision was made to try and get her off the reef, but this proved useless, so they took off her crew and all confidential papers and attempted to blow her up.

This failed so they had to leave her where she was and return to Australia. This episode was not by any means the end of troubles for the Japanese, however, because Halsey had by this time heard about the appearance of the Japanese Fleet and immediately sent out scout planes from his Carriers to locate them. They found the Japanese ships, still in the Sibuyan Sea and Halsey sent large numbers of dive bombers, torpedo planes and fighters to attack them. Trying to describe the mayhem these planes, and subsequent numbers of Carrier Planes caused to the fleet, is beyond me, suffice it to say that Halsey's planes turned the *Musashi,* one of only two Japanese Super Battleships, into a floating junkyard that was sunk the next day by more of Halsey's planes, and caused extensive damage to almost of the other ships in the fleet, so much so that the Japanese decided to retire to a position out of range of Halsey's planes.

This caused one of the faults in Halsey's decisions, in that he believed he had chased the Japanese away, where in fact, they were only making a short movement, and after retiring for some time, they turned back and resumed their course to enter Leyte Gulf through the San Bernadino Strait. Halsey wrongfully assumed they had gone away and this belief reinforced his decision to take all his Heavy Ships and Carriers north-west to attack the decoy fleet coming towards Leyte Gulf. This was an almost fatal mistake, particularly for us, because the Northern Force of Japanese ships exited the San Bernadino Strait unimpeded and proceeded down the east coast of Samar toward the beachhead.

The Japanese Northern Fleet attacks Leyte Harbor

The Japanese forces that exited San Bernadino Strait that day must have been greatly shocked to be able to get out of the Strait without a fight, because they expected to be met by Halsey's Carrier forces escorted by new Battleships and Heavy Cruisers and heavy fighting. Fortunately for them and unfortunately for us they encountered no resistance and turned south to attack the beachhead. After steaming on this course for only a short time, they sighted the American naval forces in the distance and started to attack. The only fighting ships the US Navy had in the area consisted of Escort Carriers, Destroyer Escorts and a few Destroyers. As soon as our ships and planes spotted the Japanese Fleet, they decided to attack them with all the weapons available to them. The weapons at their disposal consisted of planes from the Jeep Carriers, who had very little in the way of armor-piercing bombs or torpedoes, because their primary mission had been to give support to the troops on Leyte by use of fragmentation bombs designed to be used against unprotected ground troops.

In addition to these planes, the only other means of protecting themselves and the ships in the Harbor were Destroyer Escorts with 4 and 5 inch guns and the few Destroyers carrying torpedoes and five inch guns. Remember that the Japanese ships included two Battleships (the largest ever built) carrying 18 inch guns and very thick armor-plate along their sides, as well as several Heavy Cruisers carrying 8 inch guns plus armor, plus numerous Destroyers. The Jeep Carriers obviously had to try and escape but their maximum speed was under 17 knots, while the Japanese Battleships could exceed 30 knots. It didn't take long for our for our forces to get the message that our forces were in dire straits, but the puny forces we had, tried to do the impossible and chase the far superior enemy away from the beachhead. The Destroyer Escorts and Destroyers steamed at their top speed straight at the Japanese Battleships and fired their torpedoes whenever they could while firing their ineffective five inch guns and small arms as fast as they could.

This unequal battle continued for far longer that anyone would have thought possible, during which time several of the Destroyer Escorts were badly damaged along with a couple of

Destroyers, and several of the Jeep Carriers were also at the mercy of the heavy guns arrayed against them. The Jeep Carriers, by the way, had been originally built by Kaiser shipbuilders as disposable (literally) merchant ships but before launching were converted to Jeep Carriers. They had no armor-plating and were very lightly built, but were considered as suitable for duty as Aircraft Carriers to be used only to provide air cover for troop landing operations. In fact, at least one of the Jeep Carriers involved in this battle was hit by eighteen inch armor-piercing shells from a Japanese Battleship but instead of exploding, it went right through both sides of the ship and eventually exploded in the water several hundred yards away from the Carrier. This happened so often that Captain Copeland of USS *Roberts*, had caught a glimpse of the Jeep Carrier *Gambier* and described the ship as looking like a colander.

The situation was so serious that a decision was made to declare USS *Wasatch* as the Harbor defense ship to defend the Harbor and the ships therein from attack by the Japanese Task Force attacking at the time. I have to point out that the *Wasatch* (on which I was serving at the time) had a main armament of one only five inch 25 caliber anti-aircraft gun plus a few 20mm cannons and fifty caliber machine guns. All of this might have proved to be a deterrent to a torpedo boat, but certainly not to anything bigger or more powerful. At about this time another decision was made, that any attack on the ships in Harbor would result in the *Wasatch* proceeding up a small waterway between Samar Island and Leyte Island until we went aground. This was felt necessary since the *Wasatch* was the only means of communication between the Commander of the entire operation and the outside world. The *Wasatch* had the best and most up to date radio communications set up I had ever seen, with hundreds of radio transmitters and receivers capable of communicating with any other part of the world and probably the best staff available in the whole Pacific area.

I must comment on the quality of those guys that I had working for me – they were absolutely the cream of the crop, and anything that had to be done was done, quickly and apparently with very little hassle. It just about took my breath away, the efficiency that made my job almost unnecessary, I've never before or since had such an experience. However, it was felt that if anything happened to the *Wasatch*, it would cause almost complete chaos and would have had an unacceptable effect on the whole of the operation, which after all, would not be completed until the whole of the Philippine Island group was under Allied control.

Fortunately for the whole conduct of the war, and for reasons no one has yet been able to explain satisfactorily, the Japanese Admiral suddenly broke off the attack on the few small and relatively ineffective naval forces against him and turned north towards the eastern entrance of San Bernadino Strait, and although the Carrier Planes followed as did the few surface forces we had left, everyone breathed more than a large sigh of relief. Before the Japanese turned away,

Admiral Kinkaid was becoming desperate, because all he could foresee was the complete destruction of the ships in the Harbor plus the entire beachhead. The last word we had received was that Halsey and his major fleet of new Battleships, Fleet Carriers' and Heavy Cruisers were guarding our northern flank, and when the major ships of the Japanese Fleet arrived at the mouth of Leyte Harbor, our situation was really desperate, so he had no choice but to radio CINCPAC to find out what had gone wrong. Since time was so vital he sent a message in plain language without any coding asking "Where is Lee, send Lee?" Admiral Lee was the officer in charge of Task Force 34 which Halsey had created from a part of his fleet, but this Task Force had not actually been formed, and was obviously not able to help Kinkaid. There was a serious breakdown in communications and Kinkaid was relying on the only information available to him. Eventually, *Nimitz* sent a coded message to Halsey (because of the obvious concern Kinkaid was experiencing as to Halsey's whereabouts. The dispatch read, "Turkey trots to water GG Where is rpt Where is Task Force thirty four RR The world wonders."

To anyone not used to US Naval coding processes, this seems nonsensical, and in fact is a normal aid to preventing any decoding effort by an enemy. A Naval coded message normally begins with a nonsense phrase, called 'padding' followed by a double letter, then the actual message, followed by another double letter and then another nonsense phrase. In this case the first nonsense phrase is "Turkey trots to water," and the concluding nonsense phrase is "The world wonders". Unfortunately for Halsey, he received the message as if the phrase "the world wonders" was part of the correct message, which really angered him. He was in such a rage that he made a decision that could cost him dearly in an ambition of his. He divided his forces and took the heavy ships with him and headed back for San Bernadino Strait, where he would arrive much too late to have any effect on the battle there, but in doing so he sacrificed any chance of achieving his dream of taking on the enemy in a surface battle.

I must add here that my impression of Admiral Kinkaid's mood during this period seemed to me to be one of panic, and my previous experience with him was of a very calm and careful man who could take almost anything in his stride, without any problem. I may have badly misjudged him in this case because after a very short time he had reverted to his normal appearance – perhaps I was the one in a panic, because I can assure you that panic under those circumstances would have been completely justified. Again let me assure you that after a very short time everything on the bridge of the *Wasatch* went back to normal.

The battle fought between Kinkaid's valiant ships and the overwhelmingly powerful Japanese Task Force turned out to be indecisive, but for the American sailors and fliers involved it was probably one of the worst experiences of their entire wartime service. The US Navy lost

several Carriers, a couple of Destroyer Escorts plus Destroyers, an Aircraft Carrier and quite a few valuable officers and men.

I have no doubt that some of you are wondering how I was able to describe a lot of the action during this battle, since the *Wasatch* was not in visual contact with the ships engaged in the conflict. In fact, we could hear and see the aircraft from the Jeep Carriers at times and we could very definitely hear the sound of the 18 inch Japanese guns firing as well as the sounds of torpedoes exploding and bombs bursting. The real source of information came from our interception of TBS transmissions from all the ships involved in the action. In the US Naval tradition of using short cut names for ease of transmission, the TBS esignation stands for 'Talk Between Ships' and consisted of VHF transmitters and receivers. Because of the wavelengths used in this equipment, it is normally considered that any messages over the TBS channels could not be heard beyond the visual horizon, and that meant that it is basically secure from interception beyond the visual horizon and could be used to pass plain language (not encoded) messages without fear of interception. In actual fact, TBS transmissions do travel short distances beyond the horizon and thus we could hear all the urgent radio traffic being passed from ship to ship in the entire battle.

As you can imagine, some of the traffic we could hear didn't do much for our peace of mind. I can honestly say that this particular experience was one of the worst I have ever experienced from the point of fear – I've never been so scared in all my life, bearing in mind that we knew that we would most likely shortly become a target for those huge Japanese ships, and knowing that we didn't stand a chance once they appeared in the bay, the occurrence of which was almost a sure thing.

The Kamikaze

At about the same time as the protracted fighting in and around Leyte Gulf was taking place; a momentous decision was being made by Vice Admiral Onishi, who had just been appointed Commander of the First Air Fleet, which made him responsible for all Japanese naval air forces in the Philippines. The final decision, made on the 20th October, 1944, was "We must organize suicide attack units composed of Zero fighters armed with bombs, with each plane to crash dive into an enemy Carrier." This was the first time that suicide tactics had been officially sanctioned by the commander of an air unit. It meant that pilots would be trained, briefed, and sent into the air with the express intention to kill themselves in order to cause damage to their enemies. The next morning an announcement about the new organization was posted for all the Japanese pilots to see. The special corps were to be divided into four sections, called: Shikishima (a poetic name for Japanese), Yamato (The ancient name for Japanese), Asahi (Morning sun), and Yamazakura (Mountain Cherry Blossom). The overall name for this special attack corps was

to be “Kamikaze,” (meaning Divine Wind,) a name neither I nor any other sailor in the United States Navy will ever be able to forget, nor for that matter hear without some horrid recollections. This was the first time that there was a concerted and relentless series of attacks that took place and from then on, it became a game of kill or be killed with no doubt in our minds that just about every enemy plane we saw would be a Kamikaze, and we not only had to shoot the planes down, but also try to make sure we killed the pilot as well. That situation really turned our lives into not just a day to day existence but really into a minute by minute existence and I’m sure would have been the cause of quite a few cases of ‘battle fatigue’ (a newly coined name for shell shock). We all became continually on edge (even more than usual) and the morale of entire crews fell alarmingly. Obviously, we didn’t know at that time about the decision, but it wasn’t very long (only days later) that we started feeling the effects. In fact, by the time we started on the way to Lingayen Gulf to oversee the landings on the island of Luzon we really started to feel the effects of the Japanese decision.

It should not be assumed that no Japanese pilot crashed his plane on an Allied ship prior to this time, because it happened quite a bit, but only when the pilot was wounded or when his plane was no longer able to be flown back to his base, at which time the Japanese pilots realizing that they had no hope of living anyway would crash on our ships and with his death hopefully take some of his enemies with him. This was bad enough, but when the Japanese high command decided to use the agreed tactic of using whole squadrons of planes as suicide units the situation became almost disastrous for our plans, which, or course, was what they intended.

The only real way of combating this form of warfare was to shoot and destroy any attacking plane before it could get close enough to crash on our ships. I have to admit that it was a wonderful tactic to employ if you did not place a very high value on an individual’s life. Obviously this tactic would only work if you were prepared to sacrifice virtually all your pilots in the kamikaze attacks. I know our forces would never agree to order our highly trained and valuable pilots to follow suit – it would be unthinkable. Probably the most serious effect these attacks had was on the morale and mental decay which resulted among the crews of our ships. I know the terrible feeling of helplessness that we all felt just carrying out our duties knowing that it was possible at any minute that an enemy plane could suddenly appear and deliberately point his plane at you and was prepared to give up his life for the chance of killing your and/or your shipmates and sending your ship to the bottom. I still find it difficult to understand their mental processes; I guess I will never be able to convince myself that those guys were not insane.

Getting back to our situation in Leyte Gulf, having listened to the trials and tribulations of the poor crews of the Jeep Carriers, Destroyers and Destroyer Escorts for what seemed like days to us, (and I have no doubt for those crews), we were astonished to hear that the Japanese

force had disengaged from the battle and was heading back to the north, presumably to transit the San Bernadino Strait and head back to their bases. Despite the trouncing the US ships had been taking, there is little doubt of the mental condition of the crews. In fact, one of the Jeep Carriers had been badly damaged by Japanese shell fire and the crew was feeling very frustrated because they couldn't do much in the way of fighting back except use the puny 5 inch gun. The machine gun crews couldn't do anything because the Japanese ships were out of their range, so in order to raise their morale, an officer who was in charge of the 40 mm gun crews pointed out to the crews that their idleness wouldn't last much longer and said "Just wait a little longer, boys, we're sucking them into 40mm range".

Shortly afterward, when the Japanese Fleet turned away to the north, after the crews had resigned themselves to almost certain destruction a signalman on Spragues Flagship turned to his shipmates and complained, "Goddammit, they're getting away!" I can only repeat some of the comments I heard from some senior officers on board the *Wasatch* who said over and over after the battle was over. They were baffled and bewildered by the Japanese action and really praised the ships and their crews for the magnificent fight they had put up with such badly outgunned and unprepared ships and crews. The fact that we were able to get on with the job of getting all the rest of our troops on the beach together with all their supplies and ensure that the beachhead had been properly secured was a blessing and all thanks had to be given to those gallant men. Due to their courage we could get on with the job of preparing for the next step in the Philippine campaign, the landing on Mindoro Island, the logical next step before tackling the Island of Luzon.

The battle of Leyte Gulf finally destroyed any chance of the Japanese Navy having any important role in the whole war. They lost four Fleet Aircraft Carriers, three Battleships including one of their newest and most powerful ship, nine Cruisers and dozens of Destroyers, together many thousands of men, both airmen and sailors. In comparison, the US Navy lost three Aircraft Carriers, only one of which was a Fleet Carriers, the others being Jeep Carriers, plus two Destroyers, two Destroyer Escorts and hundreds of men. In addition, of course, the losses of Japanese aircraft continued the trend of heavy losses sustained by their Navy and air force, and just about ended any effective use of aircraft for offensive purposes, except for the Kamikaze units.

Invasion of Mindoro Island, December 1944

The invasion of Mindoro Island on 13th – 16th December was a very tame affair for the US Navy, since there was virtually no resistance to the preliminary bombardment and only very seldom any Japanese aircraft in evidence above or around the beachhead, but of course we

weren't too upset about that state of affairs. Everything went like clockwork and I kept thinking, "I hope Lingayen Gulf is as simple an operation as this one!"

We were convinced that the Japanese would pull out all stops when we arrived at the Gulf, because if we did manage to make a successful landing and consolidation, the rule of the Japanese in the Philippines would be doomed. As it turned out, the Kamikaze corps almost managed to make the landing too expensive for our forces and was just about the only resistance to our activities in Luzon.

After the preliminary bombardment, we landed all the planned troops without resistance. It seems the Japanese General decided not to oppose the landing, which took place on January 9, 1945 but to set up lines of resistance some distance back from the beaches. This resulted in a very rapid movement of our forces away from the beaches and the Japanese never ever got organized to prevent movement of allied troops southward toward Manila. The army had an easy task for quite a few days until the Japanese finally started to slow them down a bit, but progress south to Manila was much more rapid than was originally expected. Once the approaches to Manila began to be threatened and the Japanese lines of communication became very short, resistance increased, then the main resistance was limited to the area of Bataan and the situation worsened for our troops.

While this was occurring, the air attacks in Lingayen Gulf became more and more difficult to cope with since the only enemy aircraft we saw were invariably Kamikaze, and because we hadn't learned how to cope with them properly yet, they caused serious and very heavy damage and casualties to many of our ships which had to remain in the landing area to complete unloading fresh troops and supplies. This operation was the first in the war where the amphibious fleet, comprising 164 vessels (Troop Carriers, cargo ships, mine sweepers and other auxiliary) became the target of concentrated Kamikaze attacks, which took a heavy toll of ships and personnel, but fortunately did not disrupt the landing nor set back the timing in any significant way. In addition to the damage to the amphibious, there was considerable damage and losses to the escorting warships. The Australian heavy Cruiser, HMAS *Australia*, was probably the unluckiest warship present, because it seemed to be singled out for attention. No fewer than five Kamikaze planes crashed on her, killing 44 men and wounding 72, but her damage control parties did some fantastic work and she remained on station until the beachhead was well established, when she returned to Sydney for repairs. In addition, the US Escort Carrier, USS *Ommaney Bay* was hit, was set on fire, and eventually sank after being abandoned after 93 of her crew had been killed and 65 wounded. In fact, between January 3 and 13 four vessels were sunk, and 54 hit with damage occurring from moderate to serious. In total the casualties from these Kamikaze attacks included 738 allied officers and men were killed and over 1300 wounded. As

you can see, they were a serious threat to anyone or any ship present at the time. This may give you some idea of our concern at the attacks.

I can assure you that those of us on board the *Wasatch* were not happy during all this because, in her daily address to all, Tokyo Rose kept making statements about the *Wasatch*, how she knew where we were, what the ship looked like, that it was Kinkaid's flagship and promising us that we were the prime target for each of the Kamikaze planes that came our way. She never stopped this and every day made more threats against, not only us, but other ships that were present in the Gulf, calling them by their names and even naming the Captains of some of them. Previously when we had listened to her, we used to laugh at her statements, but when she named our ship, and our Captains name and saying she was going to arrange for all our deaths, including Admiral Kinkaid, we really started to worry that at last she might be right.

This part of the campaign was small fry compared to the other two main steps, the more important conquests of Leyte and Luzon, but was considered necessary as a precaution against flanking action being taken by enemy forces to interfere with our subsequent attack on Luzon.

Headquarters at Tacloban

We remained on station at Lingayen Gulf for a fair while. I can't recall exactly how long we stayed in that area but it was until most of supplies and troops were landed and fully consolidated. When it was decided we were no longer required on station, the *Wasatch* headed back to Leyte, where, after a few weeks making arrangements for our billeting on shore, most of Admiral Kinkaid's staff were put ashore to establish a new headquarters for the Seventh Fleet. We had a comprehensive amount of communications gear at our disposal, from powerful radio transmitters on a wide range of frequencies to VHF voice transmitter, plus the latest radio teletype equipment. The only thing missing to make the set up an ideal tropical holiday spot was air conditioning, but as I think I mentioned previously in these memoirs, I never served on a station or ship that was equipped with that amenity.

They had a very complete catering outfit, very well staffed, and as in almost every situation I served in during my Navy days, the food was very well prepared, very tasty, and to everyone's delight, plentiful and sufficiently varied to make eating at the mess very enjoyable. The only meals that could be said were monotonous were Saturday morning breakfasts. It seemed to be a Navy tradition that the mess cooks served up baked beans (always cooked to the same recipe throughout the service it seemed) together with sweet buns such as cinnamon buns or similar, and, of course, plenty of black (very) coffee, plus some sort of fruit if available. As an example of the sort of variety we experienced throughout our service we could have had roast chicken, chicken fricassee, fried chicken, all sorts of roasts such a beef, veal, lamb, and pork, casseroles, minced beef, lamb and pork, fish (fresh if available) together with potatoes, and any

sort of other vegetables the commissary officer could purchase. We also had well trained cooks who baked cakes and made other sorts of desserts so you can see the US Navy really looked after their men from the point of view of food. All US Naval shore stations also had ice cream makers and deep freeze facilities so we Yanks could indulge in one of our major needs. I can only remember one meal during my entire naval career that was unsatisfactory and that was on the *Henley* shortly after we left Brisbane to New Zealand to pick up the 1st Marine Division for the invasion of the Solomon Islands.

During our visit to Brisbane, the Commissary Officer placed an order with our supply office there for stewing chickens for Chicken Fricasee, but because chickens were in very short supply the local suppliers sent a consignment of frozen rabbits, with advice that rabbits were as good as chickens and perhaps better. Since our cooks had never seen frozen rabbits they assumed you should cook them just as though they were chickens. They therefore dumped them in boiling water (still frozen of course) and treated them as if they had been chickens. Needless to say the rabbit fricassee was more like rubber fricassee than chicken fricassee, and the flavour was unbelievable and INEDIBLE. Except for that unforgettable episode I can't say that I had any food in the Navy that was other than exceptionally good and as I said before exceptionally generous. Our mates from the Australian Navy used to plan to visit our ships just before meal times to ensure that they would be invited to a meal aboard. Of course, knowing the difference between foods served on our ships compared with their ships, they were always invited to sit down and enjoy our food. I don't blame them!

