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Hi:

This will likely be my last contact with you and the rest of the Men ( and Women ) of the Mine Forces. Both My Wife and I are 86 now, and are about to relocate to an Independent Living Facility in the North Chicago area. The overall health of the two of us is a long ways from being the best. This unit has a sister unit just across the driveway which is the Assisted Living Facility and has connections to the Chicago Hospitals.

I was a Gunner's Mate 3<sup>rd</sup> class, having been transferred from the USS Raleigh CL 7 as soon as I was promoted , on the Destroyer USS Dale DD 353. While on the ship a Mine Training Facility had been established in Pearl Harbor ( where the Supply Depot is or was thirty years ago ). A CPO by the name of De Forrest was the instructor for the Mark 5 and Mark 6 type mines. I understand that the man later became a Naval Captain and I heard that He was assigned to duty in the Southern parts of Thailand or/and Cambodia.

In the spring of 1941 the entire Pacific Fleet had been at sea for training exercises and was about to enter the Channel leading to Pearl Harbor. .

The USS Dale with Capt Womble and the Division Commander on board was the lead ship of the group of four Destroyers, and on the Honolulu side of the entire Pacific Fleet. It was one of those days when you have intense rain squalls. We had received orders to proceed through the fleet and assume Anti Submarine Detection positions to the South of the Fleet, using best 2 boiler speed. A Full Lt. was the Officer of the Deck and the Skipper and the Division Commander went to the rear of the bridge, to the Sea Cabin. We had proceeded pretty well into the heart of the fleet heading for the Pearl Harbor Channel. Where we entered a very heavy rain squall, the other three Ship of the Division were running a position Dog course 300 yards behind us. As we came out of one of these squalls I saw the USS Mississippi underway very close at a ninety degree angle to us. The Officer of the Deck froze ( issued no instructions ). I disobeyed all orders, grabbed the port engine control and ordered emergency astern, Spun the wheel all the way over to a port turn, asked the duty Quarter-Master to sound collision alarm, and notify the three ships on our stern as to what we were doing. We of course heeled way over and the Skipper and Div. Cmdr. came running onto the bridge. The Skipper quickly ordered the Officer of the Deck below and to start packing His gear. The Skipper and the Div. Cmdr. then stood directly behind me. I believe we were on an opposite course from the USS Mississippi , with maybe a six foot clearance between the two hulls. When we reached the stern of the Mississippi I resumed the stated course and placed the port engine control to full ahead again. When things got a bit quieter the Skipper asked with these words "



Now what in Hell Happened here" I told Cmdr. Womble about just as I have typed above, and He & the Div. Cmdr. thanked me.

I was on the Helm for the 2000 to 2400 watch on the night of December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1941. We had received a copy of a message from an Aussi. Submarine, to the effect that a large Japanese Fleet ( including about 5 Aircraft Carriers,) had been sighted by this Sub. The Japanese Fleet was about half way between Japan and Hawaii at this time. The Aussi. was very low on fuel and had to break off and head to Aussi. for refueling.

Shortly after the above event I was transferred to the USS Aylwin DD 355. Soon there after I was sent TAD to the Mine Warfare School, Yorktown Virginia to attend the third class there. I believe I did pretty well in this class. I returned to the USS Aylwin after I completed the course in this school

On December 7<sup>th</sup> 11941 I was in the Duty Section on board the USS Aylwin. The day before I had been to the Supply Depot and acquired three Thompson Sub-Machine guns for the ship. I had placed them in the Armory planning to get them ready for use the next day, Sunday, being that I was in the duty section for that day. After breakfast I picked up these guns and was walking to the stern of the Ship. I was right by the Starboard 50 Cal. Machine gun, and could see between the two sets of torpedo tubes. I heard a loud noise and look between the tubes towards the USS Utah. I saw a spout of something black rising from the Ship and also saw a Japanese plane flying low towards our Destroyer nest. The USS Monohan was providing steam, power and so on to the USS Farragut, Dale and Aylwin. The USS Aylwin was moored by cable to the after buoy and by anchor chain to the forward buoy, with the other three ships moored to us in the nest. I quickly ripped the canvas off of the machine gun and started shooting at every aircraft I saw. The sky was full of low flying Japanese aircraft. We got strafed a couple of times. The Monohan quickly cut free and headed for sea, as per the flag hoist on the signal tower " Emergency Sail " She found a midget Japanese Submarine in the Harbor, rammed same to sink it, and then ran aground Herself, but was able to back off and proceed to sea. The Dale and the Farragut soon got underway and head out. Our only Officers on board were two very young Ensigns, with little to no sea training. When we had steam we slipped the anchor chain and used an axe to cut the stern mooring wire. The Ensigns drove the ship forward. over the forward buoy, ran aground, backed off again running over the forward buoy and for good measure the after buoy also. We had a lot of vibration in the fantail, but went to sea anyhow. The fleet was miles ahead of us on a westerly, or south westerly course. When they zigzagged we zigzagged in the opposite direction. Several days later when we got back into the Harbor we were put in the floating dry dock. They did some repair work but sent us back to Mare Island for major repairs. We were, in company with a four stack Destroyer as Submarine protection for about a dozen merchant ships. One fault with this was that neither the four stacker nor us had any usable submarine detection equipment that would work. We zigged and zagged as though we had and everyone was happy with the display.

