

Forward

This is the saga of the USS FIREDRAKE AE14 and its crew. The ship was a U. S. Navy fleet “light” ammunition ship serving in the Pacific theatre of operations during the final stages of World War II.

Although most ammunition ships are named after Volcanoes, I believe the FIREDRAKE was named after a mystical dragoon. See picture. The WWII insignia of the FIREDRAKE was indeed a dragon astraddle a torpedo and holding a shell. It was painted on the exterior side of the twin 40mm gun buckets located adjacent to the flag bridge on both starboard and port side. Under the dragoon and as part of the insignia, were painted the words “Don’ t Fence Me IN “ [The title of a popular song in 1944].

Fleet ammunition ships were classified as “secret “during the war due to their ability to rearm capital ships of the line while underway. The Japanese could not understand how our fighting ships never seemed to run out of ammunition.

Ammunition ships normally carry sufficient munitions to destroy a city. See MT. HOOD explosion in the Ammunition Ships, section. Note: The MT. HOOD had approx. 3,800 tons of munitions aboard. The FIREDRAKE fully loaded carried over 5,000 tons of ammunition. Also included in this section is a picture of ammunition carrying merchant ship SS JOHN BURKE which exploded after being hit by a Japanese Kamikaze.

The crew of the FIREDRAKE consisted of a large number of young men just out of boot camp [ages 18 - 20]. The remainder of the crew had varying degrees of shipboard experience and held ratings in the many fields necessary to run and maintain a Navy ship. The officers also included men who just obtained their bars

to "OLE" timers with vast shipboard experience. After many training exercises the entire crew was ready for its mission.

The FIREDRAKE entered the Pacific on Feb. 22nd 1945. It travelled the western Pacific rearming Aircraft Carriers, Battleships, Cruisers and Destroyers.

The ammunition which the FIREDRAKE supplied to these ships was used to saturate the beach head at Okinawa and to shoot down the attacking Japanese Kamikaze aircraft. The 21 days at Kerama Retto with its Kamikaze attacks will be a memory, never forgotten.

The FIREDRAKE was awarded the following medals during the 9 months she travelled the battle zones of the western Pacific at the final stages of WW11:

American Theatre
Asiatic - Pacific, with 2 battle stars
Philippine Liberation [awarded by the Philippine
government]
Victory Medal

This brief history is dedicated to the men of the FIREDRAKE and all persons who go down to the sea in ammunition ships.

TABLE OF CONTENT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FORWARD

I. US NAVY AMMUNITION SHIPS

II. OFFICERS AND CREW

III. CHAPTER ONE *THE ATLANTIC PREPARATION*

IV. CHAPTER TWO *PACIFIC OPERATIONS, FROM HERE TO THERE*

V. CHAPTER THREE *PACIFIC OPERATIONS, OKINAWA CAMPAIGN
KERAMA RETTO, JOURNEY INTO HELL*

VI. CHAPTER FOUR *PACIFIC OPERATION, WARS END*

VII. CHAPTER FIVE *GOING HOME*

VIII. CHAPTER SIX *JANUARY 1ST 1946 TO JULY 24TH 1946
MOTHBALLED AND DECOMMISSIONED*

IX. CHAPTER SEVEN *KOREA THAN VIETNAM, THE FINAL CHAPTER
THE FIREDRAKE IS NO MORE
BY JIM WATHEN [DECEASED]*

X. CHAPTER EIGHT *SHIPS DAILY POSITION, MAP, LIST OF SHIPS REARMED
MISCELLANEOUS*

XI. THE PICTURE GALLERY

U.S.S. Firedrake AE-14

The USS Firedrake (AE-14) was built in 1944 by the North Carolina Shipbuilding Company of Wilmington, North Carolina. Her original, but short-lived name was the SS Winged Racer, a merchant vessel designed to carry produce. When she was commissioned in December, 1944, after being converted for naval use, she was named USS Firedrake (AE-14). She thus started a long and proud mission for the U.S. Navy. Immediately after receiving her commission, the Firedrake entered the Second World War as part of the Pacific Fleet. She participated in many conflicts such as the invasion of Okinawa in 1945. She supplied various forms of ammunition to combatant ships - her prime function throughout her naval career. At the end of the war, she was de-commissioned in Orange, Texas. Firedrake was re-commissioned in October 1951, and in February 1952, sailed for the waters off Korea. Her mission during the Korean Conflict was to supply the United Nations Naval Forces with ammunitions. In 1953, while on her second and final deployment to Korea, the Firedrake and the USS Princeton (CVA-37) established a new record rate for transferring ammunition. The average was 285 short tons of ammunition per hour at sea. This was the standing record until 1967. At the end of the Korean Conflict, Firedrake began operating out of her homeport of San Francisco. Even though the latter part of the fifties was relatively peaceful, the USS Firedrake made a yearly deployment to the Western Pacific. During a routine deployment in the South China Sea in early 1964, the Vietnam Conflict broke out. Firedrake was extended in her deployment to rearm combatant ships of the Seventh Fleet. As 1964 came to a close, USS Firedrake returned to the United States with the taste of war that she was destined to return to again and again. During the summer of 1965, the Helicopter Landing Platform was added just over the fantail. With this face-lifting, Firedrake was "modernized" for this modern war. After a much needed yard period and a Refresher Training off San Diego, the Firedrake again left for Vietnam on the twenty-fifth of January, 1969, for her seventeenth deployment since commissioning in 1944. (Contributed by Ed Lampman, RM2, who made 4 Westpac cruises on the Firedrake from 10/66 - 5/70. What happened to the Firedrake after that is not known)

CHAPTER ONE

[1944-1945]

From Sept. 1944 to Dec. 1944. Most of the crew coming from boot camps arrived at the Ship Processing Center, New Port R. I. After going through the Ship Selection Center, they were assigned to the USS FIREDRAKE. The crew were assembled in barracks, on the base. It was very cold in those old wooden barracks which were heated by a coal fired pot belly stove. In addition the food was far from being up to Navy standards.

During the following months the crew spent most of their time going to instructional classes. There were several tough courses one being fire control the other being damage control. In both cases mock ups of actual ship compartments were utilized and simulation was very intense with actual fire to put down and actual water flooding conditions to control. Many of the crew were sent to various Navy schools. *For instance I was sent to fireman's school at the Philadelphia Navy Yard and to the Navy Ammunition Handling school at Yorktown , Va.*

The crew enjoyed liberty in such towns as New Port, Providence and New Bedford. *I was quite lucky as I had an uncle and his family living in New Port . My uncle worked at the Naval torpedo testing laboratory out on Narragansett Bay.*

Dec. 23rd , the crew boarded a troop train, destination Jacksonville Fla. The only good memory of this train ride was a stop at Penn station , New York city on Christmas eve. This allowed family members of the crew who lived nearby to briefly visit with them.

A troop train in 1944 was undoubtedly the worse means of travel. To be on board this train on Christmas day was totally disheartening. The seats were hard and sleep was nigh impossible. The crew were fed by going to a freight car which had been converted to a kitchen of sorts complete with a long serving line. The doors were open . *Strange one of my memories was a piece of coal soot from the steam engine landing on a dish of peaches which I had just been served*

DEC 26TH The train arrived in Jacksonville The crew was transferred to the USS FIREDRAKE. The FIREDRAKE was moored starboard side pier #1 at Gibbs Engine Shipyards where she was being refitted as a fleet ammunition ship.

