

My Career in the United States Navy

By Jim Clermont

Boot Camp

I signed up for the Navy in the fall of 1942. After my birthday, April 2nd, I started pestering my Mother to sign for me. (When you were 17, you had to have a parent or guardian sign for you) My best friend, Dick Carter, had to report to the draft board. After getting my mother to sign for me, I went to the Navy recruiting station to inquire about joining the Navy. From the time I was about five years old, I had always wanted to be in the Navy. My dad had been a sailor during World War I, and had told me many stories about his time in the service. I was only 17, but I didn't want to be drafted into the army. The Navy recruiting station assured me that I would not be called for duty until after I graduated from high school. (So much for Navy promises) Dick Carter was classified as 4F. He had a bad heart and poor eye sight so he didn't get called.

About March 5, 1943, I received a notice from the Navy to report to the federal building for induction on the 17th of March. I went to the recruiting station and told them what I had been promised. They said there was nothing they could do, as the Navy was short of men and was calling up everyone early. I went to South High School (I was a senior there) and talked to the Principal. He checked my records and told me to see each of my teachers and have them give me my final tests. If I passed all of them, he would see that I received my high school diploma. I took all my tests ahead of time, and wonders of wonders I managed to pass them. When my class graduated my homeroom teacher, Helen Lund, delivered my diploma to my Mother. She may have been the reason I was able to get my diploma. I had trouble with English and she was an English teacher. She gave me a lot of extra instruction and maybe that's why I was able to make the B honor roll.

On March 17, 1943 I boarded a train for Farragut, Idaho to begin my life in the Navy. My Dad gave me a twenty-dollar bill and told me to keep it for emergencies. That was a lot of money in those days. Most jobs paid less than a dollar an hour, some as low as fifty cents. He also told me to never volunteer for anything. It was the first time I had been out of the state of Minnesota. We traveled in a Pullman railroad car that was very nice. We each had our own bed that a porter made up for us morning and night. It took two days to reach our destination. It was here that I became a close friend with Bob Abbas. He lived in Southeast Minneapolis. Some of the guys on the train didn't like him. (I never knew why) He and I went to Fire Control school together. Bob was better at math than I was but I was better at others things, he was not very mechanical.

We arrived at Camp Scott in the evening, so they gave us each a bunk and told us to stay in the barracks until someone came for us in the morning. In the morning we watched out the windows as the men marched to the mess hall for morning chow. They were all dressed in

undress blues and pea coats. They also were wearing leggings (canvas leg covering that went from the knee to the top of shoes.) They were laced like shoes on the sides.

A chief petty officer came into our barracks and told us that he was our company commander and for us to fall in at the front of the barracks. He then marched us to the mess hall. On the way to the mess hall the other men who had been in camp for some time all called out to us. (You'll be sorry) Going through the chow line for the first time was an experience. The meal consisted of eggs, potatoes, beans, bacon, corn bread, juice, fruit salad and coffee. There was a big sign at the start of the line saying: take all you want, but eat what you take. When you went through the line, the mess cooks slammed the food into your tray with such force that if you weren't holding on tight the whole thing would end up on the deck. They knocked the tray out of the guy in front of me hands, so when it was my turn I was holding on for dear life. They only did that to the new recruits that were still in civilian clothes. After breakfast we marched back to the barracks, and had thirty minutes to go to the head (bathroom) It was a challenge to get to a stall, there were about 60 men all using the same facilities.

We were then marched to the incoming center. (We marched wherever we went) Once inside we had to take off all our clothes and put them into a paper bag with our name on it. The building was cold and we were shivering and somewhat embarrassed. It didn't bother me being naked in front of other guys because when I was at Roosevelt High School I was on the football team and we all showered together. Also a bunch of us (Dick and Cliff Carter, Tom, Dutch and Joe Hembd, Joe Tomche and the Flanery brothers used to go swimming naked down at the creek.) Some of the guys were pretty embarrassed, but they got over it. The first thing we did was to take a shower and then get in line for physicals. After our physicals we went into a big hall and sat on long benches. That bothered us as there were Navy Nurses walking up and down the hall and there we were bare-naked. We slid along the wood benches until we reached the end and ran out of bench. There we saw footprints painted on the floor. We were told to put our feet on the footprints and walk when they walked and stop when they stopped. Every time the prints stopped you would get a shot in each arm. I think we got either 6 or 8 shots. Whenever a guy that was overweight or had fat arms would stop for his shots they would throw the needle at their arms like darts, I was lucky, I only weighed 137 pounds so I was on the skinny side, so didn't get any needles thrown at me. Some guys fainted. We were a sorry looking bunch of Boots. (Name given to raw recruits)

We were then issued our uniforms. It was amazing that any of them fit, the way they were tossed at us. The clothes were all too big for us, but after a while we found out why. We all gained weight and grew into our outfits. We then put on dungarees (chambray shirts and jeans) and were marched back to our barracks. We now had a complete sea bag full of clothes. The first thing we had to do was stencil our name on all of our clothes. We were then taught how to roll up our clothes and tie them with small pieces of rope, called clothes stops so our names showed on each item. Whenever we would have an inspection we had to lay out our clothes on our bunks in a certain way. All Navy enlisted men had to have a complete set of clothes ready for inspection at all times. I ended up having one sea bag just for inspections. We

were also issued a small scrub brush, called a Ki-yi brush. It was six inches long and we used it for scrubbing our clothes and also the floor of the barracks.

Navy Boot Camp went like this; spend many hours drilling and marching on the drill field called the grinder. Because our camp was so new, our grinder was packed down dirt. (The older camp grinders were asphalt) Whenever it rained the whole thing turned into a mud hole. I don't remember seeing the sun the whole time I was there, seemed like it was either foggy or drizzling every day. The first week in camp was the hardest as we were all sick with Cat Fever. (From all the shots) Most of us were homesick and feeling sorry for ourselves. During the first week, they had us doing drills with our wood rifles. There was a shortage of real rifles so all we got were wood ones.

We were doing pushups, sit ups, etc. and they also had us rolling in the mud. We were a mess, mud from head to toe. We then had to run back to the barracks and fall in for inspection. The Chief stopped in front of each man and say; "Filthy" take a shower with all your clothes. The entire Company was in the shower with our muddy clothes. He then told us to stand by for inspection at 0600 the next morning. We spent many hours that night scrubbing our dirty uniforms with our Ki-yi brushes so we could pass inspection. (If you failed inspection you received extra duty) It was the Navy way to wean a boy away from his mother's apron strings.

We would have barracks inspection at least once a week or more. One time the Chief found a small piece of lint under a bunk. We had to scrub the entire floor with our Ki-yi brushes. The Navy was always a clean place to be and we made sure of it.