A few months later I was transferred back to the Mine Warfare School at Yorktown, Va. as an instructor. I remained here for several months or so. While here I took the Exam for



Chief Petty Officer and also, at the same time Warrant Officer. I knew that I had creamed both of the exams, but got a surprise when the Skipper called me into His Office and told me I was then a CPO, thankfully I bought only one new uniform, for a week later I was called to His office again and was told that I was then an Warrant Gunner, Mines. I was too bust to go buy uniforms and or to move out of the enlisted quarters. Another week passed and again I was called into the Skipper's office and was told that I could be a CPO, a Warrant Officer, or an Ensign. I selected the Ensign. The Skipper then told me, after I had asked for the rest of the afternoon off, that I had one hour to get all my gear out of the enlisted quarters and into the Officers Qtrs, ( I had a room assigned to me also, and hence forwards I have all my meals in the Wardroom. About a month later I was transferred, along with a Warrant Gunner, and four mine men to the USS Salem CM 11, based at the Yorktown Mine Depot. I quickly found out that we were not welcome on board this vessel. he Skipper was a peg leg man and the entire crew was from one Reserve outfit someplace down in Texas. Shortly thereafter we got underway for the Med. We could make 8 knots if the wind was with us. Had about three feet freeboard, had railroad tracks( from the day that this ship and at least one other, were train ferries from Key West to Cuba, which ended when the hurricane washed out miles of the train tracks, and these ships, with old steam reciprocating engines and the ships had been laid up, with no maintenance accomplished for a number of years. When the work was accomplished in North Africa we received orders to carry a load of mines to the Pacific. We were moored at the Ammo. Depot West Locke when the five LST' caught fire, with our engines completed disabled, and lucky for us a tug go a line onto one of the LSTs that was on fire and drifting down towards us..

While at West Locke I was assigned to the Mine Assembly area, where a Warrant Officer, who had been my boss at the mine school, prior to my becoming an Ensign had later been promoter to Lt JG and was now my boss once again, until I reported back to the USS Salem and we departed for Kwajalein Atoll. After a few days stey here, and due to our slow speed, we departed Kwajalein Atoll heading for Saipan, which was about to be invaded. The harbor was full of Japanese ships of all types that our planes had sunk in preparation for our attack.

While here I along with a Doctor and six mine-men received orders to proceed back to the States for a months leave and recreation. We had to wait on a semi sunken LST for a merchant ship for passage to Pearl Harbor. When I reported in at Pearl Harbor I was given instructions to take the group to a merchant passenger ship, ten at the dock, to pick cabins on the upper decks plus an envelope to be opened when we were at sea, off Diamond Head that night. Mrs. Roosevelt was in Hawaii and She had ordered the local police, the Shore Patrol & etc. to gather all the Girls of Ill Repute up, after five PM, after the banks were all closed, allowing them one small suitcase each put them on busses and take them to the same ship we were on. There they were to be allowed to pick one cabin, on the lower decks for each two girls. When we were off Diamond Head about 0100 I did open the letter I had been given. It said, you nor any of the men with you will have anything to do with the females, and you will station your enlisted men so as to prevent any ships crew to get on the same deck as the women are located on, except when really necessary for the ships operation. Now had been a cruise ship in the Med. and there were



several ways of getting from one deck to another, including the grand staircase. The Doc and I got the men together, told them what their orders were. to stand a watch, one at a time on the main staircase and allow no one, man or female to go up or down it unless they had a real good reason. I think it took seven days to go from Pearl to Frisco, where all the girls including the Naval people debarked. I, with the Doc. and the six men reported in the Naval building at 7<sup>th</sup> and Market Street. I passed the orders through the grill expecting that we all would depart for the 30 day leave and recreation as promised. Instead the yeoman came back, after a short wait and instructed us to board the Navy bus which would take us to Morfitt Field where we would catch the midnight transport plane back to Pearl Harbor where we be reassigned to some duty station

I waited in a BOQ for about a week, and then was called down to the Personnel Office where I found that I was to proceed to the Norfolk Naval Base, and attend a two month special training school for Gunnery Officers assigned to new construction. My ship was to be the Destroyer William P. Ditter, then due to be completed a week or two after I had completed this new school. The ship was completed Sea trials completed, and I could not get released from this school. When I was released I had to go space available from Norfolk to San Diego, a stop on the Ditter's schedule. I arrived there some days after She had been there and departed for San Francisco. Again I had to wait for Space Available, and arrived in Frisco days after the Ditter had departed for Pearl Harbor. I had another few day to wait until I did get a flight to Pearl. The ship had been there and departed for the far Pacific. I was instructed to report in to AdCom MinePac for temporary duty to wait for the Ship to Pearl again. I was put to work inspecting all ships assigned to ComMinePac and to try to get the Skippers to send some of their crews to various schools.

