

# HISTORY OF THE U.S.S. CURRITUCK (AV-7)

## Appendix E

### Letters and Diaries of Crew Members who served aboard the U.S.S. CURRITUCK (AV-7) Between 1944 and 1967

#### From email's to Nathan Good's U.S.S. Currituck Web Site

<http://www.ussscurrituck.org/>

Compiled by Stephen R. Eakin

[ AE-3 V-2 Division / Flag 1962-1964 ]

As of August 9, 2009

**John Hendron, Farmington, MA**

John Hendron [GM2 – Air-Sea-Rescue Boat “MUGGS”, Working with CURRITUCK]

March 3, 2002

I have just run into the web site that features the USS CURRITUCK with all kinds of history as well as some great pictures, It was while browsing through some of these pictures that I noticed several that showed very clearly the Air Sea Rescue Boat's that were along side at various times during the Solomon and Philippine Island Campaign's, these Boats were often referred to as Crash Boats, There is one specifically that I positively do recognize as being the Boat that I was a 2nd class Gunner's Mate on in late 1943 and 1944 and early 1945, The Boat was named “MUGGS”, and the skipper was Lt Donald A. Bean, as best I can recall it was on a Sunday before lunch and the USS CURRITUCK called general quarter's with several Japanese Tony's making very low to the water attack runs on the CURRITUCK.

I can remember as vividly as though it happened yesterday that I jumped up off the fantail of the Crash Boat and ran to the 50 caliber twin machine gun turret desperately swung the gun around to try and at least get a shot off, As I turned turret to my port I saw this Jap Tony pilot as clearly as though he were just sitting there in front of me, with helmet, goggles and all looking down at our Boat as though to say where did you come from while my 50 caliber bullets were stitching along his fuselage right into his cockpit. The plane couldn't have been more than 30 or 40 feet off the water at this point and it was obvious that he was going to try and crash his plane into the side of the Currituck. Needless to say there was a hail of fire coming at him almost head first from the ship while my fire was almost dead broadside, he passed no more than 20 or 30 yards from our Boat, absolute can't miss range, as he swung by it seemed he was trying to bring the plane down even more to make sure he at least hit the ship.

Best I can recall he did barely miss the ship on the port side just over the bow, It was like watching a bad movie in slow motion, it also seemed like it took 10 minutes for the whole thing to play out but in reality was done in a matter of split seconds. I know how stunned I was, for once I got the twin 50 making contact as he came in so low I froze dead on him and followed him all the way to the bow of the CURRITUCK.

When I saw the picture of our Boat tied along the CURRITUCK it was like a rush taking me back in time, a time that I have seen in the back of my mind many times in the past 58 years. Our Boat was along side and our Skipper Bean reported to the CURRITUCK'S control room for follow up orders for our Crash Boat present and future assignments.

Thanks for your e-mail acknowledging the presence of the Crash Boat "MUGGS", it gave me a lot of satisfaction to know this was one of the shots taken of our Boat while operating from the USS CURRITUCK which was no doubt the control base for our Boat as well as others. I use to wonder as an 18 year sailor how our Skipper got his orders and direction on where to go each time we took off for another location. I can recall while located at Bougainville in Empress Augusta Bay right off the end of the airstrip at Torokina Point our call name on the radio was 'Janey one'. I also remember many nights when Marines from the 3 rd Raider's as they found the time and energy to swim out to our boat to listen to Tokyo Rose on our radio, have a few beers while they would relate some of the miserable days happenings. Wish now after all these years I had thought far enough ahead to at least find out their names, they were the most intent, focused, fearless and dedicated men of the armed forces I had ever met. I can remember one of the older marines who had obviously been in even before the war telling us about the Jap snipers who were tied into the upper branches of the palm tree's, when they would fire a shot they would as quickly as they could locate the wisp of smoke from the gun barrel and then riddle the location until some thing dropped. On several occasion's what finally dropped was a young Japanese girl who were some times the expert sniper?

You ask whether I thought the plane that I hit as it came in on the Port side of the bow of the USS CURRITUCK. Gosh, he was so close as he passed in front of our boat I can remember him turning his head to the right and looking smack dab down on us, I could see his teeth he was that close, there was a plastic canopy around him as I recall. I do remember he veered to his port as he passed us by trying to hit the ship at the bow, I was almost sure he splashed without hitting the ship. You ask for the time as best I could remember and I would have to say it was after 7:30 in the morning but still before 10 or 11:00 am.

The rest of the crew on the MUGGS at that time was the original crew,

Skipper-----Lt Donald A. Bean

Signalman 2nd class-----Henry Schroder

Motor Mac 1st class-----Paul La Badie

Motor Mac 1st class-----George-----

Gunner's Mate 2nd class---John Hendron (yours truly)

Seaman-----Adam Budrick

Seaman-----Bill Buckson

I am not sure these were the rank at the time we were along side but they were that soon after if not then. That was the 7 man crew we came over with and stayed together until after the Invasion on Lingayen Gulf on January 9, 1945. Can you image our little 63 foot long Crash Boat tossing around those rough waters in that Invasion force of some one said 600 ships of one kind or another heading for Luzon, in Lingayen Gulf.

I also remember when we reached the final destination and the Japs began their suicide dives into the ships offshore, we foolishly thought it would be safer near the bigger ships with the most firepower???? Didn't take too long to realize the folly of this assumption, the suicide planes wanted the biggest and best ships to attack, we got away from them as quick as we could. The Crash Boat dropped anchor just off shore a ways and we stood watch that night when the word came down that suicide japs were swimming out under boxes or pieces of driftwood in an effort to toss grenades aboard any thing they could reach.

Thanks for adding our boat and crew to those who were aboard the USS CURRITUCK.

John Hendron

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**Rodney D. Peterson, 116 E. Locust Street, Duluth MN 55811 218-727-7540**

*Here are excerpts from Rod's two letters to Nathan Good, one in 1992 ? and the recent one. He gives a lot of Currituck background long before most of us arrived aboard.*

Yes, I remember you very well along with Francis MaCarthy and the radio teletypes that at that early times were not that reliable. Also the Comm Officer Rummelhoff. I always got a kick out of how protective he was of the Comm Office, which he had to be. Our Ship wasn't that secure at that time as we were practically connected to it, just a open hatch or window separating the Radio Shack & comm office. Then when we would get a contact message, we could just hand it thru the opening to the guy sitting at the coding machine. Do you remember the wild party we had on the beach at San Juan. I have a bunch of pictures of it. Spav sitting in a garbage can with the ice and beer, also the ball game we had, with most of the guys stripped down to their shorts due to the heat. Rummelhoff was right in there also. That was fun and nice to remember.

When I was recalled in 1951 and at Great Lakes for assignment I had to fill out a questionnaire about what type of service I had in WW 2. I listed the Sea Plane Tender "Half Moon" So when I was assigned to another tender, the Currituck, it was quite a surprise. During WW 2 the Currituck was our flag Ship in '44 and 45. Previous to that the Tangier was our flag of Fleet Air Wing 17. I had gone aboard the Tuck a couple times, once at the Island of Woendi, just off New Guinea, and once at Leyte Gulf in the Philippines to get copies of Fox messages we had missed for one reason or another. So I felt that I Kind of was acquainted with the Ship. I remember thinking when I first went aboard it, that it must really be nice to serve on a big Ship like this. I especially remember it had a Gee Dunk stand, and one could get cokes etc. We had nothing like that. Well as it turned out, it wasn't exactly a floating hotel, but the duty wasn't too bad. (2000) I first saw the Currituck in late October of 1944. It came into Leyte and was the Flag Ship of Fleet Air Wing 17. FAW 17 consisted of the "Tuck" and several AVP's, including the Half Moon, the San Pablo, San Carlos, the Orca and later a few others. These smaller AVP's were about the size of the Destroyers during WW2 - 320 feet long. We usually took care of 5 or 6 PBYS. One day when we were sitting between Leyte and Samar, we had a whale boat going over to the Tuck and I went with it to see if I could get a copy of a couple "FOX" Schedule msgs we had missed. I thought at the time, "What a great Ship, even had a GeeDunk machine.

I never thought I would some day about 7 yrs later I would be one of the crewmen. The Tuck later was part of the invasion fleet at Lingayen.

I had been out of the Service from Jan. 4, 1946 and one day while in Minneapolis I decided to go over to the federal bldg and enlist in the "inactive reserve" That was about the middle of August of 1947. Well about a month later I hired on with "Ma Bell" and they put me to climbing poles. I got married in Sept. of '49 and things were going pretty good as I had a Cable Splicers job then - and then came Korea. I received a notice in March of 51 that I had been recalled to active duty and a date to report to Mpls. for pre-induction physical. Well they gave me a little more then a month to get my life in order and reported to Mpls again for transportation to Great Lakes, Ill. arriving there on May 23. After getting some new clothes, I still had some from the last time in the Navy. On June 2 I was assigned to the Currituck. Guess they thought I would feel at home on another Sea Plane Tender.

I arrived in Philly 7pm on June 7, took a taxi to the Navy Yard and was sent to the USS Chandeleur AV10. This was a tender the same type as the Tangier (a converted cargo

type) It was acting as a Barracks Ship for in transit personnel. The Currituck was still over in the Mothball fleet and it was not towed over to the pier where it would be opened up again until the 13th. There were only 55 of us that went aboard that first day to start opening up the Sealed Hatches - airing it out and cleaning it up I guess it had been in mothballs since 47 or 48 and it was kind of a mess. I think all of the 55 of us were inactive reserves and they started sending us young fellows just out of Boots and said to make Radio Men, Signal Men, Cooks etc. They didn't have enough service Schools to do the job at that time. I guess Spaventa, Carl Commons and I were the old RMs from WW2 and we spent many hours pounding CW at them. They did set us up with a room on the base to use for some time until things were in order on the Currituck. We ate on the base or on the Chandeleur until they were able to get the Tuck fixed for food etc.

Life on the Tuck at that time was kind of tough, as the yard workers were working Shifts to get it ready, there was welding and pounding day and night and it was kind of difficult to get any sleep - also the ventilation was bad - we used to hunt the unoccupied Officers Quarters for unused Fans and then mount them in our sleeping compartments. Trouble was, just about the time you thought "this is better" someone else decided to requisition the fan. It took a long time before things got better. August 1st the Ship was placed back in Commission and the Captain was McElroy - remember him? In November and early December we made several trial runs down the Delaware River to test the Engines and Ships handling. By this time we had almost a full complement of people, a large percentage were reserves. On Dec. 17 the Ship pulled out for Norfolk and arrived on the 19th. Half the Crew was given Christmas Leave, the other half had to stay aboard - it was too far for me to go to Minnesota. On Jan. 28 we departed Norfolk for Guantanamo Bay Cuba to begin Fleet Training, arriving there on Feb. 3.

I enlisted in the Navy Nov. 2, 1942 after Boots and Radio Operator School at the U. of Chicago and 2 months of additional training in Frisco and was assigned to the Half Moon and left for the Pacific in July of '43. We spent the next 2 yrs operating PBY (Black Cats) on night Bombing of Jap Shipping from the Solomons, several places on the New Guinea Coast, Morotai and went into Leyte with the invasion force. on October 20, 1944.

Many "interesting" things happened to us during this period and it still is talked about at our reunions. I was relieved on Jul 17 while we were at Borneo and our planes on anti sub patrol. I arrived back in Frisco on August 14 on a troopship and that day Pres.

Truman announced the Japs had agreed to surrender - what a relief..