As well as great meals there were other advantages to being stationed on shore at Tacloban, the small town where our headquarters had been set up. One of the pleasures for me was the waters of the Gulf, which lapped on the beach only yards from our tents. The water was cool, not cold, and being in a tropical location, there were several small reefs within a few hundred yards of the beach, where the reefs were only 20 or 30 feet deep and with a plentiful supply of live shells, including thousands of golden Cowrie shells, which I was able to collect with no trouble and I was able to get a reasonable supply of fine monel metal wire, a strong, stiff wire that does not rust, and was able to manufacture some beautiful necklaces which made good money for me for a while. (At least until some other smart guys sussed out where I was getting the shells from and copied my designs – then business fell right off). I must say, it was necessary to find some handy anthills where the live shells could be left for the ants to clean them out before you could make the necklaces and I lost quite a few shells once my opponents found them. I didn't really mind, though, because I didn't need the money – there was nothing to spend money on at Tacloban, so I gave that game away, although I still used to visit the reefs just for the pure enjoyment of swimming around them, it was beautiful. I should mention, though, that I

kept one of the best necklaces I made to give to my future bride, who had finally agreed to marry me when it could arranged. Incidentally, I still have some of the Cowrie shells (bare shells) with me now and I intend to us them to make a necklace for Dawn.

Anyhow, that time at Tacloban was quite enjoyable, because we were far away from the fighting still going on in the Philippines. The climate, although quite tropical, was not hot enough to cause us any worry, we had a beach only a few steps away and we could dive in for a quick cool-off at any time we could get away. It was great!

Section 2: The End of the War

I worked through the end of the war based in Brisbane as Senior Chief Petty Officer, responsible for closing down the US Naval stations in Australia. Upon returning to the States with Doris my wife, and after my official discharge from the Navy on 13th February 1946, I began a new phase of my life as a student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology; a period which was to give me great pleasure and satisfaction.

Transfer to the Naval Station at Brisbane

After quite a bit of talking, and negotiating, I was finally able to convince the senior officers in the headquarters personnel office that it would be a good thing for the Navy (as well as for me) to have me transferred to the Naval Station in Brisbane to organize the closing down of the Naval communication station there, since it would not be required for much longer. I received orders to proceed to Brisbane on or about April or May in 1945. to take over as senior non-commissioned officer present and get ready to close the station down as soon as ordered. Of course I had to then try and organize a wedding in Brisbane at around that time. I wrote to Doris explaining the situation, but of course I had leave fine details to her. When I finally got a date for my transfer, leaving Leyte on the 28th of April, 1945, I sent the details to Doris and left the rest to her. One of the last things I had to do before we got married was get permission from the Navy to marry a foreign national, not an easy thing to arrange. I somehow got this organized except for one small detail, which was to have a physical examination, focusing mainly on venereal diseases. This didn't worry me in the least, but since it was a prerequisite for final permission, I reported to the sick bay for my examination. I was first examined for gonorrhea, then for syphilis. The "Clap" test was a direct physical check, but the syphilis test involved a blood sample, so the pharmacist mate opened a drawer and took out a hypodermic syringe at least six inches long and about an inch in diameter, with a long thick needle to match. This didn't worry me until he jabbed the needle into a vein and proceeded to completely fill the barrel which looked as though it would hold almost half a pint of blood. He then proceeded to squirt a small amount (about a teaspoonful) into a test tube which he sealed, and then casually emptied the rest of the blood into the sink – I was somewhat startled but decided not to comment. I think he expected me to say something because he watched me carefully, then finally grinned, but never said a word, except "That's all for Now." I later discovered that if the blood test had been positive, I would have been refused permission to marry.

After many farewells, including a couple of very liquid ones, I boarded a plane at Tacloban airstrip and flew down to Brisbane, arriving on 28th of April, 1945. Since I had been promoted to Chief Petty Officer (CPO) while aboard the *Wasatch*, I had no dress uniform – the only items of CPO's uniform available on board had been working consisting of khaki shirts and khaki trousers, with a peaked Chief's cap but only khaki cover, so I had to really get busy when I got to Brisbane to get a dress uniform to get married in. After much negotiation and pleading, I was able to get the top suit manufacturer in Brisbane, Rothwells, to agree to make me a dress blue uniform and cap cover within a week so that I would have it to wear for my wedding. I have to say, everyone who saw me in my new uniform was most impressed and told me how good I looked. Even Doris was impressed, since she had only ever seen me in my gob's suit, and it was quite different, as you probably are aware.

There was one other hitch that bothered Doris quite a lot. She had planned for and asked her best friend and next door neighbor to be her Maid Of Honor, but when her friend mentioned it to her Priest (she was a devout Roman Catholic) she was told that she could not even enter the church where we were to be married. This caused Doris serious concern because of her deep friendship with this girl. Unfortunately her friend had to wait outside the church until the service was over and we left the church for the reception but her friend then attended the reception and all was serene for a while. This friend remained her friend for a very long time.

Wedding Bells

The wedding went exactly as planned, except, of course for the inability of my wife's best friend to attend and assist Doris. My best man was Jack Bedgood, my new wife's brother-in-law, who also paid for and arranged the reception. I have to admit that I don't remember where the reception was held, but since I had just arrived in Brisbane and knew no one there except for my wife's family and friends, I had to rely on Doris's family and friends for everything. It was, however, a very friendly and sociable gathering, and I did enjoy the celebrations.

After the reception the bride and groom were taken to Redcliffe, to spend a couple of weeks in a house owned by Jack Bedgood, which turned out to be quite a large place with several bedrooms, kitchen, bathroom, lounge and several wide veranda, and was only a short walk to the beach. We both enjoyed our stay at Redcliffe, particularly since while we were there we heard on the radio that Germany had surrendered. I knew that this meant that the US would immediately commence transferring ships and men to the Pacific to effectively shorten the war against Japanese. I also knew that the Japanese Forces would fight against any move from the Japanese government to surrender unconditionally, as the US was insisting they do. In fact, the surrender of Germany seemed to cause the Japanese High command to harden their stand against

surrender, and made the tasks of our forces very difficult indeed. However, the surrender of Germany made it almost a certainty that it would mark the end of my personal involvement in any further hostilities that might occur before the end of the war.

Closing down the US Naval Office in Brisbane

When I returned to duty in Brisbane after my brief period of leave I met the Senior Officer in charge of the US Navy communication center there. He was a full Lieutenant named Ingval M. Westerlund, who had been dragged into the Navy from his civilian job as a Lubrication Engineer, and as in so many cases in those times, was assigned duties that had no bearing on his training and experience. I was amazed when he told me what his qualifications were, but he made quite a good fist of his job once he had someone as a sidekick who knew all that was necessary to know about the technical side of running a communications office.

This was me, of course, and we enjoyed a very friendly and rewarding relationship until the office in Brisbane eventually closed on 11th January, 1946. After reporting for duty in Brisbane I was the senior Non-Commissioined Officer present in Brisbane, and it appeared that we were responsible for virtually all correspondence, including radio, teletype and telephonic communications for all US Naval activities is Australia and we were to be the last office to be shut down in the country. This kept us pretty busy, as you might imagine, right up the time were transferred home for discharge.

A few interesting little episodes helped keep us amused, but a little baffled. During the period between the surrender of Japanese and our transfer back to the States, I received instructions that I was to act as valuator for the mountains of equipment in foreign territories that had been occupied during the latter part of the war in the Australia, Papua new Guinea, the Solomon Islands, New Britain, and any other nearby places where troops and/or civilian support groups had been stationed. I quickly advised the Stores section that I had no qualifications making me suitable as a valuator for such items as earth moving equipment, motor vehicles, in fact, I was only prepared to carry out the assigned task for electrical and/or communications equipment.

The senior officer in the stores section agreed and commenced sending to me stacks and stacks of shipping documents for my sort of gear. The unfortunate part of the deal was that the shipping documents were very inadequate for my purposes. Some of the documents might indicate the sizes of consignments by dimensions, but no indication of weights and none of them gave any descriptions of contents other than statement such as “Assorted Radio spares,” or “Electrical Parts” or some other very vague indication of the types. Other consignments might give the gross weight of the contents, but no indication of dimensions.

When you consider that a carton of vacuum tubes might have a volume of say, 60 cubic feet and only weigh thirty of forty pounds, it could have been worth up to several thousands of pounds. Another consignment might have been a few transformers, comprising a cubic displacement of only 2 or 3 cubic feet and worth thirty Pounds, but weighing 50 or 60 pounds. The wild variations in weight and sizes and values made the job they had given me seemed impossible. In desperation I rang the senior stores officer and tried to explain my problems. He agreed with me and suggested that I make as educated a guess as I could about a possible value, then take one tenth of that value, and assign it to the consignment. This made me realize that someone stood to make a fortune by buying up the stuff and then selling it for the normal price, but later on in trying to inventory the gear we had, I had a further shock in dealing with stores and equipment.

As we were starting to close down the station, I started an inventory of everything we had there belonging the Navy, and finding this very difficult, I once again rang the stores officer and asked him for an inventory list of what equipment and stores we should have on hand. He laughed and said you have nothing. This startled me and when I asked for a clarification he told me that, since Brisbane was considered to be a war zone, everything, as it was issued, was automatically written off all books everywhere, and subsequently there was no record of any of it. He said, just let me know when you are finished with the stuff, and I'll arrange for it to be picked up and disposed of. I knew that most of the stuff we sent back would end up in someone's pockets, so when I told Lt. Westerlund the story he said immediately, then I'm taking the .38 Calibre pistol we had home with me. I responded by telling him that I was delivering our Remington typewriter to my wife's home where it would be waiting when I got back to Australia. I had already decided that when I finished University, I was returning to Brisbane to live.

Purchase of land in Toowong

As a matter of fact I had already purchased a block of land in Toowong from the Brisbane City Council on Birdwood Terrace. The land had been reclaimed by the Brisbane City Council for nonpayment of rates and I was able to purchase it for a very low price. The block consisted of two 16 perch allotments, each 33 feet wide and 132 feet deep, making total area of 32 perches with a 66 foot frontage to Birdwood Terrace, and only five minutes by car from the City Hall. The price I paid for that large block of beautiful land was ninety pounds. (45 pounds per allotment) so I was very happy with that. I eventually built a home on that block, 12.5 squares with a very nice built in kitchen, a large built in brick fireplace and the whole northern side of the house (the back) almost completely tinted plate glass. After we moved in, I had to paint the inside of the house, and, to save money on construction we had completed the fly wire

screens for every door and window, built in the laundry underneath the house, landscaped the entire front yard, built an entry landing for the front door, then built a large carport with a pit under the floor to allow access for servicing the car.

But, I am getting my story all out of chronological order - this happened after I came back to Brisbane when I had received my engineering degree from M.I.T., so I'll have to retrace my steps.

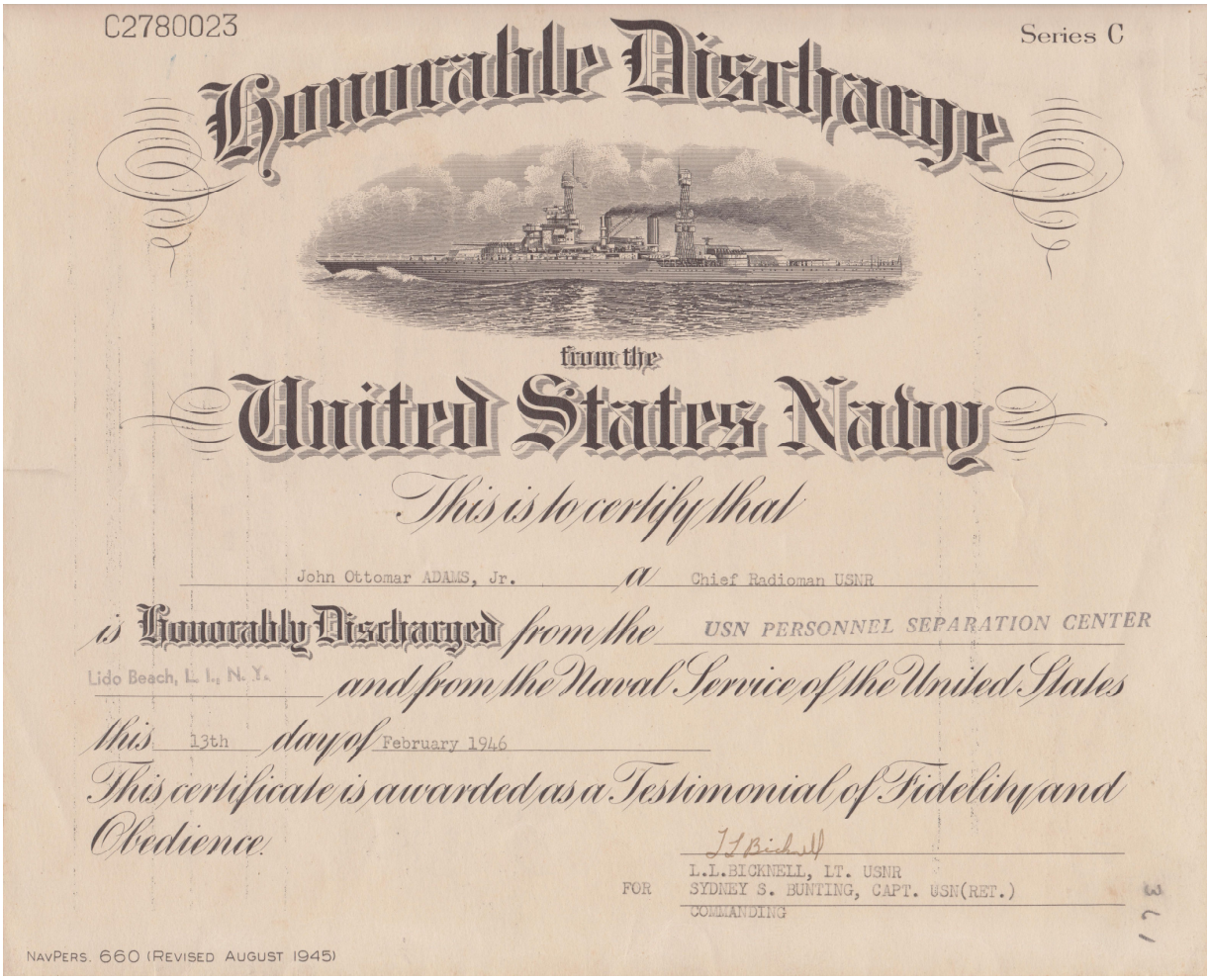
Anyhow, I duly took the typewriter to Dover Street, Red Hill, where we were living at the time with Doris's Mother (her Father had died before we met) and left it there until we returned in 1951. When we finally about to leave for the States, I took my inventory to the stores officer and told him that everything had been accounted for. He commented that he seemed to remember having seen a typewriter and a pistol in our offices, but I told him I couldn't remember them - he grinned and said he must have been mistaken. That was the end of that!

While I was in Brisbane, I renewed my friendship with the man I considered the best and nicest member of Doris's family, Norman Mair, an insurance manager with offices in Eagle Street, whom I had met for the first time at the wedding. After the German surrender, he rang me and invited me to his office for a celebration drink, and of course I agreed. He always kept a bottle of good Scotch in his desk drawer for just such occasions, and this special occasion became almost a weekly ritual. I would just drop in to his office – if he was busy, I would return later. These visits became a very pleasant break for both of us in the midst of all our other worries. In fact, after the Japanese surrender in August, we had more than one drink to celebrate. I'll never forget that day. As soon as I got the word, I rang him to spread the good news and had no choice but to go straight to his office. I can't remember too much about the rest of that day (for obvious reasons) except that when I started walking back to my office at the corner of Creek Street and Queen Street I had to fight my way through the crowds of people in Queen Street. I do recall, that in the one block walk from Eagle Street, I had my Chief Petty Officer's cap ripped off my head by young girls and had to chase them to get it back at least twice until at last I took it off and carried it in my hand, after which I only had to hang on to it as tightly as I could. After that I remember we had to handle quite of radio traffic before we could all go home to celebrate with our families.

Return to the United States and Naval Discharge

That event, of course, speeded up our return to the States, but I still had to finalise arrangements for Doris to be sent to the States (at government cost of course). The rest of my time in Brisbane was more than a little hectic, but finally I was put on a transport along with the few other ratings who were assisting me with the final arrangements to close the station down.

The trip back home was uneventful, except I was held over in San Francisco for about a week, which seemed much longer. I hadn't seen my family since October 1940, when I had left home to attend the radio school in Noroton in Connecticut.



C2780023 Series C

Honorable Discharge

from the

United States Navy

This is to certify that

John Ottomar ADAMS, Jr. a Chief Radioman USNR

is Honorably Discharged from the USN PERSONNEL SEPARATION CENTER Lido Beach, L. I., N. Y. and from the Naval Service of the United States

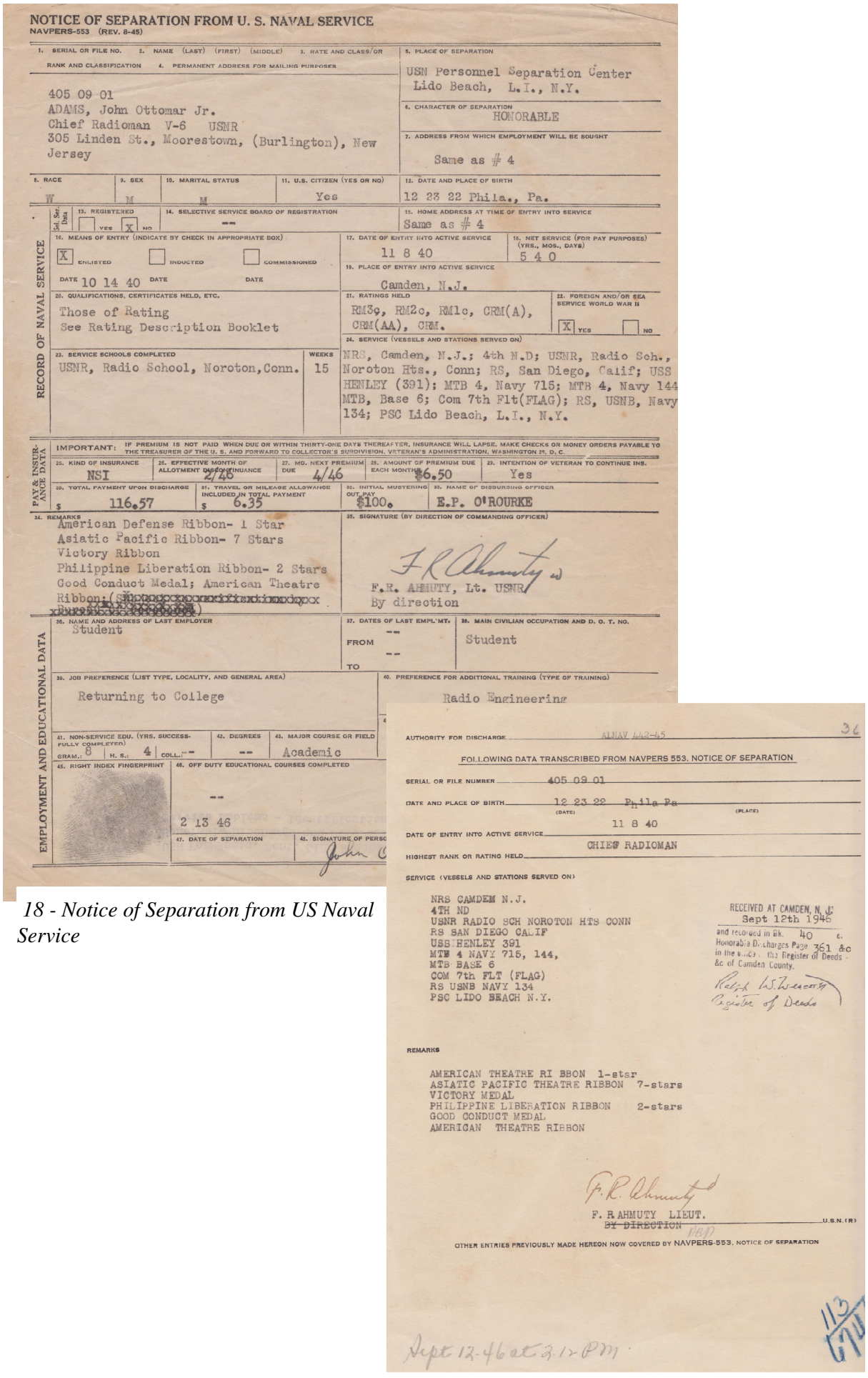
this 13th day of February 1946

This certificate is awarded as a Testimonial of Fidelity and Obedience.

L.L.BICKNELL, LT. USNR
FOR SYDNEY S. BUNTING, CAPT. USN(RET.)
COMMANDING

NAVPERS. 660 (REVISED AUGUST 1945)

17 - Certificate of Naval Discharge



NOTICE OF SEPARATION FROM U. S. NAVAL SERVICE
NAVPERS-553 (REV. 8-45)

1. SERIAL OR FILE NO. 2. NAME (LAST) (FIRST) (MIDDLE) 3. RATE AND CLASS/OR RANK AND CLASSIFICATION 4. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES

405 09 01
ADAMS, John Ottomar Jr.
Chief Radioman V-6 USNR
305 Linden St., Moorestown, (Burlington), New Jersey

5. PLACE OF SEPARATION: USN Personnel Separation Center Lido Beach, L.I., N.Y.
6. CHARACTER OF SEPARATION: HONORABLE
7. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT: Same as # 4

8. RACE: W | 9. SEX: M | 10. MARITAL STATUS: M | 11. U.S. CITIZEN (YES OR NO): Yes | 12. DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH: 12 23 22 Phila., Pa.

