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Here We Go Again

Upon reaching Ulithi, the ship anchored and all personnel were treated as if we were in a receiving station at any other place in the navy on a land base. When one received his orders, it was announced over the P.A. system that he was to report on deck with his seabag, ready to disembark. Up until this time I had no idea where I was going. I had not received any orders, but had just gone from commanding officer to commanding officer. Before noon April 11th I received my orders. I was taken from the Omar Bundy to an ammunition cargo ship, the U.S.S. Bedford Victory, AK 231. (the AK stands for Auxiliary Cargo). It was anchored in Ulithi Harbor. As I came over the plank and onto the Bedford Victory, Lt. Cmdr. "Captain" Durrant was standing there to greet

me. He wanted to know if I was Bagley and if I was the radio tech that was assigned to his ship. After my assurance that I was both, he said , "Come with me. I want to show you something." I followed him to a room directly under the bridge on the main deck. He pointed to a piece of equipment and said, "See that machine?"

I said, "Yes sir."

He continued, "That is a torpedo detector. It doesn't work and I want it fixed." That was my greeting aboard the Bedford Victory, AK 231.

This ship had been a merchant marine ship and had merchant marine gear on it. I had never seen or heard of a torpedo detector, so I had no idea what I was up against. Of course, the captain did not know anything about it either. I immediately began to look for an instruction booklet with a schematic or something to go by. There was an instruction booklet telling how to operate the thing, but there was no schematic in the booklet or on the equipment. The only instruction concerning maintenance was to have it checked by the maintenance crew each six months when the ship came into port. Usually, on a back panel or someplace on electronic equipment there would be a schematic. Furthermore, I did not even have a pair of pliers or a screw driver. I had no tools.

After inquiring, I learned there were two Electrician mates aboard. Surely they would have some tools and meters. I found them and asked if they had a meter and a screwdriver and a pair of pliers I could borrow. They had them, all right, but they were not about to lend them to anyone. They were held personally responsible for them. Therefore,

they would not allow the tools out of their sight. Then, I had to inquire around until I found the executive officer. I told him my story, and he went with me to the electricians. They then gave me all the tools I needed to work on this gear. I had no idea where to look for the different circuits, so I began with the power supply, taking voltage, current and resistance measurements on all of the component parts that took off from it. I drew my own schematic as I went. This took a couple of days. After that it was not much of a problem to go through the complete circuit and find the faulty part. I was able to get the part I needed to repair the torpedo detector from the supply base in Ulithi. This put me pretty high on the captain's list. He did not say so, but I could tell he had some confidence in me.

The torpedo detector was a piece of electronic equipment that amplified sound waves picked up in the water from a torpedo screw. We could tell whether an approaching torpedo was on the port side or the starboard side by the lights that went on. If it was on the starboard side the green light flashed, and if on the port side the red light flashed. A loud buzzer sounded regardless of which light flashed. The reaction here was just the same system of survival that we had on the carrier. Always steer into the last splash or into the direction the missile was coming from. If the green light was flashing, the navigator would give the ship a hard starboard rudder and turn toward the torpedo. It would then clear the bow. On the other hand, if you turned with it, it was more likely to catch up to the ship before the turn was completed.

The detector was working and very fortunately, too, because later,

during one of our assignments, we picked up a torpedo signal during the night. An officer who was on deck told me that the torpedo did not miss the bow of the ship by more than four feet. We were loaded with ammunition, and one hit could have disintegrated the whole ship. We were all glad the detector was working!

The Bedford Victory had no radar. We had a large, commercial type radio broadcasting and receiving set and only one operator who could send and receive in code. His station was everyday at the transmitter. We also had a receiver on the bridge that received voice messages. On it we received our operational and rendezvous instructions. It was equipped with a set of head phones.

The 15th of April in Ulithi Harbor, we began taking on ammunition. For the next 10 days everyone was getting prepared for the next move. We took on many tons of cargo, with all hands aboard required in the loading and storing of it. That in itself was a dangerous activity as we loaded some very sensitive explosives. Ammunition ships, at this time, were considered expendable--all of the equipment, the men, and the ships themselves. We had had nearly 1000 men on the Gambier Bay, including the Squadron, but the largest crew we ever had while I was aboard the Bedford Victory was 65 men. The two ships were about the same size. The Okinawa campaign had actually started on April 1st, which in addition to being April Fools Day, was Easter Sunday.

We left Ulithi harbor on April 25th for the Ryukyus Islands. We rendezvoused with and became part of task group 50.8 on April 27th. This was somewhere near Okinawa. From the 29th of April to the 20th of May we sailed back and forth, around and around in the ocean, with no

visible protection except one destroyer escort. It had underwater sound equipment that could detect submarines and torpedoes. It also had five inch guns and could launch torpedoes. Still it was scary, being out there on that ammunition ship with so little protection. I presume the destroyer escort was also expendable. If we had taken a hit, it would probably have been blown up from our concussion.

During this time the ships that needed ammunition usually pulled along side of us during the night, while we were underway. Our warships of various types came alongside, and we passed ammunition to restock them for battle. The battle kept raging on Okinawa and 'round about. This was a different kind of operation than the navy had been in before. We had a large fleet of destroyers surrounding the island. Their primary purpose was to prevent any submarines, Japanese Navy ships, or aircraft from getting to our forces on the island. Here again the destroyers and destroyer escorts did a magnificent job just as they had done in the battle for Leyte Gulf.

Each night we had a rendezvous with the task unit, except we were never allowed to get close to it. At approximately 2000 hours the instructions came over the high frequency radio giving us the location for the rendezvous. One of the storekeepers took turns with me standing watch on the radio. We had just one set of ear phones to listen in for the information to give to the captain. This storekeeper for some reason unknown to me, did not get the information one night. It was almost a catastrophe. From that time on I had duty on the radio phones from 2000 hours until midnight every day regardless of what else I had to do. While we were cruising back and forth under these circumstances

the torpedo that was mentioned previously cleared our bow by four feet in the middle of the night. The name of the destroyer escort that patrolled with us was Ukutan.

The radio operator that we had aboard the Bedford Victory was a young man from Sugar City, Idaho, just a few miles from St. Anthony where I grew up and not far from Idaho Falls. He was quite interesting. Sometime previously, he had been land based and met a Filipino girl that he intended to marry as soon as the war was over. He did not even want to go home if he could avoid it.