The crew members met for the first time the officers and petty officers who would guide and control their lives for the next 18 months. Next they were given their division assignments as well as bunk and locker locations. After a brief settling in, the crew was treated to a belated Christmas dinner, turkey ,dressing the works.

Dec. 27th 1600 hrs. The former WINGED RACER was placed in full commission as the USS FIREDRAKE AE-14. 1602 hours Commander Elb assumed command. It was an impressive ceremony with all members of the crew in full dress uniform assembled aft. Officials of the conversion yard and various Naval officers and guests of the ships officers were present.

Dec. 27th through Jan 8th 1945 The ship underwent it's final stages of conversion and fitting out. The crew adjusted to shipboard life settling into quarters and their duty assignments. During this time all members of the crew enjoyed liberty in the wonderful city of Jacksonville

Jan 8th 0815 hrs, Recd the ships practice ammunition.

Jan. 9th 1336 hrs, First drill at general quarters.

Jan. 10th , 0815 hrs , Made all preparations to get underway. A large number of dock workers as well as Jacksonville citizenry on the dock to bid farewell. Indeed a poignant farewell.

0856 hrs ,underway. 1244 hrs. Commenced swinging ship to adjust magnetic compass
1309 hrs, called to general quarters. 1319 hrs commenced test firing all ships guns.
1401 hrs secured from general quarters. 1741 hrs with St. Johns light ship abeam to starboard took departure from the vicinity of Jacksonville , Fla. enroute to Norfolk , Va.

Jan. 12th , 1355hrs , Anchored in berth 3, Hampton Roads ,Va. Reported to shakedown group for duty.

Jan 13th, Underway to the Deperming [DeGaussing] station. In dry dock 2130 hrs, commenced Depreming the ship. The purpose of this operation is to neutralise the magnetism of the ships hull. It is done to reduce the danger of setting off a magnetic mine. The operation consist of wrapping heavy electrical cables around the ship and applying electrical current until the ship is neutralised. 2230, Completed , underway .

Jan. 14th, Anchored berth 4 , Hampton roads. 0960hrs Received practice ammunition from lighter. 1700hrs Underway. 1940 Anchored off Cape Charles [Wolf Trap Area]. Underway daily at daylight to carry out assigned shakedown schedule. The shake down included ship manoeuvres as well as a considerable amount of target practice of all ships guns. The crew were assigned General Quarters stations and were drilled and drilled.

Jan 24th, 1557hrs Underway. 1747hrs Moored starboard side pier 13 &14 Norfolk Navy Yard, Portsmouth , Va. Commenced 7 day shakedown cleanup

Jan. 25th Underway . 1330hrs , Moored port side berth 32 . Further post shakedown cleanup.

During this period all members of the crew experienced the delight of liberty in Norfolk ,commonly referred to as s_____ city

Feb 2nd , Post shakedown cleanup completed. Underway enroute to Hampton Roads, Va. 0818 HRS Anchored berth #6 . Ammunition lighter # 501 moored alongside . Commenced loading ships ammunition. 1800 hrs. completed loading ship's ammunition

Feb.3rd 0920 hrs. Comander Auxiliary Vessels Shakedown Group came aboard to conduct military inspection . We were put through our paces. Fire Drill, General Quarters Drill, Steering Casualty Drill, Weapons Fire Drill, Collision Drill , Exercised Batteries At Causality Drill , Engine Room Causality Drill and Abandon Ship Drill 1103 hrs. Inspection Party left ship 1438 hrs. Underway enroute Navy pier , Earle, N. J. in company with USS ALAMANCE AKA 75.

Feb. 4th, 0800hrs.The ship entered Ambrose swept channel. The ALAMANCE proceeded independently . It was quite cold requiring the ship to break ice as it entered the estuary . With the assistance of four yard tugs, the ship was moored port side Navy Pier, Earle, N. J.

Feb 5 th Commenced cargo operations. Civilian stevedores loading.

The crew were given liberty by sections. Some taking advantage of the nearness of New York City, others content with the hospitality of the local towns of Red Bank, Long Branch and Asbury park.

Feb 6th to 15 th

During this period we waited while the civilian stevedores loaded our cargo [5000 tons + of ammunition]. They worked in shifts around the clock.

Feb 16th Completed cargo operations . With the assistance of two yard tugs got underway . With Ambrose swept channel Buoy "A " abeam to port the ship took departure from the NJ / NY area enroute to the Panama Canal Zone. Due to the possible threat of a German Submarine the ship was escorted by the USS HORACE A. BASS APD-124.

Feb 18th Overnight the ship entered the gulf stream. In just a few hours we went from bitter cold to summer . In 1945 this was a surprise to many of the crew. The sun was so hot ,the ships Doctor issued a schedule for sun exposure to minimise sun burn.

For the first time the crew saw porpoises frolic in the ships bow wave.

Feb 22nd *I was assigned to the anchor watch. We were called to sea detail at about 0500 hrs. I remember the first sight of the Panama canal as we approached in the early dawn . what an awesome sight. The lights of Gatun locks seem to stretch forever to the horizon . 0735hrs Briefly anchored in Cristobal Harbor PCZ. 0750hrs underway to transit the Panama Canal . 0849hrs Entered Gatun Locks . 1250 hrs Entered Pedro Miguel Locks, 1330hrs Entered Miraflores Locks. 1410hrs completed transit. What a tremendous engineering marvel. 1410 hrs . Entered Balboa Reach. 1420 hrs. Entered Panama Bay. 1427 hrs. Tug Anajiantied tied off port side , assisted to dockage. 1450 hrs. Moored starboard side Pier #1 Naval Operating Base, Balboa Harbor.*

THE FIREDRAKE IS AT THE EDGE OF THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER TWO

[1945]

Feb. 22nd , 1450hrs Moored starboard side , pier #1 Navy Operating Base , Panama Canal Zone. 1620hrs The ship commenced fuelling. 1759hrs secured from fuelling.

Moored to the dock's with the Firedrake were a number of ships from all nations , including a submarine flying the French colors. There was a posting that no liberty would be allowed that evening as there was rioting in the city and no Americans were allowed ashore. That evening the crew were treated to their first movie on the after deck.

Feb 23rd, 0930hrs The Commanding Officer called on the Port Director for orders and routing. The crew made all preparations for getting underway. Our destination Eniwetok atoll , Marshall Islands , some seven thousand miles, westward. 1225 hrs. A bill of pratique was granted to the FIRE Drake. 1221 hrs. Made all preparations for getting underway. 1255 hrs. US OBISPO [Canal Zone tug] moored alongside portside. 1315 hrs. Degaussing circuit turned on. 1321 hrs. US EMPIRE [Canal Zone tug] moored alongside port side. 1322 hrs. underway in accordance with Port Director's ; Panama Canal Zone confidential dispatch #231500. Steamed at various courses and speed conforming to the channel. 1328 hrs. US OBISPO cast off. 1332 hrs. US EMPIRE CAST OFF. 1830 hrs. Darkened ship, set condition III, For the first time the crew experienced the ship running under blackout conditions.

From **Feb 23rd to Mar. 4th** the FIRE Drake steamed on course. The crew spent this period making the ship , "ship shape".

Mar. 5th 0820 hrs. Exercised at General Quarters .commenced steaming on various courses for practice of the ships weapons, fired ships weapons. 0852 hrs. Secured from General Quarters.

