

Chick Splitgerber

Great Lakes - Boot Camp

My naval career began when I enlisted in the US Navy on March 28, 1945. All men needed to register with the Selective Service Board on their eighteenth birthday. My 18th birthday was on April 4, 1945. The Selective Service Board drafted men each month to go into the Army. Their policy was if you were in the last semester of high school you were allowed to complete the semester of school and then would be drafted into the Army leaving the month of your graduation. (June 1945) Once you signed up for the draft you could not enlist in the military branch of your choice.

At dinner (noon) on March 28, 1945 my Dad said to me "this afternoon you and I are going to Sheboygan and you are going to join the Navy." I said "I'd like to be here for graduation so I'll take my chances with the Army." He replied "I was in the Army in the last war. (WW 1) You can get killed in the Army; you'll be safer in the Navy." I agreed - we went to the Navy Recruiting Office in Sheboygan that afternoon and I joined the Navy. Dad went with me because a parent needed to sign the enlistment paper if the enlistee is under 18 years old. The recruiter told me that the daily quota of recruits from the state of Wisconsin was fifty. With the present number of enlistees I would be called into active service within the next 4 - 6 weeks.

On May 2, 1945 I received my orders to report for active duty May 16, 1945 at the Navy Recruiting Office in the Plankington Building in downtown Milwaukee, WI.

During the time I had remaining before reporting there were a couple of parties held for me. Following is an article from the Plymouth Review, May 17, 1945

CHARLES SPLITGERBER LEAVES FOR NAVY

Charles Splitgerber, son of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Splitgerber of this city, left yesterday for Milwaukee to report for active duty in the U.S. Navy and has been sent to Great Lakes, IL. for his boot training.

Last Sunday evening the Splitgerbers entertained eight young people for supper in his honor. Guests included: Alice Thomas, Lorraine Hembel, Pat Mooney, Warren Bohnhoff, Harold Meyer, Eugene Helmer of the Merchant Marine, and the Splitgerber twins, Mary Ellen and Charles.

Charles was again guest of honor at a farewell party given by Warren Bohnhoff Monday evening at the home of his brother-in-law and sister Mr. and Mrs. Hugo Bilgo, E. Mill St. Cards were played and lunch was served. The host presented Charles with a purse of money. The twelve guests present included: Mary Ellen Splitgerber, Pat Mooney, Alice Thomas, Virginia Roltgen, Phyllis Rhode, Lorraine Hembel, Charles Splitgerber, Harold Meyer, Eugene Helmer, Henry Schuette, Robert Reinecke and Warren Bohnhoff

On May 16, 1945 my parents, Mary Ellen, and Tom took me to the train station to leave for Milwaukee at 8:30 AM. On the way to the station I noticed school buses tudents to the high school. I had mixed feeling about that experience. None of us were happy about my departure for the Navy but that was out of our control. Standing on the train platform waiting for the train to arrive was very uncomfortable. There was a lot of small talk and it seemed that none of us really knew what was appropriate to say. When the train arrived we said our tearful goodbyes and I got onto the train as fast as I could. On the trip to Milwaukee my thoughts were going a mile a minute. Leaving home for the first time was not a happy thought. I reviewed what I was leaving, a happy home, an enjoyable school life, many friends and facing an uncertain life in the Navy. The war was still going on in the Pacific and my mind was going wild with what my ultimate fate could be. It was suggested that all I needed to take with me was a toothbrush, toothpaste, shaving equipment and a comb. I was traveling light. I arrived in Milwaukee at 10:00 AM, and was relieved to run into others going into the Navy, rather than dwelling on our fate, we spent the time until 2:00 PM exploring downtown Milwaukee.

I reported for duty at the Naval recruiting office in the Plankinton Building in Milwaukee at 2:00 pm. There were 50 recruits reporting. We were processed in the recruiting office, sworn in, and taken to the Northwestern Depot. boarded the train en route, to Great Lakes for Boot Camp. Great Lakes is located in North Chicago, Il. It was one of three Boot training facilities in the country, the others being Sampson, NY and San Diego, CA.

We arrived at Great Lakes at 6:00. We were met at the depot to be taken to the camp to be issued clothing. We were given a mailing box to put our civilian clothing in, which was sent to our home. We received standard navy issue and now we felt officially in the Navy.

After we were dressed we were met by the person who would be our training instructor for our boot training. He was identified by the name Coxswain Logvin. (identified in the dictionary as one who has charge of a boat and its crew) He took us to our barracks and gave us a brief explanation of who we were and what we can expect. We were identified as Company # 619. Our boot training began on May 16th 1945 and completed on July 8, 1945.

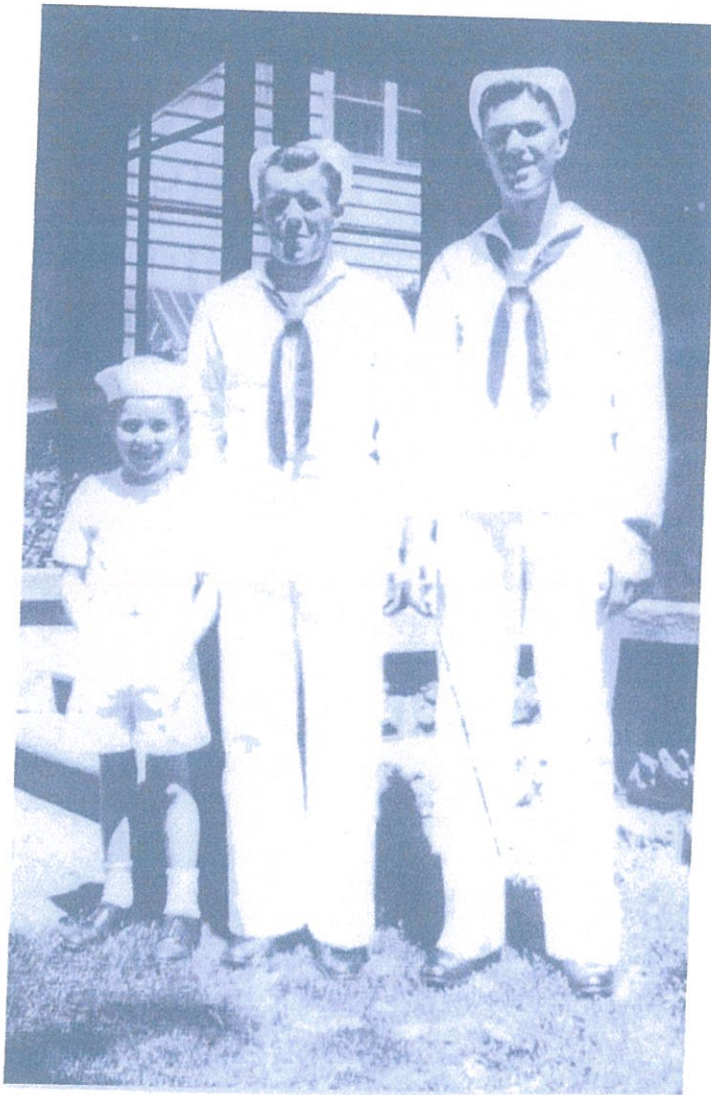
Boot camp was a good experience for me. I enjoyed the activities, the friendship, the food and marching. We marched everywhere we went. We received the usual training - physical exercises, target range, anti-aircraft, rope tying, gas mask drills, aircraft identification, swimming, etc. All of the things we did were preparing us for navy life. In addition, we learned a vocabulary of naval terms necessary for all of us to know. We were kept busy all of the time, which helped all of us from becoming homesick. The worst day of this experience was the night my high school class was graduating, June 7, 1945. My thoughts that evening were fully concentrated on the activities at Plymouth High School. Boot camp lasted eight (8) weeks upon which we graduated, received a fourteen-day leave and were to report back to Great Lakes on July 22, 1945.