The Chief would wake us up in the middle of the night and run through the obstacle course. I enjoyed that and thought it was a piece of cake. The young guys like myself, (17 to 19 years old) had fun going through the course, but the older guys (some were old men of 24 or 25) had a tougher time of it. The Chief caught us teasing them for going through the course so slow, so he had us young guys run through it three extra times at top speed. He told us that a ship depends on every member of its crew and that we all had to pull together to succeed. Another lesson, we never ridiculed a shipmate again, we all tried to help each other. When I got into combat the lesson's learned in Boot Camp made sense.

We spent one morning at Coeur d' Alene Lake trying to row a huge wood boat. We sat four abreast on each seat, two men on each oar. Most of the guys had never rowed a boat before, so we really fouled it up. I had a lot of practice rowing a boat because I went fishing with my Dad many times and did most of the rowing, we didn't have an outboard motor. The Chief had a couple of the guys and myself trying to teach the others.

I was in Boot Camp for 12 weeks, but at the time it seemed like forever. We were constantly marching, cleaning, standing watches etc. never got more than five hours sleep at night, and sometimes a lot less. One night I got caught smoking while on fire watch. (We had to stand at each end of the barracks and watch for fire) Four hours of extra duty. Another watch was clothes-line guard, marching in front of clothes hanging on a line. Didn't make any sense to us but that's the way it was.

The entire camp had a fever that the Indians called valley death, we called it "Eleanor's sickness" as President Roosevelt's wife, Eleanor, had suggested the camp in the first place. Two guys were carried out of our barracks stiff as boards, we heard that one of them had died and the other was given a medical discharge.

On our first and only Liberty we went by bus to Couer d' Alene. At that time, it wasn't much bigger than Brandon, Minnesota. The town was filled with small photo studios, bars and hamburger joints. They had one goal, get the sailors money. After I graduated from Boot Camp I went to Spokane, Washington on Liberty. That was a nice city.

We had to take a general knowledge test about the fourth week in camp. There were 240 men taking the test at the same time. We were told that the top 10 scores would get their choice of school and the top third would get sent to a school of the Navy's choice. The rest of the people would go direct to ships at sea. The test was very easy for me, as I had just left high school. (Many of the guys from the South could barely read or write, at that time Minnesota schools were some of the best in the Nation.) I ended up in the top ten, so I was to get my choice of school. Ha. I wanted to go to Aviation Ordinance school and end up in the Navy Air Force. When I had my school interview, the interviewer put down Fire Control School as my second choice. I told him that I didn't want to fight fires and that because I had finished with the high mark I was to get my choice of school. He said that Fire Control was the aiming and the firing of the ships guns, but he only put it down because the Navy required everyone to have a second choice, just in case. Big Joke, I was sent to Fire Control School.

One day we went to the rifle range. I was a good shot and made sharp shooter. I had never fired a real gun before the service, but I had an air rifle as a boy. They taught us to shoot with both eyes open.

We also had to take a swimming test. It consisted of swimming the perimeter of an Olympic size pool. I was a pretty good swimmer, spent many hours at the lakes in Minneapolis. It was a long way, but I made it. Everyone who didn't make it had to attend special swimming classes after working hours. You could not graduate from Boot Camp unless you could swim. Bob Abbas could not swim a stroke. He was about to be held back, so I pretended that I was him and took the test. I didn't swim very well at all, had to make hard work out of it for Bob. It was easy to do, as our service numbers were only one number apart. There was a guy following me along the pool edge with a safety net in case I didn't make it. We also had to jump off a high tower into burning water with all our clothes on. After we hit the water we had to take off our clothes and make life jackets out of them. Tie the legs into knots and whip them over your head to get air into them. It really worked. Also we made a life preserver out of our white hats. Unless you have done it, you don't know how hard it is to swim with your clothes on.

In the Navy everything refers to being on a ship even when you are ashore. The floor is the deck, walls are bulkheads, stairs are ladders, kitchen is a galley, rooms are compartments or holds, ceiling is the overhead, windows are portholes, doors are hatches, bunks are racks, dining hall is the mess hall, left side is port, right side is starboard, to go from the deck down is going

below, going from below up to the deck is going topside, the front is called the bow or forecastle and the back is the fantail. The sickbay is the hospital.

Some of the Navy rates or job titles are; Yeoman, clerk, water tender makes fresh water out of sea water, Boatswain, maintains the outside of the ship, Sonar Man, operates sounding gear that detects under water objects, like submarines, Radar Man, operates and maintains equipment that sends out a signal that when it hits anything it bounces back to the sender, telling how far away it is and what it is. (You can see all the ships in a convoy on the radar screen, air traffic controllers use radar to keep track of planes) At night during war time there are no lights on the outside of ships, when a hatch (door) is opened any light inside goes out, that light is red. (Red also helps to combat night blindness) The only way to keep track of the ships is with radar and maintaining a predetermined course. Signal Man communicates with other ships using signal flags in various hand held positions, bunting (different flags that are hoisted up the mast so other ships can see them) and sending Morse Code via small searchlights. Pharmacist Mate, nurse, corpsman, shanker mechanic (plus a few more titles that I can't repeat here.) Many small ships had no doctors, only pharmacists. The Pharmacist's also went ashore with the Marines to render first aid. A ship also had Fireman, Machinists, Torpedo Men, Gunners Mates, Fire Control men, Electricians, Cooks, deck hands (called seaman) below deck workers (called snipes)

When you graduated from Boot Camp, you were raised from Apprentice Seaman to Seaman second class. (I think our pay was increased from 30 dollars a month to 42 dollars.) After graduating we were put into a different barracks while waiting for transportation to our next assignment. The men going direct to sea were given seven days leave, plus travel time. The men going to schools were given leave's if their school wasn't ready to start. My school was ready, so I didn't get any leave. I was sent via a troop train clear across country to Newport, Rhode Island. (Bob Abbas went with me) The trip took five days and nights.

Fire Control School

We arrived at the Naval Training Station in the evening and after getting our gear from the baggage car, we were transported by truck to a barracks. At the barracks we turned in our barracks bags. (They were large canvas bags that held our sea bags and mattress) In return we were issued a hammock, as the barracks had no bunks. The barracks was a large rectangular building that had a head (bathroom) at one end. The rest of the room was bare except for a row of pipes along the long outer walls and two rows of pipes down the center of the room. They were for tying your hammock to. When you had your hammock tied as tight as possible, (We would help each other pull the ropes tight so you wouldn't have any sag, otherwise you would have a back ache in the morning) you would get into it by jumping up and gripping a small pipe that was over the center of your hammock and about two feet above it, and pulling yourself into it. The bed was very unstable, so we all tied safety lines on the small pipe and around our beds so we wouldn't fall out. After about a week most of us didn't use the safety lines any more. You learned to not roll over in bed. If you wanted to lie on your side, you would lift yourself up by the center pipe and then turn over. (When I first reported aboard the Herndon, I slept in my hammock during my first convoy run. It worked really well when the ship rolled from side to

