

Active Duty and the Korean War



When George and I arrived in San Francisco we had to spend the night there and wait for transportation to Vallejo where the Mare Island Naval Shipyard was located. We decide to spend the night at the Fairmont Hotel in downtown on the square.

We were shocked to learn that our room was \$95 a night, and that was about half of our monthly pay. No more staying at the Fairmont or any place else in downtown San Francisco. We went to a nice restaurant on fisherman's wharf and had dinner. We were offered a bottle of wine with our meal. We had never had wine before with a meal, so we asked the waiter for a recommendation and suggested a local Rose that I thought was delicious. We asked the price of everything in there in advance after the Fairmont experience, and they usually gave discounts to military personnel.

The next morning we got our transport and headed to Vallejo. It was a beautiful drive along the edges of the Napa Valley and the bay. I thought that this was going to be a great tour of duty.

When we arrived in Vallejo and went entered the base I couldn't find my ship and was directed to an onshore office. There I was met by a junior officer who told me that the ship was in dry-dock having the torpedo tubes replaced with a new SPS-8A Height Finding Radar and that no one was living aboard the ship. So, I was assigned a room at the Bachelors Officer's Quarters and was told that I would be contacted shortly. All the officers were on leave while the ship was in dry dock. Finally the executive officer showed up and told me to go to the dry dock and look the ship over since I would never have this opportunity again to see the ship with all the decks removed. The ship was in pieces I went back to the BOQ and there was a new set of orders waiting for me. I had been assigned Temporary Additional Duty (TAD) and ordered to the Destroyer Base in San Diego to attend six weeks of training on the new weapons system. I had a room at the 34th Street BOQ and was isolated again without my car which I had sold before leaving Norman since I thought that I was headed overseas. I went down to the National Car Rental Office and rented one for six weeks. I now had a car and some money from the sale of my old Chevy. I was ready to go again and there were no duty sections at the school for students. I had a six week vacation and since I learned quickly, and I was in a class with a bunch of 90 day wonders.

We were on navy summer schedule, which meant that classes started at 7am and ended at 2pm. That gave me a lot of free time to explore and find my way around the area. There were a lot of navy facilities in the area and each one had its own attractions and officer's club. There was the Admiral Kidd Club at the Main Navy Recruit Depot, North Island Naval Air Station, Miramar Naval Air Station and my favorite, the Marine Corps Recruit Depot where the marines took their basic training. Marine officers were just more fun and knew how to have a good time. These clubs were all free with cheap drinks and there was always a party going on or a celebration.

At the end of my first week on active duty, I was to learn about the Navy's social activities. I saw a notice on the BOQ bulletin board that the "Stars and Bars" association was having their weekly meeting in the O club on the top floor of the BOQ.

I had never heard of this, so I asked my neighbor what this was all about. He told me that this was a group of unmarried female naval officers and some of the female children of the Navy and Marine Corps brass that held a weekly party for the single officers. There were a lot of female officers in the area since the Naval Hospital at Balboa Park, the Seventh Naval District, and the Naval Communication and Security Center was located in San Diego. I was new in the area and didn't know anyone, so I decided to attend. I found out later that the group was known locally as "The Whores and Bores". This was mostly true, but each week you had a chance to meet someone different and take them out on Saturday night. The concept was promoted by the navy to keep its young single officers happy. It worked and also promoted the intermarriage of these officers to keep them on active duty. Usually after a young officer fulfilled his obligated length of duty, he went back to continue his civilian career. There was always a shortage of young trained officers because the pay scale did not compare with the civilian scale.

I attended these functions and finally met a young navy nurse by the name of Winnis Trough who was a rank ahead of me and a year older. Winnie was from Sedalia, Missouri. She had joined the Navy for the fun and for a chance to get out of Sedalia. She had roommates that were interested in meeting my roommates so this worked out perfectly for everyone. I told her that I had a girlfriend at the university that I planned on marrying after she graduated, and this was fine with her. She knew where the hot spots were in town and how to get around. I saw her often, but would occasionally go out with other people that my navy friends would recommend.

After I graduated from the school, I flew back to Vallejo and rejoined my ship. The ship refit was nearly completed. I had an opportunity to enjoy the areas of the Napa Valley once again at the courtesy of the naval nurses that were stationed at the naval hospital at Vallejo. Also, I got to spend some time in San Francisco and I enjoyed that a lot.

I tried to keep in touch with Suzanne, but this was difficult because I was travelling around so much and the U S Postal Service had trouble keeping up with me. In the downtown U S Grant Hotel, AT&T had a telephone service for military personnel where you could place a telephone call from a booth and then pay for it when you were finished. Have you ever tried to make an unexpected call to a sorority or boarding room house and get someone on the telephone? It is next to impossible. But we had trust in each other and this really wasn't a problem, other than you miss talking to them.