About fifteen to twenty miles west of the southern part of the Island of Okinawa there is a group of rocky islands rising out of the ocean called Kerama Retto. On May 20th we headed for Kerama Retto and the natural anchorage between two of those islands. They rise high out of the sea and both appear to be about 5 miles long. They are about a mile apart, spaced so that hundreds of ships can be anchored between them. The whole American fleet of cargo ships appeared to be in that anchorage. They must have assumed by now that we would be safer there than we were out to sea. On May 21st we arrived, but they did not allow ammunition ships in the anchorage. We had to anchor a mile out. We were still partially protected by the mountains, but the wind practically nullified any benefits of smoke screens. We were on the windward side of an isolated anchorage affectionately referred to as Suicide Corner.

I don't know how much truth there was to it, but a rumor went around that we were the third ammunition ship to go into the Okinawa campaign and there had not been any survivors on the other two, both of

which had been blown up. It was not an encouraging thought.

Although the battleship Yamato, a Japanese cruiser and eight destroyers had participated in a battle against the American landing forces early in April, by the time the Bedford Victory anchored, it was apparent that the Japanese had no plans to use any naval or army force away from their home islands. They were still trying desperately to save the positions they held with the forces they had on Okinawa and the kamikaze program. We were still in time for some of the action. Their army force on the islands far exceeded the number estimated by the Americans, and there seemed to be a never-ending supply of kamikaze pilots and planes.

The night of May 24th approximately 150 kamikaze planes were reported coming in, attacking our defending destroyers, warships and the supply ships in the Kerama Retto anchorage. We were at General Quarters for 21 consecutive hours. Then we had two hours quiet during which the cooks made sandwiches in the chow hall and brought them to us at our stations. By the time they got them to us we were at General Quarters again.

We sat in the anchorage spot from May 21 to June 6. During that time ships came along side of us to take ammunition. Being in the open, and visible from the air most of the time, we were an attractive target for the kamikazes. One evening about dusk one of them flew over us quite high. He saw us and dropped a flare on our port side. It burned on the water and lit up the area around us. Soon another came over on the starboard side. Both went on about a mile to turn and come back for suicide dives on us. On the way they got low enough to be in the smoke

screen between the mountains, and both crashed into other ships before they got to us. One hit a ship's mast high in the air and the second hit the fantail of one of the ships in the harbor. It was reported that there were some casualties in the latter crash, but it was nothing compared to what it would have been if they had gotten back to us.

As stated previously, we did not have a radar. Our radio man received information from the base in the harbor on the west side of Okinawa, and I received reports on nearly all of the action on our TBS (talk between ships) radio. We received announcements of all of the bogeys (the Japanese planes coming in) and their distance and angle from the base. We had only the receiver part of the TBS. At least that is all I had access to. One day when a cruiser came alongside for ammunition I got permission to go aboard it and see if I could get a piece of plexiglass. They gave me a piece that measured about one and a half feet wide and two feet long. On it I scribed a circumference with its center at the base from whence the information came, it being stationary, and marked it off in 10 degree angles from the center. I then drew circles, using the same center on a scale of every ten miles. When a bogey was announced I made a dot on the plexiglass to show where it was (distance and angle) from the base. I also scribed a circle with our location as the center, scribing the distance circles and angle lines from our position. Thus the dot mentioned above showed instantly the bogey's location in relationship to us. As the bogey changed position, I plotted its course on the glass and called through the voice pipe giving the information to the captain, who was a deck or two higher on the bridge. That gave him information he was really happy to

receive. He knew the exact location and course of the enemy planes even though there was nothing we could do about it. Once I called the captain and told him, "Bogey, 270 degrees -- 2 miles." It takes just a little while to plot and pass on the information, so the plane was usually advanced a little distance by the time the word was passed. The captain shouted back down the pipe, "Like hell, it is, it is just clearing the mast!"

Over the TBS radio, I heard some rather discouraging conversations. Our army planes engaged in various operations of destruction of enemy installations and protection of our soldiers and marines. But something was lacking in the communications between the ground forces and the pilots. Many times I heard pilots pleading with the soldiers to hold their fire and let them land, but the gunners did not get the message. Occasionally one of our pilots was shot down while trying to land on our own airstrip. It was especially hazardous at dusk and after dark. It was not uncommon to hear a pilot plead, "Hold your Fire! Friendly chick coming home to roost." The response was an increased sound of antiaircraft fire. The pilot would pull up out of range, and try again. Most of them got down eventually, but some did not make it.

One night, I heard the pilot's plea as he tried several times to come in and land. Finally, running low on fuel, and convinced that his teammates were not going to let him through the flak, he said, "To Hell with you guys! I'm going around and come in over the Japs. They are not such good shots." He did, and made it down safely.

One morning as it was just coming daylight, the officer of the deck noticed a mine was drifting towards our ship with the tide. Someone,

an assigned expert, went out in a boat and got the line the mine was attached to and towed it away in plenty of time before it reached us. The ships in the anchorage were all protected by a string of mines across both ends. It was suspected that some of the Japanese soldiers who were still on these mountain islands had cut the mines loose, leaving them to drift. If there had been another half hour of darkness the mine could have drifted into our ship and exploded. There were a few American amphibious planes using the anchorage, and the Jap soldiers began shooting at them with rifles. I don't know whether the soldiers were killed or captured, but the mischief stopped after a couple of days.

Everybody aboard the Bedford Victory was willing to give God the credit for our being alive after the several close calls we had. There were several times the kamikazes would have dived into our ship if something unexpected had not happened.

I am grateful that I did not have to see any more of the gruesome details of the war then I saw. That was enough to know that the death, destruction and suffering were real. But I was spared witnessing the mass slaughter described in many of the historical accounts of the battles in many books and magazines.

Aboard the Gambier Bay a year before on the first day of June I was advanced to the office of Petty Officer 2nd class. Out of school in December 1943, I was Petty Officer 3rd class. Without making any application for it, I was advised that I had been made 2nd class. Of course the schooling had qualified everyone who graduated for everything but chief technician and all we had to do to qualify for that rank was

to learn to send and receive the Morse Code a lot better than I was able to.