side but when the ship went up and down you were sometimes suspended in the air) In the morning when reveille sounded if any one didn't jump right out of their sacks (hammocks) the master at arms would slap that person's sack with a paddle and flip it over tossing the man to the deck. You only over slept once. It was about a six-foot fall. Attending school in the Navy was not at all like going to public schools. Each morning after reveille, we would tie up our hammocks over the top of the small center pipe, so you could walk under them. Then we would shower, go to breakfast and after eating use the head. Then it was off to class. We went to school eight hours a day Monday through Friday. One day, during class, we all were ordered to fall in at our own barracks. We were ordered to change into undress whites and fall in at the incoming road. It was a hot day but there we stood at parade rest. We had no water and some of the guys fell to the ground from the heat but there we stood. It seemed like forever when we were called to attention. President Roosevelt was coming to review us. We stood at attention for a long time when a convertible roadster came down the road at a high speed. It was Roosevelt and all we got was a car raising dust as it went by. We went back to our barracks and changed uniforms and went back to school. After school we would spend one or two hours on the drill field practicing marching. (Our company commander was a mustang, meaning he had come up through the enlisted ranks to become an officer) His name was MacGyver and he insisted that the Fire Control men had to be the top unit on the base even if he had to practice us until midnight. Every Saturday morning, we had inspection on the drill field and then had to pass in review in front of the grandstand. The base commander and his staff judged each unit as they went by the stand. The hard work paid off for us; we took top honors, which meant we received early liberty. We went on liberty at 1300 instead of the usual 1600.

The school was tough, made me realize how easy I had it in high school. I was wishing that I had worked harder at South and Roosevelt High schools. That would have made fire control school much easier. I was lucky, our math teacher was a college professor and he was excellent. He noted that many of us were having a hard time with Trig, Algebra and Geometry. The fire control problem is basically solved by Trig. He announced that he would give extra instruction to anyone that wanted it, at 2000 hours. I was there with bells on. He started us out by writing on the blackboard $2 + 2 = 4$. I remember studying my lessons by flashlight in my hammock after hours. When he was finished with us, we were able to pass the final test. It took eight hours to complete. If anyone flunked out, they were sent to the Amphibious corps and went ashore with the marines. Little Jimmie worked hard and passed.

While in Newport we went on liberty to Providence, Rhode Island and to Fall River, Massachusetts. It was in Fall River that I ate my first steak, it was very good. There were huge mansions along the Atlantic coast. One day we were invited to one of them for a party. It was like being in a movie, and the people were very nice to us.

In our barracks we had a few Coast Guardsmen. They also attended school with us. One of the guy's name was Maxwell. He always said that Marilyn Maxwell, (a beautiful movie star, just a step below Betty Grable, Rita Hayworth and Hedy Lamar) was his first cousin and that the two of them were as close as brother and sister. She was in many movies with Abbott and Costello. (Of course we didn't believe him) One day an USO show came to our base and the star

was Marilyn Maxwell. We didn't get in to see the show, (the officers and the men who had been in camp the longest had priority) Marilyn came into our barracks to see her cousin. That was the first time I had ever been alongside a movie star. She was a beautiful girl and seemed nice. From that day on every guy wanted to be buddies with Maxwell.

Upon graduating from school we moved from our barracks to an outgoing building. We had to carry all our gear, including our hammock on our backs. We had all bought extra clothes so it was quite a load. I received my orders to report aboard the USS Herndon, DD638 at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. I was given a seven-day leave and four days' travel allowance. It was the first time I had been home since I joined up.

I had a great time on my leave. On the train from Minneapolis to New York, a Fire Control man occupied the seat behind me. His name was Art Straus. He told me that he was on a destroyer, but couldn't tell me which one, as that was a no no during wartime.

After my leave I had to report to a Naval Station called Pier 92. It was where sailors went to await their ships. I was only there a couple of hours as my ship (the Herndon) was in the Brooklyn Navy yard for repairs. I was transported by bus to the Pier that the ship was tied up to.

USS Herndon DD638

I reported aboard the Herndon in September of 1943. The first thing that happened was; Chief Boatsman Breeze took all the new guys, (there were about ten of us) down to the sea locker and issued us each a life jacket. There weren't enough bunks on the ship for the entire crew, so the new guys (us) had to sleep in hammocks until some other replacements came aboard that had less time in the Navy than we did, then we would get bunks. The Navy gives preference to the higher rates and to time in the service. The Chief showed us how he wanted the life jackets tied to our hammocks and told us to walk around the ship to get to know her. About an hour later I heard my name, along with the other new guys, called over the loud speaker to report to the quarterdeck on the double. (The quarter deck is where the gang plank to leave the ship rests on the ship. The duty petty officer, duty officer and messenger stand their watch when the ship is in port) We were all told that we had been put on report for having gear adrift. Our life jackets were not tied properly to our hammocks. One of the new guys told the officer in charge that the Chief had told us to put them in that fashion. The officer said that it was the same Chief that had put us on report, and that we all had extra duty. Instead of going on liberty we had to chip paint for four hours. (Found out later that it was the Chief's way of letting you know who was in charge) We were busy chipping paint when we saw the Chief go ashore. As soon as he was out of sight the man assigned to watch over us said: The Chief just went on liberty so it's safe for us knock off and go ashore ourselves. I don't think we had worked for more than thirty minutes at the most.

I went on Liberty with one of the guys that I had extra duty with. He had been to New York before, so he showed me the ropes on how to get around in the huge city. We took the Subway wherever we wanted to go. It only cost us 5 cents. After I became acquainted with New

York, it became my favorite place to go on liberty. There was always something to do. The movies were either free for servicemen or almost free. They would have a double feature and between shows they had a stage show. I saw most of the big acts and big bands. (Tommy Dorsey, Count Basie, Harry James, Laurence Welk, Duke Ellington, Woody Herman, Mills Brothers etc.)

One night while waiting in the Lobby, (I think was the Palace theater,) I spotted this cute girl. She had on a pair of slacks and her hair was in curlers, but she was a dolly. Being somewhat of a wise guy, I tried to pick her up with no luck. She went into the theater ahead of us. Later when the band came out on the stage, she turned out to be the girl singer. Before her first number, she looked up at me in the balcony, and said over the microphone; "Do I look any better now sailor?" She really made my day. I think she was Helen O'Connell.

I reported to the Petty Officer in charge of the Fire Control men and wonder of wonders, he assigned me to work with Art Straus. (The very same guy that I had met on the train) My first job was maintaining the ship's hedgehogs. They were small depth charges mounted on the forward deck of the ship, just in front of the number one five-inch gun. They were mounted somewhat like a small rocket and when fired would fly ahead and to the side of our ship. They were designed to create a larger pattern of explosives to hit submarines with. They worked great in theory, but when we were out to sea in the rough North Atlantic, the deck was always covered with water and they would short out. A good idea, but no good at all in the North Atlantic. The next time we were in the Navy Yard for repairs they took the Hedgehogs off.

I was the youngest and newest member of the Fire Control group so I got stuck with keeping our living compartment clean. After that I was on Mess Cook duty. Any free time was spent in the IC room learning how everything worked.