The ship had a short shakedown cruise and tested the new equipment and finally steamed into our home port of San Diego. At this time, I received my ship's duty assignments. On a 2250 ton, Geary class destroyer there are normally only eight line officers who have command responsibilities. Each line officer has many duties and two or three primary responsibilities. There are four or five other officers aboard, but their duties are restricted to areas of expertise such as medical, engineering, or supply. My primary duties were: First Division Officer who was responsible for the forward half of the ship, Assistant Gunnery Officer who was responsible for secondary weapons

systems (3 inch guns and fire control systems), and Watch Officer, which meant that I stood a watch six hours a day. My collateral duties were: Small Arms and Landing Party Officer (we had no marines aboard), Transportation Officer which meant that was responsible for all the extra transportation needs of the ship, and the Chief Mess Officer which meant that I was responsible for the preparation and purchasing of the food and for the bookkeeping and collection of the fees for the officers' mess. I was busy and worked many hours doing my duties. Of course, I had about fifty petty officers and other enlisted men working for or under me, but I was in charge and responsible.

During the week, we would steam out of the harbor at dawn and do all the drills to stay effective at gunnery, ASW, man over board, air attacks, etc. Some nights we would anchor at Cortes Bay, I would put a fishing line in the water and catch Red Snapper for the wardroom. With our new height finding radar and our new three inch radar tracking guns, we were deadly accurate during the drills. We could destroy a tank with two shots and cut the tow lines of air targets with three shots. A tow sled was dead meat for us and we were not allowed to fire at them with the three inch. This accuracy was to serve us well off the coast of Korea as the enemy would set adrift explosive loaded sampans to float through our inshore ships. Our after deck three inch gun crew were known as the "Sharp Shooters", a name we carried with pride. We got a 4.0 on every evaluation and make fun of the primary five inch gun crews that were lucky to hit the shore. On air attack drills, we could pick up the targets as they left Miramar or El Toro with the Eight Able and then with our three fire control radars. We were waiting for them as they came skimming over the waves at 100 feet. I think that we feared the submarines the most, since our sonars were not very good and after one depth charge attack, we lost the contact. They enjoyed coming to periscope between our ships and signaling "Hello, your dead".

There was always some jerk that would throw an empty milk can over the side of the ship in front of us and as it sunk, our sonars would get a return and we would spend hours trying to regain the contact. Of course, this always happened at midnight.

In San Diego Harbor there are 38 buoys that four destroyers each can tie up to them. You are left in the middle the harbor generating your own power. There were two small boats aboard, the captain's gig, which is generally restricted for his use, and another motor whale boat that the rest of the ships' crew can use. When you are going on a deployment, you are allowed to berth at the main pier at the destroyer base to take on supplies. And when you return you are allowed to berth at the Broadway Pier downtown so your family can welcome you home. There is usually the Navy Band to add to the festivities. They are the pictures that you see on television.

Our ship was always tied up at buoy 38 and we had the longest distance to get to the fleet landing. There were also water taxis that call on the ship about every hour, and for a small fee they will take you to the fleet landing. San Diego Harbor is about fifteen miles long and about a mile wide and has a very narrow entrance between Point Loma and Coronado Island. As we were tied to the buoy, life was never dull. First, it was the drunks returning from liberty that had a habit of falling off the hull ladder. After that we often had visits from the harbor seal lions that could climb the ladder for a visit. Then, we had the quartermaster of the watch, that forgot to clear his weapon and during

the watch charge, the replacement would fire the weapon, thinking it was not loaded. This usually happened in my ear as the ship went to General Quarters. Then, we had Under Water Demolition teams from the Amphib base practicing boarding the ship and putting a fake bomb in the Captain's cabin. There was never a dull moment all night long.

When we didn't go for sea exercises, the signal lamps would start flashing between the ship's officers in the division as we planned our evening's entertainment. Our favorite place to gather was the Mexican Village (MEXVIL) in Coronado on Orange Avenue. It was usually quiet in the evenings since at that time, there was no bridge. We would take the gig to the Coronado landing and walk to the restaurant for a night of tequila, tacos and beer. This was my first experience with really good Mexican food. We never returned to the San Diego area without a visit to the MEXVIL. It was still there during our last visit. When our families would come for a visit, they always stay at the old Del Coronado Hotel. I found it interesting that it was the first building to have electricity west of the Mississippi River and was wired by Thomas Edison. One evening as Suzanne and I were having dinner in the lower café, Van Johnson and his family entered and sat beside us. Suzanne nearly fainted, since Van Johnson was her screen idol and she had never seen him in person.

Pat Houston Ostrander was also there and lived in naval housing in the Pacific Beach area. Gus's ship was deployed to the Western Pacific (Westpac). Pat, who was a year behind me at Central and a Theta at Kansas was a close friend and I saw her when I had time. Her dad was our family attorney at that time and everybody tried to keep in touch though her since she had a good address. Pat's best friend, Carolyn Simpson, a Theta at Colorado and my old girlfriend from Central; was an airline stewardess for United and was stationed in Seattle. She flew between Seattle and Los Angeles and she often visited when she had a couple of days' layover in LA. She would fly down and spend a night or two and joined us in our carousing of the Officer's clubs. If it wasn't for the fact that I was in the Navy, this would have been the life for me.

Being an Oklahoma boy, I always enjoyed riding horses and Winnie, being a country girl from Sedalia, Missouri, she also enjoyed horses. So, on a couple of occasions we would drive up to Julian to spend the weekend enjoying the beautiful mountains of California. On one trip, as I was leaving the ship wearing my western boots, I was stopped at the gangway with a call from the XO to report to his cabin. When I arrived, I got a real dressing down by him stating "that Naval Officers' did not leave the ship in Levis and boots." I call this incident the "Western Boot" snafu and I always had to carry my boots and Levis with me as I left the ship.

