

RESUME No. 33
of
"Andy" LAVERN ANDREW BORDWELL

My adventure with the Navy began on 3 April, 1934 in the Recruiting Station at Buffalo, New York where I shipped into the service, not quite fresh off the farm, as I had spent the previous summer traveling with circuses--about half of the time with one of the big railroad shows (Hagenbeck-Wallace). And it was an adventure right from the start for, to begin with, there was an overnight rail journey and few, if any, of our draft of recruits had ever seen the inside of a Pullman car. But before all of this, there was the farm and family.

The farm was located in western New York State near, but not a part of, the Finger Lakes wine district, and at close to three hundred acres was rather large for that part of the country. A sizeable part of the 300 acres was also part of a great wooded swamp which stretched for miles beyond our farm and which was cut by a stream where I eventually learned how to catch pickerel and bullheads, and to this day I account bullheads a prime delicacy. There were fields and woods and brooks and the big barns to play in, and a deep gully and the neighbors' sugar bush to explore, along with the ruins of a stave mill which had shut down before I was born. A mile or so over the road and up the hill was the one-room school where I spent seven and a half years, for which I am everlastingly grateful. Every year in late summer or early fall--and some years twice--a great steam threshing rig would appear at the farm. Threshing day was always an exciting time for me and for all small boys, although a time of grueling hard work for the grown-ups. In the late 1920's, the threshermen began to replace their steam engines with gas tractors, and our thresher showed up with a new Rumely OilPull ("Guaranteed to run on kerosene at any load"). The OilPull was not as spectacular as the steamers, but it was a fascinating machine and I am still--after sixty years--intrigued by it. The farm was worked for years by my father with never more than one or two hired men, and before his tenure, by his father for how many years no one now recalls.

Grandfather Bordwell came from Poland (then called Russia) in 1863, the year of another Polish revolt against the Russians, and for the ensuing sixty-seven years, until he died at the age of eighty-two, he harbored an abiding hatred of Russia, Russians, and anything and everything Russian. I was too young to hear what he had to say around 1920-21 when the Poles were walloping the Red Russians, but to this day whenever I visit the old gentleman's grave, I am careful not to mention anything about Russia, lest I provoke rumblings from below. After he got himself settled in this country and grew up a little, he met and married a little Colleen straight from 'the Ould Sod' and after that came my father and two uncles and Aunt Mary, and then Grandma, still a young woman, expired in her fifth attempt at motherhood. It is said that a wake was held for her and that during the course of that sorrowful night, some of the mourners

held her up in her coffin and provided her with liberal draughts of whatever they had for refreshment that night, the better to speed her on her way to wherever she was headed. Apparently the priest did not fully approve of these doings, but then Irish wakes were really Irish wakes in those days. Aunt Mary grew up to graduate from a School of Nursing in 1905--a rather notable accomplishment at the time--and then went out on a typhoid case, caught the fever, and promptly died. Of course, I never knew Grandma or Aunt Mary, nor did I know my maternal grandfather who was a steamboat engineer on the Ohio River and who perished in a boiler explosion while my mother was still a small child.

Growing up with me on my parents' farm were my sister and my younger brother, John. There were also two older half-brothers, but they lived elsewhere and came to the farm only occasionally for visits. Years later during the war, when all five of us were in the service, my mother had one of those little banners with five gold stars on it, which was a matter of considerable pride to her. This was the family situation: all very ordinary folks except that some say that there was an English Viscount Somebody-or-other in my mother's background somewhere, but evidently no one ever bothered to track him down. On the other hand, maybe someone did look him up and then thought better of reporting what he found! As for the farm situation, it was pretty much like the neighboring farms. We seemed to be prospering during the Twenties (if we were poor we didn't have a welfare bureaucracy to tell us so) until late 1929 when things started to fall apart--slowly at first, but by Autumn of 1932, the whole farm operation went to smash and foundered on two years of cruelly severe drought and 45-cent wheat and milk bringing a nickel or a dime a gallon. My parents' seventeen years of hard work on the farm had gone down the Black Hole of the Depression with virtually nothing left to show for it.