Life aboard a ship like the Herndon was a tough challenge. They were called "Tin Cans." They were only about 1/4 to 3/8 inches thick. About the only thing the hull could stop was a rifle bullet or a small caliber machine gun. We had to rely on speed and maneuverability in combat. I think I made six or seven convoy trips across the North Atlantic. The ocean was always mighty rough. Many times the water would be coming over the top of the main battery director, which was the highest manned position on the ship. We worried about the waves getting just a little higher and going into our smokestacks. If that would happen we would lose all power and probably sink in the high seas. I found out later that the smoke stacks had a baffle that would keep out any water. Our typical convoy trip went something like this. We would start out in the Brooklyn Navy yard where we had repairs from the previous trip. (After a convoy run to England and back we were all beat up and had to be put back together again for the next voyage) After being repaired we would proceed to Casco Bay, Maine to check out the repairs and any new equipment that had been installed on the ship. We were constantly getting better radar and sonar. It was also the time to break in the newest members of our crew. The Navy would transfer some of the men that had been on board for quite a while to new ships coming on line and replace them with new recruits. The only division on the ship that didn't transfer anyone was the O Division of which the Fire Control men were a part. The only men from the O Division that got transferred were ones that had gotten sick or hurt. This was Lt.

Bernie Moulton's doing. He was the most disliked officer on the ship. I don't think he ever went on deck at night for fear of being shoved overboard. The benefit of his plan was the fire control on our ship was one of the best in our squadron, because the men had been together for so long. The bad part was no one could advance in rating. We were allowed only so many rates. A ship our size would have either a Chief or a First Class Petty Officer running the group. Under him would be three second-class and six third-class Petty Officers. The balance of the gang would be first or second-class seaman called strikers, assisting the Petty Officers and trying to get rated. If a person made a rate someone would have to be transferred off the ship, so it was about impossible to advance unless someone got sick or hurt. When we went to the Pacific fleet, the base commander jumped all over us for not transferring people out to the O Division. One of our Fire Control men, Sullivan was transferred to office training. That made an opening for me so I finally made third class, after being qualified for at least six months or more. Sullivan later got killed while on another destroyer. He was the third man from our crew that had left and gotten killed. After that, no one wanted to leave Herndon. One of my shipmates, Vern Stayton from North Dakota, would get seasick just as soon as we left port. He carried a pail with him all the time. They offered him a transfer but he turned it down. He wanted to stay on the Herndon. Vern and I went on liberty together a couple of times.

The routine on board a destroyer went like this. Every morning before sunrise we would all go to general quarters for about an hour. Also about an hour before sunset we would do the same. Dawn and sunset were the most likely times for submarine attacks. We would spend four hours on watch and eight hours off. Our off watch time was spent maintaining the equipment during the day. The evenings after working hours were spent reading, studying for advancement, writing letters, playing cards, (I was on the boxing team, so I spent a lot of time working out and sparring with Gus Meyer, he was a former professional boxer from Milwaukee.) I thought I was pretty good until I went up against a black guy that had went to the finals in the Golden Gloves. I found out that I was only a little better than average. It was a good experience and gave me confidence that I could take care of myself.

Whenever we were in a critical war zone, we spent four hours on watch and four hours off. That way all the guns were manned and ready at all times. In the Normandy and Southern France invasions we stayed at general quarters almost all the time.

The convoys could only travel as fast as the slowest ship, so sometimes the convoy speed was as slow as six knots. A knot is about a mile and one eighth in speed. We usually kept our speed between 15 and 20 knots, as we were always zigging and sagging on the outskirts of the main group, on the lookout for submarines. We were always bouncing around like a cork in rough water, as the North Atlantic was always rough except when we would enter the gulf stream then it would be fairly calm going. Some of the crew were seasick most of the time. I only got seasick once, it was like having the stomach flu that seemed to last forever. When we left port to go on a convoy run, the first meal was always greasy port chops, had something to do with sea sickness.

My first watch station was in the ammunition handling room below a five-inch gun. My first general quarter's station was a lookout on the flying bridge. After my first trip to England

and back I was sent to school to learn how to operate the controls of the Main Battery Director and to fire the big guns. After that I stood all my watches in the Director and eventually I was in charge of keeping it operating properly. Also my general quarters station was changed to the large searchlight and a backup pointer for the director. I eventually was made the Main Battery Director Pointer for general quarters. I liked that the best because it was where all the action took place.

We were in the group that escorted the Cruiser Quincy to Malta. President Roosevelt was on board the Quincy going to a conference with Stalin and Churchill. We had orders not to point any of our guns toward the Quincy. When I was up in the Director we looked through our optics and could see a person in a blanket sitting on the second deck in a reclining chair. It was Roosevelt. One time we were in port with the Quincy. She was the larger ship and had an Admiral on board, so it was next to the pier. The smaller ships (destroyers) would tie up to the sea side of the Quincy. In order to empty our trash slop cans from the mess hall we would have to carry them from our ship to the Quincy and across the Ship to the dumping station on the pier. Our standing joke was to always spill some on the Quincy's quarterdeck just to irritate them. One time Luckinheymer forgot to salute the colors when leaving the Quincy with a trash can. The officer of the deck stopped him and was going to put him on report. Luckinheymer told him that he couldn't salute because he had a shattered elbow from a battle. The dumb officer believed him and apologized to him. We got a good laugh out of that.

Convoy duty was always a strain. You never could tell when a torpedo might hit you. Twice we saw torpedoes just miss us. One went right under us and the other went to the side. If a destroyer was torpedoed it was almost certain to sink and in the North Atlantic a man could only last about five minutes, as it was so cold. Also it was almost impossible to find anyone in the rough seas. On more than one trip across the ocean a soldier would fall over the side of a troop transport. (More than likely they would be sea sick and leaning over the rail) We would always make a big show of looking for them, but never found anybody. (Part of the act of racing around the area was for the moral of the soldiers on the troop ships)

A destroyer like ours couldn't make it all the way across the Atlantic without refueling because we were always going fast and zigzagging. We maybe could have made it if we went in straight line and the seas weren't too rough. Refueling in the rough North Atlantic was always tough. We would pull alongside a tanker (sometimes a battleship or cruiser) and send over a line to them. We would shoot the line over with a line-shooting gun. More than once one of the deck hands would simply throw the line with a knot called a monkey fist on the end. After the refueling ship received the heaving line we would attach a heavy line to it and they would pull it to them. Then an oil hose would be attached and we would pull it to our ship. We would then start filling our tanks. More than once the heavy seas would push the two ships apart and the oil would spill on our decks. We could not get too close to the other ship because if we would hit together we would almost certain to be damaged as our hull was not thick.

Twice we had to transfer men to a hospital ship on lines much the same as tying up to a tanker or Battleship for refueling. One of the men was sick and the other wounded.

