

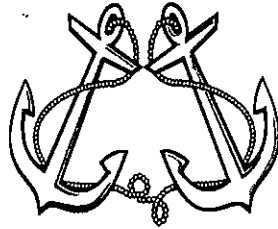
Selected
War Stories

Of

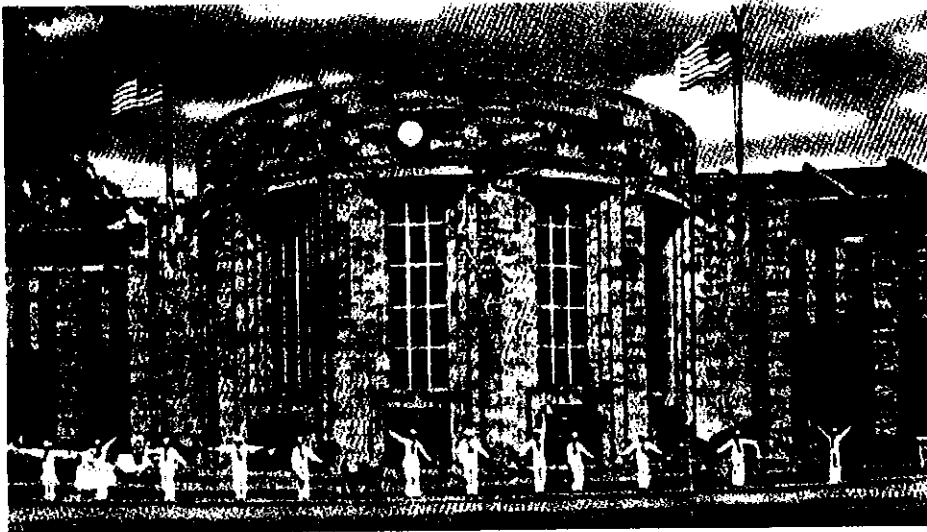
LEROY P. REHWALD

(05-01-02)

- INTRODUCTION -



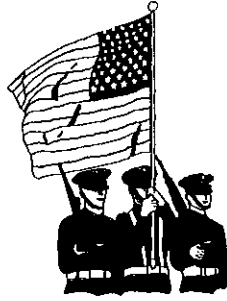
I WAS sworn in to the U.S. Navy on February 18, 1943, at Great Lakes, Illinois Naval Training Center. Before graduating from boot camp I contracted rheumatic fever and spent (7) seven weeks in the Great Lakes hospital. Returned to active duty, I graduated from boot camp on June 4, 1943 and was sent to U.S. Naval Training station at Toledo, Ohio for (16) sixteen weeks training in Navy Supply.



**Naval Armory, Toledo Ohio
Storekeepers School, 1943**

TOLEDO, OHIO:

THE CIVILIANS in Toledo were very friendly and couldn't do enough for the sailors. Each Saturday we participated in a dress parade, sometimes through downtown for war bond drives with celebrities. After the parade we were on liberty till Sunday night and Saturday night we slept on cots in the local YMCA gym. Being quite dry after marching, we stopped in a local tavern for a few beers on Saturday afternoons. While there, we met a very nice elderly lady whose pilot son was missing in action and we continued to meet her on several Saturday afternoons. The last Saturday before we shipped out, in October, she could hardly wait to tell us that she had heard from her son and he was *alive!*



I don't intend to give the impression that all I did on liberty in Toledo was drink beer. I most assuredly used my liberties for numerous other activities. Dancing at the huge Trianon Ballroom (or was it the Aragon?) to live big band music was a real treat. So was attendance at Toledo *Mudhen* minor league baseball games. The local zoo was a good one. I also attended some Lutheran Walther League (youth group) functions with a young lady named Jackie. I also was on guard duty in downtown Toledo in full dress uniform and toting a big ugly rifle. A crated Jeep, made in Toledo and ready for overseas shipment, was on display on the town square and I was (half-heartedly) "guarding" it. Numerous Toledo citizens visited me frequently and sneaked me soft drinks and snacks.

I'm Not Your Daddy!

AFTER ONE of those Saturday afternoon dress parades at the Toledo Training Station, having missed the bus, we decided to walk to town. Walking through a residential neighborhood in my spotless starched uniform, a small child with muddy hands came up to me and shouted "Daddy!" as he grabbed me by the pants leg. Since I wasn't even in town when he was conceived, I was sure I wasn't his Daddy but I had to clean off my pants when I got to town – amid constant ribbing from my walking companions.

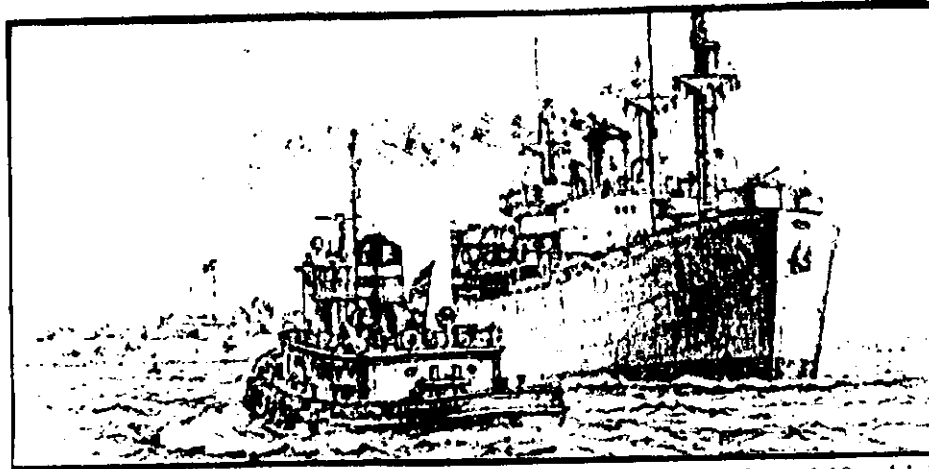
During the entire 16 weeks of training at Toledo we were awakened each morning at 6:00 AM with Glen Miller's recording of "American Patrol." Much as I hated getting up at that hour, I never got tired of hearing that rousing instrumental. And it is still my all-time favorite.