Mar. 6th 0930 hrs. Exercised at General Quarters, for practice firing of ships weapons. 1000 hrs. secured from General Quarters.

Mar. 7th 0900 hrs. Exercised at General Quarters. This was a simulation drill for all damage control personnel including collision, fire, and damage control.

Mar. 8th 0530 hrs. Joe Hahn in dropping from his upper tier bunk caught his ring on an electrical bracket and tore off his ring finger. 0600 hrs. Having passed Longitude 152 degrees west, the FIRE Drake entered the Pacific war zone. This required that the ship commenced "zig zagging" in accordance with standing orders and plan #10 of zig zag diagrams dated 1940.

Mar. 9th 0530 hrs. The crew awoke to an approaching storm. The sea became extremely rough. The ship rolled to the point that the scuppers were submerged.

Below decks, all departments having drawers such as the ship fitters shop, had to bar the drawers otherwise they would fiercely slid open spilling there contents on the deck. In the mess hall the tables had to remain in there racks, otherwise they would slide with leg breaking speed across the deck. The crew had to eat what little food that could be prepared , sitting on the mess hall deck.

The biggest fear was the effect of the ships roll on the ammunition stored in the holds. Better than 5000 tons of it. This required crew members to make constant visual checks of all the holds and each level of each hold. The constant roll of the ship made this a very laborious task. Note a 16" shell weighed 2700 #. If one got loose it could cripple the ship.

At this time it should be noted that Naval Ammunition was extremely safe. It took the

rotation of a shell caused by the riffling in the barrel of the guns to rotate the main primer and powder train only after this sequence could the shell explode. The biggest fears on a Navy ammunition ship were contact with the enemy or an explosion caused by a spark ignited concentrations of either in the holds. Either was used in the cans for bag ammunition to help prevent the deterioration of the powder. Bag powder was utilized as a propellant for the larger caliber shells .

Most of the crew were not experienced in the ways of the sea. Many became sea sick. Sleep was nigh impossible . Just remaining in the “rack” required laying spread eagle on your stomach.

Mar. 11th The storm finally abates,

Mar, 12th 0000 hrs. Crossed the international date line ,180 degrees west ,180 degrees east. March the 12th became March 13th.

Mar. 13th 0833 hrs. Exercised as Fire Quarters, 0844 hrs. Secured from Fire Quarters. 0908 hrs. Exercised at General Quarters 0910 hrs. Commenced steaming on various courses for firing on drill target . Commenced firing on drill targets with condition III batteries .0938 hrs. Secured from firing exercise. 0939 hrs. Exercised at abandon ship stations. 0958 hrs. Secured from abandon ship drill ,resumed General Quarters. 1000 hrs. Secured from General Quarters.

Mar. 14th 1853 hrs. Sighted Aur Atoll , Marshall Islands , distance 17 miles. First landfall since departure Panama Canal Zone.

Mar 15th 1823 hrs. Sighted Otho Atoll , Marshal Islands distance 14 miles.

Mar 16th 0940 hrs. Stationed Special Sea Detail, 1119 hrs. Anchored in berth C240 Eniwetok Atoll. 1125 hrs. Secured special sea detail.. Of interest included in the POD the Executive Officer commented as follows: "Some members of the crew think it is a joke when informed to keep their sleeves down and to take care of their life jackets. For the benefit of those men our course passes within a hundred miles of Japanese held islands and a strafing or light bombing attack is not at all impossible. So take it from people who have been through these attacks the more clothes you have on the better".

Mar. 17th 0600 hrs. Made all preparations for getting underway. 0640 hrs. underway for berth J5. 800 hrs. Skipper reported to the Port Director for further routing to Ulithi in the Caroline Islands. 0805hrs. moored port side to YO161 Berth J5 . 0830 hrs. commenced receiving fuel. 1205 hrs. Made all preparations for getting underway completing fuelling. 1570 hrs. underway for Ulithi.

From **Mar. 17th to Mar. 21st.** The FIRE Drake steamed towards the Caroline Is. During daylight hours the ship was forced to zig zag in accordance with standing orders.

Mar. 21st 1100 hrs. Stationed the special sea detail. 1324 hrs. Anchored in berth 170, Ulithi Is., Caroline Is. chain. The FIRE Drake was now in an area reachable by the Japanese. The Japanese still occupied the island of Yap 150 miles SW. They also held the Island of Truk , which was approx. 1000 miles away. We had passed within 300 miles to the north of Truk on our way to Ulithi. A comment on the POD by the Executive Officer read as follows;" The crew is cautioned that this Port is not as secure as it seems air raids and miniature submarine attacks have been occurring regularly and General Quarters may be expected anytime during the night and it will be the real thing. If the general alarm is sounded. After the movies the ship will be completely Blacked Out.

Interesting note, 10 days before we arrived, the fleet was anchored at Ulithi they had been there since Mar. 5th and had stayed to Mar. 13th. On Mar. 11th the USS RANDOLPH [CV-15] was hit by a Kamikaze causing a fire and a small explosion.

Although the ships log and the battle diary do not provide this information . The rearm schedule indicates that on Mar.22nd , we did rearmed the CHENANGO [CVE-28] and the SWANNEE [CVE-27].

The ship was anchored off the Island of MOG3 MOG a small level island that was used for recreation of fleet personnel. Each day the ships in the harbor would send a via small boats a portion of their crew . The small island was always crowded and it rained almost daily, but it was solid land. An afternoon swimming in the lagoon or sitting under a palm tree with 2 cans of beer [issued] was a welcome relief from the monotony of shipboard life. On the island the SEABEES had built a number of ball diamonds They also had built and placed benches and tables among the Palm trees. A band played music every afternoon which to our ears was very good and helped make the time spent there more enjoyable. The 2 cans of beer allowed each man was Greasedick and to all that hailed from St. Louis it brought warm memories of peace and home. Those that did not want their beer found others willing to pay for it.

For the first time since leaving the states the crew received mail from home.

During our stay here we had several calls to General Quarters however there was no action . If my memory serves correctly . I believe these GQ's were the result of submarines detected in the area.

I'm not sure of the date , but remember the USS FRANKLIN [CV13] limping into the harbor still smoking from battle. The aft end of the flight deck was torn and mangled She had been hit by a Kamikaze on March the 19th. 100 miles east of Kyushu.

MAR. 29th 1055 hrs. set condition II made all preparations for getting underway due to gale force winds ,engine room placed on 5 minutes alert in case the ship had to leave the area.

MAR. 30th 1245 hrs. secured from condition II , Main engines on 2 hr. notice.

MAR. 31st 0054hrs. LCT [760] moored alongside starboard side. 0120 hrs. in accordance with dispatch 280503 of 26 March1945 commenced discharging cargo to LCT [760] for further issue to the USS RANDOLPH [CV15]. [the RANDOLPH had been repaired at the local facilities after it's encounter with the Kamikaze on Mar. 11th]. 0225 hrs. completed cargo operations. LCT [760] cast off.

APRIL 3rd The ship moved alongside IX-[138] and refueled.

APRIL 5th 0217 hrs. LCT [759] moored alongside to port . 0220 hrs. commenced receiving ammunition . 0742 hrs. completed cargo operations having received 85 tons of additional ammunition from the USS NITRO [AE 2] via LCT-[759] .