Rod and Mary have two children, a boy and a girl, who live in Wisconsin. Rod is very active in locating former shipmates for the USS Half Moon. He instituted the reunions in 1990. He continues to be the President, secretary and treasurer of Half Moon Assoc. He was active in the Currituck Association too. From the son of a former Half Moon shipmate he writes about the modern navy -- "this officer serves on the USS Peleliu, it is a helicopter carrier and operates 28 helos. It is a different navy then we knew. No more paylines, the pay is automatically deposited in an account or bank the man specifies and the ship has several ATM machines so they can draw money when needed - wherever they are. Also there are many computers around the ship so they use e-mail when they want."

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**JIM STUEHLING. 12 Blackberry Ridge, Malvern PA 19355-8647 610-296-7048**

*Jim tells [Nathan Good - USS CURRITUCK (AV-7) Web Site] that he joined the ship in fall of 1953 and left in December 1954.*

He had been married to Helen in January 1953 and was not happy to leave Norfolk. After discharge he finished college in Pennsylvania and went on to graduate school at Florida State in Microbiology. Worked for Quaker Oats Research near Chicago, and finally ended up in his favorite job for the State of PA as an environmentalist. They both retired in 1992 and started traveling in their 5th wheel for up to seven months a year. I suspect they get the award for "happy travelers" since they have been to Alaska once and for four years into Mexico. His letter to me was postmarked Bend, Oregon and went on to say they may be home in late September. Helen and Jim had two girls and one boy. He comments it "would be great to meet some of you guys again some day." Like some others of us Jim has had some tumor problems and has undergone radiation for his prostate problem but seems to be doing OK.

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**JOHN DEMETRIUS. 39 Weinmanns Blvd. Wayne NJ 07470 H-973-595-6862**  
**john@demetrius-llc.com**

"I believe I came aboard the Currituck some time in June 1953 and left some time that fall when I received my TE3. At that time I transferred to USS Valcour, an AVP and COM Middle East Flagship. However, I was lucky and got myself a transfer just before going to the Persian Gulf. Nice thing about being in communications, you see all those requests for personnel. They were looking for a TE3 to go on a world cruise. So in April 1954, I ended up on the USS Hornet, CV-12, a nice big flat top going to the South China Sea via Portugal, Italy and the Suez Canal. I now cross the Equator as a worthy Shellback. We spent most of our time operating between Manila and Yokosuka, Japan. We also became members of the Gulf of Tonkin Yacht Club. While in that area our air group splashed a couple of Chinese planes that fired on us. I was then promoted to TE2. In November 1954 we headed to the West Coast. We arrived in Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1944. At that time the superstructure of the Arizona was still protruding through the water. The Hornet's new homeport became San Diego, a great place. I was released from active duty in May, 1955 and returned to Brooklyn, NY.

John has had an equally interesting civilian life. As an accounting auditor for NY Univ. Medical Center, he took his BS in Accounting from NYU. Then he moved through Haskins & Sells, now Deloitte & Touche. While there he went overseas again to South and Central America. While conducting an audit in NYC he met Millena (Mickey) Rapuano, had a whirlwind courtship and was married in June 1961. Marriage produced three-Gerard, Gineen and Gregory and now a granddaughter. Some time soon after marriage he got his CPA. (I bet Mickey loved that!) Through mergers and buyouts he is now President of Demetrius & Company LLC with 20 employees including son Gerard who also is a CPA.

I guess John liked the Navy since he is a plank owner of the USS Hornet floating museum berthed in Alameda, CA and a member of the US Naval Institute. He hangs on to photos taken from the Currituck going through the Panama Canal and our Operation "Churchy."

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**DON NORTON 12313 Majetic View Lane, Clayton NY 13624315-686-4378 (May - Oct 15) 112 Beach Park Lane, Cape Canaveral FL 32920 321-868-6738 (Oct 20 - May 8)**

"Hi Van: I really am having a little trouble remembering you, but ...looked you up on www.1onesailor.com and we found your picture...the more I look at your picture it seems I do remember. I was excited to find it. Fifty years is tough on the memory. HA HA. By the way were you on board when we went to Kingston, Jamaica? I was copying

the fox skeds in code and was tapped on the shoulder by Patricia Wymore, who was Errol Flynn's wife at the time. Can't remember if it was 51 or 52.

I went aboard August 1, 1951 and was discharged August 8, 52 at Philly Navy Yard. I returned home and took a job in a factory making machines that press shirts. Spent about six months there and was bored to death. I took the fire department test, passed and was appointed Feb. 15, 1953. Was active in a fire company (Hook & Ladder Truck) for eight years. Took another exam within the department and became a Fire Dispatcher at Lieutenant's pay. Took another exam and became a Captain at the dispatch center called Fire Control Center. About 1983 became in charge of the center and retired in January 1991 with 38 years of service in the Syracuse (NY) fire dept. I was married to my lovely wife Shirley while in the Navy (1951). She visited the ship in Philly aboard 'for Thanksgiving Dinner November 22, 1951, and when it was recommissioned just before we went to Norfolk for a shakedown cruise. .We have two sons David (44) and Dean (38) who both live in Florida. We will be married 49 years Sept. 22 heading for 50. God willing!

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***Dan Duckworth, 174 Pickford Avenue, Phillipsburg NJ 08865 908-859-5921***

Dan joined the Navy in 1951, boots at Great Lakes, then to Pax River Main Comm., was designated TE and joined the Tuck in 1952 and kept us laughing until July 1955. After Navy days worked for a data processing dept of NY Transformer in nearby Alpha, NJ," until starting with Ingersoll Rand in the DP department until retirement in 1998 as Manager of Financial Planning.

Danny and Alayne have two sons, Michael, a West Pointer -- so Dan has to yell "Go Army Beat Navy" now -- with two grandchildren and son Steven, a Delaware Valley College graduate whose wife is expecting their third grandchild momentarily. He knows the inside of a doctor's office with his two heart attacks in 1987 and another more recently in 1995. But he can still play weekly golf with a riding cart and "now takes a bucket full of pills everyday." Dan was a Phillipsburg Councilman for 13 years.

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***Norman Cote, 7 Duxbury Court, Lincoln RI 02865; Business - Realty Executives of Cumberland 2180 Mendon Road, Cumberland, RI 02864 (email NCOTE88616@AOL)***

Norm was on the Currituck as an RM from our trip to Bermuda to England and Italy. (That places him aboard from about June 1953 - although we had two Bermuda trips, another in April 1954 until the England/Italy/England trip in August 1954.) Norm's brother Bob spent all his navy time on the Tuck. Norm went the entrepreneur route and opened a meat market and spent 26 years on the business end of a meat cleaver. For the last 20 years or so he has been in the real estate business.

Thelma and Norm have four children - Debbie, Laura, David and Jonathan - and six grandchildren - 2 granddaughters and 4 grandsons.

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***WARREN E. RUMMELHOFF, 475 Ironwood Drive, Ballwin MO 63011-3428 636-227-5224 email [wer-vdr@swbell.net](mailto:wer-vdr@swbell.net).***

*He was our communications officer from February 1952 to November 1952.*

He writes, "You (VanOrden) evidently came on board at GITMO (which I did) because we left Norfolk on Monday, 28 January, a day I'll long remember. I was married on Saturday, 26 January and when Captain McElroy heard of my plans he thought it would be a good idea to have liberty expire at 2300 on Sunday the 27th. He delighted in calling me to his cabin to emphasize the time. And, of course, he had some other snide

remarks. Speaking of McElroy, I have more "sea stories" involving him than anyone else I served under. Most people can't believe them. The radio shack was involved in many of them." (More than one person has mentioned McElroy in the letters. At one time he was a dues paying member of the Currituck Association.)

I remember Spaventa. He was the backbone of the group. As for me, left the Tuck and joined the staff of the Officers Candidate School in Newport, RI. Left that assignment and went aboard the destroyer USS Purdy out of Newport as Operations Officer. That was 1955. While at OCS we had two boys. From the Purdy I went to ONI in Washington DC in 1957. After three years on that assignment I went to the USS Severn AO-61 as XO. I left Severn in fall 1963 and was assigned as the Navy liaison officer and instructor in industrial security at the Army Intelligence School at Ft. Holabird, Baltimore MD."

"That was my last tour of duty. The Army brainwashed me properly so I was able to retire as LCDR with 25 years (5 enlisted). Came to St. Louis in July 1966 to work in government security at McDonnell Douglass. Stuck it out 'till March 1987 when I retired for good."

"Son Kirk, an engineer with Pratt Whitney in FL - not married and Gary chief operating officer with a "dot com" company in San Jose, CA. He and his wife put together two grandchildren for us. By all means give anyone my address, phone number or email address. Would love to swap stories and find out what the gang's doing."

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**Joseph Berg, 9276 Angus Place, Philadelphia PA 19114-3412 215-673-3571**

Joe was aboard from Feb. 1951 to July 1953. After leaving the ship he married in April 1955 and have five children and eleven grandchildren. He worked for IBM and then the IBM Service Bureau for nearly twenty years. In 1971 he went to work for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and retired' from there in December 1994. (As I recall the Van Ordens and the McNamaras attended his wedding in Philadelphia although Joe may not recall this.) . Since retirement they have purchased a condo in St. Petersburg, FL and "spend the winter months in the balmy south and the summer months in Philadelphia and the Jersey shore, plays bit of golf and volunteers for delivery of food to shut-ins."

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**William Broder, 1842 Lakeshore Dr, Carriere MS 39426-7804 601-749-0398**

*Bill was on the Tuck for fifteen months from 1955 to '57 as a TEC.*

He recalls Comm officers Rivers and Pitz as well as Radioman Chiefs Collinsworth, Basham and an ex-airdale radioman nicknamed Tex who played the guitar all day. Fortunately for the ship, Bill was a teletype and crypto repairman, had various radio licenses and was placed in charge of the radio gang. After his days on the Tuck, he helped place the destroyers Dupont and Parsons in commission. He then spent three years instructing at the Crypto School in Vallejo and got a commission in 1963.

With commission in hand he moved on to NavCommStas at Guam, then Morocco and then OinC at RM-B school at Bainbridge. Then Bill was the XO NavCommSta Gitmo, spent a few years in the Canal Zone and retired from NAS Corpus Christi in 1976.

**Note:** After the hundreds of seaplanes many of us handled from the PATRONS, Bill witnessed the crash of a seaplane in the Azores that killed nine. As I recall a PBM was lost in 1953 - found lifeboats but no survivors. Some years ago, this appeared in the Currituck Assoc. newsletter: "The history of the CURRITUCK is great. I remember a lot of it, especially the three planes going down because of water in the gas. I remember the Dr.'s and pharmacist mate going to get the crews. I was on the list of mechanics that went to get the carburetors off the planes since we had to prove there was water in

the gas. (Earl Wooster, AV-7 '44-'45)

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***Marlin Bottinelli. 194 River Lane, New Milford NJ 07646 201-261-5555 Business  
239 Squaw Trail, Byram Cove, Lake Hopatcong NJ 07849 983-398-1958 Home***

Marty enlisted in June 1952, boot camp at Bainbridge, then Radioman School at Bainbridge, chose the Currituck and reported aboard April 1953 until Spring 1956. Made RM2 until Chief Collinsworth offloaded him to shore duty. Was then at Pier 7 Guard Mail Center at Norfolk Operating Base. "I had it made. You had to be 2nd class and above to get a pass to wear civies on and off the base. I slept in the same building where I worked and had my CAR there."

Was discharged in June 1956, then worked for RCA Service, learned the television installation and repair service - he was boss - was unionized and made journeyman. Cable TV killed the TV installation business and he began his own security alarm business for 24 years now. Marty has three children, one a former navy man now involved with a Navy contractor on the Aegis System in the NASA station at Wallops Island, VA. He was trained as an OS (old radar man) on an Aegis Cruiser, the USS Ticonderoga, which saw action shelling Lebanon and attacks on Libya. in the Navy. Marty is still the "politician" as a lifetime member of the VFW on the Public Events Committee, Recycling Committee, Zoning Board, and the New Milford Planning Board.