Aboard the Bedford Victory I approached the executive officer, and he talked to the captain about giving me a 1st class rate. The captain was a little skeptical about that. I explained to him that I had already taken all the required subjects and it was on my record, but he did not think it was right that a person could get an advancement in rate without taking an examination. He did not know who to get to make up an examination for me. He talked to one of the two storekeepers and asked if he would check and learn whatever he could to see what the requirements would be. This was while we were in the Okinawa campaign. The storekeeper came and talked to me about it, and I told him a lot of the subjects I had taken. In case they wanted to make up an examination I gave him the information to make the exam on. He listed a lot of those things, got approval from the captain and made up an exam for me. I took the written exam and by the first of June 1945 I received my rating as a 1st class radio tech. This gave me a much better salary and a higher status. They could hardly fail me on an examination that I helped make up myself. It would have been an honest test for anyone. I was proud of the reports on my advancements of rates. Every time I received anything with a rating or a grade on it my deportment was 4.0.

As a matter of record I would like to list the names of some of the officers aboard the Bedford Victory. At the time I went aboard, Captain D. A. Durrant, was a Lieutenant Commander. About the same time I received my 1st class petty officer rating he received his full Commander rank, which was one rank higher for him. His executive

officer was Lieutenant L. C. Thompson. The officer over the communications department, which I belonged to, was a Lieutenant Cassity. Ensign Hamilton was the supply officer whom I had to request supplies from when I needed them. We did not have a doctor aboard this ship, of course, but had a chief pharmacist mate who was pretty good at driving a cargo winch. He left a lot to be desired when it came to medical problems. During the last three months I was aboard the Bedford Victory I developed some severe pains in my chest, and during that time I was refused permission several times to see a doctor or get examined by someone capable from one of the ships that came along side for ammunition. It should have been no trouble at all. There was no problem getting permission to go aboard another ship to get plexiglass. Chief Riddle would never give me permission however, until we got back to Leyte Gulf and had been there for some time.

Finally one day he said I could go aboard the other ship if I could talk to a doctor, which I was able to do. I was well satisfied with the diagnosis. It was Dr. Furguson aboard an oiler, #IX-188. The doctor said it was a chain of nerves across my chest that was causing the trouble. I could understand that. The General Quarters alarm bell that clanged each morning one half hour before sunrise sent shockwaves through my whole system with the first clang. It sounded like it was right in my sleeping quarters. It was an incredibly loud and frightening sound. I lived with that chest pain the rest of the time I was in the navy. When I arrived home after the war, I got some medical treatment for it. Such pains were warnings to me over the years, whenever I came under too much pressure and worried too much

about my work.

The island of Okinawa was not officially secured until June 21, 1945, but the intensity and the pressures had diminished considerably by the first week in June. At least, the entire supply fleet was not needed for the mopping up chores. June 6th, the Bedford Victory joined a convoy headed for Saipan. Soon after I came on watch that morning, I detected something different. I picked up conversations between ships on the TBS that were farther away than usual. Some were difficult to hear and understand. With what I was able to piece together, I decided that a group of ships had left Kerama Retto, and the Bedford Victory was supposed to be with them. By the time the captain was able to get through to the proper command on our Morse code transmitter and receiver and learn what our orders were, the convoy was nearly three hours ahead of us. It must have waited, as we could not have caught up to a slow snail at our top speed of fifteen knots.

We arrived at Saipan about June 12 and stayed until leaving for Ulithi, June 18th. From there we sailed to Leyte Gulf, arriving June 29th. We took on some escort carrier ammunition and conducted replenishing exercises in and near the gulf for the next few weeks. It appeared that we were just stalling for time until the next invasion, which some of us thought would be on the main islands of Japan.

13

Winding Down

Upon arriving at Leyte, we received the mail that had caught up to us. I received seventy letters in two days. I believe that among the strongest morale boosters to service personnel during war times are the letters received from home. Those from parents and spouses are invaluable, but those from children also increase one's hopes and determination. Fortunate is any person who receives correspondence from a child who struggles to express itself.

Our two older children, with encouragement from their mother, wrote regularly to me. Bonnie was only five when the war ended, so about all she could do was print her name. That was before Kindergarten was a part of the public school system. Occasionally, Dean or Earlene would

write some lines for her and let her print her name at the end. Their letters meant so much to me that I wanted to save all of them, but many where lost with the sinking of the Gambier Bay. Some of those I still have are included here. Earlene was in the 2nd grade in school and Dean in the 4th when they started writing to me.

In Earlene's letter of Feb. 5, 1945 she is chiding me for misreading the grades on one of her previous report cards. I read VS (very satisfactory) as US (Unsatisfactory) and teased her about getting an unsatisfactory grade in all of her subjects.

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277 west 5 St.
Idaho Falls Idaho
March 31, 1943

Dear, Daddy
On April 29, 1943 I am going to play my Violin for a Concert. I will play the minuite in G. Daddy this morning during chool Load brought an army-rifle bullet to chool. He was playing with it on the floor. It exploded. I thought it was a bomb so I fell to the floor. As soon as it exploded Loan ran down the stars she rang the immergency bill. Load got a bolling out from the principle. I gess I'll haughta stoop. So God bess us all. Love and kisses frome all.

Your, Son
Dean Bagley

March 31, 1943
Idaho Falls, Idaho

Dear daddy
miss. hervis has let me read a lot of storys because I can Read so good. Daddy, I am getting better in subtractiln. I will write a few problems. 5-5=0 5-1=4 6-2=4 9-2=7 6-0=6 and that is all of those I am going to write. Daddy the weather is getting fine so you do not have to worry about that. But one day it rained. But that is not to bad.
Daddy I can not think of any thing els to say But daddy I can not think about any thing while I am going to write a litter. So don't worry about that. That is all I can think of so signing of.
Love and XXXX.
your daughter
Earlene

Many 18, 1943

Dear, Daddy

I have pasted this year and now I am in the 5th gread. I don't want you to pay me for righting to you. But I will try to right to you as hard as I can.

I haven't bought my rabbets yet. I expete to by them mondy the 24th of May. I have the money of my on to by them whith.

I was up to Grandmother's in St Anthony on Sonday the 16, ofo may. We forgot to go to your mother's plase. But I hade enught fun with Gwen. I am gitting dry of thoughts. So good by and may God bless us all.