I wish I could remember the guy who came off liberty, still half crocked, and fell off the back dock into Lake Erie while on guard duty (in Toledo) – rifle and all. Was it Bill Sharrard?

Hitch-hiking was easy (and *safe*) for young men during World War II, so on several weekends I spent roughly 24 hours in my hometown: Logansport, Indiana. My parents appreciated my making the effort, needless to say.

I graduated from Store Keeper School as a Petty Officer, Third Class in October 1943, and was shipped to Shoemaker, California by train with about (60) sixty other storekeepers. Four days and three nights, *trying* to sleep, while sitting up in coach! We got off once in Ogden, Utah, marched through downtown, showered (we needed it *badly!*) and got back on the train.

Bon Voyage:



AT SHOEMAKER, California we became assigned to Dog I - Navy 140 which turned out to be the island of Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides - down near Australia. Before leaving Shoemaker, however, I had several liberties in San Jose, California, where I met a young lady who drove a big black limousine and seemed to have no problem getting all the rationed gas she wanted. It turned out her father had a string of specialty leather shops. The only reason I mention it is because I was invited to her home by her parents to a formal dinner and was introduced to my first ARTICHOKE. I had to confess I had never seen one, and had to be coached on how to attack the thing! Tasted *terrible* too, and I haven't had one since!





U. S. NAVAL RECEIVING BARRACKS
SHOEMAKER, CALIFORNIA

★ *Menu* ★

THASOENZ

Mulligatawny Soup
Salines

Hearts of Celery Queen Olives

Roast Stuffed Young Tom Turkey, Oyster Dressing
Fresh Cranberry Sauce Giblet Gravy

Fresh Green Peas in Butter
Candied Sweet Potatoes
Mashed Potatoes

Hot Rolls Butter

Hearts of Lettuce Salad
Thousand Island Dressing

Pumpkin Pie, Cheese Sticks
Fruit Cake, Rum Sauce

Assorted Fresh Fruit

Black Coffee

Mixed Nuts ~~Candy~~ Cigarettes Filled Hard Candy

Nov. 25, 1943

Capt. O. M. FORBYER, U. S. N.
Commanding Officer

Lt. (SO) H. V. MOON, U. S. N. N.
Commissary Officer

THE WELFARE-RECREATION DEPARTMENT SUBMITS THAT YOU WASH THIS LOGO

Thanksgiving Dinner, November 25, 1943

We left California in November, 1943 in the dead of night – while they still had a partial blackout. Past the Kaiser ship yards busily making new ships around the clock and then finally under the Golden Gate Bridge and out to sea. The subdued lighting gradually faded away until finally there was nothing but total darkness – an *eerie* feeling indeed!

(Salt) Water, Water Everywhere

THE TRIP to Espiritu Santo took a total of 27 days on an LST (landing ship tank). With a tail wind she could make 10 knots, which is quite slow. The only sleeping quarters below were taken by officers and the Armed Guards who handled the ship's guns, so we had to bunk under the smaller craft lashed to the deck. Not too bad except when it rained, which was often. The showers were equipped with salt water only and we didn't feel clean afterward. So we would buy a helmet full of fresh water from the Armed Guards and took a bath in that. Gee, no-one was looking except the sea gulls, and soon none of them.

Before we reached dangerous waters, the Armed Guards had a practice session with the 3-inch ship's gun. The target was hundreds of food cans lashed together and not too far away. The gunners never did hit the floating target and we had a little trouble sleeping that night!

The chow on the LST was satisfactory except it kept sliding back and forth on the mess table from the movement of this little ship. They had bread pudding for dessert everyday and it was good for only a week. Then they had to pick the mold out of it and, when it was a vivid purple, I quit eating it!