In his Left-Handed Monkey Wrench (it is in the "Sons of Martha" section) Richard McKenna takes some note of the Navy as a haven from the Great Depression--men enlisting just for a job, and because there was not anything else available back in San Francisco. No doubt this was true of some, but it was not so with me in 1934. I had wanted to join the Navy since I was a small child, from as far back as I can remember, and rejection at the recruiting station would have been a personal disaster of catastrophic proportions. Happily, I was accepted and as it turned out over the long haul--from the show business caper of 1933 and for the next fifty years--I was one of those fortunate souls who always was able to earn a living doing something that he wanted to do--intermittent grousing and grumbling notwithstanding!

The morning after swearing-in, the Pullman porter would have herded us off the train at Baltimore, probably happy to see the last of us as a band of penniless recruits couldn't have made for a very profitable run for him. I have only the vaguest recollection of that layover at Baltimore, and I wish that I could remember more, for it would have meant a night passage on the 'Old Bay Line' steamer to Norfolk; and the Baltimore Steam Packet Company--along with PATTERSON, and trains that ran on time,

and the two-bit Manhattan cocktail (with two cherries)-is gone these thirty years, gone and as "...one with Nineveh and Tyre."

At any rate, we arrived at Norfolk and our new home away from home was a World War I temporary barracks at the Norfolk Naval Training Station. Boot camp lasted longer than the allotted twelve weeks because about the time we would be ready to break quarantine, someone in the company would catch measles or something, and we would be quarantined all over again. This happened two or three times. It was usually measles because we were quarantined so much that there was hardly a chance to get down to East Main Street in Norfolk to catch something more serious. But even boot camp comes to an end after a while, and the latter part of July we were all transferred out to join the Fleet.

Nineteen thirty-four was the year of an East Coast cruise, and the Fleet was in Newport when I joined CALIFORNIA. Soon I received my first advancement in rating to Seaman 2nd class with a whopping pay increase to \$30.60 per month, up from \$17.85 as Apprentice Seaman--in both cases less 20 cents per month for hospitalization. The Roosevelt pay cut was in effect, and the regular pay scale would not be restored for another year or so. But people who shipped-over during that pay cut period never did get their shipping-over money which went to finance the New Deal.

Shortly after this promotion, I had my rate changed to Fireman 3rd and went to number 5 fireroom where I spent the greater part of two years, interrupted by a temporary assignment in KINGFISHER for the Aleution Island Survey Expedition during the summer of 1935.

From CALIFORNIA it was back to the East Coast, and the summer of 1936 was spent at Portsmouth Navy Yard (Kittery, Maine) to await LAMSON (367) then abuilding at Bath Iron Works. She was commissioned in the autumn, but it was January 1937 before we got away from Boston for the shakedown cruise to Buenos Aires and the beginning of July before we joined the Fleet at San Diego. It so happened that LAMSON was designated 'ready duty destroyer' for the Fourth of July weekend, and thus took part in the search for Amelia Earhart--two weeks or so cruising back and forth across the Equator looking for some trace that wasn't there. Once this operation wound up, it was back to San Diego about the time the PATTERSON crew was being made up and so toward the end of August my short cruise in LAMSON came to an end, and I was off to Bremerton Yard to await PATTERSON's completion.

As is well known, PATTERSON was commissioned on 22 September 1937 at Bremerton, and she was a remarkably fine ship in every way. I went into the engine room and after a while had charge of the evaporators and stood throttle watch underway. I stayed in PATTERSON for almost four years--longer than in any of my other ships--and might still be there had I not been afflicted with grass-is-greener-on-the-other-side-of-the-fence syndrome when I was younger. The problem was a lingering desire to get into submarines, and when in the spring of 1941, the Surface Diesel School announced openings for candidates, my name went into the

mill. And so it was that I gave up my cushy little billet in PRINCESS PAT MARU and also the chance to be a Pearl Harbor Survivor. Two things I remember about leaving PRINCESS PAT: first, shaking hands with the Chief Engineer on the quarterdeck before I got into the whale boat, and second, as the boat made its way to the tanker which I would ride to the Mainland, seeing a strange looking contraption on the mast of a cruiser which had just arrived at Pearl. No one in boat knew what it was, and everyone wondered at it and allowed that it did look like a bedsprings. And for all the good that it would do on the seventh of December, it was the first radar antenna that any of us had seen at Pearl or anywhere else, for that matter.