As with all good things, this was to come to an end and the ship received her deployment orders to Westpac. A destroyer usually had a six month rotation, whereas the large amphibious ship had a nine month rotation, and the larger repair and supply ships had a yearly rotation. This caused me to keep running into my old friends and classmates at different places and at different times.

About the middle of September our squadron left San Diego and headed to Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands. It was six days of steaming with constant day and night exercises. The Captain was breaking in a new crew and we were exhausted by the time we arrived at Pearl.

We entered the harbor at daylight and somberly passed down Battle Ship Row where all our battleships had been sunk and damaged by the Japanese. We passed the USS Arizona Memorial and rendered a salute to all the sailors that had perished in the sinking. Oil was still bubbling up from the hull and leaving oil slicks on the surface of the harbor. We gently eased into our berth, which was next to the Officer's Club and across from the submarine pens. As I looked over this scene on this morning, I could visualize the Japanese planes coming over the mountains with the rising sun on their wings and attacking our unsuspecting fleet that was awakening on a Sunday morning with the crews at church call and waiting to go ashore. It was a very emotional moment for me.

Since I was the Transportation Officer, I was immediately dispatched ashore to requisition a Jeep for the Captain's use. When I arrived at the transportation office, they would not allow me to take a vehicle since I did not have an international driver's license so the Captain waited while I read the book and took the test. I passed and got the Jeep and headed back to the ship. We had planned to stay here for seven days before we steamed for Yokosuka.

This was my first of many trips to Hawaii and I wanted to see everything that I had heard about. We were on holiday routine, which meant that I had two days off and one on duty. I had four days to run and play on the beaches and mountains. The first trip was to Waikiki Beach and the famous surf boarding. Morgan Lloyd and I rented surf boards and jumped into the ocean. This looked so easy that I thought that it would be snap. Well, two hours later, we still had not made it back to shore and I knew that they were going to have to call the rescue team to come get us. We finally made it ashore and we were cut up miserably from the coral reefs that were offshore. I never tried that again. We limped back to the ship to treat our wounds. We spent the next day cruising the hotels and bars and ended up at the Moana Hotel where all the college girls stay on their father sponsored trips. The Moana was next to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel where our submarine crews stayed after their cruises during the war and where our Korean War pilots were staying during their R & R leaves. It appeared to me to be more of I & I (Intoxication and intercourse) leave. We also had a meal and drinks at Trader Vic's which was world famous for all their fancy drinks.

Soon our time to leave was here. So early one morning, we prepared to get underway. With the Skipper on the bridge and in command, he quickly swung the ship into the channel neglecting to remember that there was a floating dry dock directly behind us, and he rammed our fantail into the dock. This caused major damages and we were not going anywhere soon. We quickly tossed our landing lines back to the shore crew and winched back into the pier. The rest of the squadron sailed on to Japan, minus the Frank Knox. After inspection, it was determined that we had suffered severe damage to the fantail and some minor damage to port screw shaft. They could fix the fantail damage, but we would have to live with the shaft problem until we returned the states. Thus, we were to have two more weeks of vacation in Hawaii. Wasn't that sad? I requisitioned the Jeep again and we settled in for a two week vacation. The Captain had to be available at all times to supervise the repairs and

there sat that Jeep with no one to use it. Since I was Transportation Officer, it was my duty to insure that the Jeep was always operating properly, so each day we would take a tour of the different parts of the island to test the performance of the vehicle.

After two weeks, the necessary repairs were completed and we steamed out of Pearl to return to our squadron in Japan with nice sun tans. But before we left we received orders to make a special delivery to Midway Island where the navy still had a security and communication facility. Midway will always have a place in U S history and I was looking forward to being there. It turned out that the special delivery was a few crates of parts and 50 cases of Budweiser Beer. The captain decided that he would charge a delivery fee of 10 cases and that the crew would go ashore and have a softball game with the officers verses the enlisted. This hardly seemed fair since there were only 11 officers aboard and the padre was neutral and wouldn't play. We had the games scheduled for the afternoon that we arrived and then we would get the hell out of there for Japan. As luck would have it, we were slowed by the weather and didn't get in until late in the evening. The tide was low and we couldn't enter the lagoon to the pier. We steamed in circles until first light and then entered the lagoon and tied up at the pier. At 7:30 am the teams debarked to the field with the ten cases of cold beer and played a softball game among the gooney birds and the amused station keepers. After the game, we all boarded the ship and the sober few manned their stations and we departed for Japan. Three days later as we approached Japan, another strange thing happened. The ships intercom system turned into a juke box and all we heard was Japanese music for several hours. The morale of the crew certainly picked up and everyone was anxious to arrive. This was the beginning of what I call "The Commodore Affinity Caper."