Your Son,
Dean Bagley

Feb. 5, 1945
Idaho Falls
Idaho

Dear Daddy,

I am writing this letter to send with a Valentine that mother bought for us kids to send you.

I got V.S. on my Weekly Reader today and remember daddy V.S. is not U.S. because a V. is written different than a U. see the difference between them. So you don't need to tease me anymore.

Are clase in school is going to have a Valentine box just an ordinary box but we are going call it a Valentine box. Because we are going to put Valentines in it and give Valentines to anybody that we want to. And when we have bought them we write who we are going to give it to, and then put it in the box.

God bless you at all times Goodnight I got to go bed now. So signing off.

Your daughter
Erlene Bagley

A steward from way down south came to me with a letter that he had received from his wife. He wanted to know if I would read it to him. I asked if he was unable to read, and he said he had never learned to read or write. He was about my age, one of the older men. We had become somewhat acquainted, and I knew him to be a humble man. I read the letter to him and then asked how he would like to learn to read and write. He said he could not do it. Tommy (one of the store keepers) had tried to teach him, and after trying for some time, told him that he just could not learn.

I think this friend's name was Ed. I told him that if he was willing to try again I thought I could teach him. "Oh," he said, "I want to learn. I want to learn." I asked if he could spare an hour a day, which I knew he could because his duty was limited. He agreed, and for an hour a day I taught him phonics as near as you could teach an uneducated southern black man at that time. He tried and struggled with it. I taught him how to spell some simple words along with the ABC's. Before I left the ship, Ed had written a letter home to his wife in his own hand writing without any help from me. I received a letter from her, just after I was discharged, telling me how grateful she was that I had taught her husband to read and write. She was a high school graduate, but even her letter was just like they talk down south. It was far from the level of a high school graduate's letter, but it was readable.

While we were in Leyte Gulf there was a daily broadcast of the news early every morning. They spoke slowly so a typist would be able to take it down as the broadcast came over the air. I had never taken typing in school and had never taught myself the touch type system, but I had done an awfully lot of typing when I was in the trucking business. I had also worked in offices much of my employed time, so I undertook to take these messages off the air each morning and post them on the bulletin board. I was able to keep up with them because they spoke only about twenty words a minute. This gave me more experience in typing, and the effort was appreciated by the crew.

In the March 15, 1945 issue of Bu Pers (Bureau of Personnel) Circular Letter, the navy announced a writing contest for all navy

personnel in all categories of writing. The submission deadline was July 31st, and I did not get the information on the contest until June 30th. I had had a three act play in mind since 1935 that I had intended to write. The title was "Inmate at Large". I decided I would never have more incentive or time to write it, so I completed it in thirty days and sent it off to the contest. It was not very well done, but I needed this contest to spur me into writing it, and I am glad that I did it. I also sent in several poems that I had written, some of which have been recorded here. I never received acknowledgement from the Navy. I assume they dropped the writing contest flat when the war ended. I worked only about 6 to 8 hours a day during most of this time, which included a four hour watch on the radio. We were in Leyte Gulf most of the time, but we did take on ammunition and go out to sea a little way to rendezvous a few times.

One day I was asked to see if I could fix the radio in the officer's wardroom. Reception was weak. After replacing one of the audio output tubes and satisfying myself that the volume was normal, I was on my way out of the room, when I realized I had left the defunct tube in the new tube's box and sitting on the radio. I went back for it. One of the officers, an Ensign, followed me in. He asked me what I was doing. I told him I had just fixed the radio, but, "I think I left a box of megacycles in here." I thought he would laugh at the joke, but very seriously he said, "What does it look like?" I quickly snatched the tube box off of the radio and, on my way out, said, "Here it is."

We got a new piece of electronic equipment around the 5th of

August. It was a two-way very high frequency (VHF) radio system. We could talk ship to ship with this, which we had not been able to do before. All of our previous communication was over the large transmitter and receiver, and what we could hear over the TBS earphones.

It was my responsibility to install the new equipment and get it working, which was a good experience. A night or two after I had finished, we had a violent electrical storm with rain pouring down, and fierce lightning. Someone came and awoke me about four o'clock in the morning and said there was something wrong with the VHF radio I had installed. He said it was spitting fire, and the captain wanted me to come and look at it. I thought the storm must have something to do with it. I went up to the bridge and noticed that every once in a while there was a spark between the antenna and the chassis of the equipment. As I was installing it I had read in the instructions that this antenna could be touched at any time without any danger of shock.

I guess I was not very sharp at that time in the morning. I reached out to take a hold of the antenna, thinking that possibly it was loose. Before my hand touched it, however, I got a violent kick. I don't know how many thousands of volts I took. I had grounded the built up static electricity on the antenna. It hit my hand so hard that it almost threw my arm out of the socket. It swung me around with a blow like I have never had before or since. That told all I needed to know; it was just the static electricity from the storm building up on the antenna until the voltage got high enough to jump about an inch across to the chassis, which was grounded. There was nothing I could do about that. It was totally a product of the violent electrical storm we were

having.

By this time, August 1945, they were permitting lights above deck at night in the Philippines. In Leyte Gulf, things were secure enough, and there was very little danger of attack from the Japanese. So, when we were in the Gulf, they let us have movies on deck in the evenings. The ship had a movie projector, but something went wrong with it, and they could not get it to work. One of the store keepers had been running movies for them before, but when the projector failed, they gave me the responsibility to fix it, which I did. Then they wanted me to be the operator. Actually that was not too bad because they paid me one dollar a night for operating it. Movie films were available at a land-based supply station.

On the night of August 15th, we were assembled on the deck and about 15 or 20 minutes into the movie when an announcement came over the ship's intercom that the Japanese had surrendered and that the war was over. I did not need to run the movie any longer that night. All the whoops and hollers went up and everybody left. I did not know at that time where they were going, but I found out later. I secured the movie equipment, went to my shack (room), and got into bed. Believe me, I poured out a prayer of thanks that night like I had never done before.

I learned a few hours later where the men had gone. They came cheering and hollering after having been to the sick bay where there was a supply cabinet. The men had gotten all the denatured alcohol on the ship and drank it. It is odd that some of them did not die or go blind. I guess they knew the hazards but several of them were pretty drunk and

noisy.