At New London the submarine scheme eventually miscarried, and I finished up the Surface Diesel course according to original orders. One weekend liberty that summer I visited the Tews, who were living in an apartment in Brooklyn. Ide Ferris Tew, MM1 and a Plankowner, had left PATTERSON shortly before my transfer and was in the commissioning detail for a new destroyer tender. We would all meet once again eight years later for a day's fishing in Montana, and I am still wondering where they are now.

From late August 1941 and for a month or so, it was to Receiving Ship New York and Receiving Ship Norfolk--both hectic places because of the increasingly rapid mobilization--and then to Point Pleasant, West Virginia on the Ohio River for another new ship. This time it was a net tender, LARCH (YN-16) (later, AN-21) which was being built by a boat yard more accustomed to working on stern-wheel steamboats but which was already loaded up with war work--net tenders for the Navy and mine layers for the Army.

The autumn of 1941 was a pleasant little interlude, living in an old-time boarding house operated by a landlady who had been a steamboat cook for many years and with lots of attractions in the town for diversion when we weren't at the yard watching the ship being put together. It was also the time of the apple butter.

The landlady had a hired girl who was a most attractive little damsel, to say the least, and who also for some reason was very well behaved. Out in the backyard, the landlady also had a huge stack of apples and an enormous cast iron kettle. The connection here was that the hired girl was supposed to peel all of those apples and then boil them down to apple butter in the big iron pot, stirring them the while with a wooden paddle almost as big as the girl herself. An Electricians Mate who was also living in the boarding house and I both saw a different connection. Each of us concocted the idea that if we helped with the apples, one might get on good terms with the girl, on whom both of us had had an eye ever since we had moved in. So for several days both of us put in most of our spare time peeling apples and stirring that tub full of sticky apple mush over a smokey wood fire, and neither I nor the EM even got up to bat--let alone getting to first base--with the girl. I never have been very fond of apple butter. The EM did marry a Point Pleasant lass--not the hired girl--but whether they lived happily

ever after I know not, for after I left LARCH I never saw them again.

At length LARCH was pretty well finished and along about Thanksgiving time, we set off down the Ohio with a yard crew and a regular civilian river pilot. The trip down the river was entirely daytime running as the yard crew had only enough people for one watch and there was only one pilot, so each night the ship would lay over somewhere, generally tied up to a lock or a wharf boat. And since the yard people had been on the rivers for years and years, they knew the best towns to stop in (that is, the best liberty ports), which is, without a doubt, why the pilot chose to tie up at Baton Rouge the last night before arrival at New Orleans. Baton Rouge is perhaps 125 miles up stream from New Orleans and is (or was) a port for both seagoing vessels and river traffic and the town had plenty of entertainment facilities for all, some of them rather remarkable resorts indeed, and so it was that poor little LARCH, once tied up on the evening of 6 December 1941, was practically abandoned--by both Navy crew and river men. The town and all its facilities lived up to its reputation, and everyone had a wild and wooly good time and still got back aboard the next morning in time for the last day's run into New Orleans.

A lot of people can look back and tell just where they were and what they were doing when the war broke out, but I have a hard time fixing this information, except that we were on the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Considering the time zones, it must have been not so long after the noon meal was over, but I do vaguely remember the radioman coming into the crew's mess and spreading the word that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. I don't know whether he got the news over Navy Radio or on a personal broadcast receiver (we may not even have had the navy radio equipment on board yet). At any rate, this is how LARCH went to war and what I was doing when the bombs started falling around PATTERSON.

Some years later after I had met my spouse and we were married, she had to know all about where I was on Pearl Harbor Day, and so I told her about LARCH and Baton Rouge, etc. Maybe the story got changed a little in the telling and retelling, or maybe it was misconstrued a little, the way women will read between the lines, but after a while the legend grew that I was in a Baton Rouge bawdy house when the Japanese attacked; and that is just not so--I was already back aboard ship and halfway to New Orleans when Fuchida and Co. Zeroed-in on Pearl.