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***Ernest Harkness. 2213 Pennview Road, Havertown PA 19083-2222 610-446-5736***

Ernie was one of the longer shipmates since he went aboard right out of boot camp in 1951 and left in April 1955. The Tuck sent him off to radioman school (where he got married) along with Marty Bottinelli (and Marty's future wife) and Bill Cullen. After navy days, he was employed with United Air Lines reservations for 18 years until it moved to Washington, then worked for various travel agencies in the Philadelphia area and retired from American Express in 1996.

Also after navy days he earned a B. S. degree from Villanova University in 1962, thanks to the G. I. Bill. He says "...it was a tough job studying with the kids around but I made it." Ernie has been married 47 years now with four children and seven grandchildren ranging in ages from 15 to 9. "They really keep us on our toes." Oh yeh, he also says Dick Newkirk and Hank Spaventa "really got bombed at our wedding reception!"

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***Carlos "Van" Orden***

Reported aboard Feb 1952 to May 1955, released to inactive reserve as a TEL 1, but reverted to active reserve in Trenton NJ, and taught communications 1955-58, while attending college. Finally discharged 1 Aug 1959 after my eight year commitment. Last 2 months of active duty was on SP duty in Norfolk with the Burlesque theatre on my beat.

Married a Chicago USO hostess (Elvera) on July 30, 55 whom I met in 1951, got through college in 3 years and two babies and then two more later - all girls. They now have 18 grandchildren for us. Worked for 4 communications companies in New York City, Virginia and Illinois although we always lived in NJ. Got tired of the corporate politics and travel, earned some more education and became a college professor in 1973 at Norwich Univ. in VT for 6 years. Relocated to Belmont NC (we came south to thaw out) and retired as a professor emeritus in 1993. I continued to teach at Marine Corps bases at Camp Lejeune and Cherry Point, NC after "retiring" to our beach house here on this barrier island. Fully retired in 1998 after 4,678 students in my 25 years as a professor.

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**Dick Newkirk, 6011 Players Place, Milton, FL 32570-8769 850-626-7028  
(SRNewkirk@aol.com)**

Dick graduated from Radioman School in Bainbridge MD (along with Ernie Harkness, Bill Cullen and Dick's future wife Arduth), left the Currituck for NAS Patuxent River, MD, made RM2, then to USS OWL home ported in Rodman, CZ, made RMI and converted to CTI (Communications Technician) with Naval Security Group in Port Lyautey, Morocco then to NSG at Skaggs Island, CA where he made CT Chief. Later at NavCommSta San Miguel, Philippines was commissioned Limited Duty Officer Ensign and then assigned to NSG Headquarters in Washington. After that to NavCommSta in San Diego; Adak, Alaska; Anchorage, Alaska; Norfolk; and lastly to the Naval Technical Training Center, Pensacola where he retired as a Lieutenant Commander in 19aO. That completed what he called a "lifer" in the Navy.

After navy days, Dick attended the Univ. of West Florida and then had a second career for 18 years in real estate marketing. He and Ardy have two daughters, Jane and Mary Anne and three grandchildren. After all the navy travel, they did the civilian travel thing for three years in their recreation vehicle and toward the end of "on the road for seven months" they realized they had "been there - done that." and really settled down in Florida.

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**Harry Getchell, 417 Lincoln Avenue, Wyckoff, NJ 07481-3022 201-444-4368**

Getch was on the ship from July 1951 to June 1952 and he says "what a year it was, all around." He "also sure can recall Spav (Spaventa)." He left the ship in 1952 and had many jobs trying to adjust. He got married and they have a son and two granddaughters. He "settled down and had many jobs again" until 1962 when he took employment with Western Union International (WUI) in New York City. After 22 years with WUI, he took his pension in 1984. Like some others of us who have been under the surgeon's scapel, Getch has had open heart quad bypass surgery but says "he is hanging in there" now that he is 69.

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**Leonard Rossell, 8677 North Shore Drive, Spicer MN 56288 320-796-5599**

"The Tuck sure was a long time ago. My time on it ran from August 1952 to October 1953. It certainly had an unusual radio shack. I remember trying to operate a ship-shore circuit during gunnery practice with the 5-inch mounts on top of our work areas. After leaving the Tuck I finished my four years on the Saipan CVL-48 on which I spent a year patrolling Korea. After my discharge I stayed with the navy as an AT in a VR reserve unit. I dropped a rate to change to AT but managed to retire in 1981 as an ATC. My civilian work started out as an electronic tech, later switching to product control work and finally spent 20 years as a purchasing agent for a small manufacturing company. Been retired since 1993 playing golf, fish, sail in the summer and ski in the winter. Our three children are spread about the country so we travel some to visit them. My memory at 70 is such that I will soon be able to hide my own Easter eggs, so the Tuck is getting more and more lost in the gap."

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**Mrs. MARILYN WENKE, (55 Summer Field Court, Deer Park NY 11729)**

Called me to say her husband's name was Kenneth. We had a pleasant conversation. After the Currituck and the USS Lake Champlain, Ken worked for the phone company in New York. She said he was heavy smoker, had a heart attack followed by surgery and then succumbed with a second attack. Ken was 49 when he died in 1982. Ken and

Marilyn have five children and 17 grandchildren and most of them live in her general area. One son, is now retired from the Marine Corps and lives in Virginia. Marilyn told me "he was a great father."

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**ROBERT CASHEL, 341 W. 214th St #20B, New York, NY 212-691-2060**

*I finally found Bob! He writes:*

"My time on the Currituck began in April 1951 and the recall came as quite a shock. I had qualified for a commission a few years before but then failed the medical exam because of a spinal cyst that I thought ended my time in the reserves. Little did I know there were different rules for enlisted men.

I had just been married when the call came that led to a 15 month tour mostly on the Currituck coming out of mothballs. Without too much to do on board we spent our days shooting darts at Ship's Service and finagling weekend passes. I can't say it was an experience I found either satisfying or sensible."

When Bob got out he completed his master's degree and went to work for Community Chest (now United Way), then a stint with the Boys Clubs of America (now Boy and Girls Clubs) where he became National Finance Director. He started a consulting business, is now retired. A son and two daughters live in Connecticut. He stays in shape at the local Y and busy with AARP tax counseling, at their parochial school and various community service projects. "It is a good life, we are healthy and happy!"

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**ROBERT ISSELHARDT, 407 Sycamore Dr, Waterloo IL 62298-1739 618-939-4177**

Heard from Bob at Christmas time. He writes that he "was happy to hear about the ship she really got around before being scrapped in 1972." I was on the Tuck from about Sept. 1951 to March 1955. My wife and I were married Sept. 1958 - we are still happily married. They have two daughters and three grandchildren. One daughter is a nurse and the other is a computer analyst at Scott AFB there in Illinois. Bob retired in 1993 after a lifetime of being a journeyman welder.

"I never regretted the time spent in the Navy. The Tuck took us to many different ports -- and always got us back. I'll never forget our crossing the Atlantic Ocean when we went to England, etc. --- those coffee cans sure came in handy for the guys who got seasick. I was one of the fortunate ones; I never did get seasick."

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***From HANK SPAVENTA's Christmas card to me [Nathan Good]***

"Pretty soon I'll be writing to you. I've been practicing on my new (three year old) typewriter. I've found out how to get it started and make it move from side to side already! I think it prints in Chinese though. At least it looks that way. Seriously, I really appreciate you going to so much trouble to communicate and I promise to respond before next Christmas. Spav."

---

**JAMES W. DUNLOP (WOODIE) 1209A Thornbury Lane, Manchester NJ 08759 732-657-4385**

Woodie came aboard in April 1951 from the Brooklyn Navy Yard as a RM3 and was on the Tuck 16 months. Remember Capt. McElroy well; and Mr. Rummelhoff was a fine gentleman.

He left the Tuck in August 1952 In September he started with Brooklyn Union Gas Company and retired as a Vice President in 1990. He worked in the regulatory area designing rates and forecasting gas needs and supplies; traveled extensively; became a lobbyist; and spent my final year of service as the executive director of a trade

association.

Prior to the Tuck Woody got out of radio school in January 1945 and then to Pearl Harbor and then to Saipan. Instead of doing "radio" he was a phone operator, then at three navy hospital fulfilling the needs of patients coming back from Iwo and Okinawa, then doing yeoman work. He got his 3rd class stripe under a special BUPERS authorization. Got discharged in July 1946, Joined the reserve, went back to engineering school and graduated in 1950, Got married, took the civil service exam, got a nice job offer which was to start the SAME day as my recall to active duty.

---

***CHET INSCORE (Chester D.) 24495 Barbara Lane, Caldwell, ID 83607 208-454-3270***

writes that he was on the ship in 1953-54, then was transferred to crypto school and then to Grand Turk Island, in the British West Indies and finished his enlistment therein 1956.

Upon discharge found a spot on his lung and after a few months reenlisted and spent 8 months in Navy hospitals and again discharged to the temporary disability list. Chet has spent all of these years as a truck driver, owning his own rig and still travels the western seven states. Chet has three children from his original marriage and after remarriage in 1972 mostly raised her four children. That was a good basis for 18 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. He is not looking forward to retirement since he continues to enjoy "what he does."

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***After ROD PETERSON read in the newsletter***

*Warren Rummelhoffs comment about Capt. McElroy's antics, Rod writes -*

"One time McElroy exploded into the radio shack with a message in hand, demanding it be sent out as written and under the OP priority (Operational Immediate.) I was on a circuit with Norfolk and he handed it to me. I handed it to Mr. Rummelhoff-Capt. McElroy demanded it be sent. Another ship had a man with acute appendicitis and no doctor or facilities for surgery on board. A mid-sea transfer of this party was made to the Currituck and our doctor performed emergency surgery. This was all sent in plain language by Morse Code. I know Mr. Rummelhoff didn't want to send it that way and neither did I, but the Capt. stood at my elbow while I pounded it out. This happened on our way Norfolk, just before the trip to Colon, Panama and it probably added to his being relieved by Mr. Reid the Exec. Well he was a character. " here it is!

---

***Carlos "Van" Orden***

Among our former shipmates who are-now sailing on the Currituck in the sky are: Frank Mele died about 1990. Mrs. Dorothy Mele lives at 112cShawRoad, Belmont MA 02178-4522.617-489-0143. He was an RM3 onboard1951-54

Carl Commons lived in Kokomo, IN. He was an electrical engineer graduate from U. of Indiana and employed by Indiana Bell. They had 2 boys and a girl. Both Mr. --and Mrs. Commons are deceased in early 1980s. Carl was a WWII RM who was. recalled in 1951 to help recommission the Currituck

Bill Cullen died 12/16/1978 of liver failure. Bill was an RM who was in the same RM class as Harkness and Newkirk. They had three sons. Mrs. Barbara Cullen, Apt 206-A, 324 Strawberry Hill Norwalk CT 06851 203-847-8139

Randy Pittner died 2/28/1997 of a heart ailment. They had three sons. Randy was the die-making supervisor for 39 years at the Sheboygan Paper Box Co; A few years prior to his death the whole family visited San Juan "just for old times sake." Mrs. Maureen Pittner, 602 Huron Ave., Sheboygan, WI 53081 '920-452-0990. .

Arthur Masten died December 10, 1991 nearing age 65 of a massive heart attack and less than a month before retirement. Arthur enlisted in 1952 for 4 years and after navy days was Director of Facilities and Operations for the Ichabod Crane Central School system. Mildred and Arthur have a son. Mrs. Mildred Masten, 24 Route 22 #2, Hudson NY 12534

Robert J Menges died in 1962 by his own hand, shortly after the birth of his son Duane. Duane and I had a pleasant conversation recently and since he never knew his father I described him as I knew him on the Tuck. Mr. Duane Menges, 4849 Union Avenue NE, Homeworth OH 44684 330-823-2244

Leon M. Dennison, who was an RM3 in 1952 is deceased as shown on the Currituck Association roster. He lived in Hull MA

Francis Gottschalk, who was a TE1 in 1953 is deceased as shown on the Currituck Association roster. He lived in Walworth WI.