I was anxious to get home to see everyone. The 14 days were a very happy experience for me. I went to many parties, saw all of my friends and was very happy to spend time with my Mother, Dad, Mary Ellen and Tom. It was even harder to go back to Great Lakes this time than it was to leave when I had entered the Navy just 10 weeks before. At least when I went to boot camp I knew I would be coming home in a short time for a leave. This time I had no idea where I would be sent and for how long I would be away from home. I felt very comfortable at home. I left on July 22, 1945 to return to Great Lakes for assignment. There for many rumors circulating as to where we would be sent. Most of us felt we would be sent out individually to service schools, ships, bases, etc. The rumor that was correct was that our entire boot company along with another boot company would be sent to Port Hueneme, CA. for training. We were informed in a group meeting late in the day on July 22, 1945 to be ready to leave the next morning on a troop train heading for California. We were also told the training we would be receiving. It was a good feeling knowing we would be in the Unites States for a few more months. All of us were hoping the war with Japan would be over before our services were needed overseas



Here is a picture of me in Boot Camp. Take a look at the boots I am wearing. They really are leggings but the navy called them boots. We were required to wear them whenever we left our barracks. We wrapped them around the lower part of our pants. In boot camp we all had the rank of A/S. (apprentice seaman) an enlisted man receiving specialized training. When we graduated we were all promoted to Seaman 2/C.

Home on leave



I'm home on leave from boot camp. My brother, Tom was already in training to enter the Navy. He is the one on the left. He later served 30 years in the Navy. My friend, Eugene Helmer is in the picture with us. He first joined the Merchant Marine and later decided the Navy was a better fit for him. This is the only picture I can recall that was taken of me in my white uniform. We wore the white uniform during the warm weather.

On July 23, 1945 we received orders to go to Port Hueneme, Ca. All of the members of our Boot Co. plus another Co. from Great Lakes received the same orders. All of the personnel transported to Port Hueneme on this date remained together for the remainder of our time in the Navy. We were excited to go to California. Our biggest problem was the pronunciation of Hueneme. All of us were from the Midwest and had seldom or never heard or seen Spanish words. We learned soon enough the presence of Spanish in California. HUENEME is pronounced Y-N-E-ME. If someone followed us for the next two weeks they would have been entertained with our attempts to pronounce the names of some of the cities in California.

We boarded a train leaving from Great Lakes on July 23, 1945 spending 4 days of almost continuous travel to Port Hueneme. The distance was 2,100 miles.

After recovering from the shock of leaving home the second time I began to feel comfortable with the group I was with and looking forward to what we may be doing at Port Hueneme. Imagine an eighteen-year boy, who had never been more than 100 miles away from home in his life, on a train going to California. I was all eyes going through the states I'd studied in geography classes. While going through Missouri more than one farmer in the fields had raised their arm to cheer us on to win the war. Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona to Needles, California. From Needles we crossed the Mohave Desert. The weather was hot, the train was crowded, food was limited and all of were very edgy. The extreme heat in the desert was just as the Encyclopedia had described it. It was unbearable. This was desolate country. New Mexico on the other hand had beautiful rock formations. My Uncle Jim, Aunt Evelyn, and Grandmother traveled in New Mexico in the 1930s and had taken pictures of what I had just seen. After the desert we came into central California with mountains, green fields and pastures. We arrived at Port Hueneme on July 27, 1945. Six by six trucks picked us up at the train platform and took us to our barracks. About 30 persons lived in one barrack.

We learned that Port Hueneme was a Seabee Camp and we were there to be trained as stevedores. (To load and unload ships) What we didn't know was it was also an embarkation center for shipment overseas of trained stevedores. The training was 8 - 10 weeks upon which the units were sent overseas. This worked like clockwork since 1943 for all stevedore units. We were to replace men who had completed their tour of duty overseas and would be rotated home.

We went through the same 8 - 10 week training that all stevedore crews went through from the inception of the stevedore training programs in 1942. We were trained to use the winch, work as signalmen on deck or on the dock and to work in the hold. We were trained on a wooden mock-up ship with all the equipment used onboard ship and later on the docks at Port Hueneme. The base was a shipping port for supplies going overseas therefore we experienced the real job.

In addition, we received military training. Each of us were issued a rifle, were taught

how to put it together and take it apart and how to shoot it. We were assigned regular guard duty on four-hour shifts. My first guard duty was from midnight to 4:00 AM in the middle of the desert. California nights even in the summer are very cold so it was not a comfortable job. At about 2:30 AM I saw a vehicle driving toward me and it you ever thought your hair would stand on end this was it. It turned out to be a happy ending. It was the officer on duty coming out to tell me the war with Japan had ended. The Japanese had surrendered.

All of us speculated on what was going to happen to us now that the war had ended. It ranged from getting a quick discharge, to be sent overseas to replace those who had longer time in service than our four months. The latter of course was correct. We went overseas to replace members of the 13th Special Battalion who had been overseas since 1944, first in Hawaii and then Guam. They were scheduled to be decommissioned on October 15, 1945. Our unit was named Logistic Support Company # 78 per a directive issued on September 27, 1945.

Some interesting experiences while I was at Port Hueneme. One night shortly after we had arrived I had gone on liberty to Ventura. Getting back to my barracks at 12:00 midnight I walked into the Head (bathroom & shower) I found a large group of guys in the shower area with money in their hands rolling dice. Talk like 2 will get you 3 etc. (odds) introduced me to the game of crap. I never had a desire to play the game. I enjoyed watching it. The other gambling game regularly played was blackjack. I played this game regularly while I was in the Navy.

Each of us were trained on all activities related to unloading the ship. One day while I was on the winch I had difficulty reading the signalman's directions. As a result the hooks on the chain got caught on the bottom of the sliding door on the side of the ship and before I could stop the winch the door was coming over the deck on our mock up ship. Needless to say I was not allowed to work the winch again.

I read the sports daily pages from the Milwaukee Journal and Chicago Tribune as I was growing up and became interested in both the UCLA and Southern California football teams. It didn't take me long to figure out how to get to Los Angeles and to the Coliseum for their home games. I was there every weekend. The liberty bus for LA took us downtown where we would get on a city bus to the game. I was very excited to see college football games.

We often took the bus to Santa Monica and to the Venice pier. Venice pier had a carnival atmosphere. They had basketball shooting, throwing balls at milk bottles, etc. I liked to go there because it was a lot like our county fair without the rides.

We occasionally had a day off during the week, which gave us an opportunity to go to Hollywood. As all of us were growing up one of the major activities of our life was attending movies. Here was our chance to see real movie stars. We always started at the Hollywood Canteen. This place was highly publicized during the war as a place where a movie star would appear daily. It was generally packed. Three things could happen. 1) A

movie star might show up 2) tickets were available to radio programs 3) a tour was always available to see the movie stars' homes.

On one visit to Hollywood I got tickets to go to The Great Gildersleeve radio program. This program was one our family regularly listened to on the radio. It was a thrill to see it in person. None of us had any idea how a radio program was produced so this was an education for us. A second radio program I attended was called the Tom Brennaman Breakfast Club - the program lasted for 1 1/2 hours and was broadcast nationally. During the program I attended he asked all servicemen to come forward and speak into the microphone saying their name, branch of service and hometown. My Uncle Wes (a dentist) regularly listened to this program and heard me speak on the radio. He immediately called home to tell my mother he had heard me.

The liberty bus trip was on Highway 1 right along the Pacific Ocean. It was a beautiful ride and the sights were great. It went past Malibu where some movie stars lived. The trip to LA was about 60 miles. I travel the same route often today and still marvel at the beauty and do a lot of reminiscing.

I am including pictures of the technical training we received at Port Hueneme, of the embarkation procedure as we went overseas, some base activities, and of my adventures in Los Angeles and Hollywood.

I was in California for approximately ten weeks. I was very grateful to see the state, enjoy the weather and the sightseeing activities. I would never have had the opportunity without the hospitality of the Navy.

More important, we all developed a high degree of responsibility and discipline. We learned to load and unload ships, developed the efficiency in performing our tasks, and the confidence to do the job well.

In early October 1945 we boarded a Liberty ship from the docks at Port Hueneme on our way to Guam. We traveled north of the Hawaiian Islands, and then turned south heading straight for Guam. The trip took us fourteen days. The first eight days the ocean was very rough, the last six days were smooth as glass. There were 1,100 troops on board, most were seasick the first four days. I was one of the few that did not get seasick.

