

ONCE NAVY.....ALWAYS NAVY

B.P. & E.I.F.



A SAILORS PRAYER

FROM ROCKS AND SANDS, AND BARREN LANDS,
GOOD LORD DELIVER ME,
AND FROM GREAT GUNS, AND WOMENS' TONGUES,
GOOD LORD DELIVER ME,
AMEN.

I left school, July 1939 aged 14 years. I worked as apprentice electrician for Ruducks of Thorrington, I cycled from Colchester every day. I then worked at Spotiswoods Printers until evacuation to Exeter in 1940.

I came back to Colchester in 1941 and worked at Davy Paxmans on a lathe, Peter Bloomfield and I, also joined the Home Guard, we were given a 303 Lee Enfield rifle and also sent on to Fingering Hoe ranges, learning how to throw hand grenades, we had to hand all our equipment back when I joined the Royal Navy in September 1942, as boy seaman aged 17 years, on board H.M.S. Badger, a four mast schooner, I learnt splicing, knots, gunnery etc. I was then drafted to H.M.S. Royal Arthur, further square bashing, July 1943. I then went on to Weatherby for stoker's training, then on to H.M.S. Collingwood at Chatham, then on to H.M.S. Pembroke at Chatham main barracks, situation so bad, volunteered for foreign draft, H.M.S. Assegai, being told it was an American draft, but unfortunately it was to Durban S.A., September 1943 draft took train to Clyde in Scotland. We boarded the Cunard Line, Durban Castle, set to leave with Army, R.A.F. and Royal Navy personnel on board, and had to go well out of direct route, i.e. Bay of Biscay, because of U. Boats.

We arrived off of Gibraltar beginning of 1943 and started to join convoy of about ten ships plus Royal Navy escort to be one of the first convoys to sail through the Med'.

Unfortunately when we reached between Malta and Tripoli, at Cape Bon in the evening, we were bombed, first from German bombers from North Africa, and then by low level German bombers from Crete.

I was detailed to assist loading ammunition for the Oerlikon guns. We lost about four Merchant Ships that evening.

The next day the Royal Navy left us, and we carried on to the Suez Cannel, where we had one day's

shore leave in Aden.

We then continued into the Indian Ocean towards Durban arriving November 1943, approx' eight weeks after leaving Scotland, being greeted by a lady in white singing to all the troupes on the deck, all the great English songs, like "There'll Always Be An England".

The Royal Navy personnel were then taken to camp twenty miles out side Durban to be billeted in wooden type Nissan huts where we stayed until January 1944 waiting to be drafted to Royal Navy ships.

We were invited out to a Christmas meal in the centre of Durban.

At the end of January 1944 we were drafted to camp under canvas in Mombassa, East Africa, and "Kenya" still waiting for a ship.

February 1944 drafted to H.M.S. Frobisher Cruiser, six of us stokers for transport to Colombo Ceylon billeted in a collage.

In March 1944, drafted by train to Trincomalee Naval Base and Far East harbour, ready to board H.M.S. Relentless. Only two stokers went on H.M.S. Relentless, the other four went to another ship, which was unfortunately sunk in the Pacific.

The Relentless was escort to man ships going to Bombay and then on to Karachi, the other places we went to were, Maldives, Seychelles, and Cocos Islands.

We then went to South Africa, Simon's Town dock yard to have a boiler clean and general maintenance done. The ship was put in to dry dock so water and electricity was supplied by the dock we were not allowed to use the toilets, so showers and toilets were ashore. The stokers had to work on the boilers from 0800 hours until 1300 hours. We were then allowed ashore in our No. 1 uniforms, all white, To catch the train from Simon's Town to Cape Town for a few beers, Lion's Lager, there we were usually met by our chaperone, "Just Nuisance", a Great Dane, who escorted us back to our ship.

The Great Dane was enrolled into the Royal Navy as an A.B. (able seaman), when he died he was given a Royal Naval funeral. Since this time every year, on the 1st April, a "Just Nuisance Day" is held, it is celebrated with a parade of Great Danes.

The attached photo was taken 60 years after Nuisance's death.

Whilst in dry dock the ship's company were split in to two crews i.e. Port and Starboard.

A list was on the notice board as to where we could go for two weeks, "R. & R", rest and relaxation.

Ten Stokers were allowed to go on R. & R. to a town called, Heidelberg in the Orange Free state, a twenty four hour journey, by train. It only had two hotels, wooden walk ways and dirt roads.