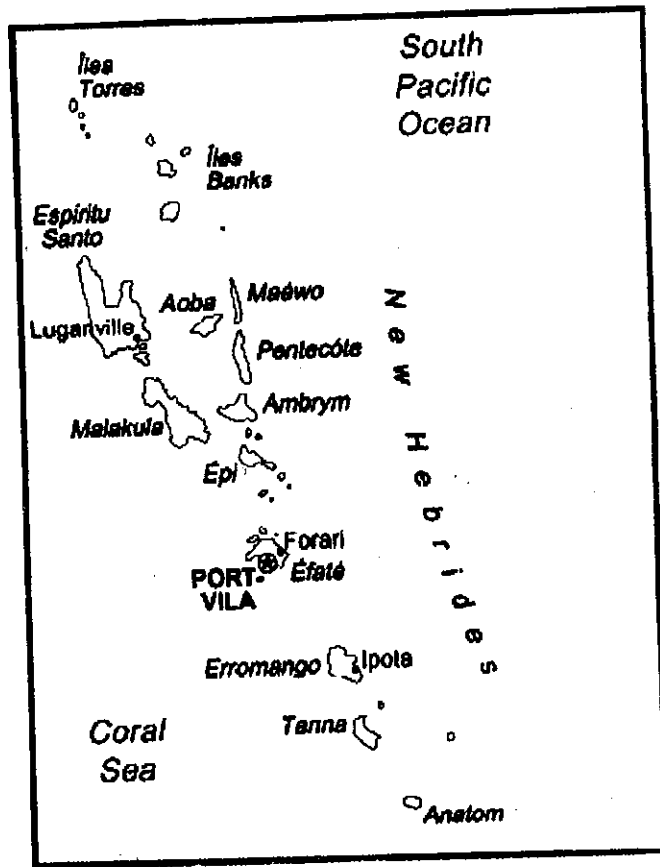
I referred to the ship which took me and my Storekeeper shipmates to Espiritu Santo as an LST. That was in error; it was a Liberty Ship. I presently live just six miles from Neville Island, Pennsylvania where many of these Liberty ships were made. On our ship an officer read all the latest news to us on late mornings. It didn't help our morale any when he read us the item about one of these same Liberty Ships that broke in half (and sunk) at sea!

In the whole 27 days it was water everywhere with only one exception. Way off in the distance we saw Christmas Island. It sure looked good but soon passed away from view.

I overlooked our overnight stop at Noumea, New Caledonia. No big deal; we weren't even allowed off the ship!



Land At Last



ON CHRISTMAS EVE, 1943, we finally docked at Espiritu Santo. We were marched (in the dark) to a coconut grove nearby and spent the night in some old abandoned 5-man Army tents – wood floors and rusty screens with lots of holes to let the jungle creatures in. We held a make-shift Christmas Eve observance there and tried to sleep. Later, we were quartered in a tin-roof Quonset hut, 21 of us in one hut – two feet between cots. Had to keep your feet covered because foot-long rats could slip in and chew on your toes. That tin roof made a tremendous noise when a rat would dislodge a coconut overhead. Yes, there were lots of rats.





Coconut Trees



Quonset Hut - Interior

The island also had foot-long lizards. One got in my bed once and I chopped him up with my sheath knife. I'll never forget how all three pieces laid there and twitched for a full five minutes!

We had cold showers -- but at least it wasn't salt water. You could wash your hair but the coral dust in the air from the nearby roads would make it impossible to get a comb through your hair.



Cold Showers

Our first year on the island there was a shortage of equipment. No lift trucks were available so if two sailors couldn't lift it, you used four, etc. Working at the top of the warehouse with a 120 degree sun heating the tin roof up to who knows how hot, you had to be sure you didn't touch the roof with your bare back!

I had charge of a large warehouse containing spare parts for ship's guns. I forgot to mention how very grateful the ships' Gunners were when I made a special effort to find them the parts they very badly needed to keep their big guns (some 14" and 16") ready. One particular ship in our harbor had a hole in its side you could drive several big trucks through. And one ship (was it *HMS Australia*?) was badly damaged from a direct hit from a Japanese Kamikaze pilot. Those guys were fighting for ME (and in my stead) and believe me, I was grateful.

During my time on *Espiritu*, I was encouraged to write some poetry. My first poem was "Ode To A Commissary Steward". I've placed additional poems throughout these memoirs as they relate to the situation.

Ode To A Commissary Steward

***Oh, you who writes the bill of fare,
Who makes the guys tear out their hair,
Why crucify a guy who begs,
"PLEASE DON'T PUT ONIONS IN MY EGGS!"***

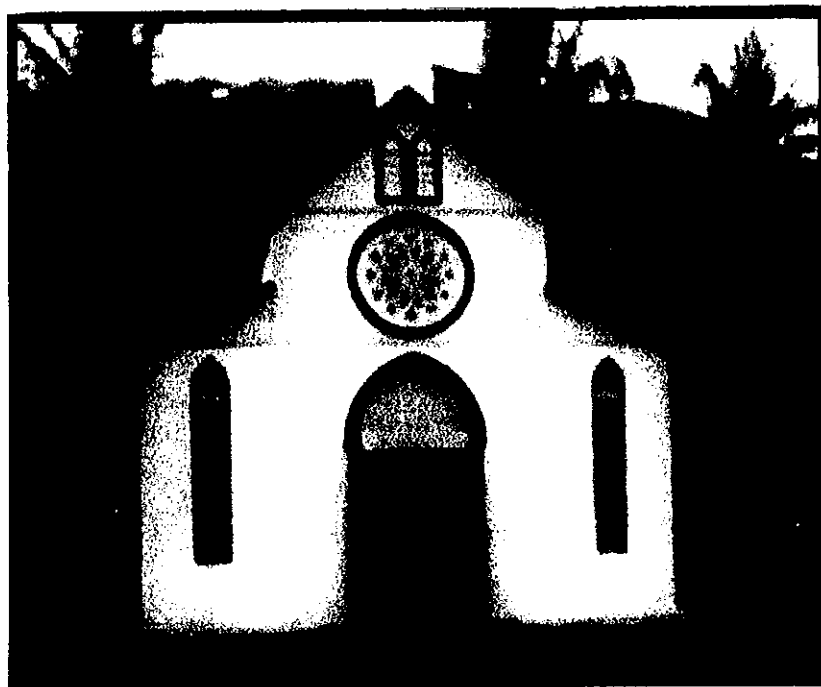
***You've pardon for the mutton stew,
For sour milk, you're forgiven too.
I'll drink your coffee, kegs and kegs,
BUT WHY THOSE ONIONS IN MY EGGS?***