LARCH must have been still at New Orleans fitting-out that first Christmas of the war, and it would have been the last stateside in-port Christmas until 1946. At length though, the builders were finished with us, and we were on our own and off to the wars, along the way tying up at Key West on New Years Eve. A few more days and we were in Brooklyn Navy Yard being fitted out for ASW service. This included installation of a 1918 model JK underwater listening device and a fantail full of Y and K-gun depth charge projectors, along with a homemade depth charge rack complete with jackknife releasing gear (to cut the lashings

holding the charges in place). But with all this weaponry, our job for a couple of months was mostly picking up bodies from the merchant vessels sunk off the approaches to New York, plus one live one who somehow managed to survive all night in near-freezing seawater. And then the night of 9-10 March, we took the whole crew off a sinking Gulf Oil Co. tanker, in the process smashing up our bow net booms (horns they were called).

Sometime during that first winter of the war, I ran into R. M. Hilton, MM1, another PATTERSON Plankowner shipmate. He, too, had left PATTERSON the previous summer and wound up in the PT navy and now was in the Brooklyn Yard preparing to leave for the South Pacific. We chatted for a few minutes, and that was the last that I saw of "Weezy", and now I hear that we will never see him again. There was also a brief encounter with my younger brother, John, who had shipped into the service in the Spring of 1940 and then had come out of boot camp just in time to become a Plankowner in BENSON (DD-421). BENSON was in the North Atlantic "short of war" doings of 1940-41 right from the start and had the North Africa-Mediterranean operations ahead of it, and it would be a long time before I would see my brother again.

With the ship's horns repaired and with the arrival of warmer weather, we had orders to a new job in the tropics, and so it was that one fine April evening we were thundering along at maybe 10.7 knots off the Carolina coast headed for Trinidad and everyone congratulating himself for having, so far, escaped the German submarines then infesting East Coast waters.

Here it should be noted that net tenders were built mostly to merchant ship specifications, including the machinery and electrical equipment, which is to say that a lot of the equipment was not necessarily shock-proof as in a proper man-of-war, and that they were Diesel-electric drive with some loosely-stacked carbon pile voltage regulators in the propulsion circuits. All of this high tech state of the art machinery would push LARCH along at pretty close to eleven knots with a tail wind, following sea, and the safeties tied down. This is about what we were doing on this particular evening as a group of us were having after-dinner coffee on the fantail and batting the breeze and idly looking out over a perfectly calm, oily-looking sea when I (I am the only one who saw it) spotted the feather of a periscope crossing our wake.

I bellowed up to the bridge and the Old Man was there taking the air too, so no time was lost and in seconds we were at GQ and coming about toward where the Captain thought the submarine ought to be. He was there all right. The man on the World War I JK heard him as clear as the bells of Christmas morn, and pretty soon orders went down to the fantail to fire the depth charges. And the Gunner's Mate must have pulled all the lanyards and cut all the lashings at once because what followed was an enormous explosion with showers of dead fish all about and some people thinking we had been torpedoed and every single breaker on the main board tripped out and those carbon blocks from the voltage regulators scattered far and wide. Suddenly everything was quiet with just the Diesels idling under no load and everything dark

below decks and the ship dead in the water. How long this situation lasted I don't remember after almost fifty years, but it took the Electrician's Mates (one of them the Apple Butter King) sometime crawling around on their hands and knees with flashlights to find all of those carbon blocks and to stack them back in place. And as for the submarine, it might be supposed that he decided we weren't worth a torpedo, or maybe he was afraid of land-based ASW aircraft, or perhaps he just thought it more prudent to simply head for deep water. At any rate, he didn't bother us, and we didn't bother him anymore either, but after this one adventure at ASW we stuck to net-tending.

Trinidad, with its big Naval Operating Base and air base, was a key in the Caribbean Sea Frontier and there was a war going on thereabouts. But the war was outside the Gulf of Paria while inside, especially around the section base where LARCH tied up, it seemed to some of us like a sleepy backwater of war, and nothing to inspire Michener to write any Tales of Teteron Bay. And when news of Coral Sea and Midway and Guadalcanal reached LARCH, I sometimes felt that in leaving PATTERSON I was missing the whole war. We strung some nets, went out to Barbados and laid some nets there, and back to Trinidad for more net laying. Usually we worked about everyday on the nets with little time off for upkeep, so most of the machinery maintenance was done sometimes on Sunday but more often at night. This is how I happened to be mostly inside the crankcase of one of the engines along toward midnight on New Year's Eve of 1943 when the Radioman showed up in the engine room; he not only wanted a cup of coffee, but he had with him an ALNAV message with my name on it. I had been a Machinist for two months already.