Zigmont J. Woiculewicz, Ziggy was an RM1 in 1953 and is deceased as shown on the Currituck Association roster. The SSDI shows him born 1921 died 1974 with no place of residence given.

Charles W Sample, the SSDI shows him living in Byesville OH (as he did in 1955) born 1931 and died 1985

Among those that I could not locate through nationwide searches perhaps because they did not have a phone number or are now among the unknown deceased or now live outside the country or there were numerous persons with the same name, sometimes 100 or more:

D W Wausau (perhaps Don or Dan) who in 1955 lived in Joliet IL Could find no clues in any current databases or the SSDI

Stephen J. Kolackovsky Jr. - whose Maryland mail was returned and there are no additional living Kolackovsky(s) in the country. The SSDI shows a K. Sr. who was born in 1899 and died 1977 in Chemung NY, undoubtedly his father.

James M. Alba who in 1955 lived in Glendale, Queens, Brooklyn NY - numerous

J G Conner (perhaps John) who in 1952 was from Philadelphia PA - numerous  
Salvatore Consalvo in 1952 from Newark NJ The SSDI shows the same name born June 1927 and died December 1969 with a NJ social security number.

James C Daly who in 1955 lived in Woodside LI NY - numerous -

J McClendon (perhaps John) who in 1952 lived in Philadelphia PA

Andrew J Rosso who in 1955 had a Music Store address in Baltimore MD. The SSDI shows the same name born in 1931 and died in Maryland in 1992

John J Tracy - there are numerous John J. Tracy listings in the country

Robert Willman who in 1952 lived in Dayton OH - I wrote to 3 Willmans in OH

Daniel J. Koprowski - no D Koprowski in the country and none in the SSDI

Saul A. Katz was returned marked "Moved - Not Forwardable"

Letters (and a few postal card reminders) went out to a few others but I never heard from them. I have to assume the addresses were correct since they were not returned. I know from searching, for college alumni some prefer NOT to be found! Some of them are: Hank Spaventa, Don ' McNamara, John DeBlock, Chet Inscore, Bob Isselhardt, Max Miller, Ed Torian, Tom Weikel, and Ensign John Tasker. Bob Keefe called me and promised to send a letter but I guess it got lost in the postal service maif!!!! I decided not to attempt telephone calls even where I had numbers.

From the Currituck Association roster are a bunch of ETs who use to traipse through the radio shack to their repair shop at the end of the shack. I think they were suppose to keep the radio receivers in shipshape condition! They are Ken Conlon ET3 51-54; Basil

Tasker ET2 51-54; Francis Welcome ET1 51-55; Roy Schmook ET2 51-52; Monte Juillerat, ET352-54; Marion Jackson ET3 54-55; and William Goldsmith, ET1 51-52. . Then from the Currituck Association roster are Ryan Lewis TE3 53; Mike Ziner, RMSN 53-54 and Richard Dumont RMSN 54-55. I have no recall of them and they were not on the Menges' 1955 list. I did not try to contact them.

Here are some officers you may recall since they frequented the area on occasion probably because some had the duty in crypto or were anxious to see if they were on the Willie Roger promotion lists. They are Capt. Harvey Burden, CO 52-53; LCDR W. Baird, Ops Of cr. in 1953 who is deceased; CDR Frank Heyer, XO in 1952-53, CDR Vance Schweitzer, OPS in 1951-53; Capt. John H. McElroy, CO 1951-52 and his XO Cdr. Walter Reid; Capt J D Black, CO 1953-54; Cdr. Edward Bishop, XO 1953-54; and Capt. J B Vredenburgh, CO 1954-? The Tuck was the last active seaplane tender in the Navy. She was dismantled (and probably sold to the Japanese to make into razor blades) at the Learner Shipyard, Oakland, CA in June 1972.

#### ENDNOTES

I used [www.555-1212.com](http://www.555-1212.com) and [www.anywho.com](http://www.anywho.com) to try to search for our shipmates. I liked the latter best. If you want to research or confirm the death of someone use [www.ancestry.com/ssdi](http://www.ancestry.com/ssdi) which j liked. This lists those who have died along with social security numbers which supposedly are not available in the public domain until after one's death. The SSDI acronym means Social Security Death Index. It was updated April 2000 and has about 64 million deceased.

I've enclosed the Navy Log Enrollment form if you are interested. If you want to visit it on the web it is [www.lonesailor.org](http://www.lonesailor.org) and in the roster you will find me with my 1951 boot camp picture. I visited the Memorial in Wash DC a few years ago and was particularly impressed with the 7' bronze sailor positioned out on the mezzanine with peacoat and seabag in all kinds of Washington weather.

If you have any yearbooks or whatever you would like to dispose of, I can find museum locations for you. All my material (except my beer mug) is in the Currituck County library here in North Carolina since our ship was named after Currituck Sound in the northeast corner of the state, two hours from where I live. If you would like a copy of the History of the ship from keel laying in 1942 until dismantling in 1972, I would be happy to send you a copy. If you would like to join the Currituck Association or receive info about it, please write or call Ron Curtis, 207 W. Marvin Avenue, Owensville, MO 65066-1038 (314) 437-3899. Dues (in 1994) were \$15 yearly.

After going through all of these searches, my wife Elvera reminded me that perhaps some of those shipmates that I have been unable to find may be in a "witness protection program" somewhere. She contends that a few certainly might qualify as I have described the behavior of some of them to her over the last 45 years!

AND IN CONCLUSION, it has been fun and as much as I would like to write to some of you and thank you for your very informative letters I guess this will have to suffice.

Oh yes, Danny Duckworth sent me a recent picture and he hasn't changed a bit. If I can help you contact anyone please ask. I'll have a new email address about December 1 so that will help, too.-VAN

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#### **Carlos "Van" Orden - Diaries 1952 - 1955**

USS Currituck AV-7 1952

March 1952

By the time you get this I'll probably be on my way to Cuba to pick up my ship. I am being transported down on the USS Taconic. She sets sail Monday. The Currituck is

setting in port at Guantanamo Bay.

Yesterday I was working on a seaplane boom ship and had my first chance to be aboard and eat a meal. The food was excellent. It sort of stands to reason, the fewer the men the better the food

The weather down here is wonderful and the sun is warm and very invigorating. Our high yesterday was 73 degrees, but during the night the temperature goes down to about 40. This is good sleeping weather. I'm sure glad this ship of mine isn't going to set in Norfolk all of the time. This way I'll get a chance to see something.

-----  
At Guantanamo Bay, Cuba

We arrived in Cuba. The country is beautiful warm and is everything that you might expect a southern island to be. Tonight, we are staying on the base until the Currituck comes in tomorrow.

The island is really so beautiful that it would be no effort to spend a year or so right here. There is all kinds of tropical shrubbery, palm trees, and coconut trees lining the walks. The sun is hot but there is always a breeze especially at night when it is wonderfully cool sleeping weather. This particular section of the island has a lot of hills and sloping land. The buildings are located on the hills and the roads are down in the small valleys.

All the windows have screens and shutters and above all around the outside is a wooden awning to keep out the sun. There is everything on the base for recreation plus movies, enlisted men's club-soda fountains-stores and everything that you would find in a small town.

The higher hills are spotted with radio, radar and loran aerals and roads winding around the low mountains. As you might expect there are Spanish personnel who work on the base so that the Spanish language is frequently heard.

When we docked yesterday there was a little old ramshackle boat in the harbor with 4 or 5 Cuban men selling pineapples and bunches of bananas. The meals are just like homemade cooking, a choice of many things, always a salad and plenty of fresh fruit and fruit juice.

This is indeed a land of beauty, relaxation, and enchantment A perfect land of paradise, so to speak. Navy personnel are allowed to wear tan shorts, and T-shirts during the day, so that everyone has a very nice tan. Movies of the countryside can never do justice to it because half of the beauty lays in the warm sunshine-cool breeze and the fragrant smell of the tropical plants and flowers.

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Aboard USS Currituck

I guess because of my background in Teletype operation I'm now a Telemen and will start working in the radio shack. There are three Teletype machines and a reperforator unit here. They need someone to learn how to service them, so since I know the operation, I'm going to concentrate on servicing and repairing them.

I'm finally seeing the ship do some of its' real work. We have three seaplanes anchored around us and another is now on the hangar deck having some work done.

The watch system works like this. On Monday, I have duty 12 noon to 6pm, off from 6pm until midnight and then from midnight to 6am (Tuesday.) I sleep until about 12 noon, eat and have the afternoon off: evening off and Wednesday morning off and then start another watch at 12 noon. It repeats then just like Monday.

The radiomen stretch out on the deck and sleep during night watches, but the Telemen can't do that since we never know when the frequencies go bad coming from

Washington and might have to locate a better frequency for reception purposes. We are furnished coffee and sandwiches on these night watches.

Most the of the radio shack gang had a beer party Monday, We all had a good time, some got drunk naturally but they paid for that the next morning. We had good food from the galley and the best part is the Welfare and Recreation Department paid for it. Went swimming in the ocean and it is indeed the warmest water I have ever been in, but salty as water could ever be. We had 8 hours of fun!

Did I ever explain to you that we always anchor out in the bay here and never go into a dock. You see, since we play nursemaid to seaplanes this approach is better when we are out in the open. Thus, we lose little going on liberty, since we always have to ride liberty boats back and forth. But you'd never know that you were on the sea, there is no movement at all, When we go out for war games, and we hit a rough spot someone always comes up with "another damn rough railroad track" comment.

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Port-au-Prince, Haiti, April 1952

When the liberty boat pulled into the city an awful stench came out to meet us, and I wondered just what the city would be like. But like any other place it had its nice part and then the poorer part where people live from hand to mouth.

I took a tour in an automobile of the entire city. We started off by seeing the official and public buildings. None of the buildings here have glass in the windows and majority of the buildings are made of concrete or concrete blocks, and have windows going all the way to the ceiling to let the breeze blow through. Many of the more well-to-do people have very nice homes.

Everywhere you go natives are trying to get you to buy trinkets and mahogany carvings and sisal weavings. The sisal is a form of hemp, such as they make rope out of. The women seem to do all the work, especially among the poorer class while the men stay home and sleep and take care of the children. Everywhere you look you see burros carrying more than their own weight with a woman astride it as the burro starts ascending the mountain. The city is built on the side of a hill. It was getting near noon so we went to a small hotel and ate. It was very nice and had recently been renovated. It had all new chrome furniture and fancy floors made out of colored mosaic tile. It was very clean.

Most of the nice homes belong to white people. Most of the cars here are very modern. Didn't see anything much older than 1948 models. The people walk right up the middle of the streets, so the cars must weave in and out of the crowd.

After dinner we went up the side of the mountain on a road that reminded me of pictures that I had seen of the Burma Road in China. It was really winding and narrow. Once on the top of the mountain there was a magnificent night view that overlooked the entire city. This also was quite modern and very attractive. We only went up to get a view of the city and have a drink.

Coming back down the mountain was even a more death-defying drive. The women in this section were carrying their wares atop their heads, probably because they were too poor to have a burro. They can balance and carry up to 100 pounds on their heads. We went to some of the open markets where there are both stores and open markets for the poor.

To alleviate some of the "other side of the tracks section" the government is building a development and moving a lot of the people out of their shacks. People are milling around all the time with no particular job to do just moving around and begging. I had a kid ask me to buy a coin for \$50.00 and it was worth just 2 cents in our economy. I

finally gave him a nickel for it and was he ever glad to get the nickel. He got better than 100% profit from the nickel so who could blame him.