***The way they were is not so hot.
Untouched, I ate them, good or not.
But why do you knock me off my pegs
BY PUTTING ONIONS IN MY EGGS?***

***Each morning I walk through your door,
Forgiving you for days before;
Consume your juices, in great dregs
And THEN FIND ONIONS IN MY EGGS!***

***I give up man, ENOUGH'S ENOUGH!
I'd sooner starve than eat the stuff.
Show pity to a guy who begs,
"PLEASE, NO MORE ONIONS IN MY EGGS!"***

Earth tremors were frequent. This also dislodged coconuts and wearing a heavily shellacked Frank Buck hat was a good safety measure. A French mission church there had tremor bars on both sides of the building. In the warehouses that I had charge of, I frequently saw parts for ships guns be shaken out of the bins. (You go out in the open -- fast!)



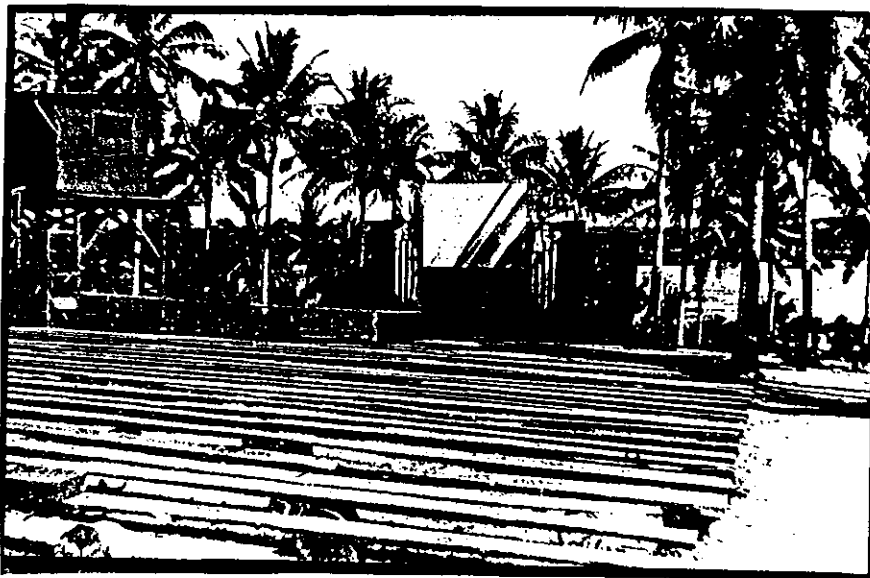
Tremor Bars

ORDER OF WORSHIP	
U S NAVAL ADVANCED BASE CHAPEL	
NEW HEBRIDES	
0900 Sunday 15 April 1945	
HYMN No. 48: "Rejoice, ye Pure in Heart"	
VOTUM	Psalm 95: 6, 7
SALUTATION	Revelation 1: 8
VERSICLES	
GLORIA PATRI	Page 0
SYNOPSIS OF LAW	Matthew 22:37
PRAYER OF CONFESSION	All Seated
ABSOLUTION	
APOSTLE'S CREED	Page 8, All Standing
PASTORAL PRAYER WITH CHORAL RESPONSE	
HYMN No. 83. "COME, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"	
SCRIPTURE LESSON: Psalm 55	
ANTHEM: "Lovely Appear"	Gounod
Ray Craft, Baritone	K. Royce Cain, Tenor
SERMON "Durdona"	
PRAYER	
HYMN No. 138: "Take the Name of Jesus with You"	
BENEDICTION AND CHORAL AMEN	
<small>All Hymns Carefully Printed to Service Tonight and Wednesday at 1000 FORT RALPH, VICTORIA, U.S.N. Base Chaplain D. B. SMITH, Director of Music</small>	

It rained for weeks at a time. One result of that was that you usually had to battle a skin condition called “prickly heat” – in all the unusual places. One time I got really desperate and applied after-shave lotion. Spent half an hour in the shower before the pain abated – but it cured it!

All the Novocain was being used on the forward island campaigns, so sick bay was perilous. I had a bone cyst incised without any pain killer and molars extracted without it. You didn’t go unless you really hurt.

We had movies every night – some I saw three or four times, but I have a list of 265 different movies that I saw. They were shown outdoors and, like church, you sat on felled coconut logs. One night, during a particularly scary murder movie, a rat dislodged a coconut which fell and startled the persons sitting nearby. They panicked, got up and ran, and everyone else followed – not knowing why they were fleeing! Some ended up a full two miles away and I got a bruise on my shin.