Our sleeping accommodations were interesting. The bunks were stacked five high. We stored our sea bags near the bulkhead (side of ship) and tied our ditty bag (a bag holding our toothbrush, toothpaste, shaving equipment and comb) on our bunk. Imagine what happened when the person on the top bunk became seasick. A chain reaction occurred. The odor was overwhelming. I slept on the deck for the first days until the seasickness subsided.

The first time I went to the head (bathroom) I noticed none of the toilets had seats. I asked one of the ships crew why the seats were not on the toilets. He said it was easier to clean up the seasickness mess without the seats on the toilets.

The first time I went through the chow (food) line aboard ship I noticed around all of the counters through the line and on all of the tables was a 3 inch strip of metal from the bottom extending about two inches above the counters and tables. This was placed there to prevent the metal trays, on which we placed our food, from sliding off the counter as the ship rolled from side to side.

In my grade school geography classes we studied the equator and the International Date Line. The equator denotes the spot that is equidistant from the North and South Poles. The International Date line is where the regions on either side of are counted as differing by one day in their calendar dates. For example when we crossed the date line, if the day going to Guam was Monday we automatically picked up a day and the day was Tuesday. Coming back we cross the line for example in Tuesday to Monday. We crossed the equator and International date line. This created much discussion on our way to and from Guam. Never did I think in my class that I would experience what was described in our class.

About the ninth day, "general quarters." was being shouted through the loud speaker as well as loud blasts on the horn. This meant the ships crew should get to their battle stations. What had happened was the lookout in the crow's nest (a basket on a pole about 30 feet high for easy sight) thought he had spotted a mine floating in the water near the ship. Some of the ship's crew had rifles with which to shoot the mine hoping to detonate it so it would harmlessly explode. As the object came closer it was determined that the object was not a mine but a barrel that another ship had thrown overboard. But, Boy were we prepared to pepper that barrel with buckshot.

The trip was very boring. There was not much for us to do but stand on deck looking over the water (and prepare for the battle with the barrel). We did a lot of talking, some

reading, eating and very little sleeping. The first half of the trip was cool (50 -60 degrees) with the last half being warm. (70-80 degrees)

I have concluded without any evidence except observation that people are greatly affected by a traumatic change in their lives. Everyone goes overseas with some apprehension and anxiety which is accompanied with mood changes. Add to the seasickness and rough seas and we have a group of difficult people to be with. As we got closer to our destination the mood picked up and anticipation became the dominant mood. Comparing this trip to the trip home is an interesting contrast.

We arrived on Guam in the middle of October debarking on the dock at Apra Harbor. This Harbor is a place where we would spend a large amount of time in our stay on Guam unloading supply ships.

A convoy of trucks picked us up and took us to our base, Camp Carter. This base was one of the first of many bases built after Guam was secured by the Americans and lacked the facilities of the newer bases. Our living quarters were tents. The tents were built on wooden platforms with screen and canvas sides and a canvas top. There were six army cots in each tent. We stored our sea bags under the cots. Kitty corner from our tent was the outdoor head. The roads throughout the camp were small coral stones. A group shower with sometimes hot water was located up the hill. There was an outdoor water faucet sticking out of the ground where we could get water to wash our clothes etc. The camp had an adequate chow hall, a recreational area where we could buy beer for 5 cents a can, and a basketball court in the same location.

We received our crew assignments and were ready to work. There were twelve men in a crew and one petty officer in charge. In the beginning because of the backlog of ships waiting to be unloaded we worked seven days a week. There were two shifts - 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM and 6:00 PM to 6:00 AM. After two weeks the unloading was back to normal and we started working five days a week alternating day and night shifts weekly.

We had an outdoor theatre where current movies were shown nightly. Each night brought a different movie. This was our evening entertainment. Basketball was played before dark as well as beer drinking.

I frequently played basketball either during the day when we were on the night shift or early evening when we were on the day shift. The base commander was interested in entering a base team in an island basketball league so shortly after we arrived tryouts were held. I tried out for the team and made it. This turned out to be a good deal for the players because the base commander arranged for us to be excused from work on the docks whenever we had practices or games.

The work on the docks was exactly like the training we received at Port Hueneme. The mock up ship at Port Hueneme was set up exactly like the Liberty ships we unloaded on Guam. I worked in the hold (below deck) attaching bars between the slats on the pallet which would be lifted by the winch above deck and directed to the side of ship and lowered to a truck on the dock. (the winch operator had the help of a signalman) This work became our regular assignment for our nine months on Guam.

Occasionally we were sent to a supply warehouse to prepare supply shipments or to unload shipments coming to the warehouse. The work at the warehouse was like the work I did during summer vacations at Lakeshire-Marty or Kraft Cheese Company. I enjoyed this assignment because there was a beach across the road where we would swim during our lunch period.

The commander of the base decided after our basketball team was selected that we needed to be more available for practices and games than his original plan had provided. He assigned all of us special duty. Five of us were assigned to the camp trash detail. I was put in charge. Each day we were to empty all trash barrels on the camp, and haul them to the dump for disposal. We were assigned two dump trucks, drove to the Brig (jail) to pick up four prisoners (2 for each truck) and pick up the trash. We were also authorized to pick up two rifles to guard the prisoners. Two drove the trucks, two sat on the top of the cab of the trucks with the rifles and the prisoners emptied the trash barrels in the bed of the truck until filled and then to the dump. My assignment was supervisor so I oversaw this operation. After this was completed we took the prisoners to the theatre area to pick up the trash from last night's movie, especially the officers area. We were usually finished by noon. This was my assignment until the basketball season was over. Then it was back to the docks.

The Brig guards asked us to come to the Brig office some evenings to listen to the Kangaroo court held in the prisoner compound every evening. For entertainment the prisoners held court, prosecuting and convicting every guard that guarding them during the day. You couldn't imagine the charges against us. All of us were sentenced to hard labor on the coral rocks that were placed on the grinder in the Brig. A person could pound on the rocks for an entire day without breaking a rock. They had a good sense of humor and had developed a method of enjoyment for the evening.

One night while working on the docks we were assigned to unload a hold that was filled with pallets of beer. (64 cases on a pallet) Our coxswain (petty officer in charge of our group) went wild. He couldn't find the driver of our truck fast enough. The truck that took us to work was the same size as the trucks that were being loaded to take the supplies to a warehouse. Trucks were lined up waiting to be loaded, and our driver was instructed by the coxswain to get in the line loading from our hold. He also assigned another person, along with the driver to guard our truck until we left in the morning for our camp. Our truck was loaded with two pallets of beer. When we finished work we squeezed onto the truck with the beer, the coxswain was sitting in the cab next to the driver. All of us on the back of the truck were very nervous about this caper but felt the coxswain, an old salt, knew what he was doing. Less than 2 miles from the dock a jeep and two Marine MP's pulled us over. Cox was out of the truck saying to us "I'll handle this" and began talking to the MP's. In about five minutes he came to us and said "We have to make a trip to the Marine base, everything is OK, but we need to drop off a pallet of beer." The MP's led us to where they wanted the pallet of beer, we dropped it off and left. When we arrived at our base the truck stopped at the commissary to see if we could store the beer in refrigerated storage. It could be, but at a cost of 1/2 the pallet. We wound up with 32 cases of refrigerated beer. If we went to the recreation area to drink cold beer it cost us five cents a can or for 32 cases \$38.40. Looking back on this episode I'd have to ask myself the question "Was this worth the risk." Maybe not, but in the end we all had a good story to tell.

Although the camp accommodations weren't what we would have liked, we became accustomed to the camp and routine. Most of the members of our group spent time exploring the island, writing letters, going to the movies, and spending a lot of time talking about home.

We were allowed to use our truck on week-ends to explore the island, go swimming or to visit friends on other bases. All of us knew each other well and usually traveled in larger groups. (15 - 20) We referred to any wilderness or mountain areas as boomdocks. It was not unusual to find American tanks on the side of the roads with brush grown over them. We arrived on Guam a little over a year after the island was secured. Japanese soldiers were still coming out of the hills to surrender. Other Japanese in the hills did not accept the notion that the island was secure so continued to fight the war. Here are articles from STARS and STRIPES newspaper on some incidents that occurred while we were here.