In the morning the Captain formalized this with a letter delivering the message and also invited me to henceforth dine in what passed for a wardroom in a net tender. All this was rather amusing for it hadn't been more than a week or two since he had had to accompany me to Mast in the Section Base Commander's office to explain a collision with too many cans of beer in a place that I didn't belong in anyway. But such is life, and for three weeks I circulated between the wardroom (same tinned string beans and meat loaf as in the general mess), the Chief's Quarters cubbyhole, the engine room, and the crew's mess coffee pot. In a net tender, everything is pretty close together.

After leaving LARCH, four months less one day would pass before I found another roosting place, and this time I would go via General Electric's Turbo-Electric School at Syracuse, New York, thence to the Sub Chaser Training Center at Miami, and finally to Norfolk to await HOPPING (DE-155), which was being built by the Shipyard there. This would be the fourth new ship in succession, and it would be the last new one.

We commissioned HOPPING on 21 May 1943; shook her down in four grueling weeks at Bermuda, and then made ten or twelve round-trip crossings with Atlantic convoys. The first one was a slow convoy out of Norfolk for North Africa and Gibraltar; the last one to Portsmouth and Cherbourg (after our troops were half way to the Rhine), and all the rest to Londonderry in Northern

Ireland. All except the first one were fast convoys out of New York, and New York is where we spent the time at the U.S. end of the run. It turned out to be a milk run situation, and it lasted for well over a year. And in all those crossings, we lost only one merchant vessel, and one escort vessel--not in our squadron--had her stern blown off (acoustic torpedo) and wound up as a mobile power plant in Cherbourg. We had a nice, easy run, a very good crew, and HOPPING was a nice new long hull turbo-electric ship, but she just wasn't another PRINCESS PAT MARU.

New York was our western terminal and on the UK end of the run, we would go into Londonderry to wait four or five days for a westbound convoy to come out of English ports and up the Irish Sea. It did not take the ship's gigoloes long to discover the attractions of Londonderry--a British WRENS' barracks and a U.S. Army General Hospital with Army nurses. Sometimes I am a slow learner, and it was years before I found out how this little game was played from the Army nurses' side of the table. Once we were tied up at Londonderry, someone from the ship would call up the nurses' quarters and line up the requisite number of dates. It was no problem to attract the girls since they all liked to get aboard ship to get nice white bread (which they didn't have in UK during the war) and also have nylon stockings and other goodies brought from the States on the next trip. Then, as the men came up the front walk of the nurses' quarters, the women would peek out through the window curtains and decide among themselves who was going to get who. One of the nurses was named Theresa Margolis, and for some reason she elected to glom onto me. Why I never knew, although the fact that she was a psychiatric nurse might have had something to do with it, but anyway that is how I eventually got caught!

After that last trip to Cherbourg--which must have been late summer 1944--HOPPING was pulled off convoy duty and sent to a makeshift shipyard at Section Base Staten Island, and in a matter of weeks during the autumn of '44, turned into APD-51.

By the time we arrived in WESTPAC most of the fighting was over. Manila was a shambles, but the battle was officially over. The Iwo Jima battle was still going on, but the HOPPING was nowhere near it. Somewhere along the way, probably in the Philippines, we embarked an Underwater Demolition Team and proceeded northward toward Okinawa with Task Force 52. PATTERSON was in the Carrier Group screen of this TF in this operation, but it was an enormously huge Task Force and I never saw PRINCESS PAT first or last.

HOPPING was in on the pre-landings reconnaissance, took her turn at patrolling, shot at some Japanese planes, and managed to avoid being clobbered by a kamikaze. But our luck ran out in Buckner Bay on the 9th of April when a shore battery opened up on us and hit us with about every round that they sent over. The ship was not grievously hurt, but we had two killed and eighteen wounded, and after a few days, we were sent back to Ulithi to have our damage repaired.