APRIL 7th 1203 hrs. Stationed special sea detail. 1221 hrs. underway shifting berths to the southern anchorage . 1330 hrs anchored at berth 324 . Engine room on 15 minutes notice. 1540 hrs. stationed special sea detail. 1600 hrs. underway in accordance with Commander Task Group 50.9 secret dispatch 061231 of April 1945 and Commander Task Unit 50.8.6 sortie plan. Joined task group 50.8.6 which included the following ships: USS TALUGA [AO-62], USS PECOS [AO-65], USS HOUSATONIC [AO-35], USS TALLULA AO-[30], Escorted by USS AYLWIN[DD-355] and USS LEWER [DE-535]. All in route to Fleet Rendezvous.

APRIL 8th Steaming in convoy . All ships cruising in circular disposition.

APRIL 9th Steaming in convoy . All ships cruising in circular disposition.0640 hrs. Mine sighted . Changed course to avoid . 0645 Mine destroyed by USS AYLWIN [DD - 335]. 1305 hrs All ships aligned commenced firing exercise of all ships weapons.1813 hrs. Commenced Zig Zagging in accordance plan 1816. 1908 hrs Ceased Zig Zag.

APRIL 10th 0400 hrs. Commenced Zig Zagging . 1515 hrs USS AYLWIN DD-355 came alongside to receive guard mail. 1625 hrs Ceased zig zag . All ships formed three column disposition. 1824 hrs Executed sunset. Set condition III.

We were approaching the Fleet rendezvous which stayed in a pattern with these dimensions ; Lat. 24-11N , Long. 130-43 E and Lat. 24 -56N , Long. 134-18E

APRIL 11th 0636 hrs. Arrived at fleet rendezvous. Released by Task Unit 50.8.6 Joined Task Group 50.8 . 0920 hrs. Received orders to rearm USS HORNET [CV - 12] , USS BENNINGTON [CV - 20] and USS BELLEAU WOOD [CVL - 24] *These rearms to occur while underway.*

1130 hrs USS HORNET [CV12] commenced approach to this ship's port side. 1140 hrs Received tow from the HORNET. 1145 hrs. commenced transfer of ammunition. 1350 hrs Completed transfer of ammunition.

1400 hrs. USS BENNINGTON [CV20] commenced approach to this ship's port side.. 1418 hrs Received tow from the BENNINGTON . 1421 hrs. Commenced transfer of ammunition. 1620 hrs. Completed transfer of ammunition . 1625 hrs. BENNINGTON cast off.

1641 hrs. USS BELLEAU WOOD [CVL -24] approached to this ship's port side . The BELLEAU WOOD steamed alongside no tow line was passed. 1647 hrs. Commenced transfer of ammunition. 1753 hrs. BELLEAU WOOD stood off to port side.

Completed cargo operations for the day.

Total cargo transferred 120 tons.

Total cargo ammunition on board 5,246 tons.

Notes from today's POD : Today was a sample of what to expect from now on .For our first time at transferring at sea everything well and all hands did well.

The following two messages were received from the first two carriers.

From the HORNET " Thank you for a fine job of loading"

From the BENNINGTON " Thank you . A fine job. Will try to deliver those where they will do the most good.

1811 hrs. Changed course to rendezvous with group TG 50.8 .1834 hrs Joined TG 50.8 . Took position on USS WRANGELL [AE-12] bearing 120 degrees true, distance 12,000 yards.

APRIL 12th and 13th steaming with Task Force 50.8 in pattern to retain rendezvous area.

APRIL 14th 1303hrs. Received towline from the USS ESSEX [CV - 9]. 1452 hrs. Cast off from the ESSEX having completed cargo operations for the day having transferred 46 tons . Total cargo on board 5,382 tons.

The following message was received from the Secretary of the Navy:

"I have the sad duty of announcing to the Naval Service the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt , The President of the United States , which occurred on twelve April. The world has lost a champion of democracy who can ill be spared by our country and the allied cause. The Navy which he so dearly loved can pay no better tribute to his memory than to carry on in the tradition of which he was most proud. Colors shall be displayed at half mast for thirty days beginning 0800 Thirteen April west longitude date insofar as war operations permit. Memorial services shall be held on the day of the funeral to be announced later at all yards and stations and on board all vessels of the Navy , war operations permitting, Wearing of mourning badges and firing of salutes will be dispensed with in view of war conditions. James Forrestal BT 122351/69. "

April 15th 1346hrs. USS YORKTOWN CV-10 made approach and steamed alongside, port side, received tow line; for transfer of ammunition. 1354hrs. Commenced transfer of ammunition to YORKTOWN . 1422hrs. Joseph Crawford CQM , USN reported aboard from YORKTOWN [via breeches buoy] for further transport to USS BENNINGTON. 1455hrs. completed cargo operations for the day having transferred 47 tons. Total cargo on board 5335 tons.

Notes from POD for the day:

Expect to form service line at 0600. Ships may be expected anytime thereafter.

The carrier we serviced this afternoon made her approach on us without any word. We had no word that we would service anyone. She was practically alongside before anyone knew it. It was gratifying the way the crew turned out to receive the tow line with such short notice. The Caption wishes to congratulate all hands on a job well done.

April 16th 1310hrs. USS RANDOLPH CV-15 made approach and steamed alongside, port side, [no towline] for transfer of ammunition. 1338hrs. Commenced transferring ammunition. Completed transfer , total 45 tons. transferred, 5290 tons of ammunition on board.

Notes from today's POD: The following message received from the YORKTOWN "Thank you for a fast loading and snappy job"

this afternoon was our fastest time - 47 tons in 58 minutes

April 17th 1812hrs USS STOCKHAM DD- 683 came alongside to starboard. Joseph Crawford transferred via breeches buoy to the STOCKHAM for further transfer to the BENNINGTON..

April 18th 0915hrs. USS LUDLOW DD-438 came alongside starboard side to transfer mail. 0920hrs LUDLOW stood off from starboard side having completed transfer of mail. 1830hrs. Detached Task Group 50.8 , ordered to join Task Unit 50.18.59 in accordance with Commander Task Unit 50.8 dispatch of 18 April , 1945. 1928 hrs. Joined Task Unit 50.18.59 consisting of USS ATACOSA AO-66. Escorted by USS DEWEY DD-349 and USS BUCHANAN DD- 484. Proceeding to Kerama Retto anchorage Ryukyu Islands. *Journey into Hell*

April 19th 0500hrs. Commenced zig zagging . 2030hrs Ceased zig zagging; sounded General Quarters bogies in area. 2118hrs. Secured from General Quarters. 2230hrs. commenced zig zagging. *Continued our Journey into Hell.*

CHAPTER THREE [1945]

Authors note: A significant source for this chapter is a comprehensive diary kept by and a copy graciously forwarded to me by Dick Wagner. When ever you see a (it means it is from this diary.

In addition a number of memories have been added, supplied by my own and various crew members diaries.

Further note due to the many ships rearmed at this site; I have eliminated mention of the ships on a daily basis , so as not to detract from the drama of this period.

Under Chapter 6 Misc. is a list of all ships and the day that we rearmed each of them.

Also at the end of this chapter find a copy of an excerpt from a diary obtained from Amphibious Group 7 ; who played a significant role during our stay here. I am sure that they were very much involved in our daily operations acting as shuttle craft transporting ammuniton from us to the larger ships we rearmed. I'm also sure they provided the smoke boats which provided protection from the Kamikaze.