RECORD OF NAVAL SERVICE

Sel. Ser. Data: 13. REGISTERED [ ] YES [X] NO | 14. SELECTIVE SERVICE BOARD OF REGISTRATION: -- | 15. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE: Same as # 4

16. MEANS OF ENTRY (INDICATE BY CHECK IN APPROPRIATE BOX): [X] ENLISTED [ ] INDUCTED [ ] COMMISSIONED
DATE 10 14 40 DATE DATE
17. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE: 11 8 40
18. NET SERVICE (FOR PAY PURPOSES) (YRS., MOS., DAYS): 5 4 0
19. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE: Camden, N.J.

20. QUALIFICATIONS, CERTIFICATES HELD, ETC.: Those of Rating See Rating Description Booklet
21. RATINGS HELD: RM3c, RM2c, RM1c, CRM(A), CRM(AA), CRM.
22. FOREIGN AND/OR SEA SERVICE WORLD WAR II: [X] YES [ ] NO

23. SERVICE SCHOOLS COMPLETED: USNR, Radio School, Noroton, Conn. | WEEKS: 15
24. SERVICE (VESSELS AND STATIONS SERVED ON): NRS, Camden, N.J.; 4th N.D; USNR, Radio Sch., Noroton Hts., Conn; RS, San Diego, Calif; USS HENLEY (391); MTB 4, Navy 715; MTB 4, Navy 144 MTB, Base 6; Com 7th Flt(FLAG); RS, USNB, Navy 134; PSC Lido Beach, L.I., N.Y.

PAY & INSURANCE DATA

IMPORTANT: IF PREMIUM IS NOT PAID WHEN DUE OR WITHIN THIRTY-ONE DAYS THEREAFTER, INSURANCE WILL LAPSE. MAKE CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS PAYABLE TO THE TREASURER OF THE U. S. AND FORWARD TO COLLECTOR'S SUBDIVISION, VETERAN'S ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

25. KIND OF INSURANCE: NSI | 26. EFFECTIVE MONTH OF ALLOTMENT DISCONTINUANCE: 2/46 | 27. MO. NEXT PREMIUM DUE: 4/46 | 28. AMOUNT OF PREMIUM DUE EACH MONTH: $6.50 | 29. INTENTION OF VETERAN TO CONTINUE INS.: Yes
30. TOTAL PAYMENT UPON DISCHARGE: $ 116.57 | 31. TRAVEL OR MILEAGE ALLOWANCE INCLUDED IN TOTAL PAYMENT: $ 6.35 | 32. INITIAL MUSTERING OUT PAY: $100. | 33. NAME OF DISBURSING OFFICER: E.P. O'ROURKE

34. REMARKS: American Defense Ribbon- 1 Star
Asiatic Pacific Ribbon- 7 Stars
Victory Ribbon
Philippine Liberation Ribbon- 2 Stars
Good Conduct Medal; American Theatre Ribbon; (S[illegible])

35. SIGNATURE (BY DIRECTION OF COMMANDING OFFICER)
F. R. Ahmuty
F.R. AHMUTY, Lt. USNR
By direction

EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATIONAL DATA

36. NAME AND ADDRESS OF LAST EMPLOYER: Student
37. DATES OF LAST EMPL'MT.: -- FROM -- TO
38. MAIN CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND D. O. T. NO.: Student
39. JOB PREFERENCE (LIST TYPE, LOCALITY, AND GENERAL AREA): Returning to College
40. PREFERENCE FOR ADDITIONAL TRAINING (TYPE OF TRAINING): Radio Engineering
41. NON-SERVICE EDU. (YRS. SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED): GRAM.: 8 | H. S.: 4 | COLL.: --
42. DEGREES: --
43. MAJOR COURSE OR FIELD: Academic
45. RIGHT INDEX FINGERPRINT
46. OFF DUTY EDUCATIONAL COURSES COMPLETED: --
47. DATE OF SEPARATION: 2 13 46
48. SIGNATURE OF PERSO[illegible]: John C[illegible]

18 - Notice of Separation from US Naval Service

AUTHORITY FOR DISCHARGE ALNAV 442-45 36

FOLLOWING DATA TRANSCRIBED FROM NAVPERS 553, NOTICE OF SEPARATION

SERIAL OR FILE NUMBER 405 09 01

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH 12 23 22 (DATE) Phila Pa (PLACE)

DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE 11 8 40

HIGHEST RANK OR RATING HELD CHIEF RADIOMAN

SERVICE (VESSELS AND STATIONS SERVED ON)

NRS CAMDEN N.J.
4TH ND
USNR RADIO SCH NOROTON HTS CONN
RS SAN DIEGO CALIF
USS HENLEY 391
MTB 4 NAVY 715, 144,
MTB BASE 6
COM 7th FLT (FLAG)
RS USNB NAVY 134
PSC LIDO BEACH N.Y.

RECEIVED AT CAMDEN, N.J.
Sept 12th 1946
and recorded in Bk. 40 e. Honorable Discharges Page 361 &c in the office of the Register of Deeds &c of Camden County.
Ralph W. Wescott
Register of Deeds

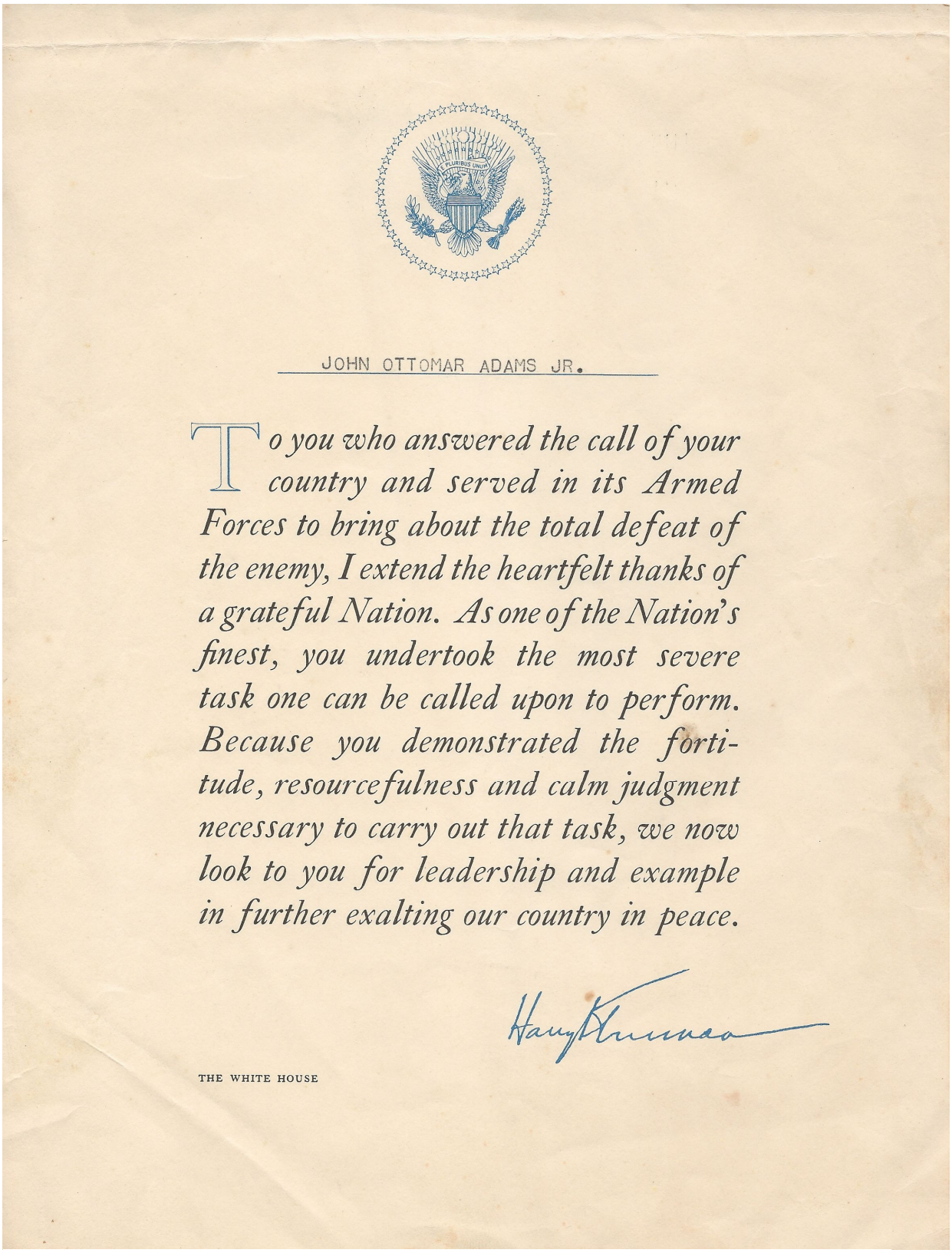
REMARKS

AMERICAN THEATRE RIBBON 1-star
ASIATIC PACIFIC THEATRE RIBBON 7-stars
VICTORY MEDAL
PHILIPPINE LIBERATION RIBBON 2-stars
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL
AMERICAN THEATRE RIBBON

F. R. Ahmuty
F. R AHMUTY LIEUT. U.S.N.(R)
BY DIRECTION

OTHER ENTRIES PREVIOUSLY MADE HEREON NOW COVERED BY NAVPERS-553, NOTICE OF SEPARATION

Sept 12-46 at 3.12 PM



JOHN OTTOMAR ADAMS JR.

To you who answered the call of your country and served in its Armed Forces to bring about the total defeat of the enemy, I extend the heartfelt thanks of a grateful Nation. As one of the Nation's finest, you undertook the most severe task one can be called upon to perform. Because you demonstrated the fortitude, resourcefulness and calm judgment necessary to carry out that task, we now look to you for leadership and example in further exalting our country in peace.

Harry Truman

THE WHITE HOUSE

19 - US Presidential Letter of Appreciation

After a long and dreary train trip to the Personnel Separation center at Lido Beach, Long Island, the processing of my discharge was quite short and relatively painless, and I was sent on my way with any money due to me and a railroad ticket to Moorestown, New Jersey.

I had rung my Aunt as soon as I arrived at Lido Beach and arranged to meet her in New York City, where she worked as Personal Secretary to the President of The Chemical Bank (one of the largest Banks in the USA). I got a surprise when we met because with her were my two sisters, Edith and Florence, it sure was a great homecoming and we spent the rest of the day and into the night celebrating.

The next day I went to New Providence, New Jersey, where my Grandmother and Grandfather lived, as well as my Uncle Linden and Aunt Mabel.

I spent a few days with them, and at the weekend my Mother and Father drove up from Moorestown to take me home. I don't really remember the next couple of weeks because they were too hectic to be able to separate the things we did and the people we met, but it sure was great.

20 - Father, Myself, Mother, February 1946

21 - Family Gathering, February 1946

L to R back row: Sister Florence, Grandma, Aunt Mable, Sister Edith, Aunt Edith, me, Mother, Father.

L to R front row: Uncle Linden, Brother Fred, Cousin Tom Shannon.

22 - Fred and Myself

23 - Florence and Myself

Planning my Education

Naturally, we had a lot of catching up to do after such a long separation and lot of news to impart to each other. One of the first items on my agenda was to contact my old high school Principal to have a long discussion about my future plans for additional education. This was Dr. Mary E. Roberts, who had been a good friend to all our family for quite a long time. In fact, she had been following my Career in the Navy all the time I had been in the service and, incidentally continued to retain her interest throughout my University studies and beyond. She was a really lovely lady and I considered her to be one of my best friends. When I graduated from high school she assisted me in my attempts to go straight to college, and was bitterly disappointed at my Father's attitude to the offer of The Gettysburg College on a full tuition scholarship at what was considered to be one of the best establishments in the vicinity of Moorestown. She also reacted in a serious way to my Father's rejection of the offer of the Virginia Military Institute to organize a full year at that venerable institution at virtually no cost to me or my family, particularly when their representative assured me of my choice Colleges with full tuition and other valuable monetary assistances when I finished my year at VMI. Shortly after I arrived home, I contacted Dr. Roberts and made an appointment to see her.

I was very pleased by her enthusiastic invitation to call on her as soon as possible. Within a few days I met with Dr. Roberts at her office, only to be greeted by a room full of people, most of whom I had never met before. She advised me that when she had let it be known that I would be visiting, she had been bombarded with requests to be introduced to me. She and I just seemed to have formed a mutual admiration society. I had always admired and respected her and apparently her feelings about me were somewhat similar. It turned out that she had been keeping her teaching staff fully informed about my life, both during my Naval Service and my time studying under her guidance at Moorestown High School. Anyhow, after I had spent quite some time in conversations with all her teachers, we were able to get to the other reason for my visit- my desire to be enrolled in an engineering course at a good university.

Her first question to me was, of course, where did I want to go to study. I had already given this matter a lot of consideration and told her that I had narrowed my choice down to two of the best schools of Electrical Engineering in the United States, The Massachusetts Institute of Technology as first choice, of course, and The Stephens Institute of Technology, which was in my home state of New Jersey and considered one of the best in the US for electrical engineering, running a close second to M.I.T. Her immediate reaction to those choices was to let me know the standings of these two Universities and she pointed out to me the difficulties inherent in my choices. Her arguments made a lot of sense, since there would have a huge number of returned

servicemen looking to go to College under the GI Bill Of Rights and competition for places in the best Colleges would be fierce.

She advised me to apply to my two first choices, certainly, but in the event of not being chosen from among the hordes of applicants to gain acceptance to either of the first choices, it would be wise to have another one or more applications made to other lesser colleges, where I would be more likely to get accepted. In one of the few instances that I didn't agree with Dr. Roberts, I decided that I would go ahead with my original plans an only apply to my first and second choices. At that time I had no idea what my applications would require of me. If I had, I am sure that I would have agreed to Dr. Robert's suggestion. The thing I hadn't reckoned on was the College Board Examinations. Both MIT sand the Stephens Institute required that I sit for the College Boards, a complication that I had not foreseen.

Entrance Examinations for MIT

I had never heard of these exams before MIT advised me that I would have to sit for them in 1946, but soon found out what they were all about. They are written examinations which are held all over the States at the same time, which are identical in all respects and last for five days, from Monday until Friday, starting at 8:am and finishing at 5pm with an hour break for lunch. The subjects of the exams are Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Modern History, and English (both grammar and composition, each subject lasting 8 hours.

This was to be a grueling set of exams with no real breaks to allow anyone to recuperate until the 5 days were up. It turned out to be the hardest 5 days of my life, so much so, that when 5pm Friday rolled around I was utterly and completely weary. Not only physically exhausted, but also mentally as well. I really had a hard time of it, partly because the high school curriculum had changed considerably since I had graduated from High School, but probably more importantly because I had done virtually no studying since joining the Navy. When I saw the subjects of the exams and glanced over the topics they would be covering I decided that I would be wasting my time if I tried to catch up with the things I would need to know to do a good job of the exams, so I could only wait for the date set for the exams and worry. The exams were set for the first week in June and the closest venue I could locate was in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, about 25 miles from where we were living at the time. Of course, I had to think about a temporary job to keep me going until I was either admitted to Uni or had been denied the opportunity by the exams I had sat for.

Incidentally, my folks had arranged to meet me in Philadelphia after the last exam on Friday evening and take me to the Circus to help me unwind. The first thing they asked me when we met that evening was "How did you make out?" My answer said it all! "I guess I can have another go next year." That was exactly how I felt, I thought I didn't have a chance to even pass

the exam, and certainly thought that given the competitive nature of the many applications for admission to MIT, I had no chance of being selected as a student. However, later in the year, while I was visiting my Grandmother on the way to Maine on a fishing trip with my Uncle, I was called to the telephone by my Aunt (who lived with my Grandparents at that time). It was my Mother calling to tell me I had a letter from MIT waiting for me. I insisted that she open it and read it to me since I couldn't bear to wait the additional two weeks until we returned from Maine. She opened the letter and read to me my letter of acceptance from MIT asking me to fill out some forms and arrange to be at the University by early in September, 1946. You might just imagine my surprise and delight to receive that particular letter. I later received another letter from the Stephens Institute, also advising me of my acceptance at that school. I never expected to be accepted by one of these schools, much less by both of them. I must have done better than I realized in the College Boards. I had, as part of the English Composition exam, to write a fictitious letter to a friend of mine, recommending a particular book to him. I was required to make it clear to my friend why I was recommending the book to him, by the way I wrote about his own nature and preferences. I thought this would be comparatively simple, since I have always been a voracious reader, even in the Navy, however when I started to write the letter I found great difficulty in naming both the name of the book, but also the name of the author. After what seemed like hours of thought, the only book that I could couple with its author was a book called "Tarzan of the Apes," by Edgar Rice Boroughs. This was a desperation choice, since I couldn't think of anything else.

Whatever the reasons for my acceptances, I will be everlastingly grateful for the examiners generosities in deciding on their decisions. In fact, however, I suppose that with the academic record I managed to achieve while at MIT, they would probably be able to say "I told you so!" Actually, my name appeared on the Dean's List at most of the term ends for my entire career at MIT. I seem to recall that for 9 out of the 10 terms I spent at MIT I made the dean's list. The Dean's List, by the way, is made up of those students whose average grades for all subjects taken during the previous semester equals or exceeds 90%. I also had the honour of being elected to an honorary Engineering Society called TAU BETA PI, which is considered to be the highest honour that can be awarded to an undergraduate engineering student, and the society has branches throughout the United States.

I'll speak more about that during discussions of my Junior year.

There still remains to describe the interval of time between my arrival home after my discharge and the time I had to report to MIT for my further education. My payoff, when I was discharged, was really nowhere enough to support me and since I was expecting my wife to arrive in the States sometime between my arrival and March or April, my expenses would

increase considerably at that time. I began chasing around for a job and found some difficulty at first, but heard of an ocean fishery that might be interested in hiring me.

These people had half a dozen pound nets staked out in the Atlantic Ocean on the New Jersey coast and they had several open fishing boats (motorized, of course) which they would launch out through the surf in the early morning, motor out to these staked out nets, pull the nets, remove the fish and take them back the beach through the surf, where the fish were cleaned and prepared for sale. They had their own wholesale and retail store from which the fish were distributed to retailers and the public. Since I had spent almost 6 years in the Navy, 18 months of which were spent serving on PT Boats, and was young (23) and very fit, they were very interested and hired me immediately. It was an exciting job, considering we had to launch and recover the usually heavily laden boat through what could be very big and dangerous surf. It was also very arduous, since we had pull the nets up alongside the boat by hand, scoop out the live fish from the net and deposit them in the boat. After returning to the beach, part of our job was to repair nets, and prepare long and heavy hardwood posts and net supports. These posts been soaked in a solution of preservative and oil to ensure long life, and were immersed for months in sea water. Obviously, we were required to sort the fish and load them in baskets to be taken to the shop, where they were cleaned and iced down waiting to be sold. Of course, while I was working for this firm, our family always had plenty of nice fresh fish to eat, and since we all loved fish, it was a great addition to our diet.

Working at Campbell's Soup Company

Unfortunately, after only 5 or 6 months of work with the fishery, for some reason they went out of business, leaving the staff out of jobs and looking for further employment. I wasn't really concerned, however, since I knew that the Campbell's Soup Company would be looking for temporary staff within weeks of me losing my previous job with the fishery. I had worked for Campbell's as a junior before I joined the Navy. The tomato season in New Jersey starts in late summer and runs through until about the end of September, and, since a huge number of farmers grow tomatoes and are contracted to Campbell's to supply them their entire crop, things get very busy in Camden, New Jersey where their main factory is situated. Actually, during this period the factory takes all the tomatoes the farmers can produce, makes great amounts of tomato soup, and cans large quantities of tomato pulp, whole tomatoes, and tomato juice for use in other soups during other times of the year. Because of these activities they hire large numbers of temporary workers, both male and female and juniors and seniors. The pay is good, since it is only temporary and the conditions are also quite good. I fronted up at the employment office of the factory and offered myself as a Senior Temp. I filled out the necessary forms without having to

use the letter X even once, which I was told was almost unheard of. I was then told to report the next day for a test, which was required of every applicant for a senior job.

With some trepidation, I duly reported to the described location for my test the next morning. After being handed a folder of some 20 or 30 pages and warned not to cheat and open it before told to (apparently to prevent cheating because the test were being timed). The room was filled with about 40 people sitting for the same test, and at the stroke of 9 we were told to open our folders and commence, after being again warned that the tests were being timed. I opened by folder to be greeted with drawing of 6 different clock faces, the hands of which were set differently. The instructions stated "Write below each clock the time the clock indicated. This took me almost 10 seconds as I was looking for some catch. The next page held 6 clock faces with no hands, but with times written below and the instructions stated "draw the hands on the clock faces indicating the time stated below." After this it really started to get difficult. We were required to draw hands on some blank faces to indicate a stated time, then on the adjacent blank face draw hands to indicate a time 10 minutes after the first face.