As we pulled alongside the pier, Japanese families started appearing to greet our arrival. I wondered what was going on and then someone told me that several of our senior enlisted crew members had two families, one in the US and another in Japan and these were the Japanese families greeting the return of their husbands. These senior petty officers immediately took leave to be with their families. When we entered the harbor, I also noticed Gus Ostrander's ship, The USS Montrose (PA212), tied along the dock. After taking on supplies, we moved out into the harbor and anchored and the Commodore (COMDESRON112) came aboard to greet us and welcome us to Japan. Before anyone would be released on leave or liberty, they had to be paid in Military Payment Certificates (MPCs) because we could not take American money ashore since we were afraid of the communists getting it and we were on the gold standard. The Supply Officer/Paymaster and I took our motor whale boat ashore with \$40,000 in cash to exchange for MPC's. Well, the weather got bad and we could not return for a while. Then the Paymaster took the cash back to the bank and we decided to meet the next day try to return with the MPC's. We did not have a place to stay until I remembered that Gus's ship was tied down the pier, so I went aboard and asked for Gus. He was aboard and I put my weapon in his safe and we decided to go the Officer's Club and have a cool one. The club was a lively place with a Japanese band trying to play Western music.

Gus and I had a lot catching up to do since I had seen his wife just few weeks before and he wanted to be brought up to date on the activities of all our friends. As we were sipping our Nippon's, we looked over to another table and thought that we recognized another one of our fraternity

brothers from Norman. And sure enough, it was Bill Lawrence from the class before ours. He was now a Captain, USMC. The last time we saw him, he was a Second Lieutenant.

He said that he had been in Korea since he left the NROTC program and that all the other junior officers had been killed and he got two battlefield promotions to Captain. Bill stayed in the Marine Corps and retired as a Brigadier General after thirty years' service. We spent most of the evening there and returned to his ship where I spent the night. The next morning the wind had died down some and we returned to the ship with MPC's. The Paymaster paid everyone in MPCs and a third of the crew when on liberty. I spent several more evenings with Gus while we were there, but shortly we left for Korea.

We received our steaming orders with the Commodore taking the Captain's quarters and the skipper moved to his sea cabin. But as the division was weighting anchor, the KNOX could not depart because the Commodore was a no-show. We didn't know what had happened to him and we radioed COMPACFLEET for instructions. Apparently, this was a common practice for the Commodore to go missing. We were instructed to send out a search party to find him and make sure that he was not kidnapped. The shore patrol gave us a tip and we quickly found him in his favorite bar and brothel. This was to become a common problem as we left port and I was able to follow each incident since I was decrypting the secret messages and giving them to the skipper. At one port, we couldn't find him and just left him ashore. Since our skipper was the junior of the four captains, it always our job to find and sober him up. Damn, I was glad when he moved his staff to the USS Isbell (DD-869).

We steamed into the Inland Sea of Japan and observed Hiroshima from afar since it was still a restricted area with high levels of radiation. Shortly, we entered the harbor of Kure, where the world's biggest battleship was sunk by a U S submarine at the end of the war. We spent a night's liberty in Kure, but there was not much there but beer halls. Some members of my division got arrested by the Shore Patrol and I had to go ashore to bail them out. We left Kure and entered the Shamona Soglsi Straits and were approaching Sasebo, which was our forward base for Korea. After leaving Sasebo, our orders were changed and we headed for Saigon, Vietnam. The French were getting their butts kicked by the Vietcong in the Phnom Penh area, so our ship steamed up the Mekong River to rescue them and the ship got them safely to Saigon. We then steamed back to Korea, but by the time we got there the major fighting was over and there were only minor skirmishes being fought until the peace was signed. I was able to pick up two more combat medals.

Typically, we would enter the Korean combat zone on the last few days of the month and leave the first few days of the third month. This way we got combat pay for three months and didn't have to pay incomes taxes on pay in combat zones. North Korea is a mountainous country and most of their commercial traffic was along the shore lines and this is where we maintained our patrols. Most of the traffic was at night and during the day light hours they would not move and remain in the tunnels in the mountains. So at night we tracked them with our fire control radars and then during the daylight hours we would seal the entrances and exits of the tunnels with naval gunfire. The next night they would try to clear the debris and the next day we would reseal them. This went on for several days until we thought that we had permanently sealed the tunnels.

While we were in the combat zone, the ship would go to condition One Able, which meant that a third of the crew was always at General Quarters. So for eight hours a day, I was sitting in the aft fire control director, freezing while the mess men brought us hot soup and sandwiches. There was no wardroom service there. To help the time pass, we would run tracking and loading drills and one day we spotted a high flying plane circling our ship. It was probably at 30,000 feet. This was not uncommon since our air force maintained a constant patrol over the airspace over Korea. The plane was out of gunfire range, so I notified the bridge of the planes presence and that we were to run a simulated tracking drill on the plane. The bridge gave its approval and we started the drill. We tracked the plane for about 20 minutes generating fire control solutions when one of the fire control men in the radar room called up and said the plane had never responded to our IFF (Identification /Friend or Foe) signal. I thought this was strange and notified the bridge and they responded that it probably had not been turned on or was not working. I returned to our drill and then the Range Operator told me that the range to the target was rapidly decreasing and the target was heading directly for our ship. By now we could get a good visual on the aircraft, but the MIG 15 looked exactly like one of our Sabre jets and the only difference was the location of the tail fins that were lower than on the Saber jet. The plane was approaching at 400 knots an hour and soon buzzed our ship while the Captain was trying to decide whether or not to open fire. The plane was a North Korean MIG 15, but never fired on us. I guess that he was either out of ammunition, his guns jammed, or was only taking pictures. He was a damn brave pilot, since he had to have known that our radars were locked on him and that we had a fire control solution.