14

Going Home Again - To Stay

The next thing we did after the war ended was tally our points. The armed services had come out with a point system. Points were given for time in the service, time in battle areas, number of dependents, age, and various other things. If you had a certain number of points, you were eligible for discharge. I already had far more then the necessary number. The various commands were supposed to tabulate the points for their personnel and turn in the names of those who were eligible for discharge. Well, it was a few days before that came about. In fact, it was the eighth of September (still in 1945) when they found a place to send me for the first step toward home and discharge. I was to go to a location called Tacloban on the Island of Leyte and wait for

passage home.

I packed my gear and was on the deck ready to go. A boat was assigned to take me ashore, but while I was waiting, I had to have everything inspected that I had put into my seabag. At the end of the war, a lot of men got away with taking souvenirs home, but there was no way I could have left that ship that I knew of with something that did not belong to me. I did not have anything I should not have had, anyway. While I was waiting for them to finish the inspection so I could get my seabag and be on my way, Ed came out on deck and we shook hands. Tears began to run down his face. He said, "Bagley, you go home and get you a business started, and send for me. I'll work for you. I'll do anything for you. You just send for me."

I said, "Ed, you'd freeze to death up there in Idaho!"

And he said, "No! I mean it. You send for me. I'll do anything for you."

Another one of my friends aboard the Bedford Victory was a man named Mack McCabe. He had been ashore on the Island of Saipan after it had been secured, more than a year before, and visited the cemetery there. He was inspired to write this poem, and gave me a copy. He sent this poem home and someone had it read into the Congressional Record.

Carry On

by Mack P. McCabe

On the grassy slope of a tropical isle,
Many miles across the sea,
Is a sacred spot where heros sleep
The sleep of eternity.
Beneath them lies the now quiet beach,

Where death fell in sheets like rain.
While above them rises the lofty heights,
Which they tried to reach in vain.
For them the struggle is over,
But the cause for which they died
Is enshrined to the world forever
By the small crosses side by side.
But for those who remain it's not finished.
They must push forward until
The stars and stripes wave proudly
From the crest of the highest hill.
And in the evening when day is closing,
Or in the first faint flashes of dawn,
Each cross seems to silently spread it's arms
And pray, "Please God, help them carry on."

The only island I ever got ashore on that we helped take was Leyte. Actually, I did get ashore on Samar but we did not really help take that one. It was occupied after the Gambier Bay was sunk. I did not fully realize the effect that being on an ammunition ship had on me until I was a mile away from it. I think I have never felt more relief from any one thing than I did when going ashore on Leyte, after leaving the Bedford Victory. The ship was literally a powder keg ready to explode.

The Battle of Leyte Gulf is identified as the largest naval engagement in world history, considering the number of ships involved and the ocean area covered. But the battle for Okinawa in World War II was the most costly in history for both sides in men, ships and equipment, according to historians. At its beginning, American officials estimated that the Japanese had 77,000 defenders on the island. By the time it was secured, after 87 days of fighting, a total of 131,300 Japanese fighting men had been killed or buried in caves, and nearly 20,000 surrendered, making a total of 151,000.

The Americans lost 4,582 soldiers, 2,938 Marines, and 5,000 navy

personnel killed f[illegible] 520 dead and 36,600 wounded. We had 30 ships sunk and 3[illegible] had at least 300 fighting ships and 1,200 troop and supply ships involved, manned by 500,000 men. I have not seen an educated guess on the number of kamikaze pilots and bakas destroyed, but there were hundreds. Bakas were jet propelled rockets with stub wings, carrying 3,000 to 4,000 pounds of explosives. They were piloted by Japanese kamikaze pilots, after being released from a "mother" bomber plane. 'Baka' is a Japanese word for 'idiot'. This fight to the finish was certainly no peashooting contest. Things do not look too good at the present time, but I hope if the world ever has to go through another one like that it will let me off first.

Upon arrival at Tacloban, I was assigned to a regular outdoor camping tent, sort of like a teepee. The tent was in a muddy spot, and this surely must have been the middle of the rainy season. It rained two or three times every day. The water ran through that dirt floor tent like a creek bed. I had to get rocks to put my seabag on to have it out of the mud. I dug ditches with sticks, trying to divert the water around the sides of the tent. Two of us had cots in that tent. We were there four days before being transferred to Talosa, a community area on Samar Island. The quarters here were very much improved. We had a boarded up tent that was on stilts about three feet above the ground. It had a wood floor, and the sides were boarded up about three feet. From there up to the eaves, the only walls were screen. There were twenty-one men in this tent.

It was customary on this base that the man with the highest rate be in charge of the men in that tent. We were assigned a certain area

on the base that we were to keep clean. We did it daily and an officer hardly ever showed up. With my 1st class rate I was the highest rated man of these twenty-one, so the responsibility was mine to see that we got out every day and filled our assignment. It was not easy to get the men to take this seriously, as they were just waiting for a ship to take them home. The war was over for all of us and we did not feel we had much responsibility there, but we were still in the navy. When we enlisted, we enlisted for the duration of the war plus up to six months. I suppose draftees had the same status.

Some of the navy men got acquainted with some of the Filipinos that came around and talked with us. Many of the natives understood and spoke some English. We were on the edge of the village, and we had a movie nearly every night. Of course it rained once in a while. Some of the natives came and sat on logs in our outdoor theater and watched the movies. Some of the sailors began fraternizing (I guess you would call it) with the natives and got a gambling thing going. They met some place in the evening that was never told to me or at least I never paid much attention to them. It was usually after the movie. The navy men came back to our sleeping quarters with all sorts of things they had won shooting dice. A man we called Frenchy was a congenial guy with a great sense of humor. One night he came home with a gold pocket watch that had "General Clark" inscribed on it. Clark was apparently a well known army general and someone had gotten the watch through hook or crook and Frenchy won it shooting dice.

I came down with an illness that really got to me. I had fever and chills similar to what was called cat fever, which I had in boot camp.

It put me in bed for a couple of days making it impossible for me to go on the work detail with the men. They did fine without me. It was just like when I was on the hospital ship, I was barely able to get out of bed in time to catch the ship to take us home. I was afraid I might have been bitten by a carrier mosquito and had malaria. The four nights we were in the teepee tent, we had mosquito nets to put around us, but there was no frame work to go with them and I knew that I had been bitten a few times there.