More of this sort of idiotic tests were shown on the remaining pages of the booklet, culminating in the final insult to my intelligence by asking me to draw my own clock faces on a blank page showing a clock with an indicated time of, say, 4:33pm and then another clock face showing a time 22 minutes later. After I had finished this last almost impossible task I looked at my watch (I could tell the time) and saw that the time was only 9:45 and wondered how I could possibly taken so long to get through such an examination. I was just sitting there looking at the ceiling, when the examiner noticed my inaction and came to my desk. He looked at me carefully, then shook his head and asked me if I was finding the exam too difficult to finish. I looked at him in astonishment and said that it wasn't and in fact I had finished. He looked at his watch and shook his head again stating that it was not possible for me to have finished so soon. After I assured him that I had indeed finished, he took my booklet and led me up to his desk, instructing me to stand there while he checked my results. He seemed to be really stunned when he finished his check and turned to me and told me that he couldn't believe I had finished so soon and also got all the answers correct. He let me go with a very peculiar look on his face and arranged for another man to take over his job while he escorted me to his boss. After he explained the situation to his boss in still unbelieving tones, he went back to his position in the examination room. The boss questioned me for a few minutes and after being unable to shake my confidence he threw up his hands and asked me when I could start work. I mentioned the next day and he ushered me out of his office still shaking his head. I found myself beginning to wonder what kind of job I had left myself in for, and it wasn't until I reported for work the next morning when I began to see their concern for time keeping abilities in their employees.

My job was initially to look after a line of three retorts, which were really only very large steam cookers, each holding 4 large perforated steel baskets which contained a large number each of cans of soup, which had been partially precooked for a short time before they were sealed. They were packed in these baskets by juniors in about 10 layers before being moved from the canning machines to the retorts. The baskets were then lowered into the retorts, the retorts were sealed and live steam was pumped into the retorts and soon as the pressure in the retorts reached a certain level, the operator of the retort would note the time the pressure was reached and the necessary cooking time was reached, the steam was shut off and cold water allowed to enter the retort to cool the soup down.

The baskets were then removed from the retorts and the cans moved into the labeling area and the process was completed. Different types of soup required different cooking times and some had lower steam pressures, so when you consider that each retort with its 4 baskets could hold in the vicinity of 8,000 to 10,000 cans of soup, it was important to ensure that the timing of the cooking was very important to the Campbell Soup Co. Also, each operator was responsible for 3 retorts at the same time, so quite a lot of money was involved in each batch.

One plus about my employment was the ability to buy cheap soup. The easiest soup to get very cheaply was of course, Tomato soup, which was the one mainly manufactured at this time of the year, and it was really cheap, which pleased me greatly because it is one of my favorite types of soup. Actually, the arrangement was that when a soup was being canned, any tins that were dented or otherwise difficult to label would be sold to employees very cheaply. There was no problem identifying any of their soups because they always had imprinted on the lids an identifying number that made it easy to decide what soup was in the can. We were allowed to buy unlabelled cans for about 5 cents each, when they ordinarily would sell for about 15 cents (wholesale). If we wanted to buy any soups that were not being manufactured at the time we got them (labeled) for less than half price, so we stocked up while I was still employed there.

One of my favorite soups of all was a soup I have never seen in Australia, chicken gumbo soup, I used to love it, but as I say it doesn't seem to be available in this country. The distinguishing feature of this soup is the addition of Okra to the flavorings. I'm not sure if Okra is even available in Australia, but it is a necessary ingredient of any gumbo –lovely. Obviously I kept my family all continuously in possession of large quantities of delicious soups.

Following my enormous success in the entry tests, it was not much of a surprise that in a matter of a few weeks I was promoted from supervising a line of three retorts to supervising four lines of three, then in a few further weeks was given a promotion to overall supervisor of the whole floor of retorts, with 20 men working under me, each controlling three retorts. When I reached the time in September when I was required to report to MIT for classes, the bosses

called me in and told me that I couldn't leave, they had big plans for me and I would be kept on at a much larger salary. When I told them where I was going, there was great consternation but they finally agreed that I really had no choice than to resign from the company.

Fishing with Aunt Mabel and Uncle Linden

I mentioned briefly previously that my wife and I had gone to Maine on a fishing trip with my Aunt and Uncle, so I suppose I should tell you a bit about that – it was a very enjoyable experience for me as I hadn't had a vacation of any description for 5 or 6 years, and was seriously in need of some serious relaxation.

My Aunt Mabel and Uncle Linden had booked a cabin on a large freshwater lake in Maine, not far from Bangor, a large seaport town in the north of the State. They had been there before and loved it so they asked Doris and I if we would like the break. Of course we did and it was arranged that we would drive to Maine in our own cars and meet at the camp. This worked out fine and we settled in to the cabin. It was quite large with three bedrooms, plus kitchen bathroom, lounge and large verandah. All the cabins in the camp, about a dozen, were on the lake and it had its own rowing boat for fishing. I hadn't done much fishing since before I joined the Navy so I was really looking forward to it.

We settled in during the later afternoon, and had arranged to go out fishing shortly after dawn the next day. We rowed the boat out on the lake and started lure casting along the banks of the lake. I should point out that my Uncle was the kind of fisherman who could catch a fish out of a bucket of water out of the tap. That is probably an exaggeration, but it seems like that to any normally skilled fisherman who watches him fish. I like to feel that I learned quite a lot from watching him and soon was acquitting myself quite well, catching at least one fish to his two. We really had a ball, and threw most of the fish back unharmed, because we couldn't eat all the fish we caught. It became very noticeable in the camp that he and I always had lots of fish, while the rest of the people in the camp caught very few. The culmination came when the camp owners decided to hold a clam bake and fish fry.

The camp owners volunteered to go down to Bangor and purchase large numbers of clams, lobsters and crabs, but the word had gotten around about my Uncle's and my prowess in catching fish, which were Smallmouth Bass, by the way. All the other residents of the camp were asked to contribute towards the cost of the seafood except my Uncle and I, who were nominated to supply the fresh fish for the function. We went out at dawn in the morning of the clam bake and fished for a couple of hours and came back with enough fish to feed everyone in the camp. There were about sixty adults who turned up for the celebrations and they all loved fish, so we really excelled ourselves that day. The other residents couldn't believe we had caught all those fish in the one mornings outing. We would take turns rowing the boat and while one was rowing

the other would be lure casting along the shoreline, then we would change places and the procedure would continue until we gave it away. I really had a ball during that fortnight at the lake, and it wasn't expensive, and there were plenty of bass in the lake. Unfortunately, those good times had to end and we went back to our normal business, much refreshed, probably helped by the good news I had received on the way to Maine.

The invitation to the trip almost coincided with the close down of the fishery, which left me free to accept the invitation, which was lucky. However, when we returned to Moorestown, the next important event was my employment with Campbell's Soup, which I have described in the previous paragraphs,

Enrolment in MIT

The next event of any consequence in my life, and it turned out to be of great consequence indeed, was my enrolment in MIT. We had arranged, by correspondence to be booked into a small cottage on the Campus of MIT which had been erected by MIT for married returned servicemen and their families. They were small, and rather plain, but comfortable and since the rents were subsidized to a small extent by the Veterans Administration, quite cheap.

They consisted of three rooms, a bedroom, with a double bed, a bathroom with toilet, and a combination kitchen-dining-living room, with a concrete area outside the front door to park a car on. They had central heating, which was essential in Cambridge, a reasonable hot water system and a kitchen with an electric upright stove with oven.

24 - MIT Accommodation, Westgate 1946-1950

They were partially furnished but only minimally so, so we had to purchase a small amount of stuff. Incidentally, the G.I. Bill of Rights, under which I was able to go to college paid my tuition (up to a maximum amount) and a small living allowance per month.

Fortunately, Doris was able to get a job with the head of the Physics Department at the Uni. which would add enough to my living allowance for us to scrape along, together with small assistance from my savings. Professor Slater, Doris' boss was quite a nice guy. Fortunately she was able to keep the job until just before I got my Degree. I also worked part time when I could, to assist in the maintenance of our living standard.

The initiation into University life, particularly one such as that existing at MIT, was pretty difficult for me, since I hadn't done any study of any consequence for over 6 years, and in addition, the subjects taught in high school had changed radically since I had graduated from High school. As a result, my first 6 months at MIT were a real struggle, so much so that I thought seriously at one stage of giving it away. Fortunately, I decided to carry on until the end of the first year and see how it worked out. As it turned out, much to my surprise, when the first term results came out, I found my name on the Dean's List. This came as a shock, since I felt I would be lucky to pass the semester. However, with the release of the Dean's List I took heart and carried on. Of course, I had been taking part in sports in my very little spare time, taking part in football (Gridiron), Athletics (the field games including hammer throwing, shot putting, discus throwing and javelin throwing), as well as a bit of baseball and basketball. These sporting activities continued on throughout my entire University career, as I will discuss further later on.

My main concentration at this time was on my scholastic work, which really came on thick and fast. My main problems, initially, were that the courses I was required to take, all assumed that I had graduated from high school in the past 4 years and as a result assumed that I had been taught a lot of things that unfortunately I had never heard of, and most of which I would be required to know and use to enable me to progress with the people who had learned the things I was assumed to know. That may seem a bit complicated to you and I can assure it was really complicated to me then. It made my job of learning very difficult until I managed to catch up, which took me a long time. I guess I should be grateful to the powers that be that I managed to hang on, even if it was only with my fingernails, so that I could go on and graduate.

The cottage we rented was part of a small group of them built on grounds owned by MIT and adjacent to the sports ground, which comprised a football oval, a baseball/softball field, a track and field area, including a quarter mile cinder track, broad jump pits, throwing areas for hammer throwing, discus throwing and shot putting areas. There was also a building for use in winter for running, throwing and jumping, and a locker room cum massage room and first aid centre. In addition, the area included a large Assembly Hall which was used for basketball as

well as meetings and social events. Between the sports area and Massachusetts Avenue (where the main entrance to the University was situated) there was a large store/shop which was run by the MIT Student CoOp Society. This shop sold books and other supplies required by the students, and you could get ice cream sodas, soft drinks and other light refreshments. I might add that as members of the co-op we received discounts on all goods purchased at the store, which was one of many of the perks we received as students of MIT. Thus the distance from our cottage to the main entrance was only a few hundred yards, with traffic signals installed to permit safe crossings of Massachusetts Avenue. These conditions made it possible to walk to school and back in comfort and in quite a short time. Of course there were other advantages to being housed in the village, which incidentally was called Westgate, some of which were the proximity of lots of people of our own ages and who were all returned servicemen who had been through dangers and experiences of life in the armed services during the war and who turned out to be good neighbors.

25 - 1934 Ford V-8 Coupe

Obviously, there were a lot of good friendships made and the common interests shared by all the residents made for lots of good times. It turned out later on that the close proximity of the sports facilities was very handy once I recommenced my participation in Athletics, football, baseball, basketball, etc. because I didn't have far to go to practice and take part in the various sports that interested me. The hard standing for the car was very handy since shortly before I left home to attend MIT, I invested in my first motorcar, a 1934 Ford V-8 Coupe, which I purchased (privately) for the large sum of $250. It didn't have a rumble seat as I would have liked, but instead had a large trunk with a lift up lid that was huge. It was to remain my only transportation throughout my first three years at MIT.

26 - 1934 Ford V-8 Coupe

At that time, of course, I had already made up my mind to return to Australia as soon as I was awarded my

degree, and didn't want to take my little bomb back to this country, so I made certain enquiries of the authorities regarding the importation to Australia of a motor car. The advice given me was that if I had owned "the motor car" for 12 months I could bring it into Australia without payment of any duty or sales tax. I therefore realized that I had to buy the car I wanted to bring back here as soon as possible to enable me to bring it back here without paying large amounts of (in those days unavailable) cash. Consequently, I started making the rounds of all the used car yards in Cambridge as an exercise in careful buying. After some serious investigation my final choice was a 1947 straight eight two tone green Pontiac with only15000 miles on the clock and in really showroom condition. I thought it was a real good buy at $800, so I traded in my 1934 coupe and drove away with my luxurious limousine, to be greet by my neighbors in Westgate with insinuations of all sorts, including "What bank did you rob?" and other rude suggestions, but all of these as good hearted indications of envy – it really was a beautiful car and a delight to drive. It was not until I arrived in Sydney that I was told that I had been misinformed about the ownership bit and that the statement should have been "You have to own "a motor car" for twelve months, not "the motor car."

As it turned out I needn't have worried about the duty and tax anyway, because when I turned the car over to customs, the valuation process was unusual in the extreme. Instead of listing "A 1947 straight eight Pontiac, Value ??? dollars they issued me with a list consisting of literally many hundreds of items, each separately valued, such as "two bumper bars," " one steering wheel," " five wheels," "five pneumatic tires," etc etc, for a total valuation of 350 pounds, three shillings and sixpence, with a total duty and tax payable of 250 pounds seven shillings and six pence. The evaluation form stated that I would have to post a guarantee to pay the amount of duty and tax if I sold or otherwise disposed of the motor car within three years of the date of the document. Unfortunately I didn't have this amount of money so my brother-in-law made the guarantee on my behalf.

I can't recall exactly what courses I had to take in my first semester, but I can recall that they included Calculus, Chemistry, Physics, and a few liberal arts subjects. I can recall calculus very vividly because of one very embarrassing incident occurring in my Calculus class, which anyone who has studied a mathematics course including even fairly simple concepts of calculus will appreciate. I had been trying to complete some homework problems assigned when I came upon a strange thing. A number was printed in an equation followed by an exclamation mark. I noticed that most times this occurred when the number was in the denominator of an equation and I just couldn't sort out what it meant. I could only assume that the number was very important for some reason, but that was the only explanation I could imagine. In class the next day I asked the instructor why the number was so important, only to be greet by gales of laughter

from the rest of my classmates. It was then explained to me that the addition of the exclamation mark meant that the number became a “factorial” number. I had never heard of such a thing since any reference to factorial numbers had not been included in the subject matter of these courses when I was going to high school. For those who are in the same situation as I was in 1946, a factorial number is the sum of the equation 1X2X3X4X4X5XN, where X is the original number. Thus 4! =1X2X3X4=24. As you can imagine, the fact that a freshman student at a place like MIT who didn’t know the meaning of “factorial” must have been hilarious to my classmates, all of whom had finished high school at least two years after me and would have been taught the fundamentals of Calculus which had not been in the curriculum during my high school days. However, I was to have my revenge when my name, to my immense surprise, appeared on the Dean’s List for the first semester, while only a couple of my classmates achieved the same results. Of one thing I am certain, I had never before (or since) found myself working so hard nor for such long hours at my studies.

Sport at MIT

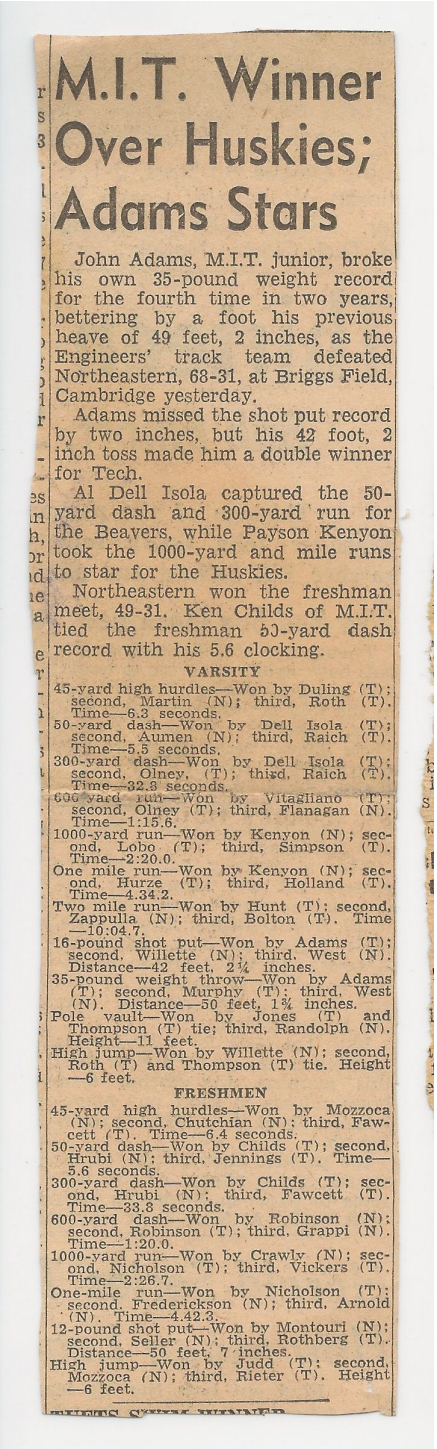
My first introduction to sport at MIT occurred shortly after the first term commenced when a notice appeared on the main bulletin board calling for students to take part in the interclass sports activities with the first order of competition being football (gridiron)which, being a winter sport, was to commence in early September, with trials commencing immediately. Having played on the varsity football at high school, I immediately became interested and signed up. The day we reported to the athletics coach we were questioned about our experience and had to engage in all sorts of physical activities, apparently to see if we would make good football players.

I must have impressed the selectors, since I was immediately issued with a uniform with all the padding you see on television and was accepted for further training and practice. The main purpose of the team was to engage in some games against other universities leading up to the final game against the sophomore team from MIT. It was considered a fairly important event in sports at Tech (the name always used in connection with any activity at MIT and in discussions with outsiders and I will use it interchangeably with the term MIT)

A few weeks after we commenced training for the football games I was approached on my way back to the dressing rooms by an elderly gentleman who turned out to be the coach for all track and field events except running. He introduced himself as Bob Bowie, who was obviously a Scot, and told me that he was looking for recruits for the events which he was responsible for as a coach. As I had competed in the shot put and the discus throw in high school, having won several County and State championships at Moorestown, I seemed to be eligible for inclusion in his squad to represent Tech. I agreed that I would be interested, so he had another

idea, which I think he had planned all along, that I might be a suitable candidate for his main interest. Being a Scot, his primary interest in field games was hammer throwing, so he asked me if I had ever tried it. When I said I had never heard of it he appeared shocked and asked me if I would like to try it. He told me that he had been watching me playing football and felt that I would make a good hammer thrower. He told me that he had noticed my exceptional agility, speed, and strength and was convinced I would make a welcome addition to his squad, and asked me to try it. He picked up a 28 pound weight and showed me how to throw it. This implement consisted of a steel triangle made of 10mm steel rod attached to a lead filled steel ball, the total weight being 28 pounds. He explained to me that freshmen used a 28 pound weight indoors in the winter season, while all other grades used a 35 pound weight.

After demonstrating the technique to be used, he handed it to me and said “try it.” I noticed he had taken a spin before letting fly but felt I would need to practice a bit before I tried his technique. I therefore just swung it around my body a couple of times and let it fly. He just looked at me and shook his head, so I thought he might be disgusted with my puny effort, but he said in a shocked voice “You have just broken the Tech record for the 28 pound weight throw!” That sealed my fate, I’m afraid, because he made me promise to practice for the event every day after football practice. I have to admit that I didn’t mind, because he became so excited I couldn’t refuse him, and he really was a very nice guy. I only had one problem with sports in that first semester, and that occurred during a practice game. I was practicing the position of line backer on the defense, when an off tackle run was called by our opposition. I followed the runner from our side of the line of scrimmage until he turned and started running straight up field. I immediately ran toward him to make the tackle, but a fraction of a second before I hit him, our right end came in and tackled him from my right. Since I was moving at about 45 degrees to the line and fast as I could, by the time I realized our end was there I couldn’t stop and unfortunately the tackle by the end moved the runner’s knee had been shifted just enough to catch me right on my right temple. I was knocked out and was out for ten minutes. I decided to carry on with the game, but, when it was over and I was going back to the dressing rooms, I couldn’t read the clock situated right above the door. The clock was almost two feet in diameter, but I couldn’t make my eyes focus. The only after effect that I suffered was that every year on the anniversary of that game and daily for about 4 weeks I would get migraine headaches that would last for several hours. These headaches would persist until long after I graduated from Tech, and I couldn’t find any relief from normal analgesics.



M.I.T. Winner Over Huskies; Adams Stars

John Adams, M.I.T. junior, broke his own 35-pound weight record for the fourth time in two years, bettering by a foot his previous heave of 49 feet, 2 inches, as the Engineers' track team defeated Northeastern, 68-31, at Briggs Field, Cambridge yesterday.

Adams missed the shot put record by two inches, but his 42 foot, 2 inch toss made him a double winner for Tech.

Al Dell Isola captured the 50-yard dash and 300-yard run for the Beavers, while Payson Kenyon took the 1000-yard and mile runs to star for the Huskies.

Northeastern won the freshman meet, 49-31. Ken Childs of M.I.T. tied the freshman 50-yard dash record with his 5.6 clocking.

VARSITY

45-yard high hurdles—Won by Duling (T); second, Martin (N); third, Roth (T). Time—6.3 seconds.
50-yard dash—Won by Dell Isola (T); second, Aumen (N); third, Raich (T). Time—5.5 seconds.
300-yard dash—Won by Dell Isola (T); second, Olney, (T); third, Raich (T). Time—32.3 seconds.
600-yard run—Won by Vitagliano (T); second, Olney (T); third, Flanagan (N). Time—1:15.6.
1000-yard run—Won by Kenyon (N); second, Lobo (T); third, Simpson (T). Time—2:20.0.
One mile run—Won by Kenyon (N); second, Hurze (T); third, Holland (T). Time—4.34.2.
Two mile run—Won by Hunt (T); second, Zappulla (N); third, Bolton (T). Time—10:04.7.
16-pound shot put—Won by Adams (T); second, Willette (N); third, West (N). Distance—42 feet, 2¼ inches.
35-pound weight throw—Won by Adams (T); second, Murphy (T); third, West (N). Distance—50 feet, 1¾ inches.
Pole vault—Won by Jones (T) and Thompson (T) tie; third, Randolph (N). Height—11 feet.
High jump—Won by Willette (N); second, Roth (T) and Thompson (T) tie. Height—6 feet.