The next series of events, I called the "Dress Blues Farce. "We usually refueled from a fleet tanker, but occasionally we would refuel from the carrier with COMPACFLT 7.7 aboard. The skipper always wanted make a good impression as we went alongside the flag ship and everyone had to change into their Dress Blues to receive fuel. We would go from Condition One Able to standard watches and then change into dress blues as we proceeded to our fueling stations. No matter as what the sea, weather or light conditions might be. We were ruining our dress blues as we took on fuel. About the third time that this happened, the Admiral yelled down from the flag bridge to our captain and asked "Where was the Parade". That stopped that crap quickly.

In the meantime, The Communist Chinese (ChiComs) were attacking the Nationalist Chinese (ChiNats) in the Tachen Islands off the mainland and the Knox supplied naval gunfire in support of their movements while the ChiNats were evacuating the islands. I was ordered to take a landing party ashore to rescue the women, children and any wounded troops while the troops were being reinforced. I received another combat medal for this rescue. After this action, the ship steamed into the Quemoy/Matsu Island areas and maintained a barrier patrol to protect the ChiNats from Invasion. We had been at sea for 40 days and the ship and crew needed some R & R and we were ordered to Subic Bay in the Philippines where we had a major repair facility. I spent Christmas Day trying to eat come chocolate cookies that Auntie had sent me but it had taken 30 days for them to reach me. I also tried to play some tennis, but it was just too damn hot to do anything. We moved our mattresses topside, but it never even got cool at night. The ship was like an oven. I will never forget that Christmas Day in 1955. After the repairs were made, we left and sailed to Manila.

This was another emotional scene to see Bataan, Corregidor, and all the bombed out ship hulls that have not been removed yet. I got three days R &R leave and Morgan and I checked into an air conditioned hotel outside the National Palace and did nothing but get cool and sleep. We soon departed and headed for Formosa again. There we went into port at Keeloung and I went aboard a Chinese destroyer that the MAG had supplied to teach them how to use their new Mark 1 Able fire Control System. They lived and ate like pigs and I could not get out of there fast enough. I then understood why the Supply Officer gave me a small sack that contained a box of crackers, a jar of peanut butter, a can of Bon Ami, a towel and a washcloth.

We received an emergency weather report that Typhoon Pamela was headed in our direction. We had to leave immediately and get into open waters where we could maneuver to avoid the storm. The ship was at anchor and the Captain, XO, and most of the crew was ashore and something had to be done immediately. I was the senior command officer aboard and I needed help, so I sent a search party ashore to find the Skipper and bring back the crew. If this happened, then I was required to get this \$23 million dollar ship underway and out into the Formosan Straits where we could ride out the storm. I felt totally unqualified to do this, particularly with a major storm heading our way. I was terrified. The storm was getting worse in the harbor and it was dangerous for our small boats to be in the water. I told the Duty Engineering officer to fire all the boilers and prepare to get under way. While we were at anchor, we only had one boiler online to generate power. It usually takes four hours to get all boilers lit and have enough steam to move the ship. As time passed I became more nervous and was anxiously watching the shore for signs of our crew and Captain. The sea finally became so rough that I ordered the whale boats to be hoisted aboard before they were smashed against the sides of the ship. I was becoming more panicky when I noticed a tug boat moving our way and it was headed directly at the ship. As it got closer the ship, I could see that it was the Captain and part of the crew. We were able to get them aboard with use of a sea buoy and we immediately hauled in the anchor and headed for open water.

We finally got out of the harbor and into open water. But this was not the end of our problems. In our haste to leave the harbor, we had left the water tight door from the chain locker to the provision storage area unlocked and we were taking on water through chain locker into this area. No one noticed this in the confusion of leaving port until we needed some toilet. All of it was water soaked. I always called this "The Toilet Paper Crises" and there wasn't a supply ship within hundreds of miles. We tried everything to dry the paper out, but nothing worked. The captain had to make a special plea for toilet paper to the Task Force Commander and was he pissed at everyone and especially me since I was responsible for this area.

This was a class 5 typhoon and we could not steam south and had to remain in the straits for four days fighting the storm. The waves were over our main bridge and no one was allowed on the weather decks. We wore life jackets when exposed to the weather and the top side watches were tied to their posts. We were short about half our crew and everyone was always on duty. When I was the Officer of the Deck on the bridge, I tied myself to the forward radar repeater so that I would not be swept away. The ship was suffering major damages with some of the depth charges being lost overboard along with their racks and all the deck lifelines were lost. Some of the ventilators were

smashed and we were taking water aboard. There was one seaman that was seriously injured and three more were in the infirmary.

Finally, the storm moved inland over China and we regained control of the ship. We limped back into Keeloung, picked up the rest of the crew, met a hospital ship and transferred our injured. We headed back to Sasebo for repairs and some R & R.

If you wanted to hear all the rumors about the ship, you heard them on the signal bridge while at sea. What you hear behind the signal bridge, stays behind the signal bridge. While steaming, members of the watch could always take a smoke or coffee break behind the signal bridge. Since I didn't smoke or drink coffee, I always had to stand in for the breakers and never got a watch break. After about three months of this, I bought a package of cigarettes and had my own coffee mug. I always carried my cigs in my pocket and I had my special coffee mug on the bridge. I never smoked one of the cigarettes or had a mug of coffee, but I took my breaks with a cigarette in my mouth, carrying my mug.