At Ulithi, I had a second wartime visit with my brother, John. After the Mediterranean operations with BENSON, he had been transferred and was part of the original crew of LYMAN K. SWENSON (DD-729), which was commissioned in May of 1944, joining the Fleet in WESTPAC a few months later, about the time of the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Now the SWENSON group was in port for logistics, etc., my brother with a badly battered knee which has never properly healed. I conned the Exec into letting me take a Higgins boat and some of our men, and then picked up my brother, and we had a little swimming party in the clear blue waters of the lagoon. And then one day, SWENSON and my brother and their whole group were gone, off to more northerly waters. SWENSON was part of one of Mitscher's Task Groups (Jocko Clark, TG 58.1), and so she was traveling in fast company. I would not see my brother again until the war was long over, and he was long since paid off.

I never crossed paths with my two older brothers, one of whom was in the Army Air Force and spent the whole war in North Africa and then in the China-Burma-India Theatre. My sister was a WAVE who spent her wartime service in a photo lab in Anacostia, I think, and I never saw much of her either. And as for old shipmates from PATTERSON, the only others that I ran into were "Charlie" Melson who, when I chanced to meet him in Brooklyn Navy Yard, was already a four-striper with a squadron of destroyers, and J. R. Anderson who was paid off from PATTERSON and then came back in as CMM when the war started and served in NEW JERSEY until it was over. Our paths crossed twice - once in Casco Bay, Maine and at the end of the war around Okinawa somewhere, and then it would be forty-two years before we would meet again. Wartime was not exactly a time for a lot of socializing.

What we did with the HOPPING's UDT, and where, I do not remember. What I do remember about the UDT is that they had a lot of equipment, including outboard boat motors, which the ship's company coveted, but the UDT destroyed it all and threw it over the side, outboard motors and all. I have even forgotten where we were when the Japanese surrendered, although I think it might have been Manila Bay or maybe the Samar anchorage. After the surrender, we did go back north to Japan and picked up American POWs from outlying areas. Wakayama, near Osaka, was one pick-up port, and I think there were one or two others, and the APDs were tailor-made for this sort of work, although a little short on medical facilities. The POWs were half-starved and some not in good condition at all, but they were all happy to get back aboard a clean Navy ship and get some decent chow. One of them gave me a little sake cup--actually insisted that I take it--which I still have stashed away somewhere--he was that happy to be liberated.

In September '45, HOPPING was at Samar for a while (from a dated snapshot), and then after that in and around Tokyo Bay when the great demobilization craze reached pandemic proportions. Everyone wanted to go home at once, and right now. Even I had

orders for a while, but eventually they were cancelled. It was bad enough in '45 and '46, but I shudder to think what things would be like now with all our civil rights and the ACLU and several hundred thousand civil rights lawyers loose in the land, and the civil courts and the so-called media ever-ready to pile on the armed services with all four feet and fangs bared.

But HOPPING survived, and finally we were homeward bound with just about enough people to work the ship, headed for the barn via Guam, Pearl, and by mid-December, San Diego. Here we were invaded by Red Cross operatives bleating for us to "let these boys get home for Christmas", and, of course, we did lose more people, so that when we left San Diego after a couple of days, we were more short-handed than ever. Christmas 1945 must have been spent still in the Pacific and before reaching the Canal because it was New Year's Eve 1946 when we reached Charleston in time to go ashore for a little celebration.

Charleston is, and was, a lovely town, and I had not seen it since 1939 when PATTERSON was there on that bob-tailed Fleet visit to the East Coast. On that occasion, I had gotten ashore for one glorious liberty after which Jack Hurff decided that I had better be available on board for the next thirty days. Now there was plenty of time for leave and liberty, I suppose while Washington decided what to do with all the ships coming home from the wars. March found us in Norfolk, why I do not know because HOPPING had already been earmarked for 'red-lead row' at Green Cove Springs, Florida, off in 'the other direction from Charleston.

By this time Margolis, the Army nurse from Londonderry but now long since demobilized, had reappeared on the scene, and we were married at Norfolk on 6 March 1946. HOPPING was tagged for Green Cove Springs, and I was slated for another DE, so after the honeymoon leave, it was goodbye to HOPPING and off to join COOLBAUGH (DE-217).