FRESHMEN

45-yard high hurdles—Won by Mozzoca (N); second, Chutchian (N); third, Fawcett (T). Time—6.4 seconds.
50-yard dash—Won by Childs (T); second, Hrubi (N); third, Jennings (T). Time—5.6 seconds.
300-yard dash—Won by Childs (T); second, Hrubi (N); third, Fawcett (T). Time—33.8 seconds.
600-yard dash—Won by Robinson (N); second, Robinson (T); third, Grappi (N). Time—1:20.0.
1000-yard run—Won by Crawly (N); second, Nicholson (T); third, Vickers (T). Time—2:26.7.
One-mile run—Won by Nicholson (T); second, Frederickson (N); third, Arnold (N). Time—4.42.3.
12-pound shot put—Won by Montouri (N); second, Seller (N); third, Rothberg (T). Distance—50 feet, 7 inches.
High jump—Won by Judd (T); second, Mozzoca (N); third, Rieter (T). Height—6 feet.

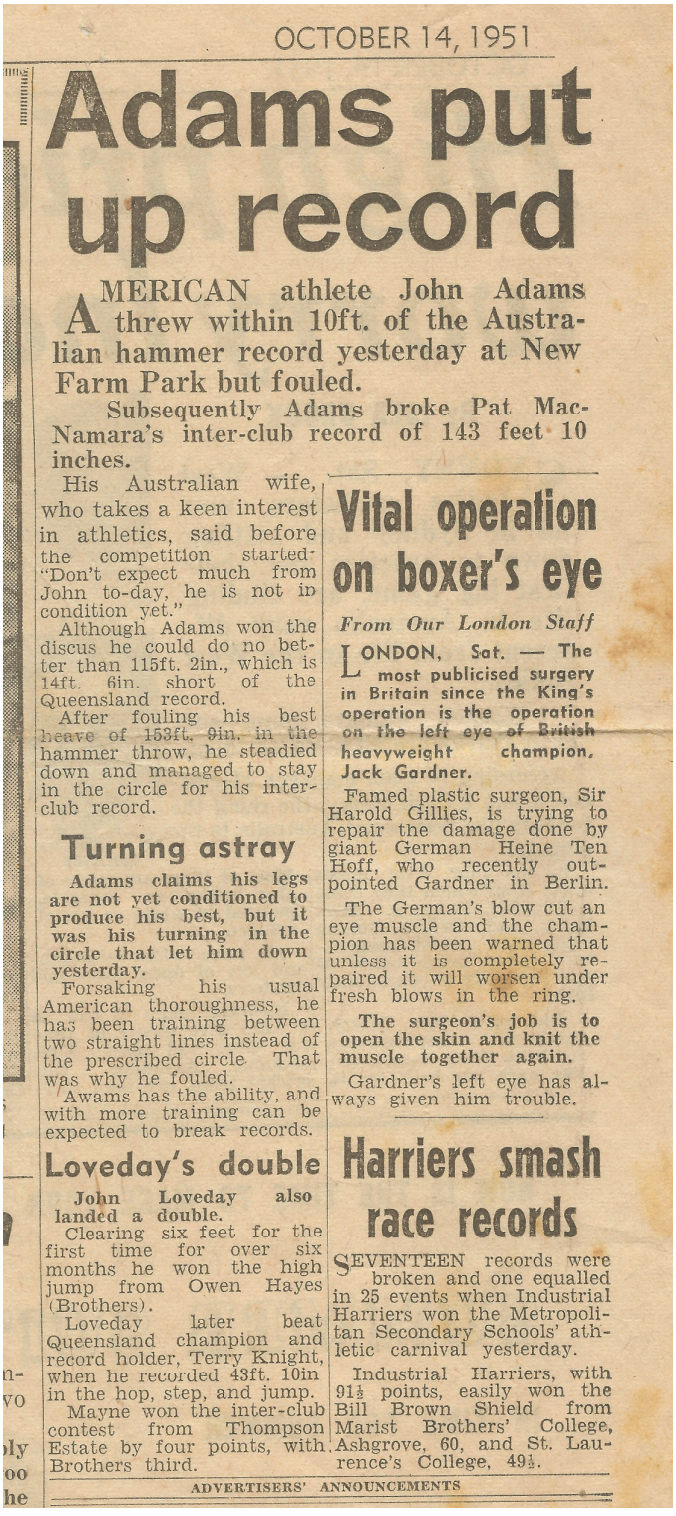
27 -'The Tech' MIT Newspaper Sports Column

When the indoor season started for track and field, I really had a ball, because at every competition I was raising the MIT record some more for the 28 pound weight, and getting lots of free publicity from school publications as well as the local press. It seems that Tech had never had a hammer thrower of any ability – ever. Incidentally, the reason for the difference in weights for hammer throwing and shot putting between freshman and upper grades appears to be because of the increasing maturity of students after the age of 18. A normal age for freshman students to commence University was 18, and it was felt (apparently) that they needed to be a little more mature to handle the heavier weights. In fact, I entered MIT at the age of 23, compared with the normal age of 18, having served 6 years in Navy, so I was 5 years older that most of my classmates. This fact was to prove an advantage to me in a lot of ways while I was at University. As well as hammer throwing, I won more than my share of shot put events against other colleges during the indoor season. When the outdoor season started, the football season had ended, thus allowing me to concentrate on field events exclusively and this paid off in inter-collegiate competitions.

My performances improved all the time, so much so, that at one senior inter-collegiate meet I was sent out to the discus circle to return the discuses thrown by the senior competitors. After one round of throws had finished, my coach came out to me and asked me not to throw the discuses back so hard. It appeared that I was throwing them further than the competitors in the event were throwing them in the competition. Of course, I was barred from the competition because I was only a freshman.

Anyhow, I had very good success in the freshman team during that year, and looked forward to competition in the senior events to come. During each of my four years at Tech I competed in the annual inter-class track and field championships with very good results. My

tally of medals for the four events I contested is 16 medals, of which fifteen are gold and one silver. The silver one was in the javelin which was won by a new student, who later that year ran second in the New England championships and third in the US During my stay at Tech I also participated in baseball and softball and basketball, so I had a busy sports life at Tech. I probably should give you some idea of the training schedule Bob set me – it was a beauty. Every day I started my training by running around the indoor track, starting off by jogging 4 miles, then 2 miles during which I had to jog around the bends, then sprint as fast as possible down the straights, then jog around the bend etc, then finish off my running with another 2 miles of jogging. I would then work on weights for 20 minutes, and that was before I even touched the implements I had to use. After I finished my training with the implements (under Bob's supervision, of course). I had to go through the running regime all over again. I tell you, I really got into good shape before I was finished. The best part of my training regime was that after all the other things I was sent in to the dressing room to the trainer, who was a really good hand at massage and I always left him feeling really first class.



OCTOBER 14, 1951

Adams put up record

AMERICAN athlete John Adams threw within 10ft. of the Australian hammer record yesterday at New Farm Park but fouled.

Subsequently Adams broke Pat. MacNamara's inter-club record of 143 feet 10 inches.

His Australian wife, who takes a keen interest in athletics, said before the competition started: "Don't expect much from John to-day, he is not in condition yet."

Although Adams won the discus he could do no better than 115ft. 2in., which is 14ft. 6in. short of the Queensland record.

After fouling his best heave of 153ft. 9in. in the hammer throw, he steadied down and managed to stay in the circle for his inter-club record.

Turning astray

Adams claims his legs are not yet conditioned to produce his best, but it was his turning in the circle that let him down yesterday.

Forsaking his usual American thoroughness, he has been training between two straight lines instead of the prescribed circle. That was why he fouled.

'Awams has the ability, and with more training can be expected to break records.

Loveday's double

John Loveday also landed a double.

Clearing six feet for the first time for over six months he won the high jump from Owen Hayes (Brothers).

Loveday later beat Queensland champion and record holder, Terry Knight, when he recorded 43ft. 10in in the hop, step, and jump.

Mayne won the inter-club contest from Thompson Estate by four points, with Brothers third.

Vital operation on boxer's eye

From Our London Staff

LONDON, Sat. — **The most publicised surgery in Britain since the King's operation is the operation on the left eye of British heavyweight champion, Jack Gardner.**

Famed plastic surgeon, Sir Harold Gillies, is trying to repair the damage done by giant German Heine Ten Hoff, who recently outpointed Gardner in Berlin.

The German's blow cut an eye muscle and the champion has been warned that unless it is completely repaired it will worsen under fresh blows in the ring.

The surgeon's job is to open the skin and knit the muscle together again.

Gardner's left eye has always given him trouble.

Harriers smash race records

SEVENTEEN records were broken and one equalled in 25 events when Industrial Harriers won the Metropolitan Secondary Schools' athletic carnival yesterday.

Industrial Harriers, with 91½ points, easily won the Bill Brown Shield from Marist Brothers' College, Ashgrove, 60, and St. Laurence's College, 49½.

ADVERTISERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

28 – ' The Tech' MIT Newspaper Sports Column, October 1951

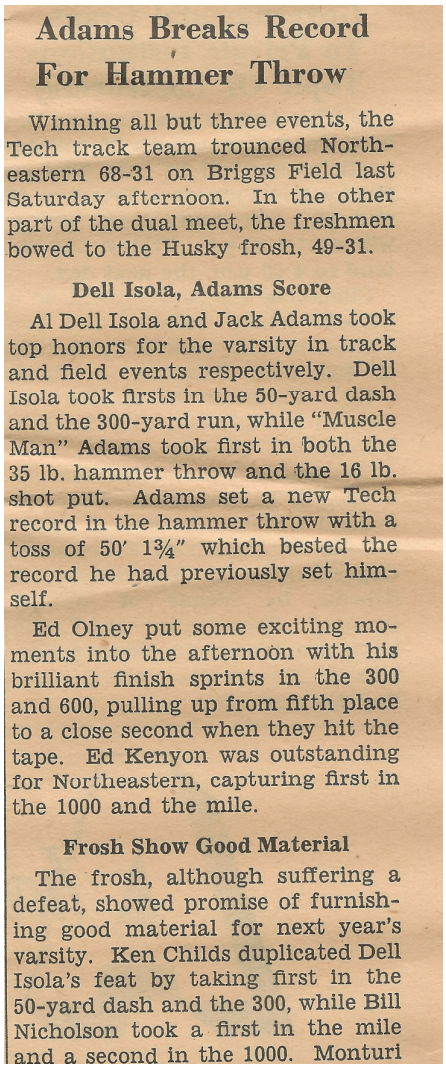
My sports career at Tech was always an important part of University life, but other things were even more important, such as learning all I could in order to ensure that my future life was happy and secure. In my first

semester, after commencing competition with the track and field team, I was invited to become a member of the MIT Track Club, which was the first honor I achieved at Tech, but I'm proud say that it was not the last, but I'll tell you about them as they occurred.

Both Doris and I got to know and become very friendly with quite a few other residents of Westgate, but still couldn't devote much time for group social events, but as time went on I managed to organize myself a bit better and conditions improved quite a bit. Despite the obvious difficulties with available time, I still found the atmosphere at MIT stimulating. The studies were fascinating, although extremely difficult, and the teachers (mainly Professors) very good and very knowledgeable about their subjects, and the whole idea of living and studying on the esteemed campus captivated me and inspired me to do my very best in both studies and sport. One of the things that really impressed me was the conduct of examinations at MIT – almost all the examinations I had to sit for (and they were numerous) were classed as open book exams. This meant that students sitting for them were allowed to bring into the exam room and refer to at any time any books, papers etc they thought might be of use to them. The idea of this was because the powers that be at Tech realized that when finished training and working in their expected professions, they would have access to any reference books and text books they could desire, so it was felt that this way of examinations should approximate better the conditions we would experience once we got our degrees. This scheme almost forestalled any attempts at cheating, except for the possibility of one student copying the work of another in the exam room. The teachers also were wise enough to set questions for which the answers could not be found in normal textbooks, for example, a question might require the student to develop or create an equation needed to achieve an answer before he could work out the answer. For this reason also, the numerical answer to a problem was normally rated at about 5% of the total grade for the question, because in the real world, no responsible engineer would complete a design without having someone else check the arithmetic. This initially amazed me, until I sat for a few exams and realized sense of the arrangement.

At no time in my 4 ½ years did I ever feel that my studies had become easy, in fact, it seemed as though the difficulties created by the professors increased each year and the pace seemed to be getting more difficult as well. As a result of this, I was convinced that the Professors were sadists, determined to destroy our enthusiasm for the work they were forcing on to us. Be that as it may, I managed to cope, even though it seemed to get more difficult every semester. My second year was not really uneventful, although it seemed at the time to slightly less eventful than my first year, with the main events on campus being of a lot more study requiring a lot more time and effort. Of course, this seemed just routine at the time.

My sports achievements, however, received somewhat of a boost, as I had to step up to the 35 pound weight throw and the 16 pound hammer and shotput. In the winter season my achievements with the 35 pound weight throw were amazing, even to me. In the first competition of the season, I broke the MIT record three times with successive throws, which got written up in the Boston papers in headlines. In the successive competitions I broke the record at least once every time I competed. Of course, the local Boston papers made a welter of it with article headings such as: "Adams does it again." And "Adams stars again with another record". Of course sometimes I might increase the record by only a few inches, but before I arrived the record had been around 40 feet. When I graduated, I left it at almost 60 feet. During the outdoor season in summer I was able to do similar things with the 16 pound hammer. When I left I had lifted the hammer throw record from under 150 feet to over 180 feet, and had won two New England championships and run 2nd in the Nationals twice. In fact, in the Olympic trials, where the US Olympic Committee had decided to send three hammer throwers to the 1948 Olympics, I finished 4th and missed out by ¾ of an inch out of 180 feet from being sent to Europe.



Adams Breaks Record For Hammer Throw

Winning all but three events, the Tech track team trounced Northeastern 68-31 on Briggs Field last Saturday afternoon. In the other part of the dual meet, the freshmen bowed to the Husky frosh, 49-31.

Dell Isola, Adams Score

Al Dell Isola and Jack Adams took top honors for the varsity in track and field events respectively. Dell Isola took firsts in the 50-yard dash and the 300-yard run, while "Muscle Man" Adams took first in both the 35 lb. hammer throw and the 16 lb. shot put. Adams set a new Tech record in the hammer throw with a toss of 50′ 1¾" which bested the record he had previously set himself.

Ed Olney put some exciting moments into the afternoon with his brilliant finish sprints in the 300 and 600, pulling up from fifth place to a close second when they hit the tape. Ed Kenyon was outstanding for Northeastern, capturing first in the 1000 and the mile.

Frosh Show Good Material

The frosh, although suffering a defeat, showed promise of furnishing good material for next year's varsity. Ken Childs duplicated Dell Isola's feat by taking first in the 50-yard dash and the 300, while Bill Nicholson took a first in the mile and a second in the 1000. Monturi

29 – 'The Tech', MIT Newspaper Sports Column

At the time it was a great disappointment, but, on further consideration it became obvious to me that I couldn't really afford to take the time off from my studies that would have been necessary for the extra training and the trip overseas, so the feeling of loss receded considerably. I have to admit that even now, I can feel certain pangs of regret that I missed the opportunity to represent my country and take part in what would have to be the dream of every serious sportsman. I was to take up athletics when I returned to Australia after receiving my degree, which I will discuss later in these memoirs.

It was during my sophomore year, that I was invited to join the MIT Track Club, an honour that was accorded to any member of a varsity team who had performed especially well during inter-varsity competitions, and I imagine the records I kept breaking must have had a bearing in my selection as a member of the Club. It meant that I could wear the straight "T", as

opposed to the ordinary varsity "T," which as well at the large T had had at each side an indication of the sport for which the varsity "T" was awarded and the straight T was universally recognized as the much more important award. In fact, I didn't realize at the time the importance of the award, but when it was made clear to me I was very impressed. Obviously, membership in the club made me feel pretty good. Suffice it for me to say that I managed to keep up my standard of athletics throughout my entire stay at MIT, continuing to break records, particularly in all the various types of hammer throwing. The only other times I took part in inter-collegiate sports was when I competed in the Caledonian Games, but I'll describe those events in conjunction with other events in my later collegiate career.

The Boston Pops Orchestra

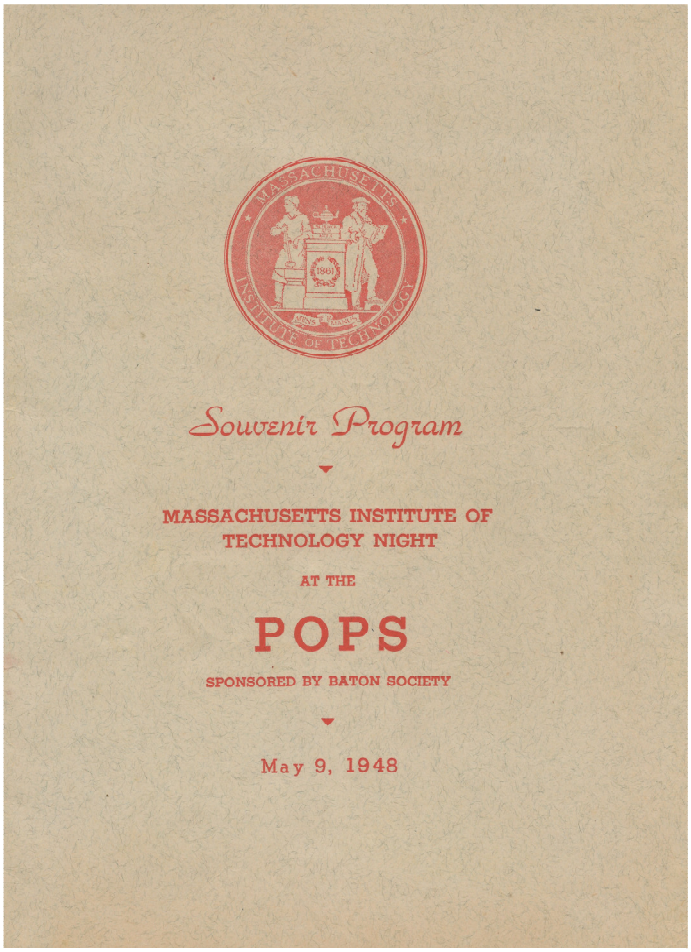
It was also in my sophomore year that I started taking a bit more interest in social events outside my sporting activities. Probably the most memorable events commenced during this year (1947/1948) when it came to my notice that the Boston Pops Orchestra had organized a special concert, at the Boston Symphony Hall, which was aimed at students and staff at MIT, which gives an indication of the high esteem with which MIT was held in New England.

30 - Doris and I at MIT on the way to the Boston Pops, 1949

The program was designed to suit the assumed preferences of the planned audience, and in addition, sales of tickets were restricted to students and staff of MIT until three days before the actual performance, when the unsold tickets were offered to the public. My information was that after that time there were very few tickets remaining to be sold, and therefore the vast majority of the audience consisted of the MIT family. The Symphony Hall had three levels of balcony seats on each side of the hall and on the end opposite the stage, and we always managed to get seats on the main floor, which had tables and chairs filling the floor, and it enabled us to be served drinks and snacks during the concert. Arthur Fiedler, the conductor of the POPS told us that he loved giving these particular concerts because of his admiration of the University, its students and staff, and proved it by the quality of the program

and the enthusiasm of both himself and his musicians. Another indication of his regard for us was the number of encores he always gave us, the concerts never came close to finishing at their scheduled times. The whole audience loved the concert, and particularly Arthur Fiedler himself.

To me and my wife, these concerts were really one of the highlights of the time we spent in Cambridge. We attended every year after we discovered they were held, and every year it became more and more difficult to obtain decent seats on the main floor. Both my wife and I were music lovers, Doris from her early years when she had been taught the piano and me because I had always liked music and had played in the high school orchestra and band commencing with my sophomore year in high school. By the way, the instrument I played was the baritone horn, an instrument shaped like an alto horn, but larger. There is another instrument like the baritone horn, but with two bells and a fourth key, which turned on the second bell and made the instrument sound like a trombone.



31 - Souvenir Program, Boston Pops, 1948

Incidentally, when I first met Doris she did part time work for the ABC playing accompaniment for vocalists during performances on air. She was quite a good pianist, but unfortunately practically gave it away not long after we were married.

The high school which I was attending when I took up the baritone horn supplied me with the instrument, so when I finished high school and joined the Navy, I did no further music making until after I arrived in Australia after the Coral Sea Battle, when I again got the bug and managed to purchase a second hand trumpet, found some sheet music and began practicing. Basically, the only difference between playing the two instruments is in the size of the mouthpiece and the pitch ranges of the two instruments. The baritone is generally used in orchestral work playing contra-melodies, and is scored in the bass range, while the trumpet is scored in the treble range. It was fairly easy for me to convert from one to the other. I continued

to practice and play until after my discharge from the Navy and became a member of the Maple Shade Post of the American Legion band, which gave free concerts at the Legion building, which were very popular events in the small town of Maple Shade, just a few miles from Moorestown.