At night we rode down a boulevard named "Truman Boulevard." It was evident that it had just been built so I asked the driver if Truman had financed it. He only laughed. By the way my French came in handy all day. I used quite a bit of it. The language on the island is about 65% French and 35% Haitian, but I knew enough French to be understood.

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En route Norfolk - April 1952

We are off the tip of Florida and are now heading for a rendezvous with an LST. They have a sick sailor aboard and need our doctor. We are supposed to meet them in about an hour. The ship effected her rescue of the sick man from the LST without a mishap. The seas at midnight were pretty rough and everybody got jostled around a bit. They had to hoist the stretcher about 20 feet to our first deck, but it went off OK. This incident will probably delay our arrival in Norfolk. But in cases like this you never hear anyone complain even if we arrive later than announced. Most sailors have a soft spot in their heart no matter how salty they appear to be.

I have to laugh when I thought this would be a small ship and set in Norfolk. Next to the Coral Sea (aircraft carrier with 3000 men) we were the next largest of all the ships in Guantanamo. We have a lot of traveling coming up. Next cruise takes us to South America with six different ports to visit.

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Docked in Norfolk for Easter, April 1952

One of my shipmates from the flag bridge has been sleeping in the Captain's chair up on the bridge all afternoon. I'm sure the old man would have a fit if he could see him.

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Back to Gitmo - May 1952

Here we are riding at anchor in Guantanamo again but only for two more hours before we leave for Kingston, Jamaica. I got pulled for mess hall duty and the hours are long and hot in the lower decks. I've taken to sleeping out under the stars more. It is so much cooler than in the compartment. It was so stuffy, the pillow and mattress cover were soaked from perspiring so I said quits to that.

Our sailors had quite a bit of trouble in Kingston so there has been no evening liberty. We have been playing nursemaid to twelve Seaplanes while here in Jamaica. We leave for Coco Solo, Panama. The weather is still nice but we have been having frequent black clouds and they open up and give us rain. I'm still sleeping out under the open stars where it is good sleeping. When the rain comes up abruptly we get pretty wet under the stars until you awake and scramble back down the hatch with your mattress. We are now in the Panama Canal Zone, Coco Solo, anchored outside the entrance to the locks. I expect to go on a 8-hour liberty Monday and take a bus ride around the locks to the Pacific. It will be the first time I have ever seen the Pacific. It will approximately be the point where Balboa, a Spanish explorer first saw the ocean when he crossed the Isthmus. Pacific means tranquil and peaceful. I wonder if my impression will be the same.

We have a trip to Bermuda, Norfolk, the Philadelphia Shipyard, Ireland, England and Norway rumored about. I never thought I would be so lucky and get to see so much right off the bat. It is really wonderful I think. I hope you are getting accustomed to me coming and going. I don't think anything of it anymore. If I were not happy doing it then it would be a different story. To date I have never regretted that I signed my name on

the line even if it meant giving four years to Uncle Sam. It's better than the Army or Marine Corps.

Went on liberty today to Cristobal This town in truly Spanish. The buildings are all two stories with porches out over the sidewalks. This *is for* protection against the rain, since there is no glass in the windows. There are quite a few different bus companies in this city. Most of them are rickety and very undependable. We are departing for Trinidad.

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Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, B.W.I. May 1952

My first impression is good. These islands are just mountains rising out of the blue (and I do mean blue) waters. The ship is quite near the Naval Air Station and that is where the liberty boats go. We catch a bus then to go to the village. U. S. currency is used on the air station for the canteen, tailor, and exchange, but we are back to using English money in the village. The shilling in Kingston was worth only 14 cents, but here it is worth 24 cents, just 10 cents more.

Situated a little further out from the ship are two or three islands with houses on them. I am curious to know who lives them. Speaking about bus service they do have regular routes here and what I have seen of the islands to date gives the impression that the United States have made them what they are. That is, as for some of the "extra things in life" that many foreigners do not realize exist. You must realize if I have not said this before, that there is a great amount of poverty, filth and not to mention much begging and illicit romance on most of these islands. Many and most of the native born people are very primitive in their own sort of way.

If you have ever looked through Life magazine or National Geographic or similar magazines and seen pictures of beggars as we would probably refer to as hobos, crouching in the gutters and corners of buildings, this is exactly the picture you would see here.

The temperature is about 90 degrees but since there seems to be a breeze, we don't mind it too much. However, we are told that this is the rainy season for Trinidad, although we haven't had rain since our first night out from the Panama Canal Zone. I hope it doesn't rain, it would be nice sleeping weather out on the deck. It doesn't matter how hot it is as long as there is a breeze to relieve you.

Our purpose on all of these stops is to tend the seaplanes naturally. At each stop we have had a dozen planes at each place. During the day the planes go out on practices and return each evening for repairs and refueling and berthing and food for the crews. Seaplanes these days are "submarine searchers" and they do patrol work when not actually engaged in target practice.

The ship is in quite good condition as far as painting and repairs have been going. They have had sufficient time to get it into such a condition traveling from one place to another, so that when we do get in these places liberty is quite plentiful since spending American dollars is very much a part of good American relations. But I only need a couple of liberties to see and get what I want. As you can expect (seeing this is the Navy) many guys go every night looking for drink and dames. They feel they *must* live up to the sometimes bad reputation that the Navy seems to possess. Today has been just like a Sunday at home. I was up at 0530 this morning, had a nice breakfast of pancakes and bacon and relaxed in the nice fresh air until time for church. Since then I have laid around in the sun, until mail call. Yes, we have mail call on Sundays.

---

En route Norfolk - June 1952

We are about off from Jacksonville, Florida. We haven't had any rough weather at all and only a little rain once. As you might expect that was in the middle of the night and disturbed our outdoor sleeping. You have never seen this but to take a walk around this ship and as you look out as far as the eye can see there is nothing but water, blue as blue can be. It really makes one stop and think. This afternoon there was a most beautiful rainbow way off in the distance. It was the most beautiful rainbow that I have ever seen.

We got the latest dope on arrival *from* Norfolk yesterday. We are arming late Monday afternoon and are going to Craney Island, which is where we will unload about 50,000 gals. of aviation fuel. Then we are going back to the south side of Pier 5 in Norfolk. Think about that, we are going to get pier space for a change. Since getting pier space, we will be able to close down everything in communications, except for a possible landline teletype to base communications. If they keep this open we will have to work out a watch list for the telemen.

This has been some weekend and it isn't over yet. I have been standing watch on and watch off, which interferes greatly with sleep. Besides that when we could sleep, we have been off-loading ammunition, then had Captain's inspection on Saturday morning followed by Admiral's inspection Monday morning. I have been making corrections to publications all weekend while I have been on watch. Secret stuff so I have to take it quite seriously. Not much communications business.

We are suppose to leave August 10 for the Scandinavian Peninsula (Norway, Sweden and Denmark) for four months. There are big maneuvers gong to take place there starting in September. In fact, there was a short article in the Norfolk paper saying that air-ground-sea maneuvers were scheduled.

-----  
Norfolk - December 1952

A good Sunday afternoon, but rather cold around ye olde Norfolk. Yesterday was a nice day here but today is different. San Juan here we come! Not too many aboard but enough to keep the conversation going here in the radio shack. Seems a little strange to he back aboard for good and all. I really haven't been a member of this crew since I went to the hospital back in August and missed the Norway trip. We are due back in Norfolk from San Juan February 6 for about three weeks and will be over in Portsmouth shipyard for about three weeks.

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USS CurrituckAV-7 1953

Enroute San Juan - January

A most uneventful trip so far with no mishaps, no men overboard and rather good weather although it has been rough during the evening, when the wind starts up, but beautiful during the day. The sun is warm and really gets the aches out of the bones. No more chills running up the down the spine as on some cruises, just droplets of perspiration running off the forehead now. Already the guys from the signal bridge are sporting burns on their faces and exposed arms. Really the life, I should say.

Until arrival tomorrow morning we are pulling up to a pier until the operations start. By the way, this is operation is named "Springboard" so if you happen to see it mentioned in the newspaper or on radio--that's is it. Don't say I told you though.

The radio teletype has been rather bad lately probably due to poor wave propagation. Over 1000 messages every day coming out of Washington, not all to us of course, but if you miss them you have no way of knowing whether they are addressed to us--NAFD--that's our ship's call, or not. You can see the responsibility and the importance of getting

all of them otherwise we have to request "reruns" from Washington, that is we have to ask for missed message inclusive numbers to be transmitted or run again hence the term "re-run."

The weather continues to amaze me especially since your letter mentions the snow storm and what trouble it caused. It is quite a bit different down here. The temperature during the day is about 75 (much hotter in the sun, of course) and the nights are rather cool. This is the part of the year when this is true. Later on, the nights will be just as hot as the days, but this isn't until June and July.

A shipmate and I went on liberty, first to the Caribe Hilton Hotel, owned by the Conrad Hilton chain .in the states, and later on to the NCCS (the National Catholic Community Service) which is a member of the U.S.O. and danced. Service members must sign in with their service numbers (remember, mine is xxx-xx-xx) and I noticed a couple of others that I knew in the log book.

Have been up to my neck in work here, since we are so short of personnel. Really keeps us stepping tu round out our time with sleep, work and a little liberty. Have been going dancing lately when on liberty. Met a Puerto Rican girl---21 year old college grad, teaches Spanish, lived in New York for two years, here at the USO/NCCS, so I have a good dancing partner.

These mid-watches used to be great, could read, write, do anything you wanted, but the teletypes run almost continuously all night long any more. Volume of traffic has increased so tremendously. Have 24-hour watch tomorrow and plenty to do to catch up in the cryptocenter.

We are quite shorthanded now, with 11 men detailed to various schools and other details, so it does interfere with free time. I don't see any long cruises again since we are not quite considered "sea-worthy" yet and may have to go back to the shipyard again.

-----  
Norfolk and then back to San Juan

Arrived back in excellent shape. Good to be back where the temperature is warm. This is the nice season here, not muggy, always a nice breeze blowing. But this may be a short stay since I hear rumors of Pensacola, Florida, then Bermuda, and possibly Argentinia (near Iceland.)

If things work out and when we get back to Norfolk, I want to take a few weekends and go into Washington. It think it is about time I give our nation's capital the once over and learn what I can about it. This is purely for academic and educational reasons and to do a lot of sightseeing.

St. Patrick's day it is! Too bad I don't have anything green to wear. It is now 330 AM and reveille goes down in another hour. No sleep for three of us though since we are going out cruising around and shoot off our pea-shooters for awhile. There is only one thing wrong when we go firing. That is that it raises havoc with the radio receivers and teletypes. It jars the bolts loose and just blows half of little radio tubes out. Oh, but what fun. If you remember, the radio shack isn't too far from the 5" gun and it sure echoes this way when it fires.

Guess it is time to sweep down for the next watch crew to take over. Won't be getting much sleep today because of general quarters (battle routine, to you) so we have to use toothpicks to keep our eye lids open sometimes. We are coming back to a pier for 24 hours and then move on to Norfolk.

There is a civilian tanker along side us and is it clean. As the run of tankers go they usually are in pretty horrid shape to look at, but this one is tops. I believe they have a

few passengers aboard. Many tankers do take them probably just for the remuneration. But, for anyone who wants to travel by tanker for a vacation and save money this is probably the best way. This particular one is from Oslo, Norway.

You may have heard by this time that we lost a PBM Navy plane last Saturday evening while on maneuvers. Saturday morning at 4am started the maneuvers and they were cancelled Saturday night so we never even got started on them. Over 100 ships and planes searched the area, but to no avail. Eleven men went down with the plane and none have been found. Various signs (life rafts, etc.) were found but no survivors. Have had a terrific amount of work since we were the center of the search. Just one of those things though, "men have always died that others might live."