**JAP SNIPERS AMBUSH MARINES HERE
THREE SLAIN ONE WOUNDED ON
ASAN POINT AREA PATROL**

Three marines were killed and one wounded when their four man patrol was ambushed and cut down by Jap snipers in the Asan Point area of the island Saturday afternoon.

Upon being informed of the incident Capt. Rolfe immediately established two patrols led by Guamanian guides. These patrols searched the plateau area until dark but were unable to find the three bodies or the Jap snipers.

**FIVE JAPANESE TWO EX-GEISHA GIRLS
SURRENDER TO GUAM NIP POW PATROL**

Five Japanese men and two women surrendered to a POW proselyte patrol Wednesday, it was revealed last night.

They seemed quite happy and stated they had lived on jungle fruits, wild pigs, deer, and "K" rations salvaged from trash cans. They admitted they had stolen small amounts of clothing and food from nearby camps.

The Japs expressed great relief at being out of the jungles and were astonished at the treatment given them and at the American development of the island.

POW proselytes are Japanese prisoners who have volunteered to go into the island jungles and advise those Japanese who are still in hiding that the war is over. They were responsible for the surrender of 500 Japanese on Guam.

After reading these articles we were very cautious moving around the island staying only on main highways. Our camp was inspected one Saturday morning looking for stolen clothing taken from the supply warehouse in our camp. This article appeared after the inspection, perhaps giving some insight to the stolen clothing. In another incident occurring in our camp, two Japanese soldiers appeared standing in our chow line wearing Navy dungarees. They thought they could walk through the line and get food. The only problem was, in addition to being Japanese, that their clothing was new. Most of us had washed ours enough so we looked like old salts. (used)

Our Camp Carter basketball team won the League Championship. The camp commander was very serious about our team practice and conditioning time so we could develop into a good team.

Here are a couple of articles appearing to the newspaper STARS and STRIPES.

FPRU Tops CASU in Loop Play

The Central Division of the North Central League resumed competition for the second time Monday night with plenty of action on the courts.

After dropping its first game, Camp Carter made the 500% average mark by downing ABCD 54 - 48. The winners held a substantial lead throughout the contest. High scoring honors for the evening were shared by Splitgerber and Gross of Camp Carter and ABCD respectively each accumulating 11 points.

Camp Carter Quint Nips TCM win Streak, 43-34

With a victory string of 19 to boost of with No. 20 in the offering, the Transient Center Marines ran asunder Monday night before the strong Camp Carter quintet, 43 - 34 at the winners court.

Heading the Camp Carter attack was Charlie Splitgerber, who accounted for 15 points. Camp Carter commanded a two point advantage at the half 15 - 13.

The TCM Transit Center Marines were very serious about their basketball team. They were older than our team which had only three players that had attended college as compared to the TCM team where all of their players had attended college. On the next page is a page from the program the TCM team had when we played them at their home court. The first game we played against them we had broken their winning streak on our court. This game was late in the season and we had added an excellent player who could score points. In this game we defeated them I learned a lot about the game of basketball this year. I believe with confidence I have that I can adjust to the way many different players play the game. The thought that you can compete with most players my age or older was a good feeling.

As soon as I became old enough to work, my mother had appointed herself as my agent to find work for me. Even while I was stationed on Guam she didn't fail. She knew of five persons stationed on Guam from Plymouth and arranged through their families for all of us to meet on a Sunday afternoon. It just so happened one was a cook working in the commissary at Camp Bright at the same time I was stationed there. All of us met at Camp Bright and had an enjoyable afternoon talking about Plymouth. Tom Mullen, the cook also prepared a special meal for us. It was better than the meals we had become accustomed to for our regular meals.

In late March 1946, Camp Carter was closed and we moved to Camp Bright., a newer camp. Indoor plumbing, hot and cold running water and clean living quarters. All of us had lived in tents with six people in a tent. Moving to Camp Bright meant we had to split up to find quonset huts that had open beds. We now had different roommates. We still hung together but met many new friends in the move.

The life became routine, basketball season was over, Camp Carter was closed, so I was back at the docks working. We had improved recreation places, better basketball courts, a movie theatre and better shower facilities. We watched many of the old inhabitants pack their sea bags and leave for home. We began marking time until it was our turn to go home. The Navy worked on a point system and by late June we knew we had enough points to go home. The Navy didn't disappoint us. On July 5, 1946 we boarded a Liberty ship to take us home.

The mood on this trip was sky high as compared to going overseas. The whole trip was one of happiness. Although we had been together for almost 15 months the only thought we had on our minds was going home. The ocean was calm the entire trip. There was very little seasickness and it seemed like all of us were changed persons from the ones that had left Port Hueneme.

We spent almost all of the time on the deck of the ship. There was blackjack going on from early morning until dark. The ship captain kept us informed on our location daily. We were fully aware of when we would arrive in the States. We knew we were headed for Treasure Island, located in San Francisco. The arrival date was July 20, 1946 at 6:00 AM. On that date we were all on deck for the homecoming. We never gave much thought to the fog that was present but we were there as excited as a person can be. As we neared the dock the captain played "Gonna Take a Sentimental Journey" on the PA system which brought on a lot of singing.

At Treasure Island they checked us in and had us go to a large assembly room where they told us we wouldn't be leaving for Great Lakes for at least two days. They also told us they had a place to store our sea bags but did not have a place for us to sleep. We were on our own for sleeping quarters but needed to report back each day at 9:00 AM to find out if they had a train to send us out. Three days later we left for Great Lakes.

When we left we expected we would take the northern route to Great Lakes but wound up heading south taking almost the same route we had taken out. The trip was very hot and uncomfortable but it didn't seem to bother any of us. We were too excited with the thought of going home.

When we arrived at Great Lakes we met in a large assembly hall where we were told how our discharge procedure would be conducted. They had all of our papers prepared so all we needed to do was to decide whether we wanted to be discharged immediately or wait one day to be discharged. If you wanted to be discharged immediately you had to join the naval reserve. This meant if an emergency occurred you could be called into the Navy again for the duration of the emergency. If you didn't choose the naval reserve you would be discharged the next day. I choose not to join the naval reserve. I didn't want an interruption in my life to go back into the service.

one of the unantisipated events that occurred was saying good bye to all of our shipmates. Having spent almost 15 months with each other, we had developed close frienships. now, realizing that we probably will not see each other again was an emotional experience. Both days were very emotional. The saving feature was the thought that we were going home.

On July 31, 1946 I left Great Lakes with my discharge. I took the North Shore Transit to Milwaukee, where my parents picked me up for the remainder of the trip to Plymouth. I arrived home 14 months and 15 days from the day I left.

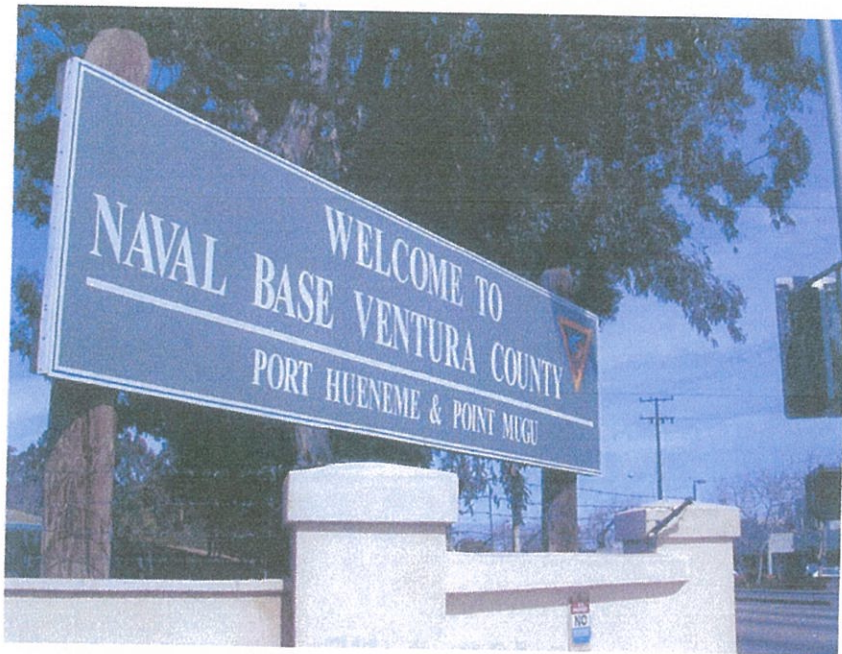
After greeting my friends and neighbors my Dad told me I had to complete an application to the University of Wisconsin that night if I planned to attend school in the fall, as they were not accepting applications after August 1, 1946 for the fall semester. We would deliver the application to Madison the next day. Fortunately my dad had gotten all of the necessary paperwork required, that needed to go with the application.