The most difficult part of being on a destroyer was the rough ride and the consistent tension of being torpedoed. The bunks were so close together that you were unable to turn over in them. If you were on your back and wanted to sleep on your stomach, you had to get out of the bunk and then climb back in. Sleeping on your side was impossible. We would never get a full night's rest. If you had the eight to twelve watch, you would get at most six hours in the bunk. If you had the twelve to four, you would be lucky to get four hours in the bunk. The four to eight was the best for sleep. You could not get any rest during the day, no bunks were to be used at that time. When you were standing watch in the director, there were three enlisted men and an officer on duty. We would take turns being a lookout for submarines, so you could do a little dozing if you had a good officer with you. One time the lead ship, might have been a Cruiser or Battlewagon, had new search radar installed. It was much better than we had in the past and would keep track of the entire convoy. The day before we left the States, the chief radar man, who went to school on the new equipment fell and broke his leg. The third day out, the radar quit working. They put out a call for anyone who could repair and operate the new radar. One of our Fire Control men, Merrill was real sharp so our Captain volunteered him to work on the system. I went with him, although I had no idea what was going on. All I did was hand him tools and meters as he asked for them. He got the system back and running, may have prevented collisions at night. The destroyer duty was, as far as I'm concerned, the best sea duty in the Navy. We wore dungarees at all times unless we had an inspection or going in or out of port. The battleships, cruisers and aircraft carriers lived in undress blues or whites. When I reported aboard the Herndon, the first thing I was told was to wear a clean pair of dungarees every day. The Fire Control Crew was always the best dressed on the ship. We would take what was called a Navy shower, wet down, soap up and rise. When we were in an area where we had to light off all four boilers, (we normally use just two) for more speed we had to use four that meant no water for showers. We had to take salt water showers.

I was in two hurricanes in the North Atlantic. That was a tough time because of our slow convoy speed we couldn't outrun it. We had to turn and go straight into it. If it hit you on a side, you might capsize. I almost got washed overboard when a twenty-five-foot-high wave hit us. I was hanging on a rail for dear life when a sailor helped me.

In the main battery director there was a Thompson sub machine gun, like the ones that the heroes in WWII movies used. They threw a box over board and had each one of us in the director try to hit it with a machine gun. The control office gave it to me, I proceeded to empty the whole clip in one big burst. In the movies, John Wayne or some other actor would stand and fire the weapon with no problem. I found that it was impossible to keep the muzzle down, the gun went up in the air. I missed the box. When it was Stone's turn, he did the same. The officer wasn't too happy with us. On one occasion, I don't remember where we were at, we anchored and had swim call. You would jump off the bow and the current would take you toward the back. You would grab a ladder about three fourths of the way, if you missed it, the motor whale board would pick you up, fun. The next time we had swim call was before we entered the Panama Canal, there was a fresh water lake before the canal and we had swim call and washed our ship. I was surprised at how low the ship sat in fresh water compared to salt water. On my first trip we went to Wales. Everything was very old and run down. When we went into a shop

or store, we didn't know how to use money. We would just hold out some money in our hands and they would help themselves. I don't think anyone cheated us as they know without us bringing them food and supplies they would be in tough shape. We usually went to Plymouth, England. That city was a mess from all the German air attacks, Londonderry was not much better. We went to Belfast Ireland just before the Normandy invasion. Their coast was something like Normandy's so we were able to practice our shore bombardment there. On liberty one day we saw a sign that said, "ICE COLD BEER". We all ran to the tavern to find that what they were doing was putting a piece of ice into a warm glass of beer, hence, cold beer.

One day a shipmate and I picked up two beautiful Irish sisters. They invited us to their home so we went. They lived in a small house with no electricity. Their parents were very nice and invited us to dinner. They didn't have much food around so my shipmate and I ate only a little. They wouldn't take any money but they did like our cigarettes so we gave them all we had with us. It was getting late, so the girls walked us out to the road to say goodbye. They pointed us in the right direction and away we went. It was so dark we couldn't see the road, just walked until we hit grass and then turned back to the road. We had to be back in Belfast before 0600 as that was the last boat to our ship. We make it in the nick of time.

We went back to Plymouth to get ready for the invasion. We had church services aboard the battleship Nevada. (She had been sunk at Pearl Harbor) It was there that everyone was giving ten to one odds that we wouldn't come out alive as were to be the first ship into the beach.

MINUTES OF D-DAY

INVASION OF NORMANDY, FRANCE

June 5, 1944

One month ago today we left New York City. Arrived in Belfast, Ireland on May 14, 1944. Stayed for two days and then went to Plymouth, England, where we stayed ten days. From there we went back to Belfast. Saw more and more ships as each day passed. Left Belfast June 3rd. We were scheduled to land troops on the Northern coast of France, near Le Havre on the morning of June 5th, 0630. However, it was so rough it was postponed for 24 hours. We are now sailing along the coast of England just to kill time. We are just south of Portsmouth, England. In about an hour we will swing south and start across the channel to the point in France where our task force is to land. Our task force consists of three British cruisers, several U.S. destroyers, U.S.S. QUINCY, and U.S.S. TUSCALOOSA. We also have several large and small landing craft. This is to be the biggest invasion in history. We are to get within 3,000 yards from the beach.

June 6, 1944

0300 Anchored off the coast of France. A lot of allied bombers and fighters going overhead. (We are at General Quarters)

0330 Underway. (We are supposed to fire the first shot)

0342 Mine or something just dragged on ship.

0459 Tracking on target #34. Everyone topside can see France.

0519 Shells are hitting the water near us.

0533 Heavy anti-aircraft fire along the beach. One of our ships was just sunk.

0540 English cruiser just fired the first shot for the allies.

0605 Shift to target #38. A ship just opened up with rockets. Some 5,000 of them just hit the beach. We are now firing on targets #40 and #42.

0627 Three minutes until H hour.

0631 Check fire. Other ships still firing all around us. Still some guns on the beach firing back at us . . . looks like 5 or 6 inch to me.

0635 Estimate time our troops hit the beach.

0640 We are firing at target #94. Target is in town of Grandcamp, Les Bains.

0655 Rangers just got target we were standing by to fire on. Opposition against troops in some places. The shore batteries have quieted down. One of our "tin cans" is really giving them hell. We are still waiting for new target to fire on. The "Tin Can" that was firing at the shore batteries is getting plenty of opposition. The U.S.S. CORY was just hit. No report on damage yet. The Germans are firing at us with everything they've got. Shells getting too close for comfort. We opened fire again. Guns we are firing at appear to be silenced. Target was #87. We just hit an ammunition dump. All that is left of it is black smoke.

0750 Report from bridge: U.S.S CORY was sunk. We commence firing at A.A. Battery. Two "tin cans" were sent to pick up CORY survivors. Target #5 coming up . . . nothing left of #5 now. The beach is covered with smoke. Life raft just went by. Bombs hitting the water near us.