I finally got word that the William P. Ditter was back in Pearl Harbor. I looked about for the Ship, and finally found what was left of Her moored to a dock. She had caught six of the Japanese planes that few into our ships. She had been on radar picket duty north of Okinawa. There was nothing at all left above the main deck, there were holes in the hull, She had less then a foot of free-board, and while both engines were okay, only one of the four boilers was operational, and due to the lack of freeboard and no stack for this one boiler a snow plow effect barrier had been constructed just forward of the hole in the deck where the funnel had been. A bit more repair work was done at the Pearl Harbor Ship-Yard and the Ship was sent through the Panama Canal to the East Coast to be rebuilt. WW 2 came to an end and when the Ditter was check at sea it was found that She had about a 5 degree bend in the keel, and She was scraped.

In the mean time I had been transferred to Commander Service Force Pacific. I was to Design Ant-Submarine protection for both Pearl Harbor and the Harbor at Guam. I think I did pretty well at this and then was sent to the Philippines to the Island of Samar which is about two-thirds of the way South on the Eastern side of the Philippine Islands. When we were planning to invade Japan, it was felt that all of their seaports should be blocked from their use by mining all the approaches. Thousands of mines, of several types had been stockpiled in two long rows from the edge of the sea to the cliffs inland. These mines were all loaded with Torpex which is somewhat unstable, but also when heated



produces a gas. If the gas builds up enough pressure inside the mine it will explode and these mine had been sitting in the sun, close to the Equator for an extend length of time. My Minemen and I were supposed to determine how dangerous these mines really were, for they were stacked in long rows, about 30 mines on the bottom to a peak of one mine and all of the hand hole plates used for the insertion of equipment had been sealed shut. There was a shelter for personnel in the middle of these mines with one or two officers and a cook assigned to the facility. There were two towns nearby, say within a half miles or so, full of Natives. There was a Naval Base about 10 to 12 miles away on another section of the coast, and a rutted dirt road , somewhat grown over, leading from this mine base to the Admirals location on the bay. We arrived in the Philippine Islands by plane on the same day that they were granted their independence. The small town to the north of the mine base were strongly for their independence, whereas the people just south of this base were deadly against it, and also belonged to the Huck Group ( extremely hostile towards the U.S. and about everyone else.) About a day after my men ( about ten men ) and I had arrived at this location the two native groups started shooting at each other, using these mines to shoot from. They always stopped about sunset and started about sunrise. We dug trenches in the ground and lived there in the day time.

I had to drive a jeep to see and report to the Admiral every Thursday This meant that I had to drive through the friendly village each day in both directions. In the early morning they would do their best top stop me to have breakfast with them. On the way back I would have a couple bottles of booze and stop for the evening meal with them. Boys and Girl basically wore nothing at all until they were seventeen to eighteen ( I am guessing the age). The mature men basically wore nothing except a piece of what looked like banana skin around their penis, and the woman only wore a sort of skirt, about 12 to 18 inches long made from Banana leaves, which really hid nothing. During and after the evening meal they would have a sort of song fest, with drums and a sort of flut which was really quite nice.

When the shooting stopped, and I have no idea why these mines did not explode and wipe all of us out. We finished our inspection and I wrote up a report which really recommended that equipment be brought in to reload these mines onto a barge, take them to the Japanese Trench, which is fathoms deep, and dump them overboard. This is what was eventually done with these mines. I have no report of anyone getting injured by the removal and disposition of these mines.

After WW 2 I was assigned as the only officer to the Harbor Defense unit for Pearl Harbor located on Waipio point in Pearl Harbor. I remained on this location for maybe a couple of years.

My next duty station was as Gunnery/Mines Officer on the USS Shannon DM 25. I do not remember of having any mines on board this ship during my tour of duty. We on this ship toured up and down the East Coast of the U.S. Made a Mid ship mens cruise to various European locations such as Denmark, Portugal, Guantanamo Bay and a few other places. We also had a six month stint in the Mediterranean at the end of which I ment the Girl I married in the home port of Charleston.



My next duty station was at the torpedo, and self propelled mines, Testing Station at Piney Point Maryland . I had been promoted some time previous to Lt Commander, USN This was more or less routine job, without much of anything of interest happening.

From Here I was assigned as the Harbor Defense Officer for New York Harbor, with my headquarters located on Sandy Hook New Jersey. I was responsible for all of Long Island Sound a good bit of Long Island Itself, all through New York Harbor, and down the coast of New Jersey to Manasquan Inlet. I had 12 Officers and about 125 men to work with. I had to make a report to the Admiral in New York City every Thursday . I had been studying a good bit, but when the promotion list came out for promotion to full Commander there was not a single ex - enlisted man on it. mostly all Academy personnel with a very very few reserves on it. I informed My Admiral then and there that apparently they did not want personnel such as myself in the Navy any longer, and that I would make my request for full retirement as soon as I get back to Sandy Hook. I did retire with slightly over 21 years in the Navy and went to work the next day with the Bell Telephone Laboratories and did retire again after 21 years with the Laboratory and AT&T.

*Arthur W. Cook*

*us this in any way you want. It is a segment  
of my life history -*