Also at the end of this chapter find excerpts from The Official Report of the Okinawa operation as reported by Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Ernest J. King

I have also include excerpts from Document titled WWII Navy Pacific Theatre which are of interest.

April 20th 0500 hrs. Steaming on various courses towards the south entrance to Kerama Retto anchorage. Called to General Quarters, Condition I, Flash Blue, Control Green [meaning Bogie was in the area, Our fighter aircraft were up.] commenced zig - zagging. 00637hrs. Secured from GQ. set condition II. 0747 secured from condition II set condition III. 0916hrs Anchored on the following bearings left tangent Zamami Jima 284 deg. true. Nu Saki 035 deg. true.

We learned later that this anchorage was the same as that of the LOGAN'S VICTORY USMS an ammunition ship that was hit by a Kamikaze and blown up on April 6th.

1033hrs Commenced cargo operations with various ships moored to starboard and port side.

1345hrs. A working party of 100 men from the USS SAN FRANCISCO came aboard.

1613hrs The working party left the ship

1847 hrs Called to GQ, condition I, flash blue ,Control green, Ships moored alongside cast off, hatches closed.

It should be noted that each time a GQ sounded the ships tied up for rearm immediately dispersed and the laborious task of covering the hatches with their huge steel pontoons had to take place.

2240hrs Secured from GQ

Ammunition transferred this day 123 tons. Total ammunition on board 5147 tons.

April 21st 0001 hrs. Boilers 1 & 2 in use. Engine room on moments notice. 0028hrs 50 hand working party from the USS COLORADO BB-45 reported aboard . 0120hrs. called to GQ, condition I, flash blue, control green. Moored ship cast off. Hatches closed. 0225 hrs Secured from GQ. 0526hrs. Completed preparations for getting underway [shifting berths]. 0612hrs. Underway to assigned anchorage. 0612 hrs. Anchored in assigned berth K19 on the following bearings Fugusi Shima right tangent 183 1/2 degrees true, Left tangent NU SAKI 042 degrees true. Right tangent GaluShima 279 degrees true. Engine room on

standby notice. 0700hrs. 50 man working party from the COLORADO left the ship. 1345hrs. 50 man working party from USS NEW YORK BB-34 reported aboard. 2012hrs. called to battle stations. Condition I Flash Blue Control Green, closed hatches ships moored alongside stood off. 2240hrs Secured from GQ.

Total cargo transferred this day 275 tons. Total tons on board 4872.

April 22nd 0004hrs. Engine room on standby notice. Called to battle stations, moored ships cast off secured hatches. 0236hrs. Secured from GQ. 0330hrs Working party from NEW YORK left ship. 0612hrs Stationed special sea detail. 0616hrs Underway. 0730hrs. Moored alongside the USS COLORADO BB-45. commenced cargo operations . 1343 hrs. Returned to Berth K19. 1800hrs. Sounded Called to battle stations. Flash Red, Control Yellow [meaning Jap planes in area no US aircraft protection]. Moored ships cast off, hatches closed. 2020hrs. Secured from GQ. 2200hrs. Completed cargo operations for the day.

Total cargo transferred this day 193 tons . Cargo on board 4,679.

(We loaded the COLORADO. Is she ever big and do they have a lot of guns on her. Kerama Retto is made up of a group of islands. Some of these islands are occupied by the Japanese troops who were bypassed because they were not considered a major threat. They occupy caves and are being starved out. They do quite a bit of sniping [one bullet hit a gun tub over one of our officers head].

A Navy LCVP approached a nearby island today and drew machine gun fire. Shortly thereafter a LCI Gunboat went in and silenced the mg.

This night we had 3 alerts. One Kamikaze came within 10-12 thousand yards of our location. On the first attack, we could see the planes. You could see them start their suicide dives. One plane was seen to be shot down by AA fire. They sank a mine sweeper and damaged several other ships.) *Like a severe thunderstorm the night sky to the north [Okinawa] was one continuous flashing as our ships pounded the island and attempted to shoot down the Kamikaze.*

(Here at Kerama Retto there are many smoke boats, 2 are assigned to the FIRE Drake. They constantly circle the ship laying smoke, during an air raid. They are fairly effective in hiding the ship.)

It should be noted a picket line consisting mostly of destroyers was continuously in place between Kerama Retto and Okinawa during our stay here. Their purpose was to provide AA fire to protect the approaches to the fleet anchored here. As a result they were subject to severe attacks by the Kamikaze. We would often see one or more limp into our area the morning after a night of raids. Some of them had been heavily damaged.

April 23rd 0004hrs. Called to Battle stations. 0257 Secured from GQ .

Total cargo transferred this day 317 tons. Total cargo on board 4,362 tons.

From today's POD :

"Our present assignment is a tough one. never knowing from one minute what is coming next. We know we will get out of here as soon as we can unload so everyone will have to reconcile themselves to working long hours. with General Quarters the most of the night. It is tough but, there is nothing that can be done about it .Lets give it to them and get out of here."

(Saw one of the DS that got hit last night as it limped into the anchorage. What a mess. No raids tonight due to bad weather. The marines went into one of the nearby islands. Considerable gunfire was heard. Quite a few Japs are being shot in the water .

They have been caught swimming or on rafts. Some of the rafts were carrying grenades. When our boats spot them they give them no chance to surrender.)

April 24th *This was our first day without being called to battle stations. The weather gave us a respite from the Japanese.* However we did carry on cargo operations.

Total cargo transferred this day 291 tons. Total cargo on board 4,071 tons.

April 25th *A day of diminishing bad weather. No enemy aircraft no call to battle stations. Did continue cargo operations.*

Interesting note: A member of a working party suffered a minor injury while passing ammunition. He was from the USS NATRONA APA-214. The NATRONA was the flagship of AMPHIBIOUS GROUP 7 [See document at the end of this chapter]

Total cargo transferred this day 193 tons. Total cargo on board 3,878 tons.

April 26th 0243 hrs. Called to battle stations. 0359 hrs. Secured from GQ.

Interesting notes: Today the USS WICHITA CA- 45 was among a number of ships we rearmed. From here she went up on the line, bombarding installations above the beach head. Tomorrow she will sustain moderate damage from Japanese costal guns.

The destroyer HUTCHIN DD-476 was damaged today by a depth charge. We saw her limp in with her bow missing, we had rearmed her on 4/21.

(Today a group of 36 Japanese surrender on the beach of a nearby island . They were easily visible us. They were waving a white flag. A LCI was sent in to pick them up.

I have not mentioned it before but at night it was necessary to post sentries at key positions on the ship. This was necessary as the Japanese would swim out to the ships with the intent to harm. If caught in the water we would shoot them.)

Total cargo transferred this day 547 tons . Total cargo on board 3,331 tons.

April 27th 0745hrs While coming alongside the SALT LAKE CITY CA-25 was too far forward, when she backed down to align the ships one of her overhung gun buckets tore along our port side bashing in our forward gun tub. The # 22 and #24, 20mm gun tub was torn loose from it's foundation and pushed up an inboard.

While this was happening most of the crew cheered as it was hoped that enough damage would occur to allow us to retire from this hell hole.Of course the damage was not that major, but we in the shipfitters shop had to cleanup the damage.

2130 hours. Called to battle stations. 2241hrs. Secured from GQ

(One of our crew shot a Japanese swimming in the water near the FIREDRAKE)

A number of US Naval vessels were damaged by enemy action today among them were the cruiser WICHITA which we had rearmed yesterday and the destroyer WILLIAM D. PORTER which we had rearmed on the 22nd.