Just read on the United Press teletype frequency that Queen Mary died. Quite a life she led. She was the wife of a king, reared two sons as future kings and grandmother of a Queen.

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At Norfolk - March

We tied up at a pier today and hope to stay here at the pier for some time. I hear the engineers want to dismantle the boilers so that should keep us setting at the pier for a while. I'm told we are going to Philadelphia for Armed Forces day. That will be helpful for some of us. New regulations say that we cannot travel on liberty past a 200-mile limit (about past Philadelphia) But regulations were made to be broken thus I'll be home one of the weekends.

Weather conditions cool, very little sun and the wind blows some good gusts. It is a risk if you go on liberty whether or not you get back. When the waves start getting high they cancel small boating and many times we get stranded on the beach. That is one of the things wrong with Norfolk anchorages. The Bermuda trip is now scheduled for middle of June. Anything to get out of Norfolk!

Three of us made third class so the cigar smoke is getting a little heavy around here. Fortunately that puts one of us in each section so that will make life a little easier as far as responsibilities are concerned.

We are going to dock at the Camden (N. J.) Marine Terminal The ship will have open house. Guess what, we got pier space. Then Tuesday morning we leave for Bermuda. We set up a new teletype frequency between the Airlant (Air Atlantic) ships and a station on the base. Had a little interference this morning but working fine now. This makes life a little difficult for guarding for Currituck messages.

Some lousy shipmate took my wallet while I was sleeping before the mid-watch Friday night. The one time I didn't put it in my locker, too. Luckily, I still had \$10 loaned out plus \$20 I had just loaned to the chief that afternoon. So that left me about \$23.00 in it. I don't mind the money too much but all the cards I had in it make me pretty provoked. The Navy is really around us here. The battleships Missouri and Wisconsin are at the next pier and the big carrier Roosevelt two piers up. They are in to pick up midshipmen. Somebody could really make out with another "Pearl Harbor."

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En route Bermuda - June

Arrived Bermuda and it looks like a quiet slow-moving island. I have liberty tomorrow so may look up one of my former shipmates and his wife. You never can tell, they might have some nice single girls living nearby. Do wish we were staying here for about a month anything is better than Norfolk.

Well it happened. Two girls got my name and contacted me so I got another shipmate and took them out to dinner at the Elbo Beach Surf Club. They are coming out to the

ship tomorrow for a tour but I have the duty so I am getting a standby to take my duty (many of the married men owe me duties.)

Bermuda has indeed been very disappointing to me, at least. This is the worst cruise I have been on. Sailors and dogs lead the same type of life here. The island itself is very nice, but the inhabitants, remember are British, so perhaps that explains it.

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En route Canal Zone - August

We are less than 18 hours away from Coco Solo on the Atlantic side of the canal and then going to transit the canal. We have two destroyer-mine sweepers along with us now. Picked one at Charleston and one off Key West. The best news is that the President of Ecuador is going to pay us a visit. We'll have to go all out with spit and shine for this one.

Some news reporters are coming aboard tomorrow, so I guess I'll be getting some more practice sending press. The name of this Pacific project is of a scientific nature, is named "Churchy" in the Galapagos Islands. There seems to be nothing "secret" about this project.

We arrived on the Pacific side last night. I didn't go through the locks however, this time. Someone had to go with the crypto Ensign by car from the East to the West side while the ship was passing through the locks, so I was delegated. We had to drop off mail, pick up publications and make arrangements for the communications in the Pacific.

The guys are really on report this weekend and today. I guess everyone who had ever been drunk really made a weekend of it this time. I've never seen so many on report as this time. I guess they heard that there won't be any liberty or beer etc. in the Galapagos.

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Crossing the Equator - September

You've heard me speak of the initiation we would be getting when we went over the equator-we got it. There are a lot of sore tails I can assure you, and a lot of short haircuts or perhaps I would come closer if I said butchered haircuts. They had us doused with eggs, dunked in water, kissing a hairy belly, getting swatted on the behind, getting our mouths squirted with some vile solution and a few other things I can't write about. Remember this is for officers and enlisted men alike--even our Executive Officer got it!

Previous to the crossing we were known as pollywogs, now we are shellbacks. A few ended up in sickbay for one reason or another but all seem to be well now---except for the haircuts.

The island near which we are anchored is practically deserted. There are 8 sailors, a Lieutenant, his wife, 2 children and a maid--all Ecuadorians--and that is all. There is no place for liberty except if you want to take a hike and see the old American Air Base, which was abruptly closed in 1946 after the war.

If you have ever wondered what a deserted dried-up mining town of the West must have looked like this must be quite typical. There are no trees, but plenty of cactus and what appears to be a form of watermelon, same size and shape.

We launched the first giant balloon this morning, which floated into the upper atmosphere. In the gondola of this are various types of scientific equipment with which the civilian scientists are studying the conditions of cosmic rays. Because the magnetic attraction is greatest at the equator the reaction of cosmic rays is thus greatest. That is why we are here.

The salt-water fishing is really marvelous down here. There is everything you can imagine. There is absolutely no swimming---sharks in the water. Just off from us we have a visiting Ecuadorian ship. The crew comes over each evening for the movie and ice cream. The way it burns smoke all day I think they must still be using coal or wood. We are really having a great time-no liberty, reveille at 0430 and the like. Everyone is quite disgusted now. It is getting to be quite unbearable, but we here in the radio shack don't see too much of what everyone else dislikes. It seems that the watches come so rapidly that all we have time to do is sleep, eat, go on watch and back to sleep again, but by next weekend we should be back to the Canal so that will ease everyone a bit. Honestly, you have never seen any place that was so desolate and dreary and dead. I can now see why so many servicemen went buggy during the last war sitting it out on some atoll or dead volcanos like these.

Guess what? We got a message today and from its' content, I guess San Juan will see the Currituck again next year. From what I gathered, right after the first of the year. Oh great fun, this will make the 4th time we have been there.

Today we returned to Colon, on the Atlantic side of the Canal. Took us about eight hours in all to go through not including tile delays in Gatun Lake where the ships get sorted out as to which is next into another set of locks.

We are on our way to Guantanamo Bay. I have had the duty for the past 24 hours and am about ready to go to bed for the day. We don't arrive Norfolk until next Saturday and I am scheduled for Shore Patrol duty that weekend.

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USS Currituck AV-7 1954

San Juan - February

We are in San Juan, which is back home for many of us. We were in Guantanamo for some retraining before here though. This is the fourth time for me and the ship since recommissioning. I took my exam for Petty Officer 2nd class about two weeks ago. Am quite confident that I passed both parts satisfactorily. Will know for sure end of April. We are going to take a weekend pleasure cruise to Kingston, Jamaica. We've been there before, two years ago. Too bad we couldn't have picked Havana or Santiago, but guess there aren't too many of us were aboard two years ago who went there anyway. We are having our share of exercises and drills this time. For example reveille is 430am tomorrow. I have his watch until midnight so that means 4 ½ hours of sleep. Course, if we work it right we'll get up at about 8am. You understand it is not legal to sleep in but at times you are forced to do it. Sometimes the master-at-arms comes through and bangs a metal type of "mid-watch" sign attached to the sleeping rack and wakes some up. I suspect I told you on one of the trips home that I have the fourth rack high, above the lights where it is usually dark and I can't be seen. I never hang up the metal sign and usually no one knows I'm sleeping. Good thing I don't more sing that would give me away.

Had two days in Kingston, some duty, then 8 hours on the beach. Went to a dance at the Myrtle Bank Hotel. Sailing back to San Juan for battle problems and I have many publications that must be updated for March operations.

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San Juan - March

A rainy afternoon in sunny Puerto Rico but when it clears a few of us are going to our favorite hangout for filet mignons. Yesterday was the division beer party at the Armed Forces beach. My tan continues to hang on with so much time spent in the Caribbean. Anyone who is scheduled to get out between August 31 and December 31 just had two

months cut from their enlistment time. This takes in quite a few guys from the ship. I'm thinking about getting a transfer to a Carrier and see a different part of the world. Perhaps two years aboard any ship is time enough. This will probably not be a problem as a 2nd class PO.

What an unusual day this has been. I ate chow early this noon, jumped into whites and headed for liberty. I got to the quarterdeck early so I would be sure of getting the first liberty boat Standing there waiting, the Captain's gig came along side to take the old man over for a round of golf so he took four of us with him to the fleet landing. Some days are better than others.

I was headed back to the ship about 4pm when a civilian asked me if they taught English in the schools here. This immediately started a conversation and one thing led to another and I ascertained he was off the S.S. Nieuw Amsterdam, a passenger ship of the Holland American line. I politely asked him if he would escort me around the ship, as I would like very much to see it. That he did. Met over a dozen people and chatted along for a couple of hours. Did not meet any young women though.

Well we did our last day in San Juan and we are leaving for a "rest and relaxation" cruise to St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands for the weekend and then on to Norfolk. We are getting another new captain the first week in Norfolk. I've seen his picture and he looks just like our boxer dog-pug nose and all! I usually have messenger duty with some types of messages for the captain so I hope I don't snicker each time I see him.

Effective May 15th I am now a second-class petty officer. Of course I'm very elated and joyful but also very humbled. I know how thrilled I am for making it, so I know how dejected others must be for having failed. I also have a new job. I am now officially assigned to crypto center as the only enlisted man along with eight other officers and warrant officers who rotate the duty when needed. The added security clearance came through from the FBI finally. I have been working off and on with the publications but the Communication Officer has been doing the "important" work. Sorry, I can't explain that remark.

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Bermuda - April

We arrived Bermuda at noon and it is rather cool now. A shipmate was in Hamilton, Bermuda yesterday and he says the prices are extremely high here compared to stateside and even compared to last year when we were here. I guess they heard we were coming and jacked up the prices.

We have contributed very little to the current operation except to berth and feed the officers and men but that is the Currituck's job to be a "floating hotel" and repair facility. Another shipmate and I were going to see a couple of gals in the Elba Beach Surf Club but men in uniform are not allowed in there. The statement they use is something like -- "we will not ask you to leave but we do not want you around" ---and after that you have very little choice except to leave. It is OK since the gals probably are looking for a little excitement not a couple small town guys, like us.

One of our cranes just got finished pulling a Navy truck out of the water. The road takes a perfect 90 degree run and I guess the driver missed it and in clear daylight too. He probably had the mid-watch and was half asleep.

I'm interested in the GI Bill. You know I have four years to do in either the active or inactive reserve after this hitch. All together I owe society eight years. If I go active I must attend a weekly meeting and take a 2-week cruise or land duty somewhere. As a second class (or maybe first class) could earn some good money to help cover expenses, probably \$1000 over the four years.

I'm finally convinced that my communications officer is an alcoholic. He really boozes it up 2 out of 3 nights. He has duty the 3rd night. My desk is at one end of a 15 ft room and his is at the other end and he practically intoxicates me in the morning when he is around. He is a Princeton grad so perhaps that is what he majored in there!

A bunch of us went over to Kindley Air Force Base to buy 400-day clocks for various relatives and friends. Now if we can get them back to Norfolk without breaking the glass domes I guess it will be worth the *big* savings. Have shore patrol tomorrow night, but it is very difficult for sailors to get into trouble here in Hamilton and most stay aboard ship. Oh what a day this has been-planes, planes and more planes. This is the busiest day we have ever had here on the Currituck and section three (my section) of course had the duty. On top of everything else, they sent our lead radioman (and my friend from Brooklyn) on shore patrol duty. But everything has quieted down now (it is 1240am) and I'm listening to good music from Almonessen, N. J. (near Camden.) I've always wanted to go dancing there some evening, but guess I'll have to keep right on waiting. To start the morning off right, we had Captain's Inspection, the first in about 8 months. The old man went so fast I didn't even get a chance to see the glint in his eye.