Sasebo was the Navy and Marine staging point for the Korean War and was a most unusual town and catered to the Navy. There was no officer's club since it was at the nearby Ewokuni Naval and Marine Air Station, but there was an annex that contained the liquor store. The most famous place there was the Matsu Lodge. It was legendary. It catered only to officers and was a combination spa, bar, restaurant, hotel, and brothel. When you were a member, you received your own kimono that you wore during your visit or stay and had a locker for your personal belongings. The service was impeccable and the proprietors were noted for their honesty. I could leave my wallet any place in the establishment and it would never be touched. You would buy your booze at the "O" club annex and they would put your name on it. It was there whenever you returned. At the annex, the best Scotches were \$2 a quart, and American Whiskeys were \$1.50. Wine was 25 cents and champagne was 50 cents.

When you had been to sea for a long time, you had a lot of money to spend since there was nothing to spend it on at sea other than toothpaste and razor blades. You were paid in MPC's and many times. I could not see the bottom of my safe because of all the money that was in it.

The Navy, in an effort to encourage your retention on active duty, would give you a 50% pay raise after you had accumulated 24 months of active service. Do you remember that when I was 17, Bob and I joined the Naval Reserve? When I came on active duty, I had 15 months of active duty already, so after nine months I got this big pay raise. This meant that I was making more money than my contemporaries, so I was really wealthy when I went ashore. I can remember buying champagne just to shoot the corks at the other officers from our division at the Matsu. After the repairs were made to the ship, we headed for another patrol in Korea and then we sailed to Hong Kong.

Hong Kong was like a city out of wonderland. Prices were cheap and you could buy or sell anything. The Sampan merchants were always around our ship and would mend our clothing, tailor a shirt or suit and do paintings of your loved ones. If we would give them our garbage, they would paint our ship for us. We spent the Chinese New Year (Tet) there and it was big celebration. I have

never seen so many neon signs and fireworks. The noises and shadows from the displays echoed and reflected and echoed throughout the harbor. We were heading shortly back to San Diego and the States after we left Hong Kong, but my mind turned back to Suzanne. We corresponded as much as I had time to write and she did also. Everything seemed to be status quo, so I needed to buy an engagement and wedding ring since prices here were so inexpensive. My roommate Morgan was facing the same problem, so we went ashore to the Shore Patrol Station and we talked to the padre there and explained our situation. He said that he understood and referred us to Fu Hong Jewelry, where he had a contact and was known to be honest. Morgan and I found the shop and told the proprietor that the father had sent us and could he help us. The shop was a little hole in the wall with no mechanical machinery. I could see the artisans working away with their hand drills and files. He went back to his safe and came out with a little box of stones wrapped in paper. He had stones from a half carat to about two carats. He then pulled out a Sears Catalogue and asked us to pick out a setting and design. We did this and he gave us a price of \$300 for a $\frac{3}{4}$ carat set for \$400 for a full carat set. He said that these stones were flawless and D color, which he said was the best you could get. I chose the full carat and Morgan chose the $\frac{3}{4}$ carat since he was saving his money for medical school. He said to come back in three days and the rings would be ready. Morgan Lloyd would continue his education and is now a gynecologist in Santa Barbara, California. Bill King, my other roommate also continued his education at Harvard and is now an attorney in Cambridge, MA. We had complete faith in the padre and his recommendation and the deal was made. We returned just before we left and the rings were ready and exactly as he described them. We came back to the ship and put them in our safes. We came back to Sasebo and I sent Suzanne a telegram and told her that I had purchased her engagement and wedding rings.

That ought to give her something to think about until I returned to Norman. We did another tour of Korea and return to Yokosuka and then we were ordered back to San Diego. Gus's ship had already returned and Bill was back in Korea. The USO had a big farewell party for us with a lot of the local girls and the next day we departed.

Once again the Japanese families were on the dock waving goodbyes to their Japanese husbands and we navigated again through the sampans and floating fish nets and headed to sea.

We had contiguous night and day exercises on the way back to Pearl, but no one seemed to mind since we were on our way home. All during the tour we had continuous contact with the States with our shortwave radios, but these were only used to send in emergencies and we never wanted to break radio silence. The final debacle was "The Make Smoke Stupid" incident. I was on the bridge watching for signals from the division commander as we approached Midway when I observed a Flag Signal that I had never seen before. I quickly looked it up in the signal book and it said "Make Smoke" and then an execution. I called the captain since I didn't know what to do and he called the engine room and told them to start making white smoke with our smoke generator. No one knew the location of the smoke generator. Slowly, each ship started emitting a small stream of white smoke that continued to grow, except for the KNOX, while the captain flew into a rage and major breakdown on the bridge. We tried for three days to make smoke and it never happened. Have you ever seen three trails of smoke with a blank spot?

At sea, we used line of sight radios and flag signals to communicate between ships. Several members of our crew had new family members and there had been one death. At that time there were no jet transports and it was impossible for a crew member to return home without a long and tedious trip.

Early one morning we steamed into Pearl passing the solemn Arizona Memorial and into the berth that we had left from about six months earlier. The ship had been freshly painted in Hong Kong with our new combat medals and stars on the bridge. We were met by a Navy band and the Commanding Admiral of our division. We stayed there a couple of days while we replenished our fresh food supplies and took on new munitions. Five days later, we sailed into San Diego harbor at 10 am and berthed at the downtown Broadway Pier.