Designing HiFi Equipment

The Tech Night at the Pops, as the concerts were called, really rekindled my love of music, but I had no outlet for it at this stage. I in my sophomore year, I was assigned a project as part of my schooling to design and construct a useful piece of electronic equipment. I suddenly had a brain wave and decided to make myself a piece of HIFI gear on which I could play the music I loved. I spent a fairly long time considering the project and decided the power output I would need was fairly large, so it seemed to me that the most important consideration was the final stage of amplification for the amplifier. Because of monetary restrictions and other reasons I decided to use Beam Power Pentodes for the final, but when I told my instructor what I had decided he strongly recommended I use triodes instead, because the valves I proposed could not be made to produce any reasonable level of sound without high levels of distortion. I gave his recommendations some very serious consideration, but was convinced I could overcome any problems of distortion by careful design. By the way, this was in 1948, and there were no supplies of transistors available to me. I won't go into any great detail of the design problems I had, and I had a few, but after I completed my breadboard construction and tested it, the finished product turned out to be beyond even my expectations. I don't know what you know about high fidelity, but I can tell you that the amplifier was finally tested (by my instructor) he called me in to his office and handed me the sheet showing the results of the tests he had carried out. The amplifier had produced 55 watts of power, with a frequency response showing zero db fall from 30 hertz to 40000 hertz, and producing only .001% total harmonic distortion throughout. He said to me that if he hadn't carried out the tests himself he would not have believed it possible with Beam Power Pentodes in push pull as the power stage. Needless to say, the mark I received for that project was an H, which was very pleasing. The first thing I did, as soon as I had a chance was to go out and purchase a 33 1/3 rpm (LP) record to play on my new Hi Fi. The record I selected was the Emperor Concerto, Beethoven's 5th Piano Concerto, with the soloist being Rudolf Serkin. Of course I had to listen to part of it first before I bought it, since I had never heard of the Artist, but soon found that he was a very talented pianist, and never regretted that first purchase. I cherished that record but unfortunately it is no longer a part of my collection. I can only assume that it remains on Birdwood Terrace in the possession of my ex-wife. I have since bought another record of the Emperor and enjoy it as well, but I still miss the first one.

Commencement in Electrical Engineering

Getting back to my studies, the end of this scholastic year marked the time the powers that be made their decisions as to who would be allowed to undertake the cooperative course in Electrical Engineering. I felt that my grades were good enough to ensure my selection, but first it was necessary to attend interviews with prospective employers, after which they would indicate to the school their choices as to which students would be allowed to engage in the work experience part of the course. We were asked to choose at least two firms who would carry out interviews before making their decisions. I chose two firms that I thought would be best because of their wide variety of activities, The General Electric Company, and The Westinghouse Electric Company) In the end I was accepted by both firms but chose the General Electric Company, because of their proximity to MIT and the information I managed to collect about the company. Once again I never regretted a decision I made, and still feel that I made the right choice. At the time I thought there was too much red tape and checking before the final decisions were made, but after consideration, I could see the sense of it all.

The selected students had to attend classes on the campus for the first term of 1948, while meeting occasionally with representatives of our nominated companies to sort out some matters, but I commenced looking forward to work in with experienced and fully trained engineers. The whole idea of this course excited me, particularly the idea of coming back to Australia with a Master's degree, but this part of the dream was not to be, as I will describe later on in these memoirs. The first involvement with GE took place during the second term of my Junior Year, when I traveled to Pittsworth, Massachusetts, about 140 miles west of Cambridge to take up employment in the Works Laboratory.

32 – Mother, Myself and 'Bill', 19 April 1947

During my sophomore year at MIT I felt that it was necessary to keep up my scholastic achievements, and in fact hopefully increase them, since I had learned that there was available a new course in Electrical Engineering, which was called the Cooperative Course. Students who entered this course would be required to spend every other semester in the

field working in electrical engineering jobs for a major employer and studying at night (attending formal classes under an instructor from MIT) and sitting for exams at the campus at the end of the term. This course required that we were in attendance either full time at MIT undertaking normal studies or in the field as described above. In addition to being a full time undertaking, the course added an extra year to your study, but at the end of the five years (as opposed to the normal four years) successful students would be awarded, not only a bachelor's degree, but also a Masters Degree, which is obviously of much more importance. The requirements for being allowed into the Cooperative Course were mainly that your grades for the first two years had to be above a certain level (presumably because of the outcome being a masters degree at the conclusion or the course) but also were dependent upon getting a commercial business to accept you for the work you were to undertake during the external part of the course. I felt that it would be great if I could come back to Australia with a Master's Degree from MIT, so I was determined to have a go. The only thing I forgot to check was that the full tuition allowance being paid by the GI Bill of Rights had an upper limit, and after that limit was reached you got no more tuition, but also your subsistence allowance was no longer paid.

The result of this (because tuition at MIT was much higher than most other colleges in the US) was that all my financial assistance cut out after four years at college, and I had to settle for a Bachelor's Degree alone. I really worked hard that year and managed to improve my standing in the scholastic ratings, had no problem getting acceptance from The General Electric Company as my work experience sponsor, (probably because of my Naval Service) so my third year I commenced the Cooperative Course.

I really enjoyed the work experience with General Electric since the other engineers I was working with were very friendly and helpful to me. My external jobs took me to several major factories in all parts of Massachusetts and I learned quite a lot from the experiences. The jobs I was given included a position in the Works Laboratory of a transformer plant where they manufactured high voltage transformers (13000 volts to 132000 volts ratings). The first job I was assigned was to design, test, and build an intricate electronic test unit for direct shipment to the factory, and then instruct the testing staff in the use of the gear. While I was in the lab in Pittsfield, Massachusetts I was dragged into the sports that the company sponsored for their employees and took part in Athletics, softball and baseball, but also was able to witness some amazing operations that were undertaken in routine factory operations, the most amazing of all was the recovery of a spanner that had been dropped inside a huge high voltage transformer by a workman. The transformer was literally the size of a small house and weighed something like 40 tons. The spanner obviously had to be removed because the transformer used oil which was used for insulation would not be able to do its job if there were some metallic implement in the space

normally filled with oil and caused a short circuit when the unit was energized. Such an event could virtually cause the transformer to be unserviceable and would require very expensive repairs, or possibly require replacement of the entire transformer. When it is considered that one of those units would cost of the order of up to half a million dollars, the event called for drastic action. When I was told of the event, I was able to watch the operation (along with several hundred of other employees.) who had gathered to see the fun. The operation consisted of lifting the transformer well above the concrete floor, turning it upside down and shaking!! it bodily until the spanner fell out the top of the transformer, after which the transformer had to be righted and lowered back to its base. All this was accomplished using a monster traveling crane, which was obviously designed with such operations in mind. This was a really mind blowing sight to see such a huge and obviously very weighty piece of equipment being treated as it was, and I have never forgotten the experience.

Work Experience with GE

Another work experience I had with General Electric was at their instrument transformer factory in Boston, Massachusetts, where a team of engineers were trying to improve the appearance and durability of the casing on low voltage (240 volts) instrument transformers plus others with ratings up to about 10000 volts. These transformers are used in metering (read measuring) current being carried in large conductors. The primaries of these transformers are connected in series with the high current cables and the secondaries are designed to give out 5 amperes at the full rated current in the primary. The meters used to denote the current flowing in the main cable are designed to show the amount of current flowing in the main cable when the current in the secondary is 5 amperes. The normal practice for insulating the transformers involved the use of cloth tape wound round and round the windings and cores of the transformers, then soaking the tape with a substance like pitch, which hardened and kept everything (cores and windings) in place as well as insulating everything.

Unfortunately, this produced a very ugly appearance for the package and was very brittle, so if it was dropped or had something heavy dropped on it, it would crack and the transformer became useless. Someone had the bright idea of using butyl rubber forced into the internal gaps inside the transformer and formed into an attractive casing which could have logos and other information molded into it. This could have been less expensive than the wrapping technique as well, so it was fairly important to the company. They were having problems with the rubber injection process and trying very hard to get it right. I was thrilled to have some input to their work and was as happy as they were when we managed to produce our first finished unit while I was still with them – we had quite a celebration, and it was a special thrill for me to feel that I had some small part in the development of such an important milestone in the improvement of

metering devices for the electrical industry. The technique we developed was put into production almost immediately and quickly became very popular with the sales side of the company. I asked the sale people about the sale price of the new units and was initially surprised when they advised me that the new transformers would be sold for the same price as the old types, despite manufacturing costs being well below the costs for the old types. They told me that the reasoning behind this practice was that it was certain that their opposition would come up with a similar product and at a price at or below GE's price and they wanted to have enough margin to enable them to immediately drop their price to at or below their opposition's. I was beginning to understand a little of the ramifications of new developments being converted into manufactured products and the economics of product pricing. In any case, the new product took off immediately and provided GE with a major improvement in instrument transformer sales – we were praised rather highly by top management for the development, but there was no immediate monetary reward - it was considered just a part of our jobs - which it really was.

Talking about the sports at Pittsfield, one of the first games I took part in was softball. When I offered my services to the softball team, the Captain of the team asked me what position I played, I told him that the only position I did not like was catcher, but my favourite position was at first base. The first game the team played listed me as "Clean-up", or number four in the batting line up, which is normally reserved for the best hitter on the team. I felt someone else should be given that position, but the captain said "we'll see what happens in this game before I change things." The first batter in the first inning got a single, and the second man up got a walk, so when I came to the plate there were runners on first and second bases. The first pitch I got was high and outside – my favourite pitch – so I swung and connected solidly, and since I felt certain I had made a hit and started running hard for first base. I passed first and noticed the runner ahead of me was only jogging slowly towards second base so I yelled at him to get moving. He laughed at me and told me to slow down because I had hit a home run over the fence and didn't have to hurry. I hadn't realized and got quite a shock but slowed down and trotted on to home plate, to be greeted with cheers from the spectators and my teammates. When I crossed home plate the captain said "I guess there's no doubt about your batting position now." I managed to accumulate a very creditable batting average of .454 in that position for the whole time I worked at Pittsfield, so I was well pleased with my softball career there. I also took part in track and field competitions while working that semester and collected a couple of medals for winning discus and shot put throws at an inter-plant competition, so I felt that I had contributed reasonably to the factory and its employees during my short stay at the factory.

Another pleasing aspect of my stay in Pittsfield was connected to my studies at night while I was there. The instructor assigned to us was a very nice guy, but very tough as an

instructor. The assignments he gave us were really tough, as were the exams he set for us during the semester, although at the time they seemed not really too bad. He did such a good job teaching us the subject that when we had to return to the main MIT campus and sit for the end of term exam everyone in his class managed very good marks in this exam, which accounted for most of the term grading. The lowest grade in his whole class was 89/100 by one man, the rest all did better with marks from 92/100, with three of us managing perfect papers at 100/100. No one who had studied on the main campus scored better than 90/100, with the class average about 83/100, which while pretty good didn't even get close to the average of the Pittsfield class, with an average of 94/100. After the exam results came out I really couldn't say anything too nice about our instructor. Incidentally, during the final exam the supervisor came over to the student on my right and told him to shift his papers to the right side of his desk when he finished a page. This almost caused me to laugh myself silly, because he told the guy next to me that he didn't want me to be able to read his answers. The reality of the situation was that I had been putting my answers on the right side of my desk and the guy sitting there was sneaking a look at them. I had no trouble with the exam, as evidenced by my perfect grade while the guy on my right, despite sneaking looks at my work only scored in the high 70's. The only other time I scored perfect marks on an exam was during the exam I have described in connection with my employment with the Campbells Soup Company, which really shouldn't count in these memoirs.

Introduction of Television

It was just about this time that Television was becoming a reality in the US and some of the students were considering having a go at constructing one. One large company in the US was just getting ready to put on the market a kit set to allow interested people to construct rudimental sets. The unfortunate problem was the cost, which was entirely beyond my ability to pay. However, a friend of mine, with whom I used to study, and who lived in Westgate seemed to have fairly large funds, and decided to invest in a kit to get some experience at first hand with the latest developments in electronics. When the kit arrived, he called me over and together we started assembly. After a couple of hours it appeared to me that assembly would be quite a lengthy process, so I gave up for the time being and returned to our unit. (About 30 yards away) It turns out that he stayed up almost all night working on the assembly and had almost finished by the next morning. After classes that afternoon, he came over to our unit with a tale of woe. It seems he had done something wrong (he thought) and needed my assistance to help get it right. When I got over to his place he proudly showed me the results of all his hard labor of the previous night, but when he switched it on and it had warmed up, he pointed out to me that the picture was upside down, and couldn't understand what he had done wrong to cause the problem. He offered to get me a cup of coffee while I thought about it and when I agreed, he went to the

kitchen and left me with the half completed TV set. I had already worked out what his problem was and when he got back with the coffee, he almost dropped the cups, because the picture on the TV was the right way up. He shook his head and said “what did you do?” I showed him that all I had done was to turn the picture tube around its axis by 180 degrees. That really rocked him, and he was really upset that he hadn’t thought of it himself. I should explain that he was a really bright guy and I had been amazed that he hadn’t realized himself what the problem was.

To show how bright he was I should tell you about an electronic gadget the designed and built for listening to music on an am Boston radio station that only broadcast classic music, interspersed with commercials. He got sick of listening to commercials, so he devised a method of muting the radio when a commercial started and unmuting it when the commercial ended and the music restarted. He had worked out that when listening to music there is almost never any silence on the record, while with speech there are periods of silence between each pair of words, so all he had to do was count the silences on the radio and if there more than a couple in every second or two he could mute it until the silences no longer occurred, then unmute again. This may seem complicated, but it is fairly simple to accomplish electronically, and the loss of music is really impossible to detect, and the process was completely automatic, All he had to do was switch his gadget on and forget it. As you can see, he was really good at electronics, so I felt quite proud that I could solve his problem so quickly and easily. One thing about that radio station – it was very popular with an awful lot of students at MIT, including me –Doris and I listened to it quite a bit, and enjoyed it immensely.

I soon acquired, as I could afford them, more LP’S and managed to get together a reasonable collection of piano concertos, some symphonies and sonatas etc, but when I left Doris I was only able to being a few of them with me to my new abode.

My life during my sophomore year became very busy indeed, with three terms during the year (instead of the normal two). My sports involvement kept going for the whole year, competing in track and field plus softball while I was in Pittsfield, and while I was at the GE Plant in Boston, I competed in all the track and field competitions at the main campus in Cambridge. Having to attend classes at night was also a bit of a chore, but a necessary one. Of course, as well as attending classes at night, there were lengthy homework assignments to be dealt with, meaning that late nights were the normal routine. During my stay at Pittsfield we had to move to the city of Pittsfield, which was about 150 miles from MIT, and we managed to get share accommodation with two other families from Westgate who were also assigned to the GE plant. During my assignment to GE in Boston, we were able to remain in Westgate, while I commuted to the plant daily, which saved us some money – a very useful exercise for us on our allowance from the GI Bill of Rights. Of course, this meant my night classes were held on the

campus, again a relief for me. As it turned out, I only had two terms to spend working for GE because I had to finish my college education at the end of four years and had been looking forward to another assignment to GE. The bonus from the job in Boston was that I could take part in all the sports on the campus and in Cambridge as well as any social events occurring in the area. This included a couple more Tech Night at the Pops concerts, a couple of "Mug Lifts" and sundry other functions. The Mug Lifts were functions designed to bring the whole class together for fraternization, good fellowship and, of course, drinking beer. They were held in the gymnasium building almost adjacent to Westgate – about 5 minutes walk away from home, which made it very convenient. The beer they always served was a local beer made by a company whose name was Jake Wurst, called by everyone "Jakie Wursts Dark." It really was a lovely brew, which I looked for during my return to Boston a few years ago.

Unfortunately, I couldn't locate anyone who even remembered the brewery, let alone the beer, so I was unable to try to raise any good memories.

During these years I was able to take part in quite a few competitions against other colleges in athletics, some of which took place away from Boston, such as in New York City. I really got a lot of pleasure from the contacts with other athletes from different schools and from seeing different places. I took part in indoor sports in winter times and outdoors in the summers, the main events in winter were the shot put and the 35 lb weight throw, both of which took place in such locations as The Madison Square Garden, the gymnasium of CCNY (The City College of New York) and similar locations. These buildings had wooden tracks of twelve laps to the mile instead of the four laps to the mile of normal outdoor grounds. The curves on the indoor tracks were all fairly heavily banked to assist the runners around the very sharp curves, and the shotput and weight throw events were held from a wooden square set on the ground marked with a seven foot diameter circle to indicate the area from which the implements had to be thrown. The whole area for the competition was much smaller than the outdoor arena, of course, and the spectator seating was very limited, but we all enjoyed the competition.

All expenses for the athletes were met by their school, but only paid for by the coach from a kitty supplied to him. I might add here that in those days the amateur rules stated that no amateur (in any sport) was allowed to accept a trophy of prize with a monetary value exceeding $25. If you accepted anything of greater value, your were automatically disqualified from any amateur events FOR LIFE, with no exceptions! In those days we were really amateurs, And believe me, those rules were really strongly enforced. We had to do all our training at our own expense, and we even had to buy our own shoes to compete in. I must say, that in the face of these limitations, I was prepared to give up several hours a day and buy my own gear just to take

part in the sport, but only because I loved it, and the friendship of the other competitors, we all thought it was great.

No one that I encountered during all my sports involvement, not only in the States, but also in Australia, felt any different about participation for the advantages they felt. If you compare this attitude with the present attitude, there are many important differences that to my mind are unfortunate. I might add, that the amateur rules stated QUITE CLEARLY that if you competed against a professional sportsman you were also disqualified for life as an amateur. Just consider what a difference those rules would make to ALL sports competitions today.

A few of the competitions I took part in were regional championships, such as the New England Championships, the United States Championships and the Boston Caledonian Games, all of which were at much higher levels of competition than the majority of events which were between two or three schools of tertiary education, such as MIT, Harvard University, CCNY, UCLA etc. The special and regional events allowed contestants only from limited schools or from specially invited schools or competitors. For example the New England Championships allowed only schools from the New England states, but the US Championships allowed competitors from any accredited school in the United Statres, so it should be obviously be of a higher standard than the New England event.

I was fortunate enough to be invited to take part in the Caledonian Games primarily because my field games coach, a Scotsman, Bob Bowie, was the organizer of these games, which were held in Boston, which included Scottish dancing plus many other Scottish specialties and events. The athletic events included the caber toss, the 28 pound one handed hammer throw, the shot put, and the wooden handled 16 pound hammer throw. The New England Championship in the 56 pound weight throw was held in conjunction with the games, as well, so I took part in most of the athletic events – I had busy afternoons during these games. I had an advantage over most of the other athletes because my coach had taught me most of the secrets of the Scottish events, so much so that I won most of these competitions. In fact, during my Senior Year at University, he offered a special trophy for the outstanding competitor in the Scottish events at the games, which I won hands down, winning all four of the events plus the 56 pound weight throw championship of New England. I might add that the Gold Medal I won for the 56 pound weight throw is now mounted as a necklet for my wife. I might also tell you that she wears my gold shoe awarded by the Track Club of MIT for my accomplishments, plus my Tau Beta Pi pin as pendants on Gold chains.

I have already discussed the caber with you in previous discussions, but for the benefit of those who haven't been told or have forgotten, the caber is a log of wood between 12 and 15 feet in length, with a diameter at the small end of about 5 inches and at the bigger end about 8 inches,

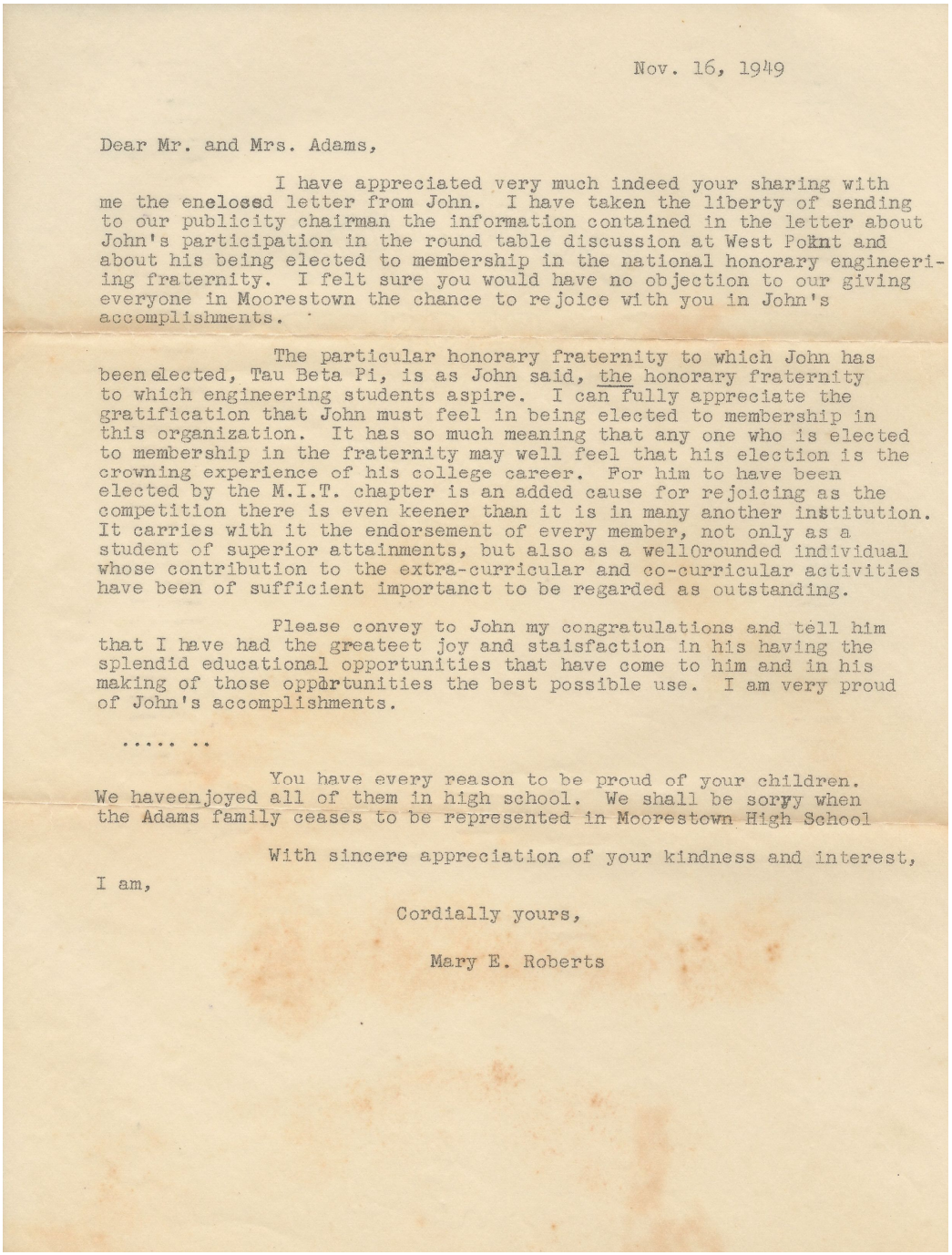
which had been soaked in water for about two weeks before the competition to make the job of the competitors tougher. You had to stand the pole up on its smaller end, lift it (keeping it upright) then run as fast as you could, prop and at the same time try to throw in such a way as to make it land on the big end and fall away from you – in other words you had to make it go end for end away from you. If you couldn't manage this, the throw didn't count and was disqualified. I couldn't begin to estimate the weight of the average caber, but I can say with complete confidence that it was bloody heavy, in fact a large number of people couldn't even get if off the ground by themselves, let alone toss it. I was always very fit and big and strong and managed to win the event every year it was held.