0840 Repair parties bring coffee and chow to us. Everyone is tired from loss of sleep. I haven't had any sleep since two nights ago. Everyone is in the best spirits but sorry about the U.S.S. CORY. Our fire control party on the beach has moved inward. Spitfires strafing the beach. Just got word of enemy aircraft.

0900 More A.A. fire from beach. Just commenced fire on new target. We just picked up a man in a life jacket. He was a sailor in the Amphibious Force, on an L.S.T. . . . he's dead!

1030 Ship next to us just blew up, believed to have hit a mine.

1100 Our battle wagons still firing.

1315 The news from London said there are 4,000 ships in the invasion. We are patrolling the beach. A lot of paratroops are landing.

1324 Liberators bombing the beach. We are firing again. NEVADA and QUINCY are firing inland. Large forces of C47's are going over head.

2119 Still patrolling the beach. There is a lot of A.A. fire from the beach. Many of our planes are being shot down. Sky is red from guns and bombs.

2400 End of "D" day.

June 7, 1944

0350 A glider bomb just missed us. A lot of German planes are overhead. Report just came in that German E. boats are attacking . . . we go out to look for them.

0630 One of our transport planes just crashed near us. Four men got out.

0830 Report just came in that the U.S.S. FITCH was sunk last night. New report, U.S.S. FITCH wasn't sunk, just badly hit.

2010 U.S.S. JEFFERS reported hit in aft engine room. She was in our former position.

2045 JEFFERS still afloat but has holes below the water line. I know a lot of guys aboard her.

2345 Out looking for Nazi E. boats again. Just picked up two survivors from a P.T. Boat that hit a mine.

June 8, 1944

0210 Rockets being fired at us . . . so far we've been lucky.

0212 U.S.S. MEREDITH just reported hit by an aerial torpedo.

0215 We are trying to lay a smoke screen over the other ships now but we are having trouble. Something is wrong . . . fire is coming out of both stacks. The fire is shooting ten feet in the air. Enemy bombers overhead . . . looks bad. I've got my phones half off and my life jacket tightened up . . . may have to go over the side. Whew! They got the fire out now. The U.S.S. MEREDITH is sinking. We are going to take on survivors. From where I am I can see her pretty plain. She's leaning to starboard badly. We are going to try and lay a smoke screen for her. All hell just broke loose . . . fire is coming out of our stacks again. Enemy planes coming in on us. We are firing at them with everything we've got. Bombs are dropping close. Almost feel the spray from them. Fire is put out again, so the bombers can't see us. For a little while there I could see myself in the water hoping to get picked up.

0245 Gosh it doesn't seem possible that all this could happen in such a short time.

0300 13 survivors brought aboard so far. They say their ship was hit at #1 stack. More survivors are being brought aboard. Some of them are in pretty bad shape. The MEREDITH was a new ship and for most of the guys on her this was their first trip . . . that sure is tough getting it on your first trip out. The dam Germans are really raising hell with our destroyers. That's the only type ship they've sunk so far.

0345 We are going to put the survivors from the U.S.S. MEREDITH aboard a transport so they can get some medical care. We have been under constant attack since about 0100. No one has had any sleep. We are all just about out on our feet. I can hardly keep my eyes open. Wish it would hurry up and get light so we could get some of our own planes for protection. I've had enough excitement in the past two hours to last me a life time. Time is sure passing slow, seems like a year since I saw the sun. Report just came in

that the planes that attacked us were using glider bombs. I could really go for a cup of hot mud right now. They may be able to save the MEREDITH, sure hope so.

- 0402 The air raid is still continuing force. Thank God it will be light soon.
- 0414 A ship just got hit by a bomb. I can see a tin can laying a smoke screen around her. The ship is a mass of flames. She's sinking already. My ears are sore from wearing these phones for so long a time. There is a small boat coming along the side to transfer survivors of the MEREDITH to an L.S.T. which is a hospital ship.
- 0545 Our battle wagons and cruisers are still shelling the beach. Air raid is over.
- 0610 Have a group of German planes coming from the West, so here we go again.
- 0700 Secured from G.Q. No planes came our way.
- 0830 We just got word that the U.S.S. GLENNAN was hit. She is down in the stern. Can't tell from here if she is sinking or not. She is in our squadron. A couple of guys I went to fire control school with are aboard her.
- 0900 One of our D.E.'s just hit a mine. No report on damage yet.
- 1230 We are going in next to the beach to relieve the U.S.S. GLENNAN which was hit.
- 1303 Just fired out first Salvo at Target #3. Word just came in that our troops are advancing fast under the protection of our shell fire. The German's are starting to get our range with their shore batteries. Shells are starting to get to close for comfort. We can hear them whistle now and believe me, every time we hear a shell whistle, we hit the deck head first. That last shell was really close. I could almost feel the spray from it. We are getting underway at last. Boy am I glad to get out of there. Our guns were firing so fast, that all the paint was boiled off the barrels. They are spraying them now with salt water. I think we hit an ammunition dump as I can see a huge cloud of black smoke rising from where we were shooting. We fired over 600 rounds of ammunition in about 45 minutes and that is considered very fast for five inch guns. Word just came through that our troops advanced over 400 yards by our fire alone. The fire control party on the beach complimented us on our very accurate shooting.
- 1420 A lot of mines are exploding all around us . . . must have been set off by the concussion in the water created by German shells hitting the water around us but we are gradually getting out of their range.
- 1455 A "Spitfire" just crashed in the water. We can see the pilot floating down in his parachute.
- 1456 A "P-51 Mustang" just crashed. I didn't see any pilot bailing out this time.
- 1530 We are now out on the outer screen again, about 10 miles from the beach.
- 1540 An Army pay chest was just fished out of the water. We are hoping to go back to Plymouth, England for some more ammunition and fuel oil.

June 9, 1944

- 0035 We are having another air raid. Just commenced firing at a plane coming in on us. Bridge just reported German E. boats close by so we are shifting to surface targets.
- 0100 Enemy aircraft overhead again.

- 0145 Nazi E. boats got in by the beach. We are waiting to fire on them if they get in range. It's quiet now for a while. Yesterday we heard a news broadcast which mentioned the fact that the U.S.S. HERNDON was the first ship into the beach. It also told about two "tin cans" being sunk. Hope the folks back home didn't hear the broadcast because if they did they will most likely be worrying. I wish they would have also said that the HERNDON was O.K. Our war correspondent (his name is Tom Wolf, and he writes for the Associated Press) is taking down everything just as it happens.
- 0830 Two of our L.S.T.'s were sunk last night by a Nazi sub. As if we haven't enough to contend with they have to use "U" boats too. I'll be glad when this thing is all over with.
- 0845 We are leaving Maisy, France and going to England to refuel and take on ammunition.
- 2000 Pulled into Plymouth, England. It seems good to see a beach that won't be firing back at you all the time.