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Milford Haven, Wales, England - July

It is now 530am and we are waiting outside Milford Haven for a pilot to come aboard and guide the good ship Currituck up the channel to Pembroke Docks. We lost five hours coming across (one hour every night) so that means the body system gets disturbed. It really got disturbed for some since the third night out was very rough and quite a few hands turned in to alleviate that "Am I going to be seasick" feeling. This is when the crew lives on saltiness. I was fit as a fiddle all the way over.

One night we passed a big ocean liner on her way back to New York. All the lights were on and the usual at sea parties were going full blast. What a difference in two ships. Communications weren't too smooth coming across. We were really bothered by atmospheric conditions east of Greenland. You do the best you can and still the officers are on your tail. The know-it-alls are a pain in the neck on a new venture like this and they rake us *over* the coals trying to *cover up* for their own inexperience.

But we are here now and now the seaplanes have been delayed because of bad weather and winds there on the east coast. This will give us another day for preparations. We are wearing blues now and had an inspection in them yesterday.

There was no getting out of this one either. He inspected the main part of the crew in the morning and then the morning watch and mid-watch operations people in the afternoon. This gave me a good excuse to really have my new pair of shoes spit shined.

I hope our reception is a little better here than it was in Bermuda. I expect to spend every day on the beach. I have duty every other day. None of the planes have as yet arrived because of continuing poor weather in the states and around Argentina, Newfoundland. We read the United Press teletype, which I usually copy late at night for various bulletin boards around the ship. If the reception is very good I just put a stencil in the teletype and then duplicate it for circulation instead of having to retype it.

There is a dance at some lodge room tomorrow and it is called a paired-off dance where 36 of us can be paired up with 36 English Wrens (like American Waves.) I didn't put my name on the list but some of us thought we might crash the party.

We have been very busy and with one-third of the crew on three-day leaves, things are a little hectic and rough around here. The encoded traffic is a little heavy and thus I've been up at the oddest hours you could ever imagine. When some of the watch standees can't find a good frequency they come wake me up. I seem to have the knack

of finding a workable frequency.

The weather is still strangely cool and the channel is quite rough, especially late at night, so that liberty expires at 930pm. This really takes the cake, but it was taking 2 and 3 hours for the liberty boats to make it back so thus the early liberty.

A group of us missed the 7am train to London so we returned to the town of Pembroke and waiting around for a small café to open (the only one in town) so we could get some breakfast. All of these small towns aren't awake until 9 or 10am - you hardly see anyone on the streets. After two rounds of ham and eggs and 3 cups of English tea we were about ready for a long 8-hour train ride to London. On the way to the station we stopped in a bank and converted dollars to pounds.

The train tickets are cheap for military from all countries so travel for us was truly inexpensive. The trains are set up with the aisle down one side and then four or five compartments that open into the aisle. Each compartment holds 8 persons and are entirely separate from the adjoining compartments. Since this end of England has thinly populated areas, the train really bounced around and stopped at every back door for awhile but eventually we arrived at Paddington Station (like New York's Grand Central) in London.

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London, England - July

The first thing I particularly noticed was the antique vintage and styling of taxicabs. They all looked old but were well maintained and in the best of condition. Even the motors were shined, not only the outside. English take pride in owning a well-kept old car than a recent one.

We went to two of the better hotels but were only able to get rooms for Friday evening and the other four guys wanted them for Sunday also. We were advised to try one hotel which some of the Navy men stationed London stay at and we were successful there. We felt much more comfortable there because it was a little less classy so we felt more at ease. I think we had a "Bermuda" hangover not knowing what to expect from these English.

After finally getting settled we started out to hit the night life in London which centers around Piccadilly Circus (like New York's Times Square and Greenwich Village.) We hit about every phase of night life from the high brow to the low.

Saturday we headed for Trafalgar Square which houses the government buildings. The mall is the parkway entrance to Buckingham Palace, the stately residence of Queen Elizabeth. We were just in time to get a glimpse of the Queen departing but the crowd was so congested could not take a picture. The guards were there dressed in scarlet with their big black fur hats. Just before leaving we glanced up to see Princess Margaret on the balcony of King James Palace. She evidently was awaiting the arrival of the Queen's two children for they were just then brought in by car almost at the same time. So you can say we saw the majority of the Royal family--at least the present ruler and the heir-apparent to the throne.

Where we owe our allegiance to the flag, the English pay the same respect to the Royal family. Actually, royalty is non-political, not belonging to any party. The one thing we did not see was 10 Downing Street, the residence of Churchill.

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En route Taranto, Italy - August

We've finally left England after the foul weather kept our planes down for two additional days and are now off the coast of Spain. The weather has turned nice and warm with plenty of sun. We are going to refuel at sea then sail through the Straits of Gibraltar and

on to Taranto south in the boot of Italy.

Our refueling took place in the Med finally from a tanker. The best part of the whole affair was that the tanker broadcasted good music to us from a public address system. This is true of all tankers. Guess it make a good pastime for everybody since no one is working and everyone is hanging over the side watching.

The last evening before arriving at Taranto we passed the isle of Stromboli which is just north of Sicily. Do you remember the big Ingrid Bergman and Rossilini scandal a few years back with the movie "Stromboli" was filmed on that isle? To many "stromboli" became a word of international fame in terms of lust and women. I had the mid that night and got a full view of the isle at night.

Later we passed through the straits of Messina, which separate Sicily from the toe of Italy. It was a pitch-black night and after three attempts at the entrance the ship's navigator finally got up his nerve to try it and needless to say, we got through. I was very leery for a few minutes though.

Taranto is a typical old city located in the flatlands that stretch from sea to sea. Was over on liberty last night and the communists are in great throngs, trying to exchange Italian money, the lira, counterfeit, of course, and just trying to gyp us in general. You can't move three feet, but a dozen kids are after you trying to slip your watch off your wrist, or grabbing for cigarettes in the jumper pocket, sometime tearing off the pocket. Many new buildings are sprouting up, probably through the money lent by our government. I don't know just what the better part of the city looks like since it is off limits to service personnel. But I suppose it isn't too clean either since many foreign countries seem to live and grow best where the dirt is.

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About Rome - August

Just returned from four days in Rome and it was the most tremendous venture I have ever been on. To have sat in history, Latin and literature classes and then to have seen the objects about which we studied is a most satisfying feat. As for the religious side of Rome from a Catholics viewpoint, this was a most amazing look inside the seat of Roman Catholicism.

We left Taranto, traveled all night long by train. Like England the train service is not too adequate in Italy either. The hotel is near the train station in the center of Rome. The train station is extremely modernistic but antiquity and age is everywhere else. In the USA we sandblast buildings of importance. It is just the opposite here as it was in England. The more aged the better for history.

In Rome events and buildings dating back to the time of Christ and even before are mentioned and described as we would speak of the blizzard of '88 or even the date 1604, the date of the founding of the first settlement at Jamestown, Virginia. After all that last date is only 350 years ago. Here, they speak of centuries-not years.

The foremost, most beautiful, most splendid edifice in Rome is Saint Peter's Basilica, the largest Roman Catholic church in the world. This church sets at the head of the square and boulevard which are always jammed to capacity whenever the Pope speaks to the faithful from the balcony.

The portico or porch of St Peter's is bounded by six bronze doors across the front, one of which is only opened every 25 years, the last time in 1950, the jubilee year, personally by the Pope. Upon entrance to the main building the massive size does not hit you until after you have been in and walked around, then suddenly you realize how high, how huge it actually is. There are huge panelings around the outside walls which at first look like canvas paintings. But actually are mosaic tile work. Just imagine

millions of small chips of colored mosaic tiles that give the various hues and shades of colors, just as a painter using various paints.

There is a bronze statue of St. Peter and where the multitudes of the faithful have touched the foot of this statue where is no longer any design of the toes. Can you imagine the millions of people it takes to wear down bronze to this extent?

All decorations within are of mosaic or gold leaf, for there is not a drop of paint in the Basilica. Sealed in glass under one of the many altars is the embalmed body of Pope Pius X who was only recently sainted and placed here. Covering the exposed parts are gold gloves and a face mask and on the right hand is the papal ring which is sealed through the glass so that the faithful may have their rosaries touched to this ring 3., a sign of reverence.

We were among the fortunate who were granted an audience with the Pope at his summer residence at Castle Gondolfo about a half hour ride from Rome. I was rather moved by his majestic movements and warm smile, not to mention the fact I heard one man speak six languages.

On the lighter side of Rome, we saw the locations where two recent movies "Roman Holiday" with Audrey Hepburn and "Three Coins in the Fountain" were shot. The latter movie was shot around the Fountain of Trevi. Here if one throws a coin in over his left shoulder he will get a wish to come true plus return to Rome at some future time. I threw in my coin, now I will have to see what happens in the future.

Went to the coliseum, huge and massive and half fallen down, which is surrounded by what is left of "bleachers" where Christians were put to death by beasts roaming in the arena. We descended into the catacombs of St. Sebastian on the outskirts of Rome which are the burial passageways of early Christians. There are nine miles of passageways dug out of this hill. You can just imagine the thousands of bodies buried in them.

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Return to Milford Haven - August

I will always remember Rome and consider myself very fortunate since only 35 of some 550 men from the ship got the chance to take the Rome tour. To have seen two world capitals, London and Rome, certainly makes Navy life much more tolerable. Some things are getting quite intolerable for many. Some of these officers are getting to be bigger fools as the days go by. I'm glad I'm a whitehat and not one of these reserve gold things they have meandering the passageways.

We are back in Milford Haven and the weather is quite fine compared to last time. I was on liberty last evening, went to a dance at a lodge hall, met a nice young English gal whose father owns an automobile garage and am going with her to a private dance tomorrow evening. I asked her are you sure you want to be seen with a sailor since I have no civilian clothes. This didn't bother her in the least. I walked her home and got a couple of English kisses. (Portions blacked out here)

We had an exceptional busy day as the seaplanes flew back to us from Taranto. As you might expect, I had the duty. Mail has been very poor, in fact we have had none in two weeks. However, a truck is coming in from London tomorrow so we should get something.

We are still in England for another week probably, as one of our planes had trouble down in south England, near Southampton Seaport, so we are leaving to go there for the plane. The weather is very poor both here and in Argentina, Newfoundland for seaplane travel.

Then we had to go to Plymouth to pick up another one of our bad planes so Saturday

night about 100 of us took off for London and got back at 6am. Had a good meal, then took in the French Follies. We'll be departing for Norfolk then for sure, take it from me, I know for' sure.

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Norfolk - September

It is 3am and I'm taking a letter writing break. I've been up to my neck in publication work and am trying diligently to have everything cleaned up so we can burn all the European unnecessary ones. I've taken the past six mid-watches so there are fewer disturbances and more concentrated effort in getting done in time for leave.

Have to get back possibly earlier than anticipated since we have to go to Quonset Point (Newport, RI) and then back to Norfolk for a few days and then off to San Juan I got back to Norfolk just in time to fill in for a second class on shore patrol duty in Norfolk. He is over leave time. There are only eight second class petty officers in operations so we have to spread it around

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At Quonset Point - November

We are anchored in Quonset Point and though I haven't been over on liberty as yet I hear it is quite fine. We had a ship's party in Newport, then went to visit an old shipmate in Providence a couple days later. When we got back boating was cancelled so we slept in the barracks on base. Since this happens frequently, we were furnished razors and shaving cream before getting back to the ship.

We are moving into a pier tomorrow and I am going to Providence again and then get a room at the local YMCA Monday is a lost day since I have to draw publications for December before we get back to Norfolk.