My discharge from the Navy brought many unexpected benefits. The federal government had established a program of financial support to all WW II veterans called the G-I Bill of Rights. This provided the payment of tuition costs to attend a college or university of my choose, purchase all textbooks required for the course I take, and \$65.00 per month for room and spending.

Now, let's analyze this. I entered the navy after the war in europe had ended. The was ended in Japan while I was stationed at Port Hueneme. Boot training for an 18 year old kid was fun. At Port Hueneme I learned how to work as a stevedore, developed the discipline needed to perform the tasks, and the maturity needed to manage my life beyond my age. The navy sent me to California where I was able to see all of the exciting activities I had read about, and then to a secure south pacific island for nine months. This island provided beautiful weather, good comradeship and many enjoyable experiences. I felt my experiences were a great benefit. This would be enough for me.

The timing of my entry into the service was perfect. My choose of the branch of service was excellent. I was never in a danger area and lived a safe secure life in the service. The additional financial support was greatly appreciated.

Port Hueneme



Here is the entrance to Port Hueneme. It is located in Oxnard, CA. I visited the Museum on this base four different times during 2003 - 2004 doing research. The Museum was loaded with information that I wanted. I was stationed on this base from July - Oct 1945. I found a picture album that had pictures taken during 1941 - 1945 that told the story of the sailor's experiences and training they went through from the time they arrived at the base to the time they were sent overseas.

Port Hueneme was a training base to train sailors to load and unload ships as well as being trained to help to secure the beach in an invasion. In other words we were issued a rifle (carbine) and taught to use it. After the beach was secured, the supply ships would come into the harbor and we would unload the supplies.

There will also be pictures of our daily life on the base such as standing in the chow line, being paid, going on liberty, on the training ship and arriving at the dock to be shipped overseas. When we went on liberty we either went to Ventura or to LA. There will be pictures of our experiences in LA on leave.

Port Hueneme



CHOW LINE



PAY DAY

Port Hueneme

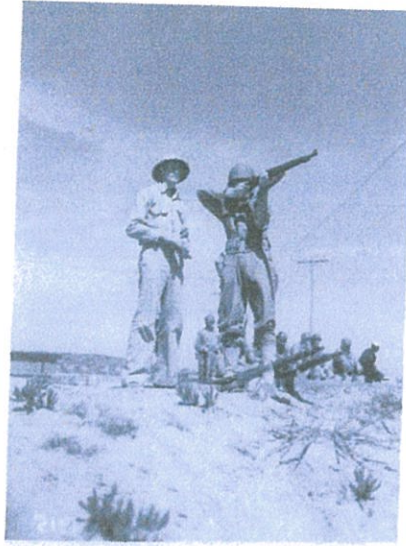


BM ROANE CHECKS LIBERTY LINE



GETTING LIBERTY CARDS

Port Hueneme

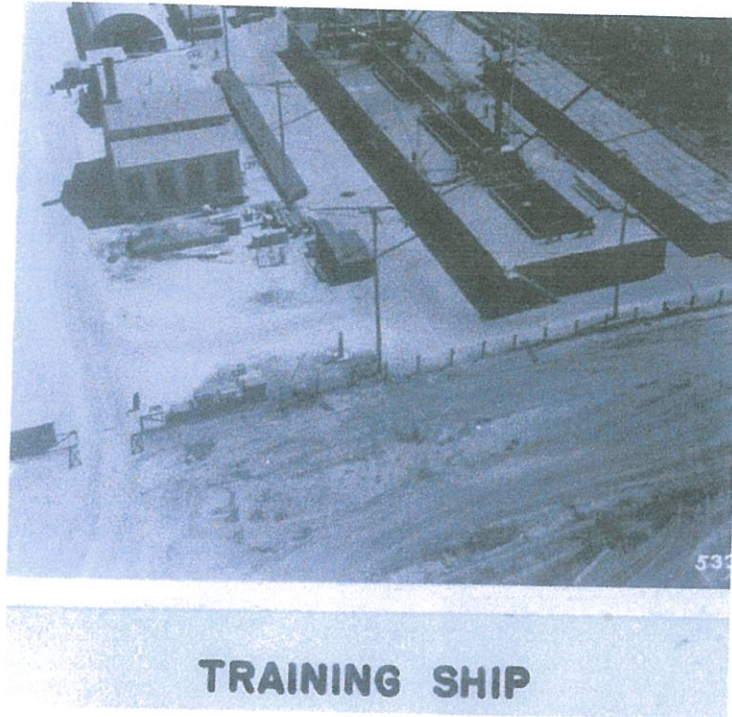


'03 ON THE RANGE



THE LINE

Port Hueneme



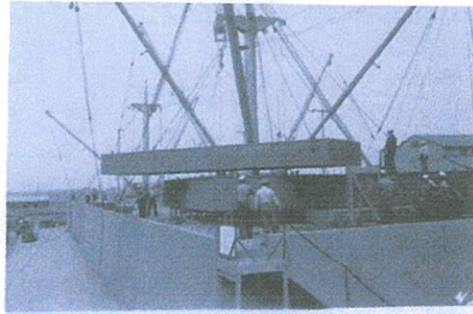
Here is a picture of our training ship. It was located in the desert near Port Hueneme. We marched about 2 1/2 miles to the training ship. Most of the marching was done on a public road. You can see the training ship was set up just like a ship we would work on. All of us worked on the ground, as a signalman, on the winch and below deck. We were thoroughly trained to load and unload ships. We were the last of 37 different groups that went through Port Hueneme on their way overseas to load and unload ships.

On the right of the ship were containers that were used for training. All of the trainers were experienced longshoremen. We learned a lot in the period of time we worked on this training ship. Later we were taken to the dock at Port Hueneme to work on real ships.

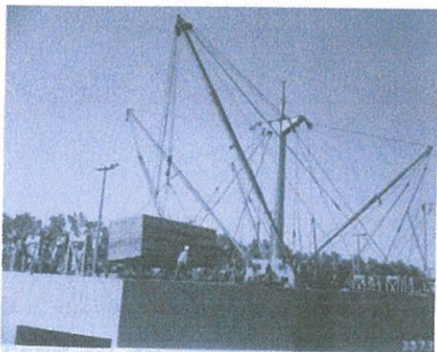
On the opposite page are two pictures of our rifle range. The rifle range was located near the training ship. We all received carbines that were assigned to us individually while we were on this base. We learned how to take it apart, put it together, properly take care of it and to shoot it. On the top picture we're shooting at moving targets. The bottom picture is a picture of our rifle range shooting at stationary targets.. Part of us would work behind the targets a distance away, (I'm guessing 50 yards) to record score for the shooter and then we would change positions. I was better recording scores than shooting for a score.