COOLBAUGH was supposed to be a training ship for the submarines at Key West, and so it was for a while. But hardly had we settled into a nice apartment (hard to find in 1946) and were all set to spend the winter in Florida when everything was all upset, and the ship spent the winter in New England and Newfoundland--Christmas in Boston that year. It was in Brooklyn Navy Yard the following July when I saw PATTERSON again and for the last time, and a pathetic sight she was. She had been dragged out of a bone yard somewhere, I suppose, and was tied up to a pier patiently waiting to be hauled off to the shipbreakers. I went aboard and managed to get up to the bridge and down into the engine room, but most of the ladders had been either removed or smashed, so I didn't get down into the crew's mess or the engineers' berthing space where I'd had my bunk (forward, starboard, top bunk, by the porthole!). But everywhere I went the vandals had been there before me, and virtually everything smashable had been smashed: gauges, engine room telegraphs, compass repeaters, pilot house windows, valve hand wheels, and on and on. People must have gone through the ship with sledge hammers, and why, I can't imagine. I managed to get the ship's

name plate loose from the main board and still have it, but that is all.

Soon after this, I left COOLBAUGH and spent the next two years at the University of Idaho (Admiral Holloway's Five-Term Program), then a year at Line School, Newport and after that back to sea in LST-391 which would be the last ship. About the time I joined 391, the Reds invaded South Korea, and so there was a lot of spinning of wheels and preparations to go to the Far East. But that turned out to be all talk, and what happened was regular peacetime training operations with one interesting exception--the expedition to Thule, Greenland, carrying contractor's (Morrison-Knudsen) construction machinery and civilian workers to build the Air Force Base there. This was the summer of 1951, and we were stuck in the ice for eighteen days on the way north. By the time we were all offloaded, it was mid-August and winter storms were already beginning as we headed for home.

That winter I left 391 for more school, this time the Intelligence School at Anacostia, D.C. After this, there was a one year tour with Commander UN Blockade and Escort Force in Korea (actually, in Sasebo, Japan) and from 1954 to '56 with Naval Forces Far East in Yokosuka. Mrs. B. and the two Dachshunds joined me at Yokosuka, and it was a pleasant tour of duty, but it soon passed, and in the Spring of 1956 we were back in Washington and on the retired list as of 1 June.

That summer we moved to State College, Pennsylvania where I entered Penn State. We stayed in State College for eleven years while I finished up an undergraduate program, taught school at Lewistown and State College, worked for a couple of years with the local community theatre, sold real estate for a year, did some graduate work at Penn State and even taught there part time for a couple of terms (Beginning Russian Language).

In 1967 a new job opened up, so we sold out at State College and moved to Kutztown, Pennsylvania. There I joined the History Department at the local State College where I stayed until retirement (again!) in May of 1983. Retirement is supposed to be a happy time with gold watches, etc., but for me, it was a dull and mechanical sort of thing for Tessie had died only a few weeks earlier on 5 March, one day short of our 37th anniversary. There were no offspring (who knows whether blessing or misfortune?), so I was left alone with an aging little Beagle. And even Little P.T. Barnum, after looking all summer for his "Mommer," passed on and then I was really alone.

Alone and aging myself but I have a roof over my head, enough means to pay the bills each month, about all the 'toys' I've ever wanted, and am still healthy enough to get up and greet the dawn each day. There are more things to do, more projects to work on, and more books to read than I will ever get to in this world, so that there are never enough hours in the day. But mostly though, at this stage of the game, it is just a matter of 'waiting for the evening train.'

L'envoi

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When this biographical project was proposed, I thought of an epigram attributed to Ben Franklin. Whether or not he originated the saying, it runs something like ". . . either write things worth reading, or do things worth the writing." And since I have never written anything of any note and have led a completely undistinguished life, I could not at first understand why anyone would want to read about me. But then, I had to admit to myself my curiosity about old shipmates after these fifty years or so and thought that someone else might like to hear about me and admitted that if I am to read about them, then I should submit something in return. And so here is my little contribution, and I hope that many others submit something, too. Most of all, I regret that this whole thing wasn't undertaken earlier so that we could have heard from those who have already passed on or dropped out of sight, my old 'Plankowner' shipmates especially--Purcell, Hilton, Jimmy Owens, and on and on.

Regards,

NOTE: This is one of "our" special
 "PLANKOWNERS - 1st crew. He
 has volunteered his talent
 to do the unique artist sketches
 at the head of each SALVO (Chapter).

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