June 11, 1944

- 1900 Just arrived back in the harbor of Maisy, France. We are on the outer screen tonight.
- 2130 An L.S.T. just hit a mine. I can see her stern sinking. I think they will be able to tow the rest of her into the beach.
- 2210 Back at General Quarters again. I suppose this will be another one of those nights. Pretty quiet so far, have hopes of getting some sleep for a change.

June 12, 1944

- 0145 General Quarters. Word just came in that the U.S.S. NELSON got hit. She is our squadron leader. Don't know how bad she is hit yet.
- 0230 We are standing by to eliminate a target. I can barely see it from here. Maybe a German "tin can". We are not more than 1,000 yards from her. Whew . . . bridge just reported that it was one of our own destroyers.
- 0415 Secured from General Quarters
- 0455 Planes bombing beach again. The sky is filled with A.A. fire. Tugs just towed the U.S.S. Nelson by us. She was hit in the stern. She has her "fan tail" and mounts three and four blown off. Is she ever a mess.
- 1100 The U.S.S. NEVADA is shelling inland again. Just one week ago today we started the invasion of France. It seems like a year ago instead of one week. Between E. boat attacks, enemy aircraft, and mines, we are all out on our feet. Everyone is jumpy and our nerves are all on edge.
- 2130 Bombs and fighter's overhead. Whew, they are ours returning from bombing the Germans. We are screening for the U.S.S. NEVADA and our cruisers tonight. Heavy A.A. fire all night, but it's pretty quiet for us.

June 13, 1944

Our heavy ships are still shelling the beach. Churchill and General Ike Eisenhower just went by us heading for the beach. Spent another sleepless night with enemy planes overhead.

June 14, 1944

- 0100 Just secured from General Quarters. A lot of A.A. fire on the beach. Everything quiet for us though, which doesn't hurt my feelings any. Everyone is showing effect from lack of sleep, no one gives a dam what happens anymore.
- 2230 Enemy aircraft coming in from the East. They stayed away from us for a change.

June 15, 1944

- 0115 Secured from General Quarters. E boats and enemy aircraft in area.
- 0230 Enemy aircraft overhead. They are dropping mines and floating flares. There is very heavy A.A. fire coming from the beach. I saw four planes go down in flames. (German)
- 2300 General Quarters. Enemy planes overhead again. No sleep tonight for me. Wish those Germans would take a vacation for a night or two.

June 16, 1944

- 0300 Secure from General Quarters at last.
- 0400 General Quarters. Here we go again. If I don't get some shut eye pretty soon, I'll forget how to sleep. Everything is quiet now except for heavy A.A. fire from the beach. We are going to leave here in a few days.

On July 15th we invaded Southern France. The night before the invasion we took a group of Army Rangers close to the shore and dropped them off, I never found out just how they made out. They were on our ship for a few days and we had made friends with many of them. They carried a 45 caliber short barrel rifle. They said it had a lot of killing power. We didn't do any shore bombardment here. We were with the aircraft carriers, protecting them from submarines and E boats. We also picked up down plane crews. On one occasion while I was in the main battery director I heard a pilot saying he was going to need help. You could hear the wind going through the holes in his plane. He was trying to get to the carrier but didn't think he could make it. We headed toward him at full speed and saw him crash into the sea. We got as close as we could and saw the pilot jump out of his plane and swim toward us. We heard his crew member calling for help as he either had been wounded or injured in the landing. The pilot ignored him and kept swimming to us. A sailor named Baron (who was a very strong swimmer) asked the captain for permission to go get him. The Captain said, "Go get him". Baron dove off the flying bridge which is very high up and just below the director. He rescued the airman and swam back to our ship with him. He almost beat the pilot to the ship. When the pilot reached our ship none of the deck force would help him aboard, (they were mad because he had left the man behind) two officers had to get him. The plane sank soon after Baron had rescued the man.

After the invasion we took a convoy to Alexandria, Egypt. On the way we got word that the convoy ahead of us had been almost wiped out by Germans who had restored American P38's. They flew right over the convoy and everyone thought they were American and just

waved at them. It was bad. After that we had ordered to shoot down any plane that didn't have the proper IFF (identify friend or foe) or invaded our air space. I think we shot down two planes that may or may not have been ours.

We thought we might be going through the Suez Canal to the Pacific but we went home instead. We stopped in Bermuda for some R & R, (rest and recreation) we were to head for Boston. Everyone was betting on their own ship being the first into Boston. At that time, the Herndon was considered old, she was commissioned in December 1942. Most of the destroyers were much newer and larger. I was in the director when we left Bermuda. I heard the captain call the engine room and told them to give him all the speed we had and do it now. We hit almost 40 knots and were way out ahead of the other ships. Coming into Boston, it was heavy fog and we hit a sea going tug boat and cut it in half. We were able to rescue everyone except their dog. Our captain got in trouble because we were going too fast in a harbor. Because so many of his family members were Admirals he got out of it. Our bow was a mess and we had to get towed to the Chelsea dry dock for repairs. We enjoyed Boston, went to dances and shows there. One night we were at the Play More Ray, More Dance Hall. It consisted of two dance halls connected by a walk-through tunnel. The two bands would alternate; each would play three songs so we would go through the tunnel to the other one. I saw this very pretty girl sitting in the stands. She was so pretty no one was asking her to dance. Her name was Doris Dwyer. Not Jimmie, I asked her and after that we dated while we were in Boston. Her father owned a lumber yard and asked me to come and work for him after the war. It was tempting but I was homesick. One evening Doris and I were supposed to go on a date but I was broke. Her dad invited the two of us to go with him and Mrs. Dwyer to the Lithuanian club on him. We walked into the club and wonder of wonders, a bunch of my fire control shipmates were there. They all stared at the very pretty Doris and when they saw me one said, "it's that god dammed Clermont". They all had to come to my table to meet the girl.

After that we went through the Panama Canal to the Pacific. In the Pacific we went on patrols and I think we got to Wake Island but I may have been wrong. We went back to Pearl Harbor and had our torpedo tubs removed and replaced with more AA guns. While in Pearl Harbor we practiced our anti-aircraft firing. We were on station with the carrier Franklin. The target came by and the Franklin missed it, we shot it down. Another target came and again the big carrier missed it. We shot it down. Over the intercom came the message: Good work Herndon, return to base. Franklin stay on station. I later asked one of the gunners on the carrier why they were having so much trouble hitting the target when they had many times more guns than we had. He told me that because there was so many tracers in the air, you couldn't tell which one was yours. After that they were required to use the Mark 14-gun sight with better results.

Pearl Harbor was a disappointment to me. The famed beach was small and rough, our Minneapolis Lakes beaches were much better. I made one liberty in town and after that went to the Sub Base to swim and drink beer. (25 cents for a full quart) The hula girls were not at all like the movies, they were short and wide.

I was then sent back to California on a Navy transport ship to go to advanced Fire Control school. There were many wounded Marines and Sailors aboard. On the way they piped over the loudspeakers of Doris Day singing Sentimental Journey. I saw battle injured men with tears in their eyes as they heard her sing. I later wrote to her about that, but never heard from her.