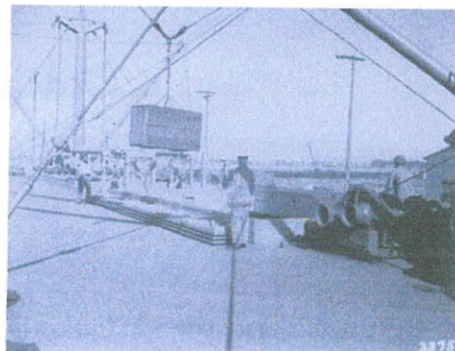
STEVEDORE BOOM



OVERSIDE



SLING AWAY

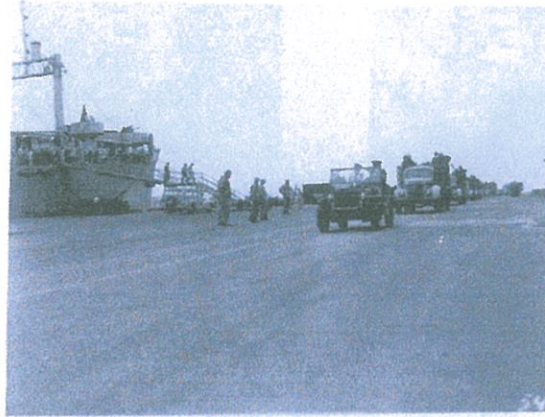


DOWN THE HATCH

The pictures shown above tell the story on how we got the cargo from the dock to the hold of the ship. All of us worked at each of the locations. We also worked on unloading the cargo from the ship. By the time we completed this training we were ready for the real work

Port Hueneme

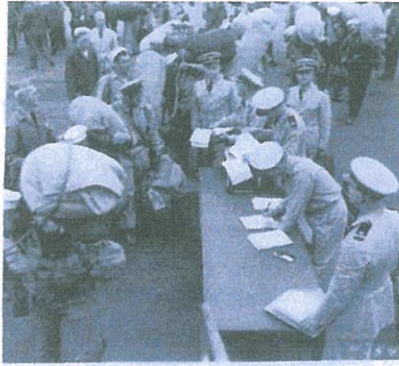
The following pages will show you what it was like the day we went overseas. The pictures tell a very clear story of the process from traveling to the dock, checking in, boarding the ship, in our quarters below deck and finally leaving from Port Hueneme for Guam.



CONVOY ALONGSIDE



UNLOADING CONVOY



CHECKING ON



STANDING BY TO EMBARK



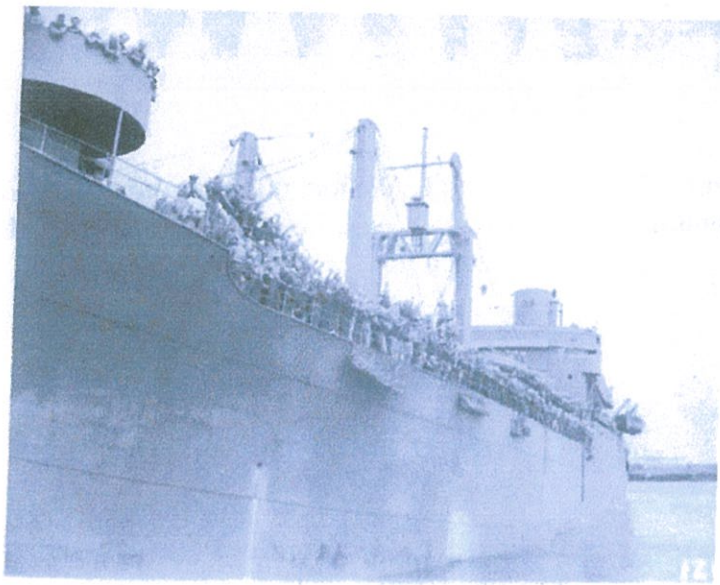
UP THE GANGWAY



GOING BELOW



STOW YOUR GEAR



FAREWELL

The ship you see here is the same type ship we were on to while going to Guam It was called a Liberty ship or sometimes a Victory ship. Approximately 1400 were on a ship this size.

dow

Port Hueneme

To put the finishing touches on my experiences while at Port Hueneme it is important to show you pictures taken while I was on liberty in Hollywood and Venice, which was slightly north of Los Angeles. Venice was a pier which had carnival games such as knocking down milk bottles, shooting baskets, shooting at moving targets, side shows, etc.. We went there often for entertainment. The liberty bus stopped there on the way to LA and picked us up on the way back to Port Hueneme.



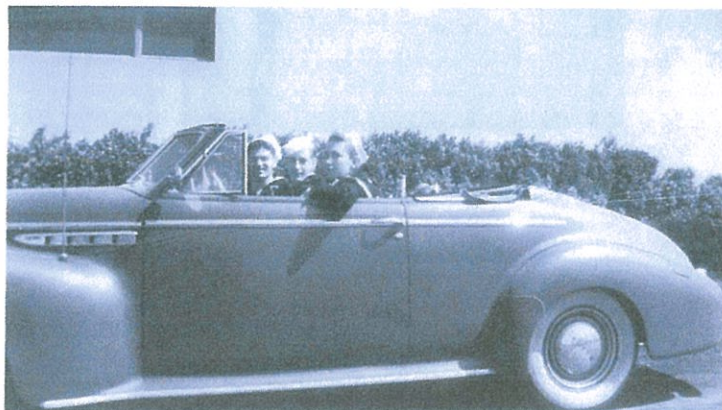
Here is a picture of John Shea and I. We had this picture taken at Venice pier after we finished shooting baskets. The dolls on the counter were dolls we had won.



This is picture of me, Dale Simmons and John Shea. We had been at Radio City to watch radio programs live. This was part of our entertainment route when we were in Hollywood.



The two pictures taken above were taken in Hollywood. John and I asked the Wave to pose in the picture with us. The Hollywood Canteen was a popular place to hang out. Radio programs were broadcasted from there as well as popular movie actresses and actors often served as hosts. Light beverages and snacks were served to servicemen free of charge.



Here is a picture of me along with John Shea and Dale Simmons.



GUAM

Guam, the second step in the occupation of the Marianas, (Saipan, being the first) was destined to become the nerve center for the final thrust of Japan. Guam was developed as an airbase to support offensive operations, become the Pacific Fleet Headquarters, and was used as a huge storehouse of supplies.

Guam is about 32 miles long and varies in width from 4 miles near the center to 8 miles across the northern and southern sections. The whole island is surrounded by an extensive reef system. It is 9,500 miles from Washington D.C. and 3,500 miles from Hawaii. It is three-quarters of the way from Hawaii to the Philippines.

The only important anchorage in Apra Harbor, on the western side of the island, formed by Cabras Island and Orote peninsula. The harbor required considerable development before it could be considered a first class anchorage.

The island climate is healthful and pleasant. However a 100 inch annual rainfall and a flash run-off which follows sudden downpours create considerable drainage problems.

The Japanese took Guam on December 10, 1941. Prior to that date the Americans had graded a road around the island, and other roads had been extended and improved.

The Japanese during their occupation constructed a 4500-foot coral surfaced airstrip on Orote peninsula. They also built a similat strip northeast of Agana and partially cleared a third strip further north.

The United States assault to recapture Guam began on July 24, 1944. Organized resistance on Guam officially ended August 10, 1944.

The large scale assault operations carried out by our attacking forces, together with demolitions set off by the Japanese had destroyed a major part of the installations on Guam. All Naval onstallations were destroyed beyond any possible use except salvage.

Development of waterfront facilities in Apra Harbor was a task of highest priority. By the end of October 1944 six piers were in full operation and a seventh underway. Almost all were destroyed in a typhoon between October 2nd-9th. One month later six piers were in operation. By July 1945, the piers in Apra Harobor numbered twenty-five. As the waterfront facilities were developed to accomodate the heavy flow of supplies and equipment, the construction battalions turned to the airfields.

Early in 1945, attention was concentrated on two B-29 fields, North and Northwest fields, on the northern end of Guam. Following the airfields were the roads.

Due to the position of Guam in the forward area, it was essential that a large store of supplies, spare parts, equipment, fuels and refrigerated foods, be on hand at all times for

the fleet, and military forces on the island.

Several major supply depots were established. The naval supply depot comprised 464 steel, arch-rib warehouses, a large personnel camp, open storage areas, a drum filling plant, and 68,000 cubic feet of refrigerated storage. Guam was indeed a central distribution center filling the supply needs of the Fleet and ground forces.