Total cargo transferred this day 211 tons. Total ammunition on board 3120 tons.

April 28th Today the FIREDRAKE came the closest to being "blown up" in all our time in the forward area. 0002hrs. Called to battle stations. 0407hrs. Secured from GQ. 1128hrs. Called to battle stations. 1135hrs. Secured from GQ. 1237hrs Called to Battle stations. 1323hrs. Secured from GQ.

Approx. 1930hrs. The chief [Ken Pearson] of my division and I were on the aft boom cross bridge adjusting cargo lights, for night operations. Suddenly the lights went out and Lieutenant Eaton came running back to just below us. He hollered up that a Japanese plane was approaching. The Jap had snuck into the harbor by flying in the blind area of a Navy PBM returning from patrol. First we heard then looking up we saw a plane with the rising sun on it's wings. It flew over us slightly to port and so low it seemed that we could reach up and touch it. The plane, a Kamikaze continued on and dove into a ship off our port bow. At

the same time the battle station klaxon sounded and the P. A. blared "Flash Red , Control Red ". Looking forward we could see a ship covered in flames. After climbing down, I was running to my battle station when I heard someone yell " The dirty bastards got a hospital evacuee ship. It was the USS PINKNEY APH-2 [see page 3 of AMPHIBIOUS GROUP 7] at the end of this chapter. My battle station was manning the sound powered phone for the forward deck repair section. Arriving at my B. S. I grabbed my life jacket, talkers helmet and phone out of the deck locker and put them on. Shortly thereafter Bill Franke who was at Damage Control Central below decks came on the phone " Everything OK up there Dick". I think I said something like " Hell no ". I waited for the circuits to clear from other stations reporting in. I than made my report " Central, forward deck repair is manned and ready, Condition "A" affirmed and set throughout "A" part of the ship". I received acknowledgment from Bill and waited. I heard Central call the bridge. " Bridge this is central repair manned and ready condition "A" affirmed and set throughout the ship ". The bridge acknowledge.

A short time later the bridge advised that the USS COMFORT AH-6 a hospital ship with her lights on and red crosses showing had been hit by a Kamikaze and badly damaged. [It was later learned that the Kamikaze was actually a " Baka " bomb. The Baka was really a glider bomb. They depended on the gliding ability of the Jap suicide pilot riding the bomb, horseback style. The bomb was released from a mother plane].

This news along with the attack on the PINKNEY invoked in all of us so much anger that it led to a perilous night.

"All stations all ststions, bridge, bogie approaching approx. 18 miles, bearing ??? I said to myself just a few minutes. Soon we saw AA fire from the picket line to our north. Suddenly the sky was a mass of tracers and the roar of guns deafening. I could hear the whine of shells as they passed through our rigging. I thought to myself I'm liable to be killed by our own people. Eventually the Task Force Commander raised enough hell that all ships ceased firing and we lay hidden in the smoke like we were suppose to. All of the ships had been firing their guns, yet that bogie [if he indeed came over the fleet] was never touched .We stayed at battle stations till 0157hrs the next morning.

In addition to the COMFORT and the PINKNEY many other ships were damaged by Kamikaze this day. Destroyers from the picket line were badly hit. Among them were the WADSWORTH which we had rearmed on the 24th and the BENNION rearmed on the 21st.

Total tons transferred this day 239. Total ammunition on board 2,615 tons.

April 29th 0001hrs. All hands at battle stations. 0157hrs. Secured from GQ. 2137hrs. Called to battle stations. 2258hrs. Secured from GQ.

Total Cargo transferred this day 239 tons. Total ammunition board 2,615tons
(During the GQ's today there were Japanese planes overhead. Due to darkness and smoke we could not see them. There was some unauthorised AA fire but not as bad as last evening. One Kamikaze was shot down.)

April 30th 0227hrs. Called to battle stations. 0454hrs. Secured from GQ. 2242hrs. Called to battle stations. 2323hrs. Secured from GQ.

Total Cargo transferred this day 265 tons. Total ammunition on board 2350 tons
(During this raid the minelayer USS TERROR CM-5 was hit by a Kamikaze. The TERROR was about We had hit the ship. I had just reached the gun directors tub when it hit. The ship seemed to be covered with a large sheet of flames. The plane was already on fire when it hit. 150 casualties most of them killed. We were almost hit by gunfire from our

own ships.) .

May 1st 0355hrs. Called to battle stations. 0455hrs. Secured from GQ. 1920hrs. Called to battle stations. 2030hrs. Secured from GQ. No planes overhead during these alerts.

May 2nd *The skies were heavy overcast and it rained most of the day and night. No alerts, a peaceful day. The crew was allowed some much needed sleep.*

Total ammo transferred this day. 167 tons. Total ammunition on board 2,024tons.

May 3rd 1215hrs. Called to battle stations. 1245hrs Secured from GQ. 1325hrs. Called to battle stations. 1404hrs. Secured from GQ. 1837hrs. Called to battle stations. 1957hrs. Secured from GQ.

Today appeared to be the start of another Japanese offensive. They were concentrating on ships cruising the picket line, just north of our location. We were kept very busy.

4 destroyers were sunk during today's attacks. In addition a light cruiser, 3 destroyers, 3 mine sweepers and a cargo ship were damaged. One of the minesweepers was hit by a piloted [Baka] bomb. The cargo ship was hit by a suicide boat.

Total cargo transferred this day 426 tons. Total ammunition on board 1,598 tons.

Of interest ;

(We were in Kerama Retto only a day or so when we were greeted by Tokyo Rose on the radio. She reported that they knew we were here. She mentioned the ship by name and number. For all her infamous broadcast, she did provide us with the wonderful music of the American big bands, which although ludicrous often brought smiles to the crew members.)

May 4th 0138hrs. Called to battle stations. 0552hrs. Secured from GQ. 0801hrs Called to battle stations. 0931hrs. Secured from GQ. 0945hrs. Called to battle stations. 1118hrs. Secured from GQ. 1900hrs. Called to battle stations. 1955hrs. Secured from GQ.

Obviously today we were subject to almost constant danger from attacking Kamikaze. Sleep was nigh impossible. Everyone was very tired. The almost constant sounding of the klaxon. Dispersing ships that were tied up. Re- mooring them after the all clears. Closing and opening hatches. Meals consisting of sandwiches delivered to your battle station.

(During the daylight hours we could see many Kamakize overhead. In fact one came low over our fantail, only the smoke prevented him from seeing us.

Our Navy fighter aircraft had a field day shooting down 98 enemy aircraft while losing only 5 of our own planes.)

From the official Navy report for this day. " Japanese aircraft staged heavy attacks on Yontan airfield, Okinawa and United States Naval vessels supporting the Okinawa operation[that's us].

An escort carrier along with a number of destroyers and mine sweepers were damaged either by Kamakize or Baka bombs during these very heavy attacks.

Total cargo transferred this day 231 tons. Total ammunition on board 1367 tons

May 5th 0237hrs. Called top battle stations. 0455hrs. Secured from battle stations. 1110 hrs. Called to battle stations. 1130hrs. Secured from GQ. During today's attacks a seaplane tender and a survey ship were damaged by suicide aircraft.

Total cargo transferred this day 193tons. Total ammunition on board 1221 tons.

