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After graduating from UNC-Chapel Hill in June 1941, and after a few months back in Wilson, it became obvious that we would soon be in World War II . I applied for the Officers Training Program offered by the Navy. At first I was rejected because of an ear problem, but after I made several doctor's visits, I was finally accepted in the fall of 1941. I was soon assigned to a training program at Notre Dame University, where I spent about three months learning fundamentals of Navy and military procedures. After this training, I was sent to Northwestern University in Chicago. where I became a "Ninety Day Wonder" and was commissioned an ensign..

After receiving my commission, I was given a thirty day leave to go home. I was then sent to Miami for air-sea rescue training. In Miami, I picked up a crew of four and a small boat, similar to a PT boat. We next went to New Orleans to await further assignment . That was my most pleasant duty in the Navy! We then were loaded aboard a Navy freighter and were taken by the freighter through the Panama Canal, and

on to the "big Island", Hawaii and stationed at Hilo. We worked with the Naval Air Station in Hilo, training everyone for war conditions. I spent about fifteen months in this duty. We rescued a couple of pilots, but were never in danger. Target towing for pilot bombing practice was also part of our duty in Hilo.

After my fifteen months in Hawaii, I had my only leave of my time in the Navy. I had now become a lieutenant j.g. and after my leave was up I was sent to Newport, Rhode Island to be placed on an AKA, a ship designed for hauling troops and equipment. There were eight small boats in the AKA to allow us to unload troops in areas with no port facilities. I was the second in command, and we could transport as many as five hundred troops and their equipment. The ship's crew numbered about fifty. Most of the troops we carried were Marines, although there were also some Army personnel. We spent the entire time in the South Pacific, mostly in the New Hebrides, and toward the end of the war, in the Philippines. When we had a full consignment of troops, they slept in shifts, so three men would share the same bed.



Our captain was an older man , probably in his late fifties, who had spent his earlier life in the Merchant Marine. He was a superb seaman, and a very nice man. Sometime in this duty, I was promoted to Lieutenant Senior Grade.

I remember drinking a whole lot of very strong, not very good coffee. This was quite necessary when we were in any area where Japanese submarines were a threat, as we had to stand watch for stretches of 24 to 36 hours at a time. Luckily, we were never shot at by a sub. Sometimes we traveled in a convoy, but more often alone.

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The most dangerous hours of the entire war were , ironically the night the war was over. We had just left the New Hebrides after loading up our AKA with troops and equipment, including explosives and gasoline canisters and other dangerous materiel. We sailed into Pearl Harbor on the night of the Japanese surrender in August of 1945 We arrived in port about nine-thirty p.m. where all the celebrations were going on, with fireworks and pyrotechnics going off everywhere. The captain had to call "general quarters"

and we spent the entire night on deck hoping that no explosives would be set off and blow us sky high

After the Japanese surrender, we ferried troops to Japan for the occupation. Everyone was nervous, because we didn't know if there would be sabotage or other forms of resistance . We landed in a large bay in the port of Sasebo, Japan. After <sup>Docking</sup> ~~docking~~, we were allowed to go ~~allowed to go~~ ashore, and felt the Japanese that we saw were as glad as we were that the war was over, and were friendly to our troops. There was some destruction, but the most impressive thing was the large number of huge rats.

The next port of call was again in the New Hebrides, where we picked up troops to be returned to the United States, a happy group of men. They debarked in Pearl Harbor, where we reloaded more troops and equipment and returned to the U.S. We landed in the San Diego area. While the ship was being refueled, we had a few days to see some of the California coast.

Once again, we sailed through the Panama Canal, thankfully in the other direction, and tied up in



Norfolk. We were given no further orders, and the next day I looked off the deck and saw our captain, luggage in hand, headed for home. The ~~4~~ rest of us decided that was a good idea, and followed suit! I headed for Wilson.

I was extremely lucky during the war. We had enemy fire only once or twice, and it was never very close. How fortunate I was.