Since this tent in Talosa had screen all around, I was surprised one night, while laying in bed before the lights went out, when one of those green lizards, like I had seen in the New Hebrides Islands, fell from the ceiling right onto my bunk. It raced over the side and onto the floor and ran under the cots where we could not see it. It surprised me that he was exactly like the ones we had seen in Espiritu Santo. My bunk was directly underneath a light, and the lizard had been up there catching bugs and flies, having his dinner. After that, I rigged up something to put over my bunk to catch anything that fell instead of having it in bed with me.

September 27, we were taken to the USS Barrow, APA, 61, an Auxiliary Personnel Attack ship, sitting in Leyte Gulf and headed for San Francisco. We got about half way to Guam and sighted an oil tanker sitting dead in the water and drifting with the tide. It had lost its screw. The driving mechanism had broken and the propellers had dropped off. We hooked on to that ship, and acting like a tug, pulled it towards Guam for two days. Then we met a tug coming out to get it. In those two days the speed the ship could travel was like the Gambier Bay

and the other Kaiser ships. We were going against the tide, towing that tanker. I think we made about 20 miles in those two days. I am sure the tug that came to the rescue got along a lot better than we did.

When we were approaching the west coast of the United States and heading for San Francisco, we got our assignment changed. There were too many arriving there for discharge to be processed, so we were routed to Portland, Oregon. We arrived in Portland October 17th. It had taken us about 20 days to come across the Pacific which is better time than a lot of other passenger transports made. Thirty days was more nearly average.

It was fitting that I should make my final entry from the war into the U.S. via the Columbia River, as that was the route of my first exit. I had wondered if the water would be as rough as when we rode those 100 feet high waves on the Gambier Bay. I was anxious to see the whole show, so was out on deck before daylight the morning of October 17th. What a meaningful contrast met my eyes! As we had made our exit twenty-one months before, the elements seemed to symbolize a state of hate, violence, misery, destruction - WAR! It was as though they wanted to destroy us before we could even get to the enemy. Upon re-entry, they were completely reversed. There were no waves, but only placid water; no reminders of tide, rain, wind, or the continental shelf. As we slowly made our way up the Columbia River into the sunrise, it seemed as though all nature was in harmony to welcome us back. I think at that time I experienced a sample of what the Peace of Heaven is like.

After I got off the Bedford Victory, I decided to let my beard grow until I got home. I had grown a beard a couple times for a month or so,

but each time we got into a danger area I thought it would be better not to have a beard in case of fires. Now it looked safe. I had an uncle in Portland (my father's brother) who was a barber. The first thing I did when I had an opportunity was visit him in his barber shop. As I walked around the streets of Portland a little while, I became aware that a beard was an unusual thing. People were staring at me. My beard may have been a little shaggy, but it was not very long. When I got to my Uncle Frank's barber shop I asked him to shave it off. He said he would not shave it off until I had a picture of it. I went to a do-it-yourself photo stand on the street a few blocks away and took my picture. He then shaved me. After three days in Portland I was put on the train for (of all places) Bremerton, Washington.

I was mustered out of the navy at the Puget Sound Navy Yard, Bremerton, Washington on October 25, 1945, one year to the day after the Gambier Bay was sunk, and only two weeks short of three years after I started my navy career there. At Bremerton there were men from different companies checking on the sailors that were being discharged, trying to pick up competent help. One of the fields was electronics. I could have stayed in Seattle and gone to work the next day, but I did not want to stay in that area because I felt the influence of so many sailors in the community had not been good. I did not want to stay in San Francisco for the same reason. I knew that opportunities in the electronics field in Idaho Falls were practically nil. At this time, Idaho Falls had only two radio stations, and it did not take much personnel to keep them running. I caught the train towards Idaho Falls late that night. It arrived early the next morning in Spokane. I

stayed a few days there with my sister, Erva, and her family.

I arrived home in Idaho Falls in the afternoon of October 30, 1945 the day before Halloween. The next evening some of the neighborhood children were at our home playing with Earlene, who was ten years old. They were playing with their jack-o-lanterns and masks. Earlene was wearing a mask with a long beard attached to it. I had just stepped outside to watch the children when she looked into her lantern, and the beard caught fire. I saw it happen and was just a few feet from her. I was able to grab the mask and put the fire out before it burned her. That night I felt that I had more than one reason for being thankful that I was home.

In April of 1946 I received in the mail a purple heart for wounds received in the Battle of Leyte Gulf and on May 1 just a few days later I received the Presidential Unit Citation which was awarded to all members of our task unit, Taffy III, who participated in the Battle of Leyte Gulf.

Several years after the war ended one of our ship's crew who lived in New York State decided to get as many Gambier Bay survivors as he could interested in a survivor's organization. From that start in the late 1960's, with the help of many other officers and enlisted men, a great organization has been formed. It is the survivors of the shipmates and the VC-10 squadron of the Gambier Bay. We had several hundred members in it. We still do, but many of the original survivors have passed away. We have a survivor's reunion every two years. Of course this includes everyone who is a member of a shipmate's family. They are all invited.

One summer Alice and I took a bus to Rochester, New York to visit our daughter and family. I then went on to Annapolis, Maryland, to attend the ship's reunion. It was late Friday afternoon when I arrived at the Hilton Hotel where the reunion was being held, but I thought I still had time to catch a tour bus and see some of the points of interest. Someone recognized me, and remembered that I was an active Mormon. Before I could get away, the person responsible for the Memorial Service the next morning came and asked if I would conduct that service in memory of our shipmates who had passed on, both during the battle and since. The pastor who had agreed to do so had called and told the reunion officers that he would be unable to attend. So, rather than seeing the sights, I spent the evening preparing for the service. I would like to record here the short talk that I gave and the prayer that I offered at the service the next morning:

July 6, 1974

> Shipmates, families and friends of shipmates, how fitting that we should pause a few moments and try in our weak way to pay tribute to those of our number who have departed. There is little we can do to alleviate the pain and suffering they have endured or the sadness experienced by their loved ones, but our desires are to do all that we can. It would be proper for us today, to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln's famous address of one hundred eleven years ago not far from here, when he said '... a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. It is for us the living, rather to be dedicated to the unfinished task. We resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain.' When Lincoln gave his address, the nation was less than ninety years old. Believe it or not, one third of that much time has elapsed since we were on another historic battlefield. To our children and grandchildren it may seem like ancient history. To us who were there it seems but a moment ago. Those memories are an instantaneous part of our being at all times. Two years from today, this nation will be three days into its third century. That is probably longer than any nation so conceived and so

dedicated has ever before endured. It seems ironic that during these two hundred years, we have had to defend our liberty and freedom on an average of about every twenty years. It has been much longer than that since we suffered a physical attack, but I believe we are all aware of a more insidious attack from the inside, that has been going on for more than a decade. No one can deny that forces of dissention and discontent are at work from within. They are more difficult to detect. They are camouflaged with saintly sounding names and phrases. Their ammunition dumps are invisible. In some cases, highly respected men are either knowingly or unknowingly furthering their causes. If we are to honor our departed friends and finish the task which those who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced, we must launch counter offensives. May I quickly make one or two suggestions. We are part of Taffy three. Taffy one: Let's TEACH peace in our homes, our businesses, our social affairs, and within ourselves. Return kindness, the opposition has no defence against kindness. Taffy two: TELL our political leaders we expect honesty. Tell them what we think is right. Politicians do not ignore the opinions of their constituents. Taffy three: TALK it over with God. Tell Him we sincerely desire that our shipmates shall not have died in vain. He will help, just give Him a chance and see. Shall we bow our heads and start now.

Our Father in Heaven, We are thankful for this opportunity as survivors and families and friends of the Gambier Bay and VC-10 shipmates to bow before Thee in prayer in remembrance of our shipmates who were not permitted to live to be with us today. We thank Thee for the bond of fellowship we feel for them, even in their absence and we realize this is the way it should be according to Thy word. We are so grateful to them, both those who died in battle and those who have passed on since, for their efforts and their sacrifice. We thank Thee that we had the opportunity to work and associate with them as a team and to feel each other's strength.

Wilt Thou bless the families and loved ones of all of them, that they may have assurance of, not only our love and appreciation, but Thine also, that they may receive comfort in the knowledge that the sacrifices of their loved ones was for the accomplishment of Thy purposes at this time in history. Wilt Thou bless these families with all the material things they need to sustain life and good health, and let Thy peace abide with them always. We also ask thy Spirit to be with and help any of our number who are ill or in any state of sadness at this time.

Now in remembrance of our fellows, wilt Thou help us to be strong in our resolution to keep the freedoms they gave their all to protect. Let us not build our patriotism by harboring hate for those who were our enemies long ago, but help us to recognize present dangers and be instrumental in

> finding solutions to problems. We believe that it is Thy divine intention that this Nation be preserved in freedom. We acknowledge thy hand in its establishment and preservation to this date.
>
> Wilt Thou raise up among us Admirals, Generals, Captains, and enlisted forces who will be wise in the subtle warfare of principal against principal and logic against logic--forces capable of understanding that freedom and liberty exchanged for an imitation security is not a fair exchange.
>
> We pray Thee to give inspiration to leaders and citizens of this Nation, both present and future, that they will see clearly and have courage to choose proper methods for restoring and preserving those conditions that will be of lasting benefit to our country so that the efforts of all who have defended it during the last two centuries shall not have been in vain.
>
> Help us all here today and all other members of our association, wherever they may be, to firmly commit ourselves to build an honorable monument to our departed shipmates by our actions in behalf of the principles for which we fought, we humbly ask, in the name of Thy Worthy Son, Jesus Christ, Amen.

That evening at our business meeting they voted me to be the association chaplain until our actual chaplain came back from Europe where he was located on an indefinite assignment for his church. By the next reunion, he was back.

Glossary of Terms and Expressions Used

AK	Auxiliary Cargo ship
AP	Auxiliary Transport ship
APA	Auxiliary personal attack ship
APH	Auxiliary Personnel Hospital ship
bogey	Enemy plane or unidentified aircraft
Article of Faith #10	One of the 13 basic Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
bow	forward part of a ship
bridge	A platform or superstructure built above the deck of a ship for observation and operational purposes
bulkhead	Partition or wall of a compartment aboard ship
catwalk	Narrow walkway along the hull of a ship
CIC	Combat Information Center - location where data pertinent to combat are received and analyzed
Doctrine and Covenants	Book of modern scripture used by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
dirwa	African hair-do resembling a bundle of bound grain
fantail	Overhanging deck at the stern of a ship
flight deck	Aircraft carrier's top deck, from which aircraft are launched and on which they land
General Quarters	Battle stations
hanger deck	A deck below the flight deck used for storage of planes not in immediate use and for maintenance and repairs
hatch	Opening in deck providing access to space below
hull	outside wall of a ship
IFF	Identification, Friend or Foe, explanation in text
Jackson fork	Large fork used with a derrick to lift hay from a wagon to a haystack
Kamikaze	A suicide attack. Also a plane or a pilot engaged in

a	suicide attack. Japanese name for "Divine Wind"
keel to	The structural piece of a ship that runs from bow stern along the bottom
knot	One nautical mile per hour (6,000 feet)
LCI	Landing Craft Infantry, gunboats
L.D.S.	Pertaining to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
L.D.S. Stake	A geographically located number of wards
L.D.S. Ward Christ parish	An organization of members of the Church of Jesus of Latter-day Saints in a given area; similar to a
list	A ship's leaning because of uneven balance
megacycle	One million electromagnetic wave cycles per second
Mutual organization of	Mutual Improvement Association (MIA), formerly an youth in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
screws propel the ship	sets of blades at the end of revolving shafts that
scuttlebutt gossip	Drinking fountain aboard the ship; also rumor and
starboard	To the right, eg. starboard side or starboard list
stern	The rear part of the ship
Very Gun	A gun to shoot flares
wardroom	Dining and recreation area for commissioned officers aboard ship

WHAT KEPT ME GOING - - -

LETTERS FROM HOME

The IFF gear consisted of a radio frequency combined transmitter and receiver. When in operation, the transmitter sent a coded message that activated a transmitter on an approaching plane or ship, Which in turn transmitted a coded signal. The codes were changed daily or at pre-arranged times. If the equipment was not turned on, or the code had not been set correctly for the day, no return message was sent by the approaching object, and it was assumed to be of enemy status.