With five Stokers in each hotel we drank "Tiky Wine" which was like a sherry, three old pence a glass (one and a half new pence).

After our R. & R. break we went back to our ship, the sailed back to Trincomalee.

Into 1945 we were in a convoy of Battle Ships, Richelieu, (French Ship) H.M.S. Nelson, K.G.V. ALS Cruisers London, Belfast, and many more bombarding air fields in Malaysia, such as Nicabar Sabang N/W of Sumatra.

In September 1945, we sailed out of Trincomalee as we had done many times before.

The Japanese capitulated on September 12th 1945. We went to Penang where H.M.S. Nelson had her 16 inch guns trained on the town, we sailed into the harbour on September 4th.

We saw the Japs who were cruising the harbour in a barge, big beefy chaps, they were the general's body guards and they were waiting for him to come off of H.M.S. Nelson were he was agreeing surrender terms, locally the General was a cruel man and had a lot to answer for.

On September 1945 we stood by at action stations, with others, we covered the landing at Port Dixon and Port Swettingham, the Marines were put ashore during a long, slow operation.

Going to Singapore we sailed ahead of the Nelson and the French Battle Ship, the Richelieu, the big

ships let us go ahead for us to be used as, "live mine sweepers" to shield them.

We arrived in Singapore about the 20th September 1945 where we were allowed ashore for the day, we watched the Japs cutting grass and pulling a large roller, guarded by British and Indian troops, from there we went for a beer at the Raffles Hotel, well known for Gin slings, fifty years later, my wife Anne and I, had a look around Raffles, but it was being renovated.

Back on board, Relentless the stokers and seamen were getting ready for Lord Louis Mountbatten's victory parade.

September 21st an order came through that any sailor that had served 2 years or more could come home with the ship, as I had done over the 2 years I qualified.

In October 1945, with about forty ex Jap P.O.W.'s we sailed from Colombo, Ceylon, for home through the India Ocean, through the Red Sea, into the Suez Canal, into the port of Alexandria, Egypt, then through the Mediterranean to Malta, into Valetta harbour. Once in Valetta Harbour, we had a nice run ashore, having a few bears down "The Gut", a local street running from, High Street Valletta, Malta, down hill to the bay, full of girls and bars with blue label beer a shilling a bottle, (5 new pence) for all sailors. From Malta, onto Gibraltar, ashore again for few more bears, then through the Gibraltar Straights into the Bay of Biscay, unfortunately there was a force eight gale blowing and no one was allowed on the upper deck, we all felt sorry for the ex P.O.W.'s on board. Every thing that was not lashed down went on the move, our P.O.W.'s were all violently sick, we lost a whaler and a Carly float (inflatable life raft), then we saw the white Cliff's of Dover, and they looked marvellous.

On to the river Medway, up as far as Chatham flying our forty foot "paying off pennant". We are then started to be sent on seven day leave, it will be the first Christmas at home for two years.

The start is on for the ammo' decommissioning of the ship's company, the first to go back to their bases, are the Scott's North East sailors, I myself, go back into Chatham Barracks on H.M.S. Pembroke, working in the barracks during the week.

The week end leave, is every other week end.

I remain in the barracks until February 1946 and then got drafted to Londonderry which is Northern Ireland to pick up an ex-American "Lease Lend" Frigate, H.M.S. Cockatrice, Lease Lend ships were ships borrowed from the American Navy, these were all pre-war ships.

In April 1946 we set sail for America, arriving in May 1946, we anchored in the mouth of Hudson Bay for ammo' decommissioning, in sight of the statue of Liberty. When the decommissioning is completed, after about a week, we sailed down The Hudson River to 32nd Street, Brooklyn, where we were allowed shore leave. We had to go ashore in pairs, and return in pairs, because things were pretty bad in Brook land. We took the under ground subway to Times Square, at the American N.A.A.F.I. we showed our pay books at the desk, and the big board above us, told us, where we were free to go.

We decided to go to Madison Square Gardens "Three Ring Circuse", and then the next day to see Bud Abbott and Lou Castella at the theatre. In the evening, we went to Jack Dempsey's bar where the drinks went up every hour. The next day we went to Coney Island. The American sailors called us "Godamn Bell Bottom Limeys", because in the old days, sailors were given Lime Juice to try to stop scurvey.