I think it must be obvious by now that my sporting career at MIT turned out to be quite eventful and very busy, and it might seem to have taken up most of my time, I can assure you that the actual situation was that most of my so called leisure time was taken up with studying, in an endeavor to maintain my scholastic standing, with the sports having to be fitted in as and when I could manage. I can assure you that the amount of home study that we were forced to do was never less than three or four hours every night, and I can remember very distinctly many occasions when I would only interrupt studying for dinner at about 7pm and then breakfast at about 6:30am with 'time-outs' only for a cup of coffee. This was certainly the case the higher the grade I was in and for particular projects such as theses and other lengthy reports we were required to submit. I think I may have said something like this before, but it really does bear repeating -- I have never before or since had to work so hard, nor for such long periods without a break, but I felt then that it was worth it, and I still feel the same way.

Tau Beta Pi

With the commencement of my Junior year at Tech in 1948, a year in which I achieved what I consider to be the highest honor of my career at my university, my election to the MIT chapter of the honorary engineering society TAU BETA PI. It is considered to be the highest honor that an undergraduate engineering student can receive. In fact, I have a copy of a letter Mary Roberts (the principal of Moorestown High School), sent to my parents when she heard that I had been elected to Massachusetts BETA, the branch of TAU BETA PI at MIT and I'll show you how she expressed her pride in my achievement in being elected to the society. She wrote "The particular honorary society to which John has been elected, Tau Beta Pi, is as John said THE honorary society to which engineering students Aspire. I can fully appreciate the gratification that John must feel in being elected to membership in this organization. It has so much meaning that anyone who is elected to membership in the society may well feel that his election is the crowning experience of his university career. For him to have been elected by the M.I.T. chapter is an added cause for rejoicing as the competition there is even keener that it is in

many another institution. It carries with it the endorsement of every member, not only as a student of superior attainments, but also as well rounded individual whose contribution to the extracurricular and co-curricular activities have been of sufficient importance to be regarded as outstanding."



Nov. 16, 1949

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Adams,

I have appreciated very much indeed your sharing with me the enclossd letter from John. I have taken the liberty of sending to our publicity chairman the information contained in the letter about John's participation in the round table discussion at West Point and about his being elected to membership in the national honorary engineering fraternity. I felt sure you would have no objection to our giving everyone in Moorestown the chance to rejoice with you in John's accomplishments.

The particular honorary fraternity to which John has been elected, Tau Beta Pi, is as John said, the honorary fraternity to which engineering students aspire. I can fully appreciate the gratification that John must feel in being elected to membership in this organization. It has so much meaning that any one who is elected to membership in the fraternity may well feel that his election is the crowning experience of his college career. For him to have been elected by the M.I.T. chapter is an added cause for rejoicing as the competition there is even keener than it is in many another institution. It carries with it the endorsement of every member, not only as a student of superior attainments, but also as a well0rounded individual whose contribution to the extra-curricular and co-curricular activities have been of sufficient importanct to be regarded as outstanding.

Please convey to John my congratulations and tell him that I have had the greateet joy and staisfaction in his having the splendid educational opportunities that have come to him and in his making of those opportunities the best possible use. I am very proud of John's accomplishments.

....

You have every reason to be proud of your children. We haveenjoyed all of them in high school. We shall be sorry when the Adams family ceases to be represented in Moorestown High School

With sincere appreciation of your kindness and interest, I am,

Cordially yours,

Mary E. Roberts

33 - Letter from Mrs Mary Roberts, Principal of Morestown High School,1945

The actual requirements that the candidate for membership must include being in the top ten percent of his class scholastically and having made outstanding contributions to extra curricular activities throughout his college career. After he has met these requirements he must then attend an informal meeting of the total present membership of the branch to mix and get to know those present and give them an opportunity to judge you for those personal traits that might make you a worthy member of their particular branch. In fact, after the meeting, a vote is held and it requires at least a 80 % majority vote in your favor to achieve the desired membership. I must admit to a feeling of great pride when I was told of my election.

By the way, in this same year, I was offered membership in another honorary society, ETA KAPPA NU, which is the Electrical Engineering Honorary Society, which is a national society, as is TAU BETA PI. Unfortunately, because of financial constrictions, I was unable to afford to be a member of both groups, so I had to settle for the better of the two. This decision was also proved to be very wise, as subsequent experiences clearly proved. One example of this occurred just before I was due to receive my Degree and I was being interviewed by representatives of those companies to whom I had sent applications for employment. Every Senior student was requested to make applications to at least three prospective employers before the end of his last term before graduating, so I chose to apply to The General Electric Company, The Westinghouse electric Corporation, and The Radio Corporation of America. (RCA).

Of course I had no intention of accepting a position with any of those firms because I had already booked our passage to Australia with a sailing date of early January, 1950, and had already accepted a job with a firm of consulting engineers in Trenton, New Jersey who were very happy to accept me for the six months before our sailing date. When the time came for the interviews we, the entire Senior class, were given days and times for our interviews, and were ushered into an interview room where the rep from the particular company sat waiting at the only desk in the room. As soon as we had greeted each other and sat down, the first thing the interviewer did was to open our application form, and with a coloured pencil place a large circle around the Tau Beta Pi notation on the space showing any honours we had obtained during our time at MIT. Everyone who interviewed me did exactly the same thing, the only difference between their actions was the color of the pencil they used. Some used red and others used blue, but all the colors used were bright and very noticeable. I soon learned the reason for this and I was being shown the wisdom of my choice the year before. Everyone who is interested in this sort of thing has indicated to me the extent of the honor I had attained.

As I indicated previously, the difficulty we encountered with our studies increased markedly with every year we completed, and our junior year was no exception, the homework becoming more and more difficult and requiring much more time to be spent on it and

demanding a much more concentrated effort to produce the required results. Of course, this was to be expected as the more we learned, the more effort was required to acquire the knowledge necessary to become a first class engineer, and the reputation of MIT was dependent on them producing only top graduates. I can assure you that the professors had every intention of maintaining that reputation and really made us step up our efforts to hold our places in the scheme of things. Most of my friends at Tech managed to keep up their standards and were eventually achieve their Degrees. I should probably clarify one thing about my class that I feel had a big bearing on our achievements.

The class of 1950 had quite lot of returned servicemen who had served in the US Armed Forces during World War II. As a result, most of my friends were among this group, particularly those who lived in Westgate, who were, for the most part, several years older that a lot of our classmates, as well as being more mature in their outlook. There were lots of men in similar circumstances to mine, who were thrilled to have the opportunity as offered by the GI Bill of Rights, to earn a higher degree and thus ensure a much brighter future for themselves and their families. It should be noted that one of the requirements to be allowed to live in Westgate was to have a wife, and, of course be an ex GI, so a lot of these couples had a couple of children, which increased their responsibilities, giving them more encouragement to make a go of their opportunities.

It has since been shown that the returned servicemen who went to college on the GI Bill of Rights managed much higher grades on the whole than most of the students who started college straight after finishing their high school diploma. This pleased the US Congress, who had passed the necessary legislation to create the GI Bill over a lot of strong criticism from a lot of people. There is no doubt in my mind that I really benefited greatly from this opportunity and I am certain that most of those who attended institutes of higher education would say the same thing. Without this bill I certainly would never have been able to earn my degree – my family would never have been able to give me the financial assistance necessary, and I did not have sufficient financial resources to enable me to afford all the considerable costs involved.

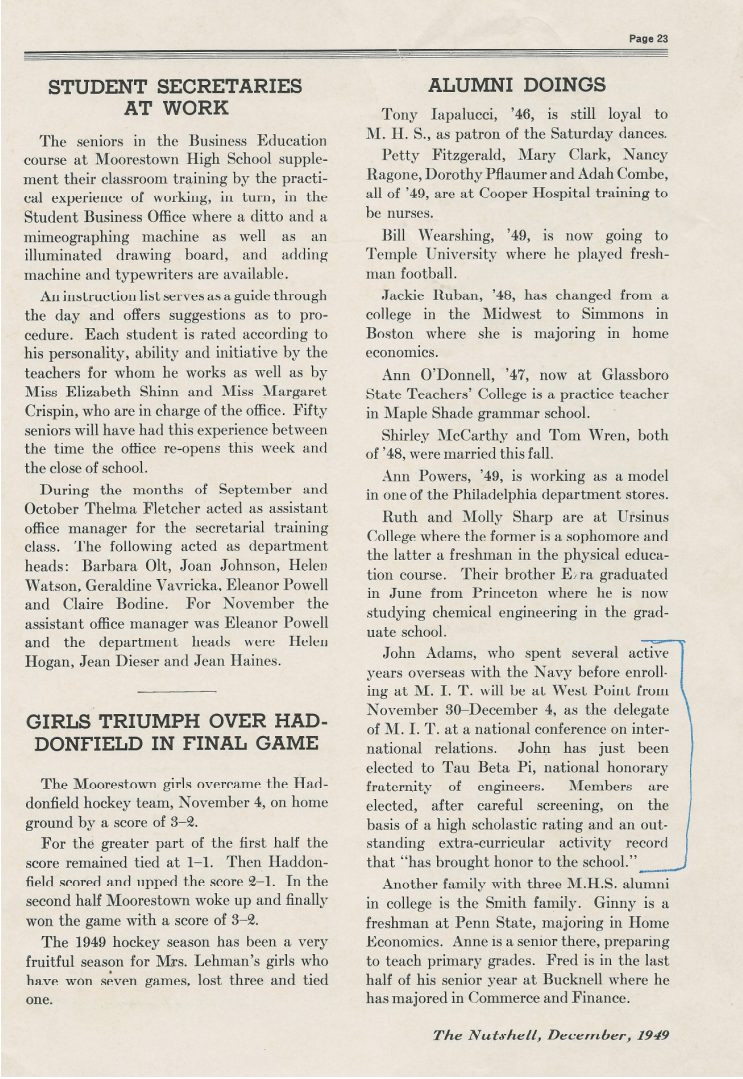
Final Year at MIT

Well, finally my Senior Year at MIT arrived. However it wasn't until half way through my last year that I got final confirmation that I had to forgo my Masters degree and settle for a Bachelors degree. This meant I had to drop out of the Co-operative Course, and finish my education after four years at MIT. The problem, which I had dreaded, was that the Bill of Rights provided for complete costs of annual tuition for four years and in a pinch would last five years, however, the tuition costs at MIT were much higher than most American colleges so my maximum tuition costs were nowhere near enough to last over four years. In addition, the living

expenses the US government supplied us with, while under normal circumstances barely sufficient to keep one person, would cut out completely as soon as the maximum allowable tuition was reached, which made it impossible for me to continue on. It was a blow, but one which I had thought likely to occur.

Conference at US Military Academy

Despite this setback, I still felt quite fortunate to be able to get my degree and decided to make the most of my last year at college. To help soften the blow, I had another very surprising, but very welcome honor added to my collection at MIT. When I attended one of my classes, a class on current affairs and historical reflections, the professor announced that he had received notification that MIT had been requested to send two representatives to a week long conference at the US Military Academy, better known by the location it occupied, West Point, New York, and was sponsored by the United States Military Academy and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The conference invitations had been sent to 51 Universities, each of which was requested to choose students of high caliber. The invitations also stressed the hope that students of unquestioned competence attend and remain for the entire conference, and further requested that all colleges choose exceptionally well qualified juniors and seniors be sent as participants. To my great surprise and delight he told us that the school had chosen me and another student Donald Eberly to represent MIT. I was also very thrilled at the spontaneous applause from the class when our names were mentioned. As well as



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STUDENT SECRETARIES AT WORK

The seniors in the Business Education course at Moorestown High School supplement their classroom training by the practical experience of working, in turn, in the Student Business Office where a ditto and a mimeographing machine as well as an illuminated drawing board, and adding machine and typewriters are available.

An instruction list serves as a guide through the day and offers suggestions as to procedure. Each student is rated according to his personality, ability and initiative by the teachers for whom he works as well as by Miss Elizabeth Shinn and Miss Margaret Crispin, who are in charge of the office. Fifty seniors will have had this experience between the time the office re-opens this week and the close of school.

During the months of September and October Thelma Fletcher acted as assistant office manager for the secretarial training class. The following acted as department heads: Barbara Olt, Joan Johnson, Helen Watson, Geraldine Vavricka, Eleanor Powell and Claire Bodine. For November the assistant office manager was Eleanor Powell and the department heads were Helen Hogan, Jean Dieser and Jean Haines.

GIRLS TRIUMPH OVER HADDONFIELD IN FINAL GAME

The Moorestown girls overcame the Haddonfield hockey team, November 4, on home ground by a score of 3–2.

For the greater part of the first half the score remained tied at 1–1. Then Haddonfield scored and upped the score 2–1. In the second half Moorestown woke up and finally won the game with a score of 3–2.

The 1949 hockey season has been a very fruitful season for Mrs. Lehman's girls who have won seven games, lost three and tied one.

ALUMNI DOINGS

Tony Iapalucci, '46, is still loyal to M. H. S., as patron of the Saturday dances.

Petty Fitzgerald, Mary Clark, Nancy Ragone, Dorothy Pflaumer and Adah Combe, all of '49, are at Cooper Hospital training to be nurses.

Bill Wearshing, '49, is now going to Temple University where he played freshman football.

Jackie Ruban, '48, has changed from a college in the Midwest to Simmons in Boston where she is majoring in home economics.

Ann O'Donnell, '47, now at Glassboro State Teachers' College is a practice teacher in Maple Shade grammar school.

Shirley McCarthy and Tom Wren, both of '48, were married this fall.

Ann Powers, '49, is working as a model in one of the Philadelphia department stores.

Ruth and Molly Sharp are at Ursinus College where the former is a sophomore and the latter a freshman in the physical education course. Their brother Ezra graduated in June from Princeton where he is now studying chemical engineering in the graduate school.

John Adams, who spent several active years overseas with the Navy before enrolling at M. I. T. will be at West Point from November 30–December 4, as the delegate of M. I. T. at a national conference on international relations. John has just been elected to Tau Beta Pi, national honorary fraternity of engineers. Members are elected, after careful screening, on the basis of a high scholastic rating and an outstanding extra-curricular activity record that "has brought honor to the school."

Another family with three M.H.S. alumni in college is the Smith family. Ginny is a freshman at Penn State, majoring in Home Economics. Anne is a senior there, preparing to teach primary grades. Fred is in the last half of his senior year at Bucknell where he has majored in Commerce and Finance.

The Nutshell, December, 1949

34 - Nomination in 'The Nutshell', December 1949

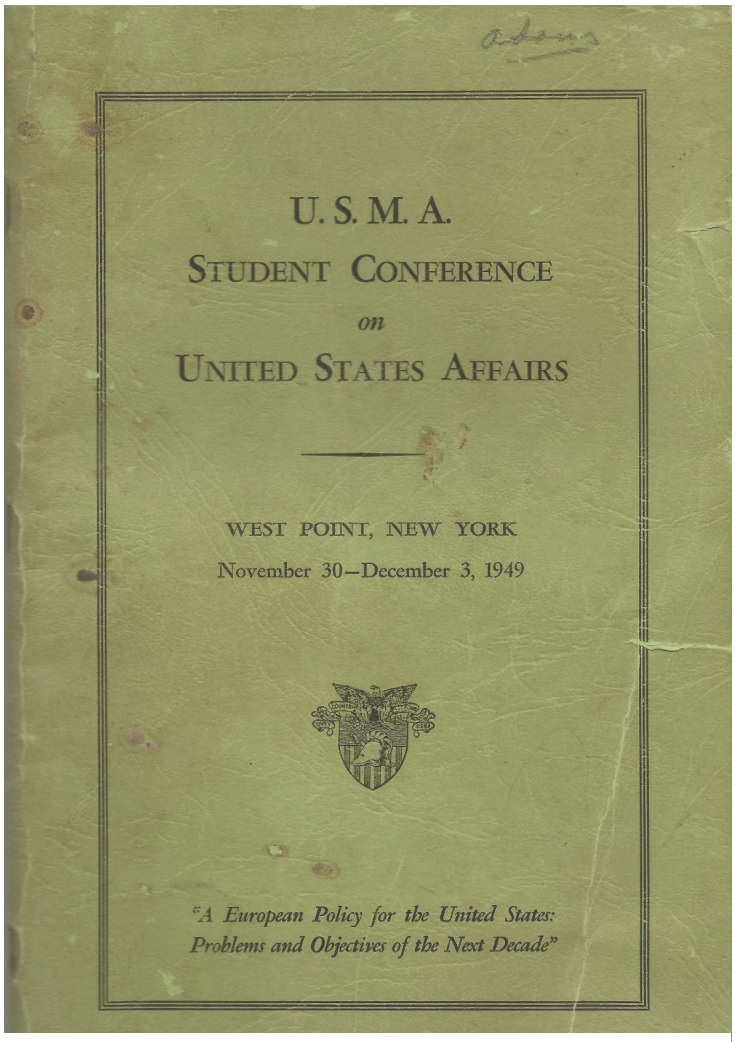
the pleasure I received from being selected I really enjoyed the experience of participation in such a national event.

The objectives of the conference were stated in the forward to a booklet sent to us at the conclusion of the conference which set out the full details of the whole week, including full copies of the keynote addresses given by very highly qualified members of the government and other influential people. I have a copy of this booklet which I intend making a part of these memoirs. The conference purposes were as set out below.

> *"To further mutual understanding and broaden contacts among undergraduates of participating organizations. To develop the essential interrelationship of political, economic and security factors as elements of public policy today. To emphasize the realities faced by the responsible officials of the United States Government and the practical limitations to their freedom of action, and to end with some concerted views as to the method and direction of United States policy during the next decade - but not necessarily firm or detailed policies."*

We also received when we checked in copies of the program and procedures to be followed throughout the conference, as well as copies of the keynote speeches to be presented at the first plenary session. After checking in we were taken for a tour of the Academy by one of the senior cadets, and were shown where we were to sleep and eat and given a complete rundown of what was expected of us for all aspects of our behaviour, together with a description of the everyday life of a cadet. The discipline imposed on the cadets was awesome and I can remember comparing my life for the first few months of my Naval career with the kind of conditions that the Army cadets had to experience. The worst conditions were reserved for the lower classmen, who were required to run everywhere – no walking and they had to address any cadet from a higher class as Sir plus they had to carry out any command issued by a senior cadet and there were lots of other quite severe restrictions imposed on them. One of the interesting things to me was the requirement for all cadets to participate in inter-collegiate sport. I never found out if they had a choice of what sport they would compete in to obey that particular order. We were (the male participants) domiciled in the dormitories on the grounds and ate with the cadets. As a result of this we had no trouble waking up in the mornings – the whole academy came to life at 0600 and went to bed at 2200 with meals at set times. During the actual conference hours we had morning tea (COFFEE OF COURSE), with light refreshments served to us at our conference tables and afternoons brought the same pleasurable experience.

The business of the conference commenced with the first plenary session held in the Gymnasium commencing at 1900 and concluding at approximately 2100, and was attended by the entire Cadet Corp as well as a large contingent of the press and radio, and of course the student participants. It was my first experience of hearing an address, while at the same time having a printed copy in my hands, but I found it a very edifying experience. All the speakers had an astonishing breadth of knowledge of their subject, as I guess I should have foreseen, but I was pleasantly surprised just the same. To give you an idea of the caliber of the speakers, the first speaker was a Major General Bryant E. Moore, the Superintendent of the United States Military Academy, followed by Colonel Herman Beukema, Head of the Department of Social Sciences at the Academy, both of whom welcomed us and described the purposes of the conference and a brief introduction to the three main keynoter speakers. The three aspects of US foreign policy we would be discussing were the National Security, the Economic Aspects, and the Political Aspects. The speakers on each of these subjects were very well qualified for their task, with the speaker on the subject of National Security being Rear Admiral Arthur C. Davis, Director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Department of Defense. The speaker on the subject of The Economic Aspects was Mr Paul Hoffman, the Administrator of the Economic Co-operation Administration (ECA), while the speaker on the Political Aspects was Dr. Grayson Kirk, Provost of Columbia University and Director of the Academy of Political Sciences. Quite a distinguished line up, as I'm sure you will all agree. I won't go into any details



35 – Program, USMA Student Conference

of their addresses, other than to say that I, and almost all my co-participants were very impressed indeed, and thrilled to be there when they outlined their views on the subjects we were to be discussing in the coming days of the conference.