One afternoon our radar tracked an on-coming plane several miles without receiving an IFF response. When it came close enough it was identified as one of our fighter planes, but because of lack of a signal, one of our ships shot it down. At least the echo disappeared from the radar screen. According to the scuttlebutt, a Japanese pilot escaped from the cockpit and was picked up by one of our destroyers. How he came to have the plane or why he came flying over us I never heard. The story concluded with the pilot being confined in a storage compartment out of sight of the ship's crew until he could be turned over to proper authority.

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CHILDREN'S LETTERS

I believe that among the strongest morale bosters to service personnel during war times are the letters received from home. Those from parents and spouses are invaluable, but those from children also increase one's hopes and determination. Fortunate is any person who receives correspondence from a child who struggles to express itself.

Our two older children, with encouragement from their mother, wrote regularly to me. Bonnie was only five when the war ended, so about all she could do was print her name. That was before Kindergarten was a part of the public school system. Occasionally, Dean or Earlene would write some lines for her and let her print her name at the end. Their letters menat so much to me that I wanted to save all of them, but many where lost with the sinking of the Gambier Bay. Some of those I still have are included here. Earlene was in the 2nd grade and Dean in the 4th when they started writing to me.

In Earlene's letter of Feb. 5, 1945 she is chiding me for misreading the grades on one of her previous report cards. I read VS (very satisfactory) as US (Unsatisfactory) and teased here about getting an unsatisfactory grade in all of her subjects.

March 31, 1943
Idaho Falls, Idaho

Dear daddy

miss. hervis has let me read a lot of storys because I can Read so good. Daddy, I am getting better in subtractiln. I will write a few problems. 5-5=0 5-1=4 6-2=4 9-2=7 6-0=6 and that is all of those I am going to write. Daddy the weather is getting fine so you do not have to worry about that. But one day it rained. But that is not to bad.

Daddy I can not think of any thing els to say But daddy I can not think about any thing while I am going to write a litter. So don't worry about that. That is all I can think of so signing of.

Love and XXXX.
your daughter
Earlene

---

277 west 5 St.
Idaho Falls Idaho
March 31, 1943

Dear, Daddy

On April 29, 1943 I am going to play my Violin for a Concert. I will play the minuite in G. Daddy this morning during chool Load brought an army-rifle bullet to chool. He was playing with it on the floor. It exploded. I thought it was a bomb so I fell to the floor. As soon as it exploded Loan ran down the stars she rang the immergency bill. Load got a bolling out from the principle. I gess I'll haughta stoop. So God bess us all. Love and kisses frome all.

Your, Son
Dean Bagley

May 18, 1943

Dear daddy.

Mother planted mew grass wright in back of the house. Daddy i pasted my grade too. grandmother has bean down here. Daddy grandmother is up to ervas.
daddy i will write but do not pay me. i wish you could come home. daddy i have some levise. [Levis] and i almost live in then.

love and X X
your daughter.
Earene Mae
Bagley

Many 18, 1943

Dear, Daddy

I have pasted this year and now I am in the 5th gread. I don't want you to pay me for righting to you. But I will try to right to you as hard as I can.

I haven't bought my rabbets yet. I expete to by them mondy the 24th of May. I have the money of my on to by them whith.

I was up to Grandmother's in St Anthony on Sonday the 16, ofo may. We forgot to go to your mother's plase. But I hade enught fun with Gwen. I am gitting dry of thoughts. So good by and may God bless us all.

Your Son,
Dean Bagley

May 25, 1943

Dear, Daddy

We are having a club. Colleen, Earlene, and I are the officers of it. I am the secretary. Colleen is the president. Earlene in the fice president.

We are having a flag it is a red white and blew flag with eight stars on it and every time an other child coms we add a knew star.

May God bless us all.

Your Son
Dean

Feb. 5, 1945
Idaho Falls
Idaho

Dear Daddy,

I am writing this letter to send with a Valentine that mother bought for us kids to send you.

I got V.S. on my Weekly Reader today and remember daddy V.S. is not U.S. because a V. is written different than a U. see the difference between them. So you don't need to tease me anymore.

Are clase in school is going to have a Valentine box just an ordinary box but we are going call it a Valentine box. Because we are going to put Valentines in it and give Valentines to anybody that we want to. And when we have bought them we write who we are going to give it to, and then put it in the box.

God bless you at all times Goodnight I got to go bed now. So signing off.

Your daughter
Erlene Bagley

Feb. 10, 1945

Dear Dad,

At school we are getting ready for Valentines Day. Were putting all kinds of decoration on the bulitenbord.

Daddy I made up a few Valentin poems and I would like to ask you if it is a good start. I don't think they are very good but I want to write them to you any way and here they are.

Valentine

I

Give me your heart
If you please,
And I'll lock it up
With my little keys.

II

I'll give you my heart
On one condistion,
If you'll be my valentine
And pleas don't go fishen.

III

I'd love you so
Whene it was dark or light,
If y'll be my valentine
By day and by night.

I want to send these with our Valentine

Father last Wednsday I bought two gold fish one was brown and one was white last night the white one died but the other one is still alive. Oh and when I bought them I could not get any fish food but Lois had some that she gave to us.

Well I cant think of nothing else to wright so sining off and may god bles you tell we meet again.

Your Son,
Dean

P.S. Tell me how you feel and tell me how things are going.

Two P.S. We are having march weather here how is the weathe down there.

Dean

June 26 1945

Dear Daddy,

Today I got a new pair of shoes and mother let me buy a pair of dancing taps and put them on my new shoes. They come up over the toes of my shoes.

Two days ago Grandma Bagley came over hear she was on her way to Erva's. She says on the way back she might stop in again.

Marylin and Stan came to Idaho Falls and seen us. They stayed one whole day and no nights. It was yesterday they came. We sure had a lot of fun. We played Truth or Consequences.

I wish you was home so I could play with you. We would have a lot of fun if you could stay home for ever.

We have got a DOG. Boy was we excited when we found out we could have it. A man that owns the horses at the park gave it to us. And it a boy dog too.

Well I cannot thing of anything else to say s signing off. God bless you at all times.

Your Daughter
Erlene Bagley

[Bonnie 5 yrs old]
[June 1945]

Dear Daddy,

We got a new pair of shoes and mine had holes in the toes and I was happy. Earlenes shoes were black ofverds and she got taps on her shoes. Now she can dance. Are dog got lost yeslerday and we had phone the dog catcher to see if he would find him. But he came home to day alone.

Your Daughter
B O N N I E