May 6th Engine room placed on 1 hour notice. 0231hrs. Called to battle stations. 0457hrs. Secured from GQ. 0832hrs. Called to battle stations. 0939hrs. Secured from GQ.

1928hrs. Called to battle stations . 1944hrs. secured from GQ.2032hrs. Called to battle stations. 2056hrs. Secured from GQ.

I remember this day quite well especially the Kamikaze attack at 0830. It was a bright clear day and one could see the planes as they flew in over us. No formation just scattered across the sky. I remember thinking this is Sunday supposedly a day of peace and rest.

(During this GQ we could see one of the Kamikaze being shot down. One of our F6F's had a dogfight with one of bogies. We had an additional scare from a swimmer. One of our smoke boats noticed one too many crew members. When they tried to capture him he dove overboard. After a while it was feared that he had climbed up our anchor chain . Our entire ship was searched. The officers armed with side arms and the crew with knives.)

Total cargo transferred this day 169 tons. Total ammunition aboard 1,072 tons.

If the daily tonnage does not add up recognize that we received as well as dispersed ammunition

May 7th Engine room on 1 hour notice. 0220hrs. Called to battle stations. 0449hrs. Secured from GQ.

Total cargo transferred this day 177 tons. Total ammunition on board 1,017tons.

I have no date for this. The following comes from Roy Earlandson as related to Wayne Stoll. " I was the gun captain on the 5" gun. One day a kamikaze flew low and near the ship. I ordered the gun to be loaded. Although there was a standing order that no guns were to be loaded or fired unless ordered to do so by the bridge. Remembering this I ordered the gun crew to unload the 5" shell. The shell had jammed in the breech. We finally rammed a 2 x 4 down the barrel, which allowed release of the shell. We threw the shell overboard and told no one"

May 8th *A windy and raining day. No enemy activity. Cargo operations on going. Due to lack of enemy action , the Captain took the opportunity to hold Captain's mast. Seven crew men were charged. Most of the offenses were refusing to obey an order, insolence to an officer and not responding to reveille. One was charged with violation of the censorship regulations.*

Total cargo transferred this day 114 tons. Total cargo on board 903 tons.

May 9th *The scuttlebutt is racing wildly through the ship. We are finally leaving this terrible place.*

Anchored as before. Engine room on 1 hour notice. !854hrs. Called to battle stations. 2010hrs. Secured from GQ. 2040hrs. Called to battle stations. 2126hrs. Secured from GQ. 2159hrs. Called to battle stations. 2257hrs. Secured from GQ.

(Five alerts in less than 8 hours. [Dick included 2 that occurred overnight]. In the first one; one DE and a AM got hit. One plane was shot down. One of the Kamikaze came right over us. From where I was in the Director's Tub, I thought we were going to get it. It missed our after mast by about 75 feet. Went by me no more than 200 feet away, Close enough that I could see the pilot. It crashed into Zamami Jima.)

Today we received ammunition. Total received 169 tons. Total ammunition on board 1,072tons.

May 10th 0004hrs. Anchored as before. Engine room on 1 hour notice. 0013hrs. Called to battle stations. 0447hrs. Secured from GQ

0655hrs. Stationed special sea detail. 0747hrs. Underway shifting to departure berth. 0851hrs. Anchored in berth K-97 on the following bearings. Na Ji 026degrees true. Right Tangent, island south of Fukasi Jima 278 degrees true. Rock south of Aware Saki122

degrees true.

0859 hrs. Called to battle stations. 1154hrs. Secured from GQ. 1943hrs. Called to battle stations. 2102hrs. Secured from GQ.

Again today we received as well as dispersed ammunition. Total tons transferred this day 83. Total ammunition on board 1051tons.

(Our forces again invaded one of the nearby islands probably performing cleanup operations. A lot of gunfire.)

The following was sent to me Wayne Stoll "G" division officer. In July 1945 , he was promoted to JG.

This piece of history is not dated but definitely occurred during our stay here.

"Whenever we got an order to transfer ammunition, Gunner Bagley and I would go over the order and decide what bins it would come from and in what order. Then he would oversee the detail of unloading. I would go to the gunnery office and keep score or I would watch the operation from the bridge. One day as I was watching the operation, I saw this plane coming up the slot and almost touching the water. I thought that if he didn't get up he was sure to run into someone. Then it dawned on me that this was a Kamikaze and he was headed right at us. There were no guns manned and it was too late to announce GQ. So I was hoping he would want a bigger target than what we presented. Suddenly a small ship at the mouth of the harbor began to fire it's 40mm. After about a dozen rounds down went the plane. At that point I felt that I wanted a cup of coffee so I went to the wardroom. Chief Warrant Officer Shinton was there and I told him what I saw. I then began to realize what a close call we had and my hands began to shake so that I could hardly hold the cup of coffee. I told the Captain and other officers but I doubt that the crew was never told.

Wayne goes on to tell of a true coincidence. After the war he reentered the business world. He became associated with an electrical engineer. One evening when Wayne had taken this man to dinner, they got into a discussion of their participation in the war. The man related that he was aboard a net tender at the entrance to our anchorage. His boat was the one that shot down the Kamikaze which would have doomed the FIRE Drake.

The FIRE Drake certainly led a charmed life and all of us with it.

May 11th Hooray!!!! We are leaving this awful place.

0004hrs. Anchored as before. Engine room on 1 hr notice. 0012hrs. Called to battle stations. 0042hrs. Secured from GQ. 0723hrs. Called to battle stations. 0737hrs. Secured from GQ. 0833hrs. Called to battle stations. 0912hrs. Called for special sea detail. 0944hrs. Underway in accordance with Commander Task Group dispatch #101151 dated 10 May 1945 in company with USS ENOROE AO-69. Convoy Commander, Commander A. Elb in this ship. Escorted by the USS DEWEY DD-349 and USS GILLESPIE DD-609. 1023hrs. Secured from GQ. With Koba Shima island bearing 312 degrees true, took departure from Kerama Retto area heading for Fleet Rendezvous. Took single column disposition. 1415hrs. commenced zig-zagging.

Total cargo transferred this day 88 tons. Total ammunition on board 963 tons.

Another major air battle was fought over the Okinawa area as we were leaving. During the day carrier based planes shot down 69 enemy aircraft. Ships gunfire accounted for 3 more were destroyed in suicide dives on the carrier BUNKER HILL. The carrier was badly damaged. 373 of the BUNKER HILL's crew were killed, with 19 missing.

This was a time of thankful prayer for many of us.

Let's take a moment and reflect on our stay at KERAMA RETTO.

We arrived on Friday April 20th 1945 and departed on Friday May 11th 1945, a total of 21 days.

We arrived with 5,290 tons of ammunition and departed with 963 tons of ammunition.

We were called to battle stations 47 times [mostly at night] . On four occasions we were in dire peril from the close proximity of Kamikaze aircraft.

We received a battle star [our second] for our participation in this action.

We were informed that 48 hours after we left Kerama Retto , the merchant ship that took over our anchorage was hit by a Kamikaze.

CHAPTER FOUR [1945]

May 12th 0004hrs Steaming as before, in Convoy, in route to Fleet Rendezvous. 0753hrs Arrived at Fleet Rendezvous. Joined Task Group 50.8 to await onward routing to Ulithi Islands. 1540hrs USS LAKE DE-301 came alongside and transferred mail. 1615hrs Formed with Task Unit 50.18.7 to form a convoy including the following ships: USS SEBEC AO-87, USS ENOREE AO - 69, USS MERCURY AK- 42, USS KANAKEE AO-39, USS MANATEE AO- 58. Escorted by USS LAKE DE-301, USS DONALDSON DE-44, USS WEAVER DE-741 AND USS MOCTOBI ATF-105.