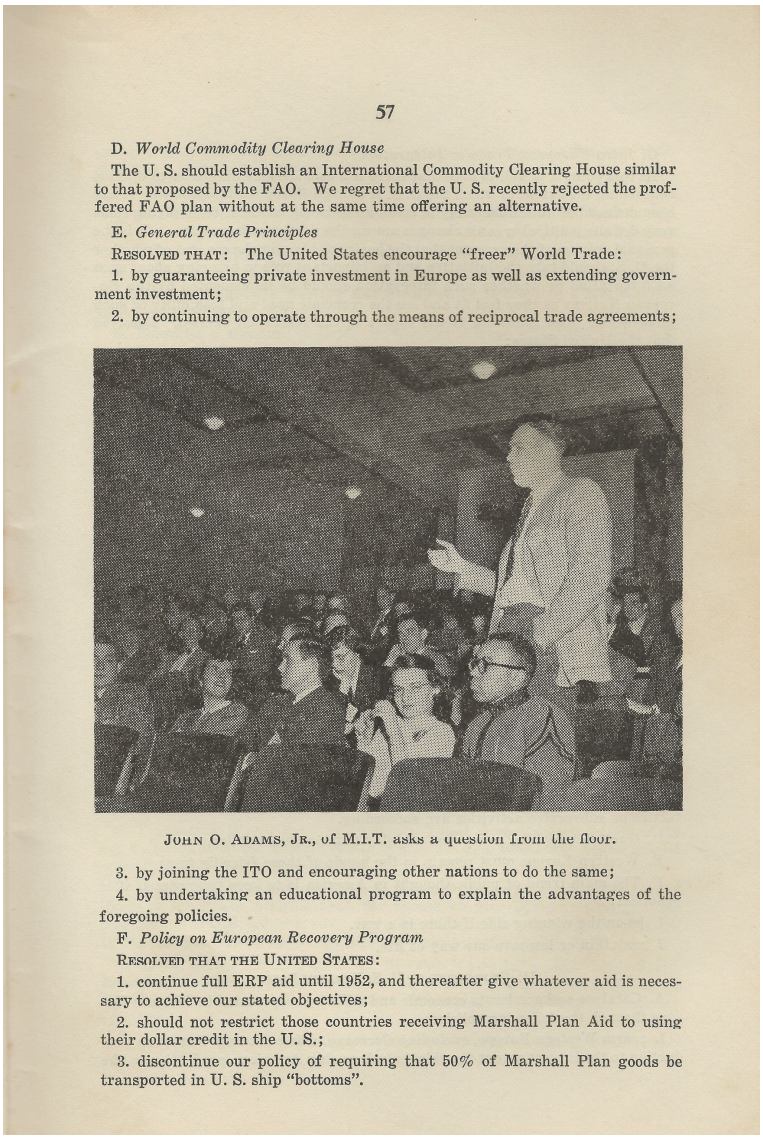
The participants were divided into six groups, with all groups made up of a wide variety of academic courses, with two groups each focused on one of the three aspects, and each group comprising twenty one participants and being chaired by a Senior Cadet, with at least on Senior Advisor being present at each group discussion. During the first day of discussion, each group would start out in the morning discussing one aspect of our proposed recommendations from 0830 to 1130, then in the afternoon from1330 to 1600, we would change to discussing another aspect and in the evening from1930 to 2200 we would redirect our discussions to the third aspect of our recommendations.

The following day, the second plenary session was held from 0915 to 1145 with further addresses from our keynote speakers on the normal governmental procedures for deciding foreign policy and setting out the magnitude of the tasks set us in making our recommendations.

Following this second plenary session we began our next round of group discussions where we had left off on the previous day but at this time we commenced by formulating our recommended policies on the economic aspects of policy. This was done during the 1415 hours to 1645 hours session. The next session (from 1930 to 2200 hours) was devoted to reconciling (in conjunction with group B) and preparing joint economic recommendations to be presented to the third plenary session. During this same time segment, groups C and D got together for purposes of carrying out the process on the Political Aspects of Foreign Policy, and Groups E and F did the same thing for Joint Security recommendations. This may seem like a rather strange arrangement, but it certainly worked and produced very good results The following day held the third plenary session, where the recommendations of all the participants were presented to the entire conference plus all the expert participants. The recommendations were then open for discussion and possible amendment. All the participants were present and able to comment on the various policies and if thought appropriate, to suggest amendments. There were quite a few cases of individuals putting forward their points of view during these discussions, but very few of these suggestions got past the body of the meeting. It was during these discussions that I made some comments from the floor of the meeting, resulting (to my surprise) during which one of the photographers took a picture of me on my feet which was printed in the Booklet we all received after the conference ended. I didn’t notice the photographer and got quite a shock when I saw the photo in the booklet.

In fact, the other representative from MIT at the conference noticed the photo and told me about it. The most surprising thing about the whole thing was that although they took lots of

photos during the conference, only one of them showing a single participant appeared in the booklet – I was thrilled! The third plenary session lasted until well after the normal finishing time in the evening of 2200 hours, but this didn't seem to bother anyone, since this session was the last formal business of the entire conference, and the only remaining function was to be held at the final assembly, which culminated in a farewell banquet at the Cullum Hall, after which there was a concluding address by the host, Major General Bryant E. Moore, the Superintendent of The Military Academy who really made us all feel good about the conference. In his address he indicated that all those who were involved in the planning and operation of the conference all had spoken to him expressing their extreme pleasure at the tremendous results that had been obtained, not just from the point of view of the very good recommendations we had made, but also because of the way the participants had taken part and the atmosphere of good will and friendships that resulted. They all felt very gratified at the way the conference had turned out, as were all the participants.



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D. *World Commodity Clearing House*

The U. S. should establish an International Commodity Clearing House similar to that proposed by the FAO. We regret that the U. S. recently rejected the proffered FAO plan without at the same time offering an alternative.

E. *General Trade Principles*

RESOLVED THAT: The United States encourage "freer" World Trade:

1. by guaranteeing private investment in Europe as well as extending government investment;

2. by continuing to operate through the means of reciprocal trade agreements;

JOHN O. ADAMS, JR., of M.I.T. asks a question from the floor.

3. by joining the ITO and encouraging other nations to do the same;

4. by undertaking an educational program to explain the advantages of the foregoing policies.

F. *Policy on European Recovery Program*

RESOLVED THAT THE UNITED STATES:

1. continue full ERP aid until 1952, and thereafter give whatever aid is necessary to achieve our stated objectives;

2. should not restrict those countries receiving Marshall Plan Aid to using their dollar credit in the U. S.;

3. discontinue our policy of requiring that 50% of Marshall Plan goods be transported in U. S. ship "bottoms".

36 -USMA Student Conference on United States Affairs, Nov 30 – Dec 3, 1949

I have to say that attendance at that conference was probably the most fascinating and rewarding experiences of my entire time at MIT – I certainly will never forget it.

One of the most satisfying experiences tied in with the conference was spread over the ten years after the conference. Having been a participant I was able to compare the actual

decisions made by the US Government on foreign affairs with the recommendations the conference had made. To my surprise and great satisfaction, when I followed these decisions I could find very few instances where the Government had made decisions that varied greatly from the recommendations we had agreed upon at the conference. In fact, it seemed almost as though when they made their decisions, they had relied on us for the final decisions. I have to say that it produced some very eerie sensations in my mind. I can only say that the planners and operators of the conference were very astute men and clear thinking types.

I propose using some of the relevant publications produced for the conference as Appendices to these my memoirs, because of their influence on my thinking, and in fact on my future life.

I probably haven't given a very clear indication as to the emotions that I felt from the moment I heard the announcement from our professor that the conference was to be held until my return to MIT after the conclusion of the conference. I ran through the gamut of feelings, from that of humility to a feeling of exhilaration and complete satisfaction of a job reasonably well done. The first feeling of humility came from the WHY ME surprise I felt when the professor named the two participants who had been chosen by the faculty, one of which was me. My common sense said to me, "There are literally hundreds of others in my class, most of whom are smarter than me and probably better qualified than I am who could have been chosen". For me to have been chosen over all the other members of my class, left me feeling really proud (that is – after I had a chance to digest and accept the fact that I had been selected to represent MIT at an event as significant as had been announced). Once I reached the decision to be happy with what had happened to me I immediately resolved that I would do all in my power to ensure that I lived up to the expectations the faculty had obviously place upon me.

With hindsight, I felt (and still do feel) that I did a reasonably good job in representing MIT, even despite the quality of the other participants. The other students, coming from all the best and most important universities in the whole of the eastern parts of the USA, were without exception an outstanding selection of products of the American tertiary schooling system. Once the conference commenced, and the round table discussions began, it was obvious that I would have to use all the knowledge and intelligence I possessed just to keep up with those people. The depth of knowledge, the clarity of thinking and the ability to make their thoughts known to others was phenomenal, and I was really kept on my toes trying to keep up with them. I have never before or since met such an outstandingly intelligent and unbiased group of people. (Present company excepted of course). As well as all the above good qualities, they had other very important traits which gave a great deal of satisfaction to all the participants as well as the organizers of the conference – their personalities. They all exhibited their friendly attitudes, their

abilities to get along with others, and this all contributed to a great conference for all concerned – everyone had a great time because virtually everyone got along well with each other and all the discussions were carried out on a basis of good will and the desire to produce well thought out, clear and sensible recommendations. That this occurred is well documented in an article which appeared in a monthly publication produced by the Cadet corps at West Point called "*The Pointer*". For the benefit of readers of this journal I will quote from the article, which appeared in the December 21, 1949 edition. The article said "It is a fact that the discussions at the conference were lively, broad, and well founded. The SCUSA experiment proved that young Americans can conduct a very able resolution of the problems facing their country abroad in the next decade. The fact augurs well for the country for from Americans such as SCUSA participants, and quite conceivably, from the SCUSA participants themselves, must come the leaders, and the policy makers of the next generation."

As you must have gathered by now, not only did I enjoy the conference because of the depth of the discussions I took part in, but also I thoroughly enjoyed the company of such a wonderful group of people with whom I was able to share ideas and feelings of friendship and speak thoughts which I could not have expressed with most other people I usually mixed with. It was all in all a really magnificent experience which I shall remember always.

The major feeling of disappointment came after I returned to School and had to get back to the day to day hard labour of study, because of the proximity of graduation day and the necessity of maintaining my already good record scholastically, I felt let down, but still basking in the sense of a job well done and a feeling of satisfaction of having achieved a worthwhile goal.

When I got back to MIT, the winter track season was well under way and I had to resume training for competition in what was to be my last indoor season for Tech. Obviously I wanted to go out with a good record for every year I competed in the field games. I must have done a reasonably good job with my training, because once again I won all four throwing events in the Intramural sports, as well as winning most of the inter-school competitions we had during the summer outdoor season, extending further some of my school records for the hammer throw and the discus throw. As for my studies, they became more and more difficult as the final year went on until I almost felt as though I would never get over the line to get my degree. Fortunately, I managed to maintain my record of achievement in making the Dean's List in both of my last two semesters, so I was able to accept my Degree in June with a large degree of pride in my scholastic achievements. I wasn't good enough to graduate as Valedictorian of my class, but I felt I had done well by remaining in the top 10% of my class. I guess to achieve that at a school

of the reputation of MIT is worthwhile and was deserving of a congratulatory comment such as that which I received from Mary Roberts, the principal of my High School.

Before we left Cambridge, my wife and I were invited to dinner with my field events coach, the venerable Bob Bowie and his wife. He and I had become very close friends during my time at MIT and I was very pleased to have an opportunity to say good-bye to him in a social way and to thank him for all he had done for me during our friendship. Doris and I went to his home in Cambridge one evening and were introduced to his wife, a lovely Scottish lady who made us very welcome and had prepared a delicious meal. Of course, we had to have a drink before sitting down to dinner, and being a Scot, the drink had to be Scotch (a single malt, of course). The meal consisted of a prawn cocktail appetizer, fillet steak, grilled of course, with roast vegetables. The steak was huge, but being an American cut, was lovely – tender and flavourful. During the main course we were served a very nice red wine, but when I finished my main course, Mrs Bowie took away my plate and immediately returned with another one complete with another steak and vegetables. I was really full when I had finished the second steak but managed to enjoy the sweets, which consisted of fresh strawberries soaked in a beautiful orange flavored liquor and covered with whipped cream and ice cream. Boy, what a big but very delicious meal that was. When the table had been cleared and the coffee brought in, Bob reached into his waistcoat pocket and removed a small key, which opened a wine cupboard into which he reached and produced a short stubby bottle. He opened the bottle and gave me a drink of a liquor I had never heard of much less tasted. To this day this particular drink is my very favorite liquor, and I soon discovered it is a Scotch based drink, as I should have expected. The drink, as I'm sure some of you have already guessed, was Drambuie, and I generally keep a bottle of it in my drink cabinet.

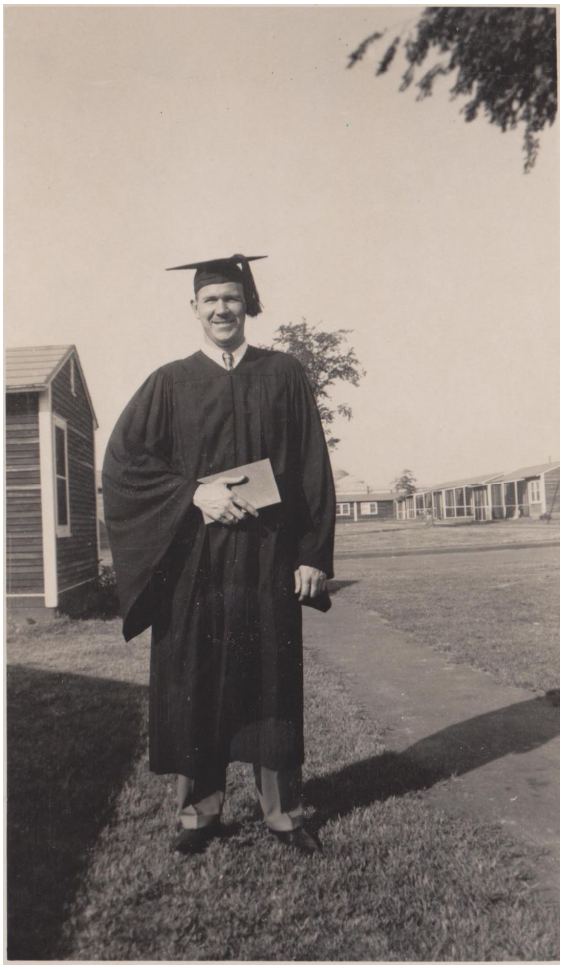
Actually that dinner was just the start of a series of gatherings I had to attend before the graduation ceremony, but all of them were both sad and happy, if that is possible. They were sad because we were about to part from people who had become good friends but happy because we all enjoyed being together even though we knew we were parting and because most of the people gathering together knew we were going back to Australia and might never see each other again. Some of the groups involved in these gatherings were The MIT Track Club, the Tau Beta Pi members at MIT, and of course the residents of Westgate, where we lived. At times the pace became a bit hectic, but we managed to cope reasonably well.

37 - MIT Year Book Photo, 1950

Graduation from MIT

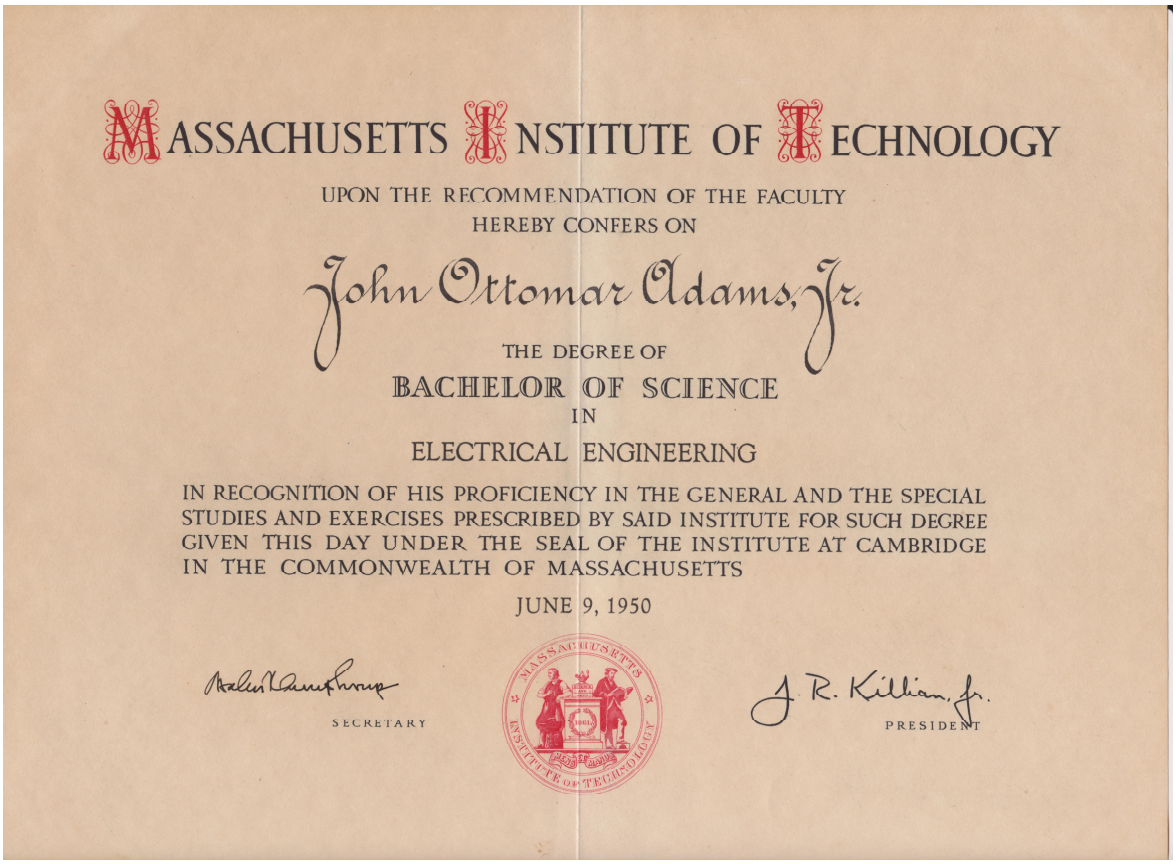
The graduation ceremony and the presentation of degrees took place in the Great Hall of the University on June 9 1950, and was quite a serious occasion, carried out in a manner that really impressed me. The Dean of the University spoke to us at length and with a lot of very good advice as to our future lives and careers. It was really an inspiring talk but carried a huge amount of information about lots of things that had been on my mind during my time at MIT. I am sure that that talk had a profound effect on my life, but the thing that most impressed me was when he explained to us what an honor it was to have a degree from MIT and how much such a degree was respected in the engineering profession. I found out what other engineers thought

about an MIT degree after I received my degree and started to meet other engineers who were practicing.



38 - Myself at Graduation, June 1950

39 - Mother and Myself at Graduation



MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

UPON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE FACULTY
HEREBY CONFERS ON

John Ottomar Adams, Jr.

THE DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE
IN
ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING

IN RECOGNITION OF HIS PROFICIENCY IN THE GENERAL AND THE SPECIAL STUDIES AND EXERCISES PRESCRIBED BY SAID INSTITUTE FOR SUCH DEGREE GIVEN THIS DAY UNDER THE SEAL OF THE INSTITUTE AT CAMBRIDGE IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

JUNE 9, 1950

SECRETARY

PRESIDENT

40 - MIT Graduation Certificate, 1950

Acknowledgements

I have had a tremendous amount of assistance and advice from a number of people whose help and encouragement have made these memoirs possible (and hopefully) worth reading.

Firstly, I must thank my Daughter-in-law Jennifer Myers for all her hard work in converting my disjointed and confusing weekly writings into something that should make sense and possibly enjoyable reading to the end.

Secondly, my sincere thanks go to Marie Mooney who gave me encouragement and much needed tips and hints about how I should go about my writing.

Thirdly, and my no means lastly, my Memoirs Class at U3A who were of great assistance with their comments and suggestions during our classes.

Lastly, my thanks and heartfelt appreciation to my wife Dawn for her encouragement and forbearance during the times I spent agonizing over details to be included – she was a pillar of strength in helping me present this document to her family and to mine.

EXCERPT FROM MY SERVICE RECORDS, DATED JANUARY 1942
ENTERED BY CAPTAIN OF THE USS HENLEY DD391.
ORIGINAL OF RECORD HELD BY NATIONAL PERSONNEL RECORDS CENTER,
9700 Page Avenue, St Louis, MO63132-5100, USA

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Name ADAMS, John Ottomar jr.
(Name in full, surname to the left.)
No. 405-09-01 Rate RM3c, USNR, {A.A. / P.A.
Date reported Marhc 3,1941
Ship or Station From U.S.S. Henley
USNTS, San Diego, California

This man served with distinction on board the USS HENLEY during the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese forces on December 7, 1941.

Robert Hall Smith
ROBERT HALL SMITH, Commander, USN

CROSSED EQUATOR - JANUARY 1942

2-1-42:
Appointed Radioman Second Class, V-3, USNR.
Article 1275, USNR read and appointment accepted.
Authority: Bunav Circular Letter 1-42, to fill allowance.

Robert Hall Smith
ROBERT HALL SMITH, Commander, USN.

Date transferred _____

To _____

_____
Signature and rank of Commanding Officer.

Date received _____

Ship or Station From _____

_____
Signature and rank of Commanding Officer.