Here are two pictures locating Guam in the Pacific Ocean. It is located in the middle of the picture on the left.

The picture on the right is a map of Guam. I was stationed there from October 1945 to July 1946. You will notice the village Agat on the left side. Just above Agat is a . Carter. This is Camp Carter. I was stationed there from October 1945 until April 1946. At that time I moved to Camp Bright until July 1946.

Pictures from Guam



This is our basketball court. We practiced and played all of our Camp Carter league games on this court. We learned to use the wind to our advantage. There were eight teams in the league with only one of them having an indoor basketball court. On the right is our theater. This was our evening entertainment. We had a movie every evening.

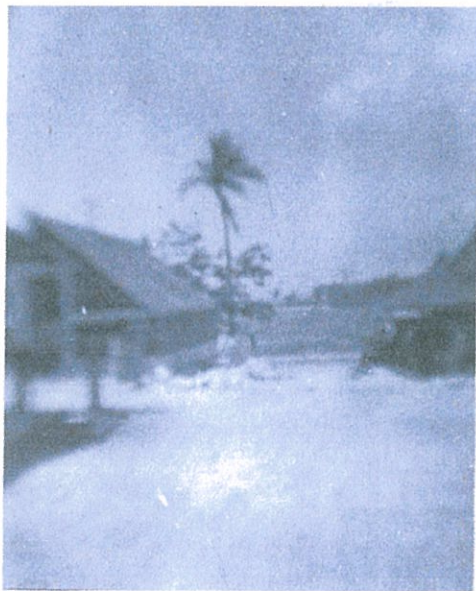


This is a picture of me taken at our recreation area. I'm sitting on a ping pong table which provided many long hours of entertainment. I'm drinking a can of beer. The cost of beer was .05.

Pictures from Guam



This is a picture of our living quarters at Camp Carter. The six of us lived in this tent from our arrival on Guam in October, 1945 until April, 1946 when we moved to Camp Bright. Top row - Red Rehmer, Momence, IL., Chuck, Plymouth, WI., Ray Morgan, Antigo, WI., Paul Siegrist, South Chicago Heights, IL, first row - L. E. Simpson, Cedar Falls, IA and John Shea, Hurley, WI. We slept on cots, storing our seabags and other personal items under our cots.



Here is a picture of our head. (bathroom) It was located diagonally from our tent. Very convenient. We did have shower facilities a distance away from us. I'm standing in the doorway to our tent. My cot was located inside on my right.

Pictures from Guam

On day's off we would use our 6x6 truck to travel around the island. Here are a few pictures of our group exploring the boomdocks. After Guam was secured the tanks were abandoned a short distance off the road. It was not difficult to find them.



Here is a beach where all of us went to swim in the Pacific Ocean.



In April 1946 we moved to Camp Bright. This was a new camp with all of the modern facilities. We lived in quonset huts here with only 4 persons per hut. We were sent here to prepare to go home for discharge. The biggest problem was the lack of troop transports to take us home. We had a lot more free time to explore the island. Below you will find two pictures of natives. (called gooks) One picture is of a small village and the second picture of some native children and their water buffalo. George Siebert, who was in my high school class in in this picture with me.



Pictures from Guam



In May 1946 my Mother planned a reunion with the servicemen on Guam from Plymouth. We met on a Sunday at Camp Bright. All of us were in the Navy. Starting from the left: Roger Eichenberger - His parents had a shoe store in Plymouth. He graduated from PHS in 1941. Next is George Siebert. A member of my high school class of 1945. Tom Mullen is next. He graduated from PHS in 1940. I knew him well because he played softball on my dad's Future Farmer softball team. I also played on the Plymouth Athletic Association baseball team in the summer of 1944. Wayland Schultz is next. He was also on the Plymouth Athletic Association baseball team in 1944. I'm next.



This is a picture of Bob Bohnhoff And George Siebert. Bob had taken the picture of the group above. Bob graduated form PHS in 1943. I played football with him on the 1942 high school football team. I was the center and he was the quarterback We knew each other well.

Returning home with an Honorable Discharge from the Navy

On July 31, 1946 I was discharged from the Navy with an Honorable Discharge. Along with the discharge I was awarded two ribbons.

Asiatic Pacific Area Ribbon - The Asiatic Pacific Campaign Ribbon was awarded to personnel for service within the Asiatic Pacific theater between December 7, 1941 and March 2, 1946 under the following conditions.

- (1) On permanent assignment (Guam)**

World War II Victory Medal

The World War Victory Medal was awarded to all military personnel for service between December 7, 1941 and December 31, 1946.

I also received mustering out pay of \$102.55 which included a travel allowance of \$5.35.

I immediately called my parents after receiving my discharge and asked them to pick me up in Milwaukee. I told them I would be arriving in Milwaukee on the North Shore at 2:00. The North Shore ran past Great Lakes. I boarding it at 1:00 pm.

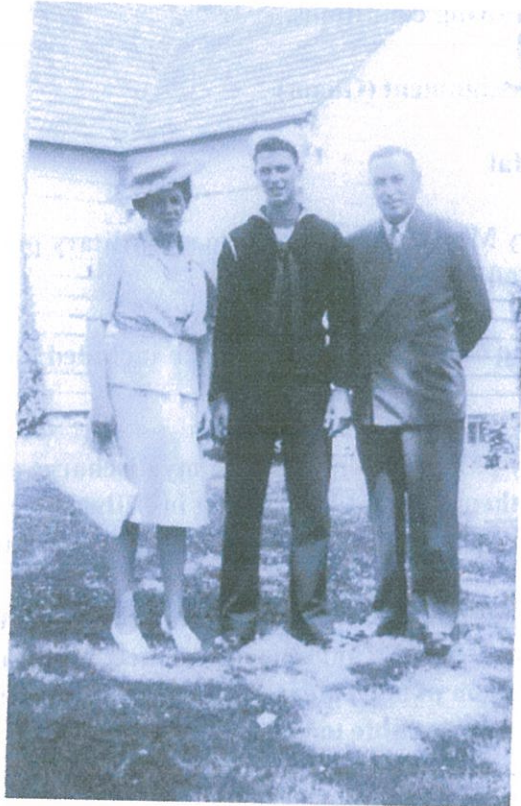
The time I spent in the Navy was very important in my growth to maturity. Although being separated from my family was a traumatic experience, I went into a situation where discipline was necessary, freedom of movement was restricted and responsible work habits were required. I left the Navy better able to cope with the freedom I was going to be facing as a more responsible and mature person.

My parents met me at the North Shore station at the intended time and we took off for the one hour drive to Plymouth. We enjoyed a happy reunion at the station and the trip to Plymouth brought on a very lively discussion. My Mother was full of questions and news. An interesting feature of my trip is I was traveling with a lot more baggage than I had when I left home for the Navy. I had a full seabag and a ditty bag on the way home as compared to a small bag containing a tooth brush and shaving equipment when I left home.

On the following pages will be pictures of my entry to family life again.

Arriving home

When we arrived home, the first thing we did was get out the camera to take pictures. It was very interesting to note we did not take any pictures when I left to go into the Navy. The mood was quite different coming home.

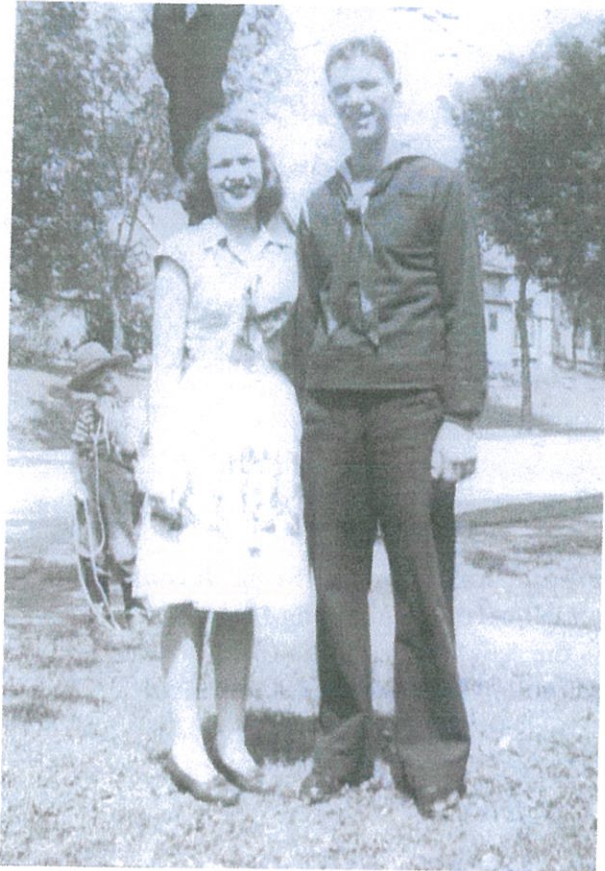


Here is the first picture taken when I arrived home. Notice the clothes my Mother and Dad are wearing. When adults of this era went anywhere they did what we called "dressed up." There the proud and happy group is. The picture tells the story.