Movies



Beer Line

Assorted Gripes, Groans and Moans

***I've told you of the many things
I like about this "Perfect Haven".
But now my conscience forces me
To tell you of the griping I've been savin'.***

***So – number one, without a doubt,
On each and every person's list I know.
Is rain and mud, and still more rain
And never seeing anything that looks like snow.***

***There's billions of mosquitoes here.
(I hope you realize it's facts I'm stating.)
"It's blood we want", they sing aloud,
As each night in my bunk-net they are waiting.***

***A coconut tree is quite a sight
When silhouetted 'Gainst a moon and sky of blue.
But after seeing them for so long
I'll very gladly give them all to you.***

***I've known the time when I would eat
More than my share of lamb chops at my table.
When I come home, Mom, Please remember
To eat just one more bite of "GOAT" I won't be able.***

***As I remember now, It seems cold water
Was never very good for shave and shower.
When I get access to hot water,
I'll surely soak my skin in tubfulls, every hour.***

***I hope you do not mind my griping.
I only "SING THE BLUES" to illustrate the point
That if I found I'd nothing to complain about
I'm sure that I could never like the joint!***

Anyone might wonder what it was like for a young man in his early 20's to go for two years on an island with absolutely no feminine companionship. Answer: it was rough! Watching officers squiring nurses and Red Cross workers about the island didn't help. But that was "verboden" for non-commissioned personnel. Mail from various girlfriends only helped me to remember what I was missing. Although my memory has dimmed somewhat, I am sure that getting back in operation back in the U.S. must have been indescribably exciting.

No Women

***Since I am in the Hebrides
My sole contacts with females
Are only pictures, letters and
Those funny little V-Mails.***

***It's always been my policy
To always have them near me,
But now, to pin-ups I make love
And they can't even hear me!***

***I do seen nurses, now and then,
They flash by me in cars.
But I can't rate their company
Because I have no bars.***

***"But how about the native girls?"
You ask me earnestly,
If you could see them you'd know why
They don't appeal to me!***

***Seems I'm sunk for company
Of the fairer sex variety.
But when it's over, look out for me,
When I get back to society.***



Rest Area

I was quite fortunate to visit with 13 servicemen on Espiritu from Logansport (population 22,000). Somehow they found me or vice-versa. So that I will never forget, their names are: *Melvin Angle, Frank Broyles, Bill Carney, Everett Crump, Richard Galbreath, Glen Huffman, Carl Hassett, James Lebo, Hal McElheny, Neal Michaels, Doug Meyer, Geruld Pugh, and Jack Walls.*



PT Squadron – Visit With Zeb Crump from Logansport

Huge land crabs were numerous. They attempted to cross the road and many were smashed by passing trucks. Then the 120 degree sun cooked the smashed bodies and produced the foulest odor you can imagine.

There were no Dorothy Lamour-type island beauties. The females, although sometimes bare from the waist up, were not the least bit attractive – even after two years on the island! Also, they chewed beetle nuts which blackened their teeth and made them appear toothless. Any dogs (ship's mascots from tied-up ships) that natives could get their hands on would be dragged into the interior and eaten.



It is a fact that Frank Buck captured his largest python on Espiritu Santo, and driving a jeep only partway into the interior got a jeep viciously charged by wild boars.



Tonganese Natives – Espiritu Santo – New Hebrides

Preparing for World War II. Japan used the interior of the island in the 1930's for war maneuvers. Some were said to have intermarried with the natives.



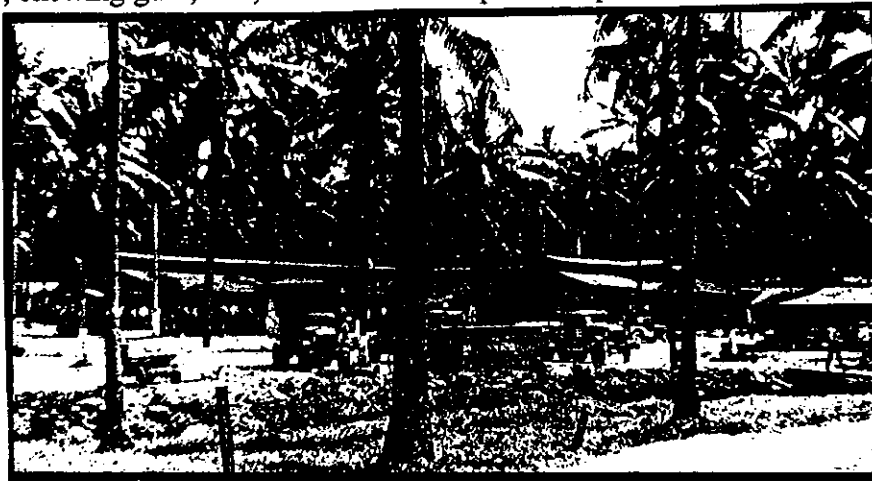
Some of Our Gang

Soft Duty

AFTER I was on the island a year. I was allowed to have my tonsils removed because of the rheumatic fever I suffered in Navy boot camp. It took one full month in the naval

hospital to get the incision properly healed, during which time I had warm showers and good food.

One thing the island did have was an excellent PX. Ice cream, made with powdered milk, of course – but very good; cigarettes, .50 cents per carton; candy bars, .60 cents for a box of 24; chewing gum, etc., etc. That made up for the poor meals.