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USS CURRITUCK AV-7 1955

En route San Juan - January

We are now half way to San Juan and we have been rolling around. This time we did not load up on fuel as we are going to take it on at Roosevelt roads just outside San Juan. Thus we are top heavy and the rolls have been fun.

It is a beautiful night for sailing. Moon is almost full and the night is cool. This is the midwatch and though I do not have the duty, my Brooklyn radioman is underhanded so it is best that I do. There is a good chance of visiting Havana before our return in February. There are rumors that the ship is going to Europe in June for six months. That means I will probably be placed on shore duty because of my July discharge date.

My alcoholic communications officer has been replaced and the new officer has been a communications officer for two different tours of duty. What a relief to have an experienced one. He has twelve years in the Navy.

A shipmate and I took in a couple of movies in San Juan recently. They are our American films in English with Spanish translation running across the bottom of the film. I wish I could find American movies with French across the bottom.

Held a big field day here in crypto the other day. They never inspect this classified area when zone inspections are held, so could get away from holding field day every Friday like the rest of the ship. But out of respect for my new boss, the time had come.

It is hot here and the sleeping compartment is unbearable, so it is topside sleeping for me again. My tan and freckles are really popping out now. But when I stay away from the Sun for a few days it begins to disappear. We are busy with so many new personnel and experienced men getting out. In March we'll have real problems since 8 radio shack men leave and about 200 for the entire ship. This is a result of that big first wave of

enlistees in 1951.

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San Juan - February

We had to take a short cruise to the Isle of Saona, which is off the eastern side of the Dominican Republic. One of our plane's engines failed so they landed there and we had to go out and repair it. Because of our abrupt departure we left some 200 guys on the beach who were on liberty. When this happens, muster (roll call) of the men on the ship must be taken and then those who are not aboard must be transmitted to Washington in case the ship sinks. Washington would know who may have gone down with the ship. Those on the beach would not be included obviously.

We are leaving here soon to pick up a plane for transportation back to Norfolk at St Thomas in the Virgin Islands. So this may be my last time in San Juan which I have calculated to be about 10 months and eight stops. A shipmate and I had a swell last day in town Sunday, Church, a good dinner, the beach and a movie and we agree that we have kissed San Juan goodbye.

We actually went to Pillsbury Sound which is midway between St. Thomas and St. John in the Virgin Islands group. We were able to order cases of booze - officers two cases, enlisted one case - and I did. This is at a greatly reduced price and no stateside taxes to pay. It will be delivered when we arrive in Norfolk. I plan to buy up additional cases from some of my friends here who may want to sell it. Perhaps I can use it for my wedding.

The latest word is that our new deployment schedule will take the ship to England again, to Gibraltar, then to Sicily and Greece for August through November. My communications officer asked me if I didn't want to reenlist for another four years. Many rates are now closed and just because you pass the examinations there are no billets for promotion. The government can save much money by not rating more since the Navy is now Petty Officer top-heavy. I've also been told that giving fewer men more power and maybe more will make a career of it.

We may be off and running again tomorrow. Air operations are closed down and we could go out looking for an R4D which crashed on way to the Azores.

It is March and we are busy. I am off the watch list so I can concentrate my full time in crypto and get things squared away. Quarterly inventory coming up again plus an administrative inspection by our type commander as soon as we arrive Norfolk.

Something big is going to happen.

Still at sea and En route to Jacksonville, Florida to pick up another bad plane for return to Norfolk. This after crane on the ship really comes in handy for various of the Navy crash problems. My boss made it very clear to the chief that I had to remain off the watch list so I can keep the place caught up. Perhaps he thinks that I will ship over for four more. No chance now with wedding plans in Chicago quite definite.

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Norfolk-April

I have a Shore Patrol job in Norfolk for two weeks since we shut down the crypto along side the pier and we are terribly short of second class guys. My second class radioman friend went home to Brooklyn to see his wife. I have four hours on the street and then four hours in the S.P. Office doing paper work. The Officer-in-charge said you are a Teleman so that means you can type!

I am back aboard ship now and basically ready to be a civilian again but with mixed feelings. I am very happy to announce that I will soon be a first class Petty Officer. Some one told me I should be very happy to have made "first in four" which means first

class in four years and I have to agree. What is more interesting is that I came aboard the Currituck as a seaman apprentice and will be leaving a first class. Right now I'm being asked continually why I am not shipping over.

Well, the Currituck is leaving the country for a long cruise so I will be on permanent Shore Patrol duty in Norfolk as a first class. They pay us to room at the YMCA in downtown Norfolk so we can be readily available. This is my last letter from the "Queen". You can consider your days of writing some 200 letters to me has come to an end. I have been aboard about three years and four months.

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**GEORGE R. HAUSER - VPB Squadron**

August 14, 2004

I submitted a write-up on the crash to [vpnavy.org](http://vpnavy.org) six or seven years ago. I'll paste a copy below.

My log lists the following for June 1945:

6/14 - - - arrived at Lingayen and the Currituck

6/16 - - - local familiarization

6/17 - - - Black Cat Lingauen-Hong Kong-Lingayen sector

6/21 - - - ditto

6/25 - - - ditto

6/30 - - - Started for Tawi Tawi. Captain Crashed ( Lt. Commander Leeds Cutter) picked up survivors returned to Lingayen Gulf and the Currituck.

7/02 - - - departed for Tawi Tawi

On the morning of June 30, 1945, a number of PBMs departed from Linguyen for Tawi Tawi. After takeoff the planes joined into a V formation on Comdr. Cutter and headed south over the low land between Linguyen and Manila. I was flying at his left-wing position. It was a clear day and every thing seemed to be going along perfectly when Comdr. Cutter started to descend. I held my position until it was obvious he was in trouble. His airplane lost power where, during a flight, fuel would normally be transferred from the hull tanks to the wing tanks. From my location in the cockpit I couldn't see what was happening behind the airplane but I was kept informed (via the intercom) and learned that Mr. Cutter's airplane had exploded on impact and was immediately engulfed in flames. I headed for the nearest water that was only a few minutes away, landed and anchored the plane. Two members of the crew and I armed ourselves, inflated a life raft, paddled ashore and walked inland. We, after a short time, met cammander Cutter and his copilot walking out. We returned our airplane and took off for Linguyen and the Currituck. Since we had already transferred fuel several minutes earlier in the flight we decided to take the risk and fly back over land in order to get the survivors back to the tender as quickly as possible. A boat was waiting for us and took us to the tender.

Commander Cutter's plane carried another crew in addition to his own with a PPC, by the name of Roberson, flying as his copilot. The two pilots escaped through their respective cockpit windows. One of Mr. Cutter's hands was burned. Ltjg Roberson was not injured.

Another PBM from the flight landed in the same area as we. I learned many years later that it was Lt. Hicks and that he had to make a forced landing. I thought, at the time, that he had landed to help the survivors.

Commander Cutter flew with us on a couple of flight after that disastrous day. Once to Palawan for medical treatment for his burns. He could have gone home but chose instead to remain with his squadron. He was conscientious and well liked. I hope he is

alive and well. (*I read recently that Commander Cutter was killed in an airplane crash in Alaska shortly after the war.*)

My crew and I left for Tawi Tawi, just off the NE corner of Boneo, on 2 July 1945. The trip was uneventful.

Many thanks

George R. Hauser

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**Martin LeVan Box 664 Somis, CA 93066 [mlevan@gte.net](mailto:mlevan@gte.net)**

**10 February, 2001**

**This actually happened - I was there.**

Our Ship, The USS Currituck, over five hundred feet long, had returned to the Naval Shipyard at Portsmouth Virginia for major renovation during the Korean war. She was placed in a huge dry dock with another navy vessel. The water was pumped out, draining the dry dock and both ships were slowly lowered onto the supporting blocks under their keels. We were to spend several busy weeks here, while the yard personnel and sailors would be engaged in major refitting and repairs and painting.

One sailor, a truly colorful character, was being punished for his outrageous and constant pranks and was ordered to spend each day chipping old paint from the side of the hull. We couldn't see him but we could hear the paint grinder all day long as he worked from a scaffold hung between the ships hull and the walls of the dry dock. Day after day his work continued as ordered by the Captain.

In typical navy fashion, the ship alongside us had to leave ahead of schedule even though our dry dock work was unfinished. It meant refloating both ships, backing the first ship out, and lowering our ship into position on the blocks again. As the water was being pumped back in and the ships were rising, we could see the side of our ship for the first time in weeks.

There, in full glory, a hundred feet long and twenty feet high, was the result of the sailor's work. Chipped in the old paint was his name PHIL GABEL ! They told him to chip paint - They didn't say how.

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(The following is an E-mail from Stan to Ed that Stan sent on to me. Nathan)

The message that follows was a response to another AV-7 shipmate. It might interest you.

**Stan Virden P. O. Box 475 Gulf Shores, AL 36547 (334) 967-4287**

**[vivahaus@gulftel.com](mailto:vivahaus@gulftel.com)**

Hi, Ed -

Reading over your message reminded me of that shore bombardment we conducted in the Delta. We fired 57 5" rounds of WWII vintage, getting a lot of air bursts we didn't intend. We actually made a second run at that place (a VC logistics and training site) on a later date, but didn't fire, because we couldn't connect with the spotter plane. CAPT O'Neill was pretty ticked off while we unreped a few days after the shoot and he saw carrier planes attacking the same place. "Hey!" he cried out while I was standing near him, "that's MY target!" On the way back to Con Son some kid, left alone in the upper level, port side 5" powder magazine, just aft of my stateroom, blew his fingers apart playing with a hand grenade fuse. I was the investigating officer on that one, and can't say that my sympathy for him ran very high.

You may also recall that the little amphibian plane that shuttled back and forth to Saigon every day stove in its bow and had to land ashore on Con Son for several weeks. I rode that trip once, and had to strip to my skivvies, wade out to a 40' launch,

and report on board dripping wet. Our admiral (COMPATFOR) made that trip every day. When the aircraft finally got fixed he made it a big thing to depart in clean whites, but had to board the motor whaleboat to get to the plane, as all other boats were too large to go under the wing. The sea was choppy, and the boat swept away from the accommodation ladder just as he was stepping in -- the drink, that is. First we saw just his gold braided cap floating on the surface. Eventually, he crawled into the boat, stood up, and pointed dramatically toward the plane, in which he soon departed. Fun times. Did anybody notice the war?

I was also on board in 1964 when we visited Saigon, which was a trip full of stories. Later, when we sailed into Cam Ranh Bay I was on the recon team that went ashore to develop a report for CINCPAC on whether this was a good place for a base. It was. We built one. After the war the Soviets operated it for years.

**Also from Stan.....**

Pacific Stars and Stripes, Tuesday, August 10, 1965

There has been but one break in the routine and monotony. On June 23, the Currituck was passed [probably this is meant to be "pressed"] into service for shore bombardment. Her two five inchers [I recall that three of the four were brought into play] pumped 68 rounds into a Viet Cong concentration 70 miles south of Saigon; and the crew's boredom and tension broke up in jubilant cheers as they were told they had destroyed three of four targets.

**also:**

The Observer, Saigon, Vietnam, July 10, 1965

Seaplane Tender Shells Viet Cong Saigon (MACOI) --

The USS Currituck, a 14,000 ton seaplane tender, is the first seaplane tender to have ever conducted a shore bombardment.

The unusual mission for the tender took place June 23 when Currituck left the seadrome, a small island off the coast of South Vietnam, to provide shore bombardment against selected Viet Cong targets in the Mekong Delta region.

Using five-inch guns, the Currituck lobbed sixty-eight rounds into a training post, into administrative areas, and an ammunition dump.

A pilot of a U. S. Army aircraft observing the action informed Currituck the results of the bombardment were good.

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