At the end of May 1946, after the ceremony of "Handing Back" H.M.S. Cockatrice to the American Navy the whole of the ship's company received a Draft Chit to the liner Queen Mary which was docked in New York. We were bunked about four decks below, it took six days to reach Southampton, England. On arrival we were met by a Royal Marine Band playing us ashore, together with the Women's Voluntary Service (W.V.S.) who issued every body with 10 x Lucky Strike cigarettes. One Petty Officer had a whole kit bag full of Lucky Strike, knowing how short Britain was of cigarettes. We then boarded a train to Chatham Barracks from where we were billeted on board H.M.S. Argus in Chatham Docks and then on to H.M.S. Collingwood for de-mob. We collected our suit, hat and every thing for civillian

life, it was then October 1946.

Home to 16, Gilberd Road with a month's leave, it was the end of Royal Navy days for me.

A week later I received my medals in a little card board box, they were;

1939-45 STAR

BURMA STAR

PACIFIC CLASP

1939/45 END OF WAR MEDAL.....all will be left to my son, Tony.

My first job after the Navy was on the rail way at £4-50p per week, then my Navy checks started to come in..... so I left to have a few beers???

The next job was at Critalls, the window people, at Witham, working nights, galvanising the window frames. My next job was at, 6 Command R.E.M.E. Work Shops in Flagstaff Road, looking after six Ruston and Hornsby diesel engines, for power to the factory, it was July 1947.

September 1947, at a club in George Street, Colchester, with Peter Bloomfield, Chris Reineck, John Cutler and myself, after the pubs had closed at 10pm (we had all ran out of cigarettes) the boys dared me to go over and ask a girl to dance, and also see if her, or her mates, had any cigarettes, this happened to be my future, lovely wife Anne.

On the way back to the tent we all had a good ole' sing song, I left Anne at her bed and breakfast, and then saw her on the Sunday morning.

See attached; all the boys and Anne, on the beach on a Sunday morning.

We had a stormy, but nice relationship, hence, two years later on September 24th 1949, we were married at St. Micheal's Church, Berechurch Hall Road, Colchester.

April 1950 saw our lovely daughter, Linda born, now 61 years old, later with two daughters and a son, I still love my lovely wife as much, if not more, than ever.

My and I still kept together mainly week ends.

Peter, John C. Chris and I decided to buy an ex army Bell Tent which we would erect down Vally Farm, Clacton. Johnny Webster had joined the army, he was about two years younger than the others and was serving in Burma, when he returned we all went down to the tent in Clacton at week ends.

As I was the only one courting, my soon to be wife, Anne, had to go into bed and breakfast, there was not any living together in those days. Saturday nights we would all meet up to go to the pub in Clacton town centre, and then on to the pier's dance hall.

I would only allow Johnny W. to dance with Anne, I knew Chris fancied her, and Anne being a bit flirty, I didn't want to fall out with my pals as I was a bit quick tempered.

AND FINALLY.....in remembrance of my old pals and ship mates who have passed away, "OVER THE BAR" in Navy terms, also Linda and Gerry making this all possible.

BRITISH PACIFIC AND EAST INDIES FLEETS

SPLICING THE MAIN BRACE.....the issue of a tot of Rum daily

Favours are done for “*sippers*” such as, Dhobing, an Indian word for “wash your laundry“, for larger things, such as doing your watch, i.e. 12 noon until 4pm, you would get “*gulpers*” which is a double sip of your Rum. To get a whole tot, would be for important things.



Japanese surrender on H.M.S. Nelson
SEPTEMBER 1945

On 9th September the planned Operation “Zipper” begins with the landing of the 25th Indian Division (Major-General Wood) near Morib, 18 nautical miles South of port Swettenham and the 23rd Indian Division (Major-General Hawthorn) near Sepang, 8 nautical miles North of port Dickson. Over 100000 troops are landed in three days. The covering forces comprises the battleships Nelson and Richelieu, the cruisers Nigeria, Ceylon, and Cleopatra, 15 destroyers and the 21st Carrier Sqn consisting of the cruiser Royalist, the escort carriers Hunter, Stalker, Archer, Khedive, Emperor and Pursuer and, as a Spitfire transport, the Trumpeter.

On 12th September Lt-General Itagaki and Vice-Admiral Fukudome, representing the indisposed Japanese C-in-C South East Asia, Field-Marshal Terauchi, sign the surrender of all Japanese forces in South-East Asia in the presence of the Allied C-in-C South East Asia, Admiral Lord Mountbatten.