Once again, there was a Navy brass band playing, flags were flying, the Commandant of the Seventh Naval District was there and hundreds of family members carrying signs and babies. It was a mob scene. As soon as we were secured to the pier, the gangway was lowered and the crew went ashore to see their American families. I wasn't expecting anyone to meet me so I stayed aboard and observed all the activities from the forecastle. I noticed that someone seemed to be waving at me and as I looked closely through the binoculars, I saw Pat and Carolyn on the dock. So I debarked and then ran into Winnis at the bottom of the gangplank. We hugged and then went over to see Pat and Carolyn. No one seemed happy with this arrangement, but what could I do? I quickly greeted everyone and both said that they were having a coming home party for me. Thank god Suzanne wasn't there. I explained to them that the first shore leave after a deployment that only the married men got liberty, and the single men stood the duty and that this might occur for several days. They seemed to be satisfied with this explanation and I said that I would call them when I would be available. I appreciated their efforts and particularly Carolyn's since she had flown down from Los Angeles. Anyway, I had applied for a short leave and I needed to get back to see Suzanne and pick up a car that Uncle Joe had acquired for me to buy and bring back.

After spending the night at the Broadway Pier, we moved back out to buoy 38 and got into our routine. Many of the crew went on leave and finally I had my turn and flew to Tulsa, where I spent and day and then drove to Norman. Suzanne was glad to see me and we spent a couple of days together and everything seemed to be as when I left. I drove straight through to San Diego. I did this on a five day leave. I had now figured out a way to use a long weekend for a trip to Norman and back. I left at midnight on Friday and drove to Tucson, where I left my car with an old Central HS and OU friend of mine, Bill Rahe. He was stationed at the Air Force Base there. I then would catch a 9 am American Airline direct flight to Oklahoma City, arriving about 2 pm and Suzanne would pick me up. I could spend Saturday and most of Sunday in Norman and then catch the return flight to Tucson and drive to San Diego about midnight. This was fairly tiring, but it was worth the effort. I did this once every 4-6 weeks. Suzanne's graduation was scheduled for August 1956. The damage that we had sustained at Pearl and by the typhoon was a constant problem and the squadron commander decided that the only way to permanently repair the damage was to go into dry dock at Vallejo. So a ninety

day dry dock refit and repair was scheduled for July. Upon further inspection, it was decided that it would take more time, so the officers were asked if they would like to be transferred instead of spending that time in dry dock.

Since I wanted to return to Norman and get my Master's Degree, I listed the Naval Air and Technical Training Center (NATTC) in Norman as my first choice and I don't remember what the others choices were. I sent this request in to the assignment desk and waited for a response. I was still enjoying myself in San Diego and kept meeting new friends and thought that perhaps I had made a mistake by requesting the NATTC assignment. After all, Suzanne was graduating in a few weeks and she could join me here or in Vallejo and teach school, since there appeared to be a critical teacher shortage in California. The pay was much better than it was in Oklahoma. Each weekend that I didn't have the duty, I was going to Mexico to the bull fights and Rosita Beach, Las Vegas, Lake Tahoe, and to the mountains behind San Diego. It wasn't such a bad life, when you weren't in the war zone.

One day, I received a letter from Carolyn and she told me that she was having a long layover in LA that weekend and asked me to join her. United had large apartments that they maintained at the airport for their employees to stay in during layovers, and it had plenty of room available, particularly on the weekends. I called her that evening and said that I had the long weekend and would meet her there on Friday around 6 pm. Back then, LA was only a three hour drive up SH 1 and it sounded like it might be a fun weekend since there was always something going on in the area. Carolyn and I had gone together for two years in high school and steady in my senior year so we knew each other well. When I went to college she found another one to take my place during her senior year, but we still dated occasionally when we were both were in Tulsa.

We spent Friday evening in a bar and grill near LAX. On Saturday we went to Long Beach and saw the sights around the yacht harbor, but missed the boat to Catalina. We ate there and returned to the apartment. We had a lot of time to talk about old times and the fun we had together at Central. She said that her contract with United was up at the end of summer and that she wanted to settle down and start a family. She was tired of "dating losers' and playing the game. I kind of got the drift of where she was going with this, but she didn't know that I was going to be transferred shortly. Frankly, I wasn't sure either. I returned to San Diego with a lot to think about. I was still seeing Winnis and her roommate at the hospital who was going hot and heavy with the Academy grad that came aboard the ship after I did. In fact, I out ranked him by seven days because I was commissioned seven days before he graduated. I had been dating Winnie for about a year now, but part of that time I was in Westpac. She told me one night that she thought that our relationship should move on to the next step, and her contract with the Navy was also up for renewal. Even though this wasn't a big deal, it meant that she had to obligate another three years and she got a promotion. She asked me what I thought she ought to do. She was aware of my impending orders, so the meaning of these remarks was not wasted on me. I told her that she ought to do what she felt would be the most satisfying thing to her and that I shouldn't be a consideration in her decision.

