

Naval life and times of Henry I. Rushlow

The Navy had too many enlistments in 1942.

In Jan 1943. Got Draft papers for the Army. I was to report on Monday. Same day enlistments open up for the Navy. I was # 276 in line. But by 3pm. I was in the NAVY. Went to boot camp at Great Lakes. 10 weeks.

Shipped to New Orleans. Plank owner on USS Sproston DD577. Shake down on the east coast. Went through the Panama Canal. Up to Frisco. Out Pearl Harbor then to Aleutian Island. Wife died Jan 4 1944 Shipped backed to the states 50 days leave.

Assigned to USS MERCY. (hospital ship) This ship was in building. While waiting, I sat in Naval receiving station, San Pedro. While waiting, I studied the book for GM3/C. Passed the test!!! Got the rate. Now I am Gunners mate. One week later I got called into the office. Officer said, What is your rate sailor?? He said for your info there is NO guns on a hospital ship. Got transferred to Anphibs Coronado *Island. Every one went through the training but three GM of which I am the lowest.*

We were put in a Boat Group!!137 men in the group. Only 3 GM's I am 3rd class. The Group was sent to Camp Pendleton. The landing craft Group trained w/ the Marines. Landing in and out for weeks. Mean while I stood Guard at the Main gate. In OCT. of 1944 our Group went aboard the 208. We were Plank owners. We were not ships company. We were always the Boat Group!! Went to Pearl. then to HILO. Picked up 2350 of the 5th Marines. Trained them with our landing craft out to sea then hit the beach, day after day. Sort of felt sorry for them (no place to sleep) in their trucks, on the deck and in the holds. 49 days. All we did for them was feed. Then on Saipan. Loaded supplies, then out to sea. No body knew where???

After leaving Saipan, about Feb 1.1945. Now all the maps broke out. No more secrets. It's Iwo. No body knew to much about it except they were bombing it for months.

Pulled up within seeing distance of the land on Feb. 18. Now we got a sense this was the real thing!!! Chow down 0400.

Now here is my personal part..... 27 boats on board. I was in charge of the Landing craft, Personnel (ramped) called the (R) boat. Seven men 1 Cox, 1 radio man, 1 Signal man, 1 GM (me) and 3 seamen. Our boat was already hanging over the side. The Chaplin, over the loud speaker said Let us Pray. My boat was lowered into the water about 0630.

This boat was rigged w/ an extra Large screw. For power and speed. This was our job, as the LCVP's (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel) would hit the beach, drop their ramp, unload Quickly. Throw it into reverse to keep it afloat. If not, the next wave would throw the boat right up onto the Sand.

Note: Our job was Salvage. Pull these boats back into the water or blow them up. We had to keep the beach Clean. YES we did both.

Before the landing 0900 Feb 19 1945. We got up to the beach on our own, not a shot was fired. It was like a grave yard at midnight. We were just DUMB Kids. We could have been blown out of the water.

Before the first wave we just cruised around, waiting for things to happen. Our beach was Green Beach. (The first beach at the base of the mountain). About 0850 the (Control boat called up the first wave into line).

At the drop of the flag the whole wave headed for the beach. Not only our green beach BUT all the Control boats did the same. Red beach, yellow beach, blue beach, etc. What a sight to see. As soon as they departed wave #2 called up to the line. Same story. Then wave #3, same story. What was so amazing not a shot was fired until the third wave was on the beach. Then all H#### broke loose. The beach was not sand, it was volcanic ash. men stepped into it up to their knees. It was like coffee grounds. These Marines were just mowed down.

We followed the second wave in and went to work!!! Within one hour the call went out to (every ship).to send in one boat to carry out the wounded. At the end of the day 550 dead. As night time came on we just pulled away from the shore and went to sleep. As dawn broke we went back to work.

In those days there was a saying (let George do it). About after noon we spotted a Mae West life jacket floating. The best we could do for this sailor was to pull off his dog tags. In so doing we discovered the whole top of his head was blown off. Not only that, the back of his life jacket read GEORGE. As night came on there was a LST grounded and abandon. Looked like a good nights rest for us. Tied our boat to the fantail climbed up the rope. Found a good bunk and we all had a good nights sleep. Can't remember the date. I think about Feb 22 that the FLAG went up. Cheers could be heard for miles.

This page is a highlight happening.

Out from the shore was a LVT(A)-4 amtank returning from the beach. Right before our eyes the amtank took a Mortar right in the face. The two drivers were (fried like chickens). In the back box a guy stood up raised his hand and fell down again. Went right over to him and pulled him over into our boat. His belly was split open from his naval to his back. Every thing was falling out. Used out first aid to pull him back together. Gave him Morphine, In working on him he saw my Smith and Wesson 38 under my coat. Then I got the hard question!!!! Just shoot me NO WAY.

This was before the Hospital ship showed up. There was a makeshift ER. Just a barge tied up to an LST.

They handed us down a wire basket stretcher. Put him in it. OOPS his arm fell out, the arm was just hanging on by a piece of skin. Threw it into the basket with him. If he lived or died, no way to know! I Think he was an Officer from the New England area.

After I was discharged, gone to Michigan. I received a letter of Accommodation along with a Medal. Signed by Rear Admiral Hall. I guess they had a party for our boat. Guess I will never know!!!

After about 6 days our work was done. Headed for Batangas Philippines. On the way we had to bury at sea 2 Army, 2 Marines. What a sight!! When we arrived in the Philippines we loaded an ARMY unit. Off to Okinawa. We got there 2 days after the invasion.

Landed the unit without any trouble. Before we got out of there, here comes a JAP ZERO across the land. He was so high that we could not tell if he was aiming for us or the ship behind us. Everyone was firing at him. As he was coming down one of us got him. Must have hit his bomb or his gas tank it went up in a ball of fire. Then we headed back to the Philippines.