It didn't take long for the neighbors to come out to add to the enjoyment of coming home. My sister, Mary Ellen, was working at Kraft Cheese and came home shortly after this picture was taken. As a matter of fact many of my friends were working at the cheese factories and would be walking past our house on the way home. All I had to do was stand in the front yard and meet them walking home. Notice they were walking. Car manufacturing was just beginning again after the war and cars were being sold at premium prices.

The surprise of this picture was my brother Tom. He was six years old and generally stood behind everyone to get into the picture.

Arriving home



Here is my sister, Mary Ellen. We were 19 years old when this picture was taken. We both graduated from high school the year before this picture was taken. She chose to wait for me to be discharged from the Navy so we both could start school at the University of Wisconsin at the same time. She worked at Kraft Cheese as a secretary for the past year. I suspect mother was behind her decision to wait. Look at our brother, Tom, behind Mary Ellen. This was his position while pictures were taken.



Here is plaque given to me by my son, Scott. It contains the three medals I qualified for during my naval career. Following from the left as you look at it - the World War II Victory Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal and the Good Conduct Medal. Please read the following letter which explains it all.



"I can imagine no more rewarding a career. And any man who may be asked in this century what he did to make his life worthwhile, I think can respond with a good deal of pride and satisfaction: 'I served in the United States Navy.'"

President John F. Kennedy

Dad -

I hope you like your Christmas/Birthday/Fathers Day Gift.

Service to one's country is one of the greatest sacrifices one will ever be asked to give, and service in a war and living to tell the tale is an accomplishment indeed. You should be proud of what you did and what you accomplished. I know that I am.

Love,
Scott

construction force HISTORY OF THE SEABEES: WORLD WAR II

After the December 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States entry into the war, the use of civilian labor in the war zones was impractical. Under international law civilians were not permitted to resist enemy military attacks. Resistance meant summary execution as guerrillas.

The need for a militarized Naval Construction Force to build advance bases in the war zone was self-evident. Therefore, Rear Admiral Ben Moreell determined to activate, organize, and man Navy construction units. On December 28, 1941, he requested specific authority to carry out this decision, and on January 5, 1942, he gained authority from the Bureau of Navigation to recruit men from construction trades for assignment to a Naval Construction Regiment composed of three Naval Construction Battalions. This is the actual beginning of the renowned Seabees, who obtained the designation from the initial letters of Construction Battalions. Admiral Moreell personally furnished them with their official motto: *Construimus, Batuimus* -- "We Build, We Fight."

With authority to establish construction battalions, the Bureau of Yards and Docks was confronted with the problem of recruiting, enlisting, and training Seabees, and then organizing the battalions and logistically supporting them in their operations.

The first Seabees were not raw recruits when they voluntarily enlisted. Emphasis in recruiting them was placed on experience and skill, so all they had to do was adapt their construction skills to military needs. To obtain men with the necessary qualification, physical standards were less rigid than in other branches of the armed forces. The age range for the enlistment was 18 - 50, but after the formation of the initial battalions, it was discovered that several men past 60 had managed to join up. After December 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt halted voluntary enlistments, and men for the construction battalions had to be obtained through the Selective Service System. Henceforward, Seabees were on the average much younger and came into the service with only rudimentary skills.

At Naval Construction Training Centers and Advanced Base Depots established on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, Seabees were taught military discipline and the use of light arms. Although technically support troops, Seabees at work, particularly during the early days of base development in the Pacific, frequently found themselves in conflict with the enemy.

After completing three weeks of boot training at Camp Allen, and later its successor, Camp Peary, both in Virginia, the Seabees were formed into construction battalions or other types of construction units. Some of the very first battalions were sent overseas immediately upon completion of boot training because of the urgent need for naval construction. The usual procedure, however, was to ship the newly-formed battalion to an Advanced Base Depot at either Davisville, Rhode Island, or Port Hueneme, California. There the battalions, and later other units, underwent staging and outfitting. The Seabees

received about six weeks of advanced military and technical training, considerable unit training, and then shipped to an overseas assignment. About 175,000 Seabees were staged directly through Port Hueneme during the war.

The construction battalion, the fundamental unit of the Seabee organization, comprised four companies that included necessary construction skills for doing any job, plus a headquarters company consisting of medical and dental professionals and technicians, administrative personnel, storekeepers, cooks, and similar specialists. The complement of a standard battalion originally was set at 32 officers and 1073 men, but from time to time the complement varied in number.

As the war progressed and construction projects became larger and more complex, more than one battalion had to be assigned to a base. For efficient administrative control, these battalions were organized into a regiment, and when necessary, two or more regiments were organized into a brigade, and as required, two or more brigades were organized into a naval construction force.

Although the Seabees began with the formation of regular construction battalions only, the Bureau of Yards and Docks soon realized the need for special-purpose units. While the battalion itself was versatile enough to handle any project, it would have been a wasteful use of men to assign a full battalion to a project that could be done equally well by a smaller group of specialists.

The first departure from the standard battalion was the special construction battalion, or as it was commonly known, the Seabee Special. These special battalions were composed of stevedores and longshoremen who were badly needed to break a bottleneck in the unloading of ships in combat zones. Their officers, drawn largely from the Merchant Marine and personnel of stevedoring companies, were commissioned in the Civil Engineer Corps. The enlisted men were trained practically from scratch, and the efficiency of their training was demonstrated by the fact that cargo handling in combat zones compared favorably to that in the most efficient ports in the United States.

They humped cargo from Pearl to Japan, kept K-rations, beer and ammunition flowing from base to ship to the beachhead. ConBat stevedores swung the big hook in torrid heat and bitter cold; they hauled under fire, went in with combat troops, and came out just as bruised and tired.

The first Special Battalion (1st Special Battalion) was formed at Camp Peary in December 1942 and moved to Port Hueneme in January 1943. Most Special Battalions moved through Port Hueneme for approximately six weeks of technical (learning to unload ships) and combat training before embarking to overseas ports. The last Special Battalion (38th Special Battalion) was sent from Camp Endicott to Port Hueneme on May 1, 1945 arriving a week later. On June 16, 1945, after training, the personnel from this Battalion was assigned to the stevedore replacement pool at Hueneme and on August 15, 1945 the outfit was decommissioned.

Another smaller specialized Seabee unit within the Seabee organization was the construction battalion maintenance unit, which was about one-quarter the size of a regular construction battalion. (8 officers and 250 enlisted men) It was organized to take over the maintenance of a base after a regular battalion had completed construction and moved on to its next assignment.

Still another specialized Seabee unit was the construction battalion detachment, ranging in size from 6 to 600 men, depending on the specialized nature of the function. These detachments did everything from operating tire-repair shops to dredges. A principal use for them, however, was the handling, assembling, launching, and placing of pontoon causeways.

Additional specialized units were the motor trucking battalions, and petroleum detachments comprised of experts in the installation of pipelines and petroleum facilities.

In the Second World War, the Seabees were organized into 151 regular construction battalions, 39 special construction battalions (stevedores), 164 construction battalion detachments, 136 construction battalion maintenance units, 5 pontoon assembly detachments, 54 regiments, 12 brigades, and under various designations, 5 naval s.