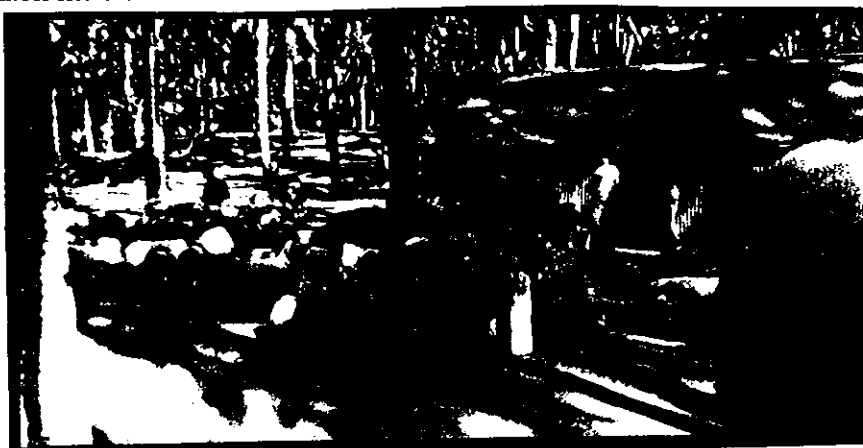


Mess Hall

A lot of people from the US entertained the service people on Espiritu Santo, including: Bob Hope, Jerry Colonna, Francis Langford, Jack Benny, Carole Landis, Randolph Scott and Dance Groups.

Headed for HOME

AFTER TWO years of living on Espiritu Santo, we finally got orders to go home for a 30-day rehabilitation leave. We boarded a large army transport in November, 1945. I ate a box of 24 Milky Ways on the way home, since I had my first case of sea-sickness and could stomach little else.

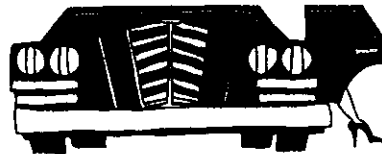


Ready To Leave Santo Behind

Arriving at Treasure Island, California in November, the lights were on again and boy did the U.S. look *good!* All the time on the island we had powdered milk, dehydrated food and no fresh fruit or vegetables. So when I hit San Francisco, I went to a restaurant and asked them to bring me lots of cold milk and fresh sliced tomatoes. Later, I ate other things.



I called the little gal with the big black limousine, and sure enough, she came around to the San Jose, California YMCA and picked me up. We danced at some high school hangouts and drank a few beers. By this time she was 18. I didn't know it till later, but when I met her two years before she was only 16! Of course, I was only 20 at the time. We had fun again but decided not to make anything more of it.



A Home Run Interrupted

I GOT on a train for Chicago where my father was to meet me when I got off the train. But I never made it. I suffered an inflamed appendix and had to get off the train at Cheyenne, Wyoming and was taken by ambulance to Fort Francis B. Warren Army Hospital, where my appendix was removed.

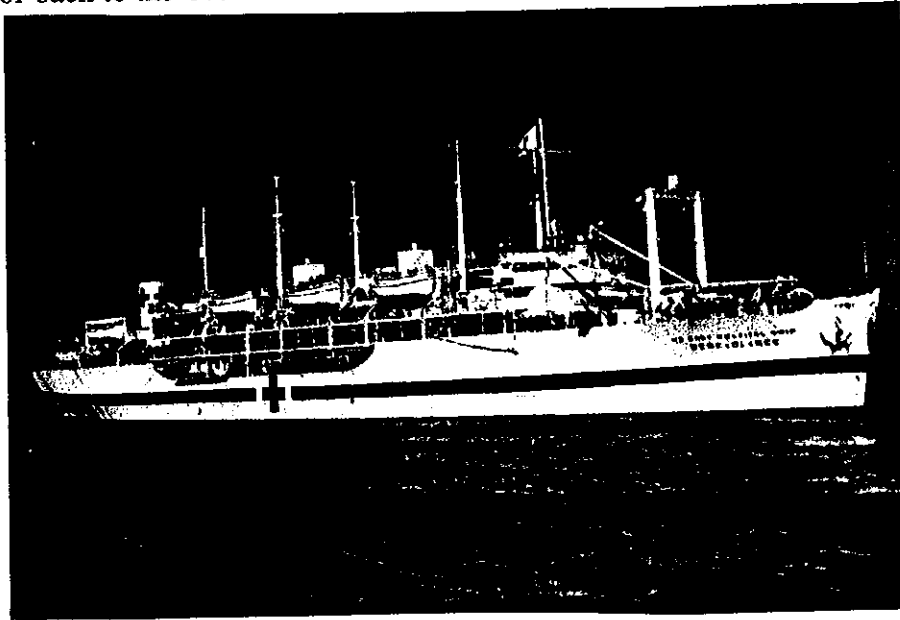
David Studebaker and Bill McMillen accompanied me off the train, exhorted the ambulance driver to hurry, and stayed with me till they were sure I was okay. Then they continued to their homes for their 30-day rehabilitation leave. I had been in too much pain to care for myself and certainly appreciated my shipmates' thoughtfulness.

While at the Army hospital, the Army officer in charge tried to contact the Navy to get my leave extended. When I was healed and ready to travel, he still hadn't heard from the Navy. So he issued me a 30-day Army furlough! I spent my 30-days over Christmas and reported to Indianapolis, Indiana, as ordered by my Army papers.

The Navy considered giving me brig time for being over leave on my Navy papers. But they finally decided to honor my Army furlough. (Phew!)

Out to Sea Again

THE NAVY authorities in Indianapolis eventually sent me back to Treasure Island, California where I was assigned as ship's company on the U.S.S. Benevolence – a hospital ship. I operated the ship's store (cigarettes, ice cream, etc). In January, 1946, the ship was used on Magic Carpet duty -- returning service personnel and families from Pearl Harbor back to the U.S.