I was given a 31-day rehab leave and when I got back to California heard the war was over. After completing school, I was sent to Bremerton, Washington to go aboard the battleship Indiana. I always thought that if I had been assigned to a Destroyer, instead of a battleship I might have stayed in the Navy. I had enough points to get out of the Navy so was sent to the Great Lakes to be discharged.

After I was settled at home I tried to get into a school but they were all full with no openings. While I waited for school, I worked at many odd jobs. The last one was the Pure Oil Company. When I gave my notice they tried to get me to stay and offered me a better job. I turned them down and went to Tool & Die along with Drafting school. While going to school, I tried working at part time jobs, the worst one was tending bar. I couldn't believe how bad some of the people acted at closing time, especially some of the women. I couldn't handle it.

One day at school a Navy recruiter came to our class. He was looking for veterans with certain skills to teach at the Naval Air Station in Minneapolis. He wanted me so I signed up, another bad idea, but at the time it gave me some extra money. I taught the Mark-14 computer/gun sight and systems. I learned more about the equipment than I knew before by being a teacher. You had to be ready for all kinds of questions. That would help me later when I got recalled to active duty.

In 1950 the Korean War broke out. I wasn't too concerned about getting called to active duty as I thought they would take the younger guys and leave the instructors to teach new recruits. Wrong, they only took the instructors, not the raw recruits.

I married Dorothy Mitchell on May 28, 1950 and less than three months after we were married I got called to active duty. I was not a happy person at the time.

On August 24, 1950 I boarded a train for Great Lakes Naval Station. After a week or so of getting shots, physicals and clothes I was on my way to Green Cove Springs, Florida to help get naval ships out of moth balls and back in service for Korea.

When I arrived in Green Cove Springs, most everyone was on liberty for the Labor Day holiday weekend. The duty PO took me to the O-Division compartment and told me which bunks and lockers I could have. In the Navy most everything goes by rank and time in service. There were many unrated seaman and petty officers with less time than me. I could have taken any of their bunks and lockers but instead I took an unoccupied bunk and locker. I didn't want to create any hard feelings.

When the crew returned from liberty I got a rude welcome. No one would talk to me. Everyone there was regular Navy, I was first reserve in the outfit and resented. They all thought that I had gotten my rate while in the reserves. It was some tough days at first. One evening I

overheard a Gunners Mate telling the younger guys who hadn't been to sea about his life on the destroyer Shubrick. I walked over and asked him if he had been on the Shubrick. He said, yes, what's it to you? I told him that I had spent almost two years on the Herndon. The Shubrick and Herndon were sister ships and our hull numbers were next to each other. After that I was accepted into the division, but they still called me the reserve. As time went by we got many more reserves, including Kenneth Doane.

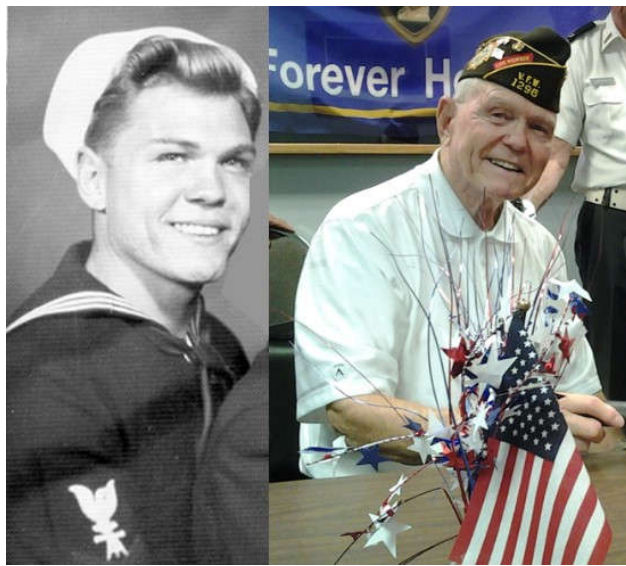
Getting the gun sights and computers ready for sea was a challenge. To put guns, computers and sights together in an aluminum dome, they had disconnected everything and in some cases had even cut wires as that was faster. One day we had a Mark-14 gun sight that when pointed north, the guns were aimed south. One of the young guys wanted to rewire everything, but I told him to just reverse R1 and R2. He went to the chief and complained about it. The chief told him to do what I had said and came over and reversed the wires himself. Everything now worked just fine. I found out later that he went to the division officer and told him that I was the best Fire Control man in his group.

After working hours were over I was told to report to Lt. Grace. I wondered now what? The Lt. commended me on my work and then asked how come I hadn't put in any progress reports to advance to second class. I told him that at the Naval Air Station I had made second class but when I got called to active duty, they turned me back to third. Also, my enlistment was soon up. (Truman extended everyone one year a couple of days later so I was stuck.) The Lt. told me that if I didn't put in the progress reports he would restrict me to base, that meant no liberty, so I couldn't go home to see Dorothy. I agreed to work on the progress reports. After doing all that, I took the Navy's fleet wide exam for advancement, it was a tough test but I thought I did OK.

One day as I was walking back to my home base on the pier I met D Ames, he had been my Fire Control Officer on the Herndon. He was now a captain of DE (A DE is small and slow, something like a baby destroyer) He gave me a lot of booze and tried to talk me into going with him to Korea. He had no one with any experience and assured me that we would get me advanced to a Warrant Officer if I went with him. It was a wonderful opportunity and if I hadn't been just married I would have gone with him.

Dorothy and I rented a small two room apartment in Jacksonville. I got what was called comrats which came to be about thirty dollars a month or so. I then could not eat any meals on base. Those of us that did that were called brown baggers and we carried our lunches in paper bags. I wore whites and had to have a clean pair every day. Poor Dot, she washed a suite of whites every day in the bathtub on her hands and knees. Shortly after Dot came to Florida we had a bad hurricane. I had to stay at the base and help tie up ships. Poor Dot was all alone and she told me later that she got so scared that she went to bed and covered up her head. When I had the duty weekend I often was on shore patrol. A lot of walking in hot Green Cove Springs. I took the truck drivers test and passed. Now when on Shore Patrol, I drove the paddy wagon, no walking.

After long last, my enlistment was over, I went to the discharge building to get discharged. I had two days to go when the list came out for the test results and the people that were advanced in rating. My name was on it but I would have to stay in the Navy another two weeks for it to take effect. They told me I could stay but Dorothy had given our rent notice, cancelled the utilities and shipped all of our belongings back home and had train reservations. Also, I was afraid that Truman just might extend me for another year if I stayed in the Navy. I decided to call it quits and left with Dorothy for home. On my discharge papers Lt. Grace had written that he recommended me for reenlistment which made me feel good. All in all, the Navy life was good for me and it gave me confidence.



James E. Clermont FC 3/C

Aboard the U.S.S. HERNDON (D.D. 638)

(The Minutes times were recorded from the 1C room people)