Finally, in June, I received my new orders and was I surprised. I had been ordered to report to the Commanding Officer at the Naval Ammunition Depot in McAlester, Oklahoma. I didn't even know

that the Navy had ammunition depot in Oklahoma. I had 14 days to report including transit time. The Wardroom had a party for me and at midnight of the day of my release, I pulled my car on the dock near the ship and left. I drove straight through to Norman and got there shortly after noon on the next day. I went to Miss Hedy's Rooming House and yelled up the stairs for Suzanne and she yelled back "Is that you, John." How could she possibly have known that I was in Norman? No one in my family knew that this would happen. We had a tearful reunion after I told her the news and it appeared that all our plans were working to our satisfaction. I drove to Tulsa to notify my family and then to McAlester to report.

The McAlester Naval Ammunition Depot had been built towards the end of WWII and at one time employed about 20,000 people and a barracks of about 500 military that were used for security. They manufactured all kinds of munitions and covered about 365 square miles of the county and had about 300 ammunition bunkers. After WWII, the production slowed and the civilian employees went down to about 2000 with 250 military which were mostly Marines that were used for security. When the Korean Conflict started, production increased and they increased employment to about 5000 civilians. There were only 12 naval officers stationed there, one of them being a doctor to operate the dispensary and four more restricted duty types that supervised the civilians employers and managers. That left eight of the unrestricted line officers available for the command structure and I was now fifth in command. Apparently I had been requested by the Captain for a specific purpose and I asked what was to be my billet. He told me that I was the new Administration and Communications Officer and would have about 30 civilians that would work for me. He told me that I was requested because I had a Top Secret Clearance and was knowledgeable in the new cryptography machine that they were installing. He didn't need to say anymore. They were going to start storing atomic weapons and all communications regarding these types of weapons were always coded in a class one code that required special equipment and cryptographers. No one on the base knew how to use the new Crypto machines. That is why I was sent here. I was their man.

I moved into the large BOQ that was built for 50 officers and I was the only resident with my own staff of stewardesses to maintain the facility. I had my own fishing boat since the BOQ was located on a small lake and my own swimming pool. There were quarters for senior officers and I had my pick. Also, since I was the Administration Officer, I was the Treasurer of the Commissioned Officer's Club, which meant I was in charge of the operations of the club, and responsible only to the Commanding Officer.

This was very interesting since I ran the only liquor store within a 150 mile radius because Oklahoma was a dry state at that time. The nearest other store was at Tinker Air Force Base in Mid-West City. We had hardly any expenses since we were located on the depot which furnished all our utilities and a public works department that did all our maintenance. The officers took turns serving as bar tenders. By tradition the drinks were free when they were working and I generally operated the package store. We did have one guy that cleaned up after us and we had all our food catered or the wives fixed it. We were making so much money that I didn't know what to do with it. I was constantly

being entertained by the local bankers who wanted our business and by the distillery representatives that wanted sell us their products. I was given so many free samples of their products that I was able to stock the club bar, and when we moved to Norman the biggest boxes were full of booze. The only problem I had was with the wines. I knew nothing about wines, so when the wineries came to call, I let them talk to the Captain who was from California, supposedly an expert on the subject and he got the free wine samples. We were selling about a hundred cases of products a month and the profits were becoming a problem. The Navy had regulations regarding profits and any surplus over what they thought was reasonable was to be returned to the Navy Department. This is when I learned about creative accounting.

The youngest supply officer on base keep the books since I had no knowledge about accounting at that time. We set up a series of reserve accounts for the replacement of equipment that was supplied to us freely. We had a reserve set up for every item in the club and at one time the reserve to replace the juke box was over \$25,000. We had to open three different banking accounts so as not to exceed their insurance limits.

Finally, we were notified that the new Cryptography equipment was to arrive shortly, so it was my job to find a secure place to install this top secret piece of machinery. Also, it was my job to train the other officers on how to use the machine since I would be not be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I will not go into all the details involved in this operation since I am sure that part of the details are still top secret. After I notified the Navy that we were ready to receive the machine, I received notice that the machine would arrive in a few days at Tinker AFB in Oklahoma City and we were to be there to receive and receipt delivery. I called the Commanding Officer at the Marine Barracks and arranged for a squad of armed marines to accompany me to Tinker to pick it up, and we looked like an armed convoy carrying an atomic weapon.

We retrieved the machine and soon it was hooked up and functioning and then the training began. I honestly believe that some of the junior officers just played dumb so they would not have to encode or decode messages This was one of their functions if they were the "Officer of the Day " or the duty watch officer.

Since I only had to stand duty every sixth weekend, I had plenty of time to travel back and forth between Norman and Tahlequah. Suzanne and I continued with our wedding plans although Suzanne's parents were not in favor of her marrying and much less her marrying a guy from the big city. They even offered her a trip to Europe if she would defer the wedding. This did not seem to tempt her and she was now wearing her engagement ring. She graduated as scheduled and returned to Tahlequah to continue our plans.

The planning of the wedding date was a critical issue since I wanted to be released from active duty with 60 days leave on the books. That was the maximum amount that you could accumulate and get paid. That money would be a big help towards getting started in our married life. I figured that if we got married on the Friday after Thanksgiving, and then returned to the depot and started leave on

Monday that no leave days would be used. Then I could take five days, Monday thru Friday and with the free weekend, we would have seven days to drive to Monterey, Mexico, and return.