USS BENEVOLENCE

Included were 40 or 50 WAVES and it was co-ed Navy for that trip! I had reached the level of First Class Petty Officer while on Espiritu Santo and was privileged to select a WAVE to assist me in the Ship's Store. I chose a real doll and we hit it off pretty good. However, soon after the ship got underway and after all the rest were taken, I noticed her over in a corner emptying the contents of her stomach. She spent the rest of the cruise in or near her bunk and, when I finally saw her on the day we docked in the U.S., she looked *really* bad!

First Class Entertainment

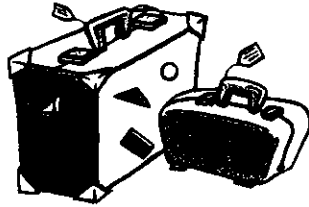
ONE OF the highlights of the trip from Pearl Harbor had to be a transfer at sea (at night) of a soldier from an Army transport ship to our hospital ship. He had a bowel obstruction and needed immediate surgery. Our ship fired a line to their ship and with both ships heaving in a heavy sea; our ship pulled him over that line on a stretcher -- with another line from our ship. Fortunately, it was after Japan had surrendered, so we could use full floodlight illumination. What a sight that was!

Good Old Hospital Ship

WHAT A break for me to be on a hospital ship. Somehow I had managed to get infected ingrown toenails on both big toes. A friendly Navy surgeon offered to fix them for me and one night he completely removed both nails – only this time Novocain was available! They say sailors get to visit a lot of foreign ports. Such was not the case for me. I did, however, get to visit several cities in California. Most notable of what I did see was in the Pearl Harbor (Hawaii) area. The fantastic Diamond Head was quite awesome. I also spent one liberty on the famous Waikiki Beach. Like typical tourists we got a little drunk at the Pago Pago Club and had our pictures taken with half-naked hula girls. I often wondered what happened to the pictures. Maybe they didn't have film in the camera? Getting used to sleeping in a hammock resulted in falling out once!

Discharge!

ONCE AGAIN I returned to Great Lakes, Illinois, but this time for a discharge! They asked me if I wanted to sign over for another hitch but I said "No thank you sir!" And I received my papers on April 15, 1946.



Miscellaneous Notes

I WAS in charge of two gigantic warehouses on the island. One was full of spare parts for ship's guns. I had two Gunners' Mates to do most of the heavy work and for technical advice. In one end was a rifle repair and maintenance shop. Another warehouse held thousands of marine infantry equipment for island warfare: helmets, machetes, ammo belts, boots, ammo boxes, etc. When our ship docked at Espiritu Santo on December 24, 1943, Guadalcanal had been secured and the war front was several miles north. Accordingly, our island was no longer subject to Japanese air attack.

The last incident occurred just a few weeks before our arrival. That was a single aircraft, affectionately called "Washing Machine Charley" who rattled overhead almost every night – purely for nuisance value. Mail from home was infrequent but very important for morale. Our hut #203 had a member who always got the word when a seaplane arrived as he had charge of the Motor Pool. So he (Dewey Wilbur) tipped us off when we could expect mail. My dear mother took advantage of all (4) four of her sons being in the service to obtain new dentures while they were gone. For Mother's Day she sent me a

greeting card with a 4" x 6" photograph of her with her new dentures. The only trouble was that the mail plane went down in the Pacific

Sing 'Em 'Bout The Mail Situation

**In Hut 203 there are two lonely guys.
Their mail has diminished to minute size.
To say that it's vanished is much truer, mates
Vic and Ray are forgotten by all in the states**

**Occasionally – now and then – their way will fall
A V-mail from relatives, but that is all.
They hear from their parents – (Of that they are glad
For first on their list is their Mom and their Dad.)**

**But – what of the sugar reports, letters from gals?
Our friends in the service, our old four – F pals?
While other guys get them, two dozen a week
The answers to last years, we patiently seek!**

**It seems we're forgotten by girl-friends we knew
A crime, for to each one, we've always been true.
We've quit looking for letters, in this land far away –
I say, Mate – Did we rate any mail, today?**

(“Ray” Rehwald, Author “Vic” Morrone, The Other Guy)

The plane and mail were salvaged but the wording on the greeting card from the sea water superimposed upon the photograph! But I got the general idea and still have that photo in one of my several photo albums.

One of my superior officers learned that I was a tennis enthusiast and invited by to play tennis with him on the officers' tennis court. That was a real treat but we couldn't play very long in the 100 degree plus sun! The last year on the island (1945) things had loosened up some and we were able to finagle some beer for special holidays. Later we were allowed to go to the mess hall and draw 2 cold bottles of beer on Tuesday and two on Thursday. I drank one cold one on issue night and drank the (warm) one the next day.

A fifth of whiskey was eventually “available” for \$25. (Probably the equivalent of \$100 today, maybe more.) On VJ Day (August, 1945) there was plenty of booze flowing – needless to say! I had just finished celebrating my 22nd birthday with a friend from Logansport, Indiana (Zeb Crump) and started celebrating all over again!

The \$25 whiskey salesman referred to never got any money from me. Petty Officer's pay wasn't bad and there was little to spend it on – if you didn't gamble, and I rarely did. So I

sent money home by money order and had over \$1,000 with which to start off civilian life.

And finally, on a subject that used to be taboo, I would like to discuss the subject of race relations in the Navy – only from my own personal perspective, however. Two things must first be noted. One, I am talking of conditions 60 years ago. Second, it must be considered that I was coming from a small town where the Chamber of Commerce statistics quoted the local African-Americans as totaling 8/10 of 1%.

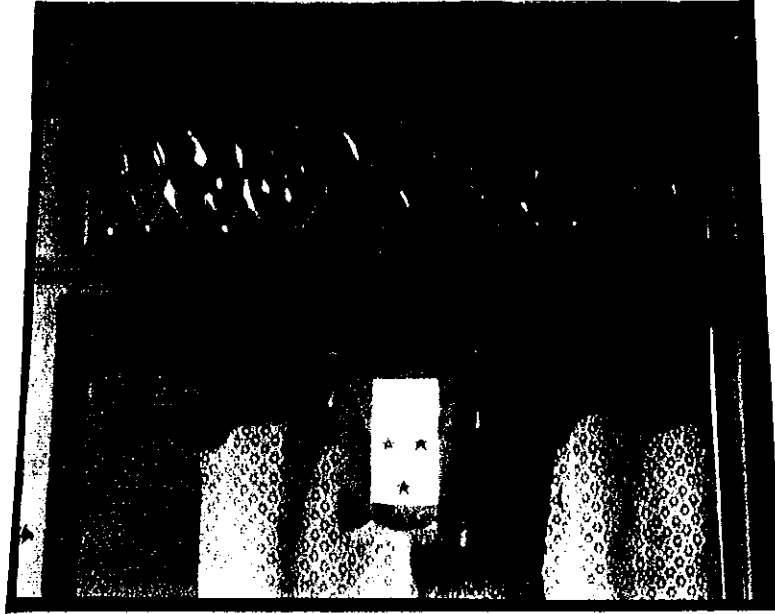
That said, I mentioned earlier that two Gunners' Mates were assigned to work for me in my warehouse on Espiritu Santo. Those two men were black and, in very short order, I found it necessary to chastise one of them for poor work habits. That individual responded with hate in his eyes that I had never before seen. He was from Baltimore, Maryland.

Accordingly, I would have to say that the greatest fear I experienced during the entire three years in the Navy was the result of this unique incident. (I couldn't have him court-martialed because his threats were quite veiled.)

But here comes the shocker! The other African American was from Montgomery, Alabama and he saw and heard the entire incident. Minutes later he told me privately, "Don't you worry, Mr. Rehwald, I'll keep my eye on him at all times. And if he makes any kind of move against you, I'll kill him." This man, a huge man, all muscle, could have done the job with his bare hands. He went on to say that things had been getting better for black people and it was people like my antagonist that only make things worse.

So, needless to say, it was easy for me to conclude at the tender age of 21, that there are good ones and bad ones of all races. Somehow I've found it difficult to extend that philosophy to the Japanese who opposed my country in World War II, however.

But, I'm working on it.



Rehwald Service Flag
524 West Linden Avenue -- Logansport, Indiana

Letter To My Parents

***If you think I don't know how you feel,
If you think I doubt your love is real,
That thoughts of you I don't quite often steal.
How could you?***

***If you think I've forgotten little things --
A beer with my dad and the warmth it brings,
And my mother's prayers and comfortings.
Why should you?***

***It's true that I'm so very far away
But it won't be forever til I'm home to stay
(and)
If you think I'm not waiting for that day,
You're very wrong.***

***But in the meantime, keep in mind
That I'm strong and healthy for any grind,
Ever thinking of family and friends behind
And singing a song.***

Epilogue

I COULDN'T recall or recite all the interesting (to me) experiences I encountered in the three of my young years I spent in the U.S. Navy in World War II. Now that I am only a little shy of (80) eighty years of age, however, it has been most enjoyable to relive some of them.

Looking back, I guess I was a green bean Hoosier hick from Logansport, Indiana going in, never having been any farther from home than Chicago; but I sure did grow up fast! At my current age, new and exciting experiences do not occur very often. So I consider myself blessed that I have 1940's memories to relive – and I make no apologies for such fits of nostalgia.

I am unashamedly proud of the fact that I am a veteran of World War II. I am especially proud, since my parents had the distinction of having (4) four sons in the service of our country during this important period of history – two in the Army and two in the Navy – you might say “an equal opportunity family.”



THE POWER OF A GOOD SONG

Picture, if you will, a 20-year-old displaced Hoosier 4000 miles from Hoosier-Land – sitting on an island deep in the South Pacific in 1943, when the war in the Pacific was still touch and go.

He had only recently arrived on the island after a 27-day journey out of San Francisco – which had been on partial blackout when he left. And he was weary from loading live ammo canisters on the Espiritu Santo docks. And he was understandably apprehensive about what God had in store for his future.

In the 23-man quonset hut which he called home for two years, the Armed Service Radio was playing heart-warming music for the boys overseas. And the mellow voice of Vaughn Monroe could be heard singing this poignant song:

When the lights go on again,
All over the world
And the boys come home again
All over the world
And rain and snow is all
That may fall from the skies above
A kiss won't mean goodbye
But hello to love
When the lights go on again
All over the world
And the ships will sail again
All over the world
Then we'll have time for things
Like wedding rings
And free hearts will sing
When the lights go on again
All over the world.

Even to this day that still homesick Hoosier is overwhelmed with memories of those days and those feelings when this song is played.

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Leroy P. Rehwald