1710hrs Took departure from Fleet Rendezvous for Ulithi Islands.

On the night of May 12th we were heading for the fleet . I had the dog watch . I would walk the decks to make sure everything was secure. It was pitch dark , no moon and the ship was running under blackout conditions. I had just come down the aft starboard side ladder from the superstructure when I stumbled on a body. I shielded my flashlight and looked at the face . He was the ships baker [a great one I might add] I saw blood dripping out of the side of his mouth. I felt for a pulse and there was none. I raced up to the bridge and reported to the OOD [Wayne Stool]. He advised me to wake the doctor and escort him to the body. When we got there ,the Doctor and I carried the baker to sick bay. We laid him on the gurney and the Doctor leaned over him for a closer look. he looked up first with anger and then with a small smile and said " that's cranberry juice " . Imagine my chagrin. The baker had fermented the juice , celebrated alone our leaving Kerama Retto and passed out. I certainly felt like an A_____

May 16th 0004hrs Steaming as before in convoy , in route to Ulithi Islands. 0610hrs Steaming on various courses and speeds conforming to channel for entering Ulithi Islands. Called up special detail. 0812hrs anchored in berth #528 , Ulithi Islands , Caroline Island Chain. 0822hrs Secured special sea detail. Reported to ComServ RonTen for duty. 1327hrs Shifted berths to berth #1. 1630hrs SS DAVID GAILLARD moored to starboard side. 1911hrs commenced receiving cargo from the GAILLARD.

May 17 Anchored as before Ulithi Islands. MS DAVID GUILARD moored to starboard . Cargo operations ongoing receiving ammunition. The loading is being loaded by Navy Stevedores , so other than standing our normal in port watches , we had time for R&R on MOG MOG island , during our stay here.

Thanks to "Fantail " Adams and several others who will remain anonymous we now have a LCVP [which apparently had been abandoned on the beach] The LCVP makes the trip to the beach much more pleasant than with the motor launch. After a super cleanup and paint job it looks like it belongs to us.

Total tons transferred this day 305, total tons on board 1,360

May 18th Cargo operations continue. Total cargo transferred this day 100 tons , total cargo on board 1,460 tons.

May 19th Cargo operations on going with MS GAILLARD moored to starboard. 1240hrs. 40 US Navy stevedores reported aboard. Total cargo transferred this day 55 tons , total cargo on board 1515 tons.

May 20th Cargo operations in progress. Several injuries today during loading operations Total cargo transferred this day 319 tons total cargo on board 1834 tons

May 21st Cargo operations in progress. Total cargo transferred this day 337 tons Total cargo on board 2171 tons.

May 22nd Cargo operations in progress. Total cargo transferred this day 201 tons
Total cargo on board 2372 tons

May 23rd Cargo operations in progress 0904hrs. USS MAUNA LOA AE-8 moored alongside port side. Total cargo transferred this day 131 tons total cargo on board 2503 tons

May 25th Anchored as before in berth #1 Ulithi Islands. USS MAUNA LOA AE-8 moored alongside, port side. MS DAVID GAILLARD moored alongside, starboard side. Cargo operations in progress around the clock. 40 man Navy stevedores aboard. 0943hrs. the MAUNA LOA cast off port side. 1045hrs. SS NORTHWESTERN VICTORY moored alongside port side. Total cargo transferred this day 192 tons, total cargo on board 2609 tons.

May 27th Anchored as before, Berth #1 Ulithi Islands . MS NORTHWESTERN VICTORY moored alongside, port side. Cargo operations in progress. Several injuries occurred during overnight cargo operations. 0815hrs NORTHWESTERN VICTORY cast off. 1842hrs SS RUTGERS VICTORY moored alongside port side. 1907hrs. USS MOUNT BAKER AE-4 moored alongside , starboard side. Total cargo transferred this day 38 tons. Total cargo on board 3077 tons.

May 28th Anchored as before, Berth #1 , Ulithi islands , Caroline Island chain. MOUNT BAKER and RUTGERS VICTORY moored alongside. Cargo operations in progress. 2002hrs. The USS MOUNT BAKER AE-4 cast off . Total cargo transferred this day 132 tons. Total cargo on board 3339 tons.

I haven't mentioned that the FIREDRAKE crew [by sections] were spending time on the beach; "MOG MOG" island during this loading operation. "Be happy, 2 beers a day "

May 29th Anchored as before . SS Rutgers Victory moored port side. Cargo operations in progress. Total cargo transferred this day 132 tons. Total cargo on board 3,482 tons.

May 30th Anchored as before in Berth #1 Ulithi , Caroline Island chain, in 23 fathoms of water, coral bottom, with 105 fathoms of chain to port anchor. SS RUTGERS VICTORY moored alongside port side. Cargo operations in progress around the clock. 0819hrs. USS PROVO VICTORY AK-228 moored alongside starboard side. Total cargo transferred this day 173 tons Total cargo on board 3655 tons.

From the diary of Chuck Lindsay:

From the 16th of May to the 4th of June, AE-14 work parties reloaded her near empty holds with ammunition. The crew although working hard on ships maintenance ,found rest and relaxation with a few beach parties , mail from home and nightly movies. During the days here at ULITHI , the booms were overhauled, the ship painted and guns checked and repaired. Stores of food and supplies were brought aboard.

May 31st Anchored as before. PROVO VICTORY moored starboard side. RUTGERS VICTORY moored port side. Cargo operations continue around the clock. 1532hrs. USS PROVO VICTORY AK-228 cast off from alongside, starboard side. 1618hrs SS FURMAN VICTORY moored alongside, starboard side. Our famous baker George Johnson got his hand caught in the dough mixing machine. He is currently residing in sick bay. Total cargo transferred this day 269 tons. Total cargo on board 3,803 tons

June 1st Anchored as before , RUTGERS VICTORY moored alongside port side. FURMAN VICTORY moored alongside starboard side. Cargo operations in progress around the clock . 0840hrs. RUTGERS VICTORY cast off. 1252hrs. Engine room placed on standby notice. 2129hrs. Secured main engines. Total cargo transferred this day 213 tons.

Total cargo on board 4,016 tons.

June 2nd Anchored as before, Berth #1 Ulithi atoll, Caroline Island Chain. SS FURMAN VICTORY moored alongside to starboard. Cargo operations in progress . 0305hrs. Completed cargo operations. Total tons on board 4,184. 0833hrs FURMAN VICTORY cast off. Heaved in port chain to 90 fathoms of chain. 1620hrs All 70 men of the imported work party left the ship.

June 3rd Anchored as before. Ulithi Atoll. The ship is very quiet this morning. Absolutely no activity. We sit waiting. 1420hrs The Executive officer [Lieutenant E. S. Fleming] left the ship to attend a departure conference aboard the USS CHIPOLA AO- 63. 1635hrs The Executive officer returned.

June 4th Anchored as before in Berth #1 Ulithi Atoll. 0845hrs Commenced all preparations for getting underway. 1255hrs Stationed special. 1346 hrs Underway in accordance with C.T.U. 30.9.4 dispatch 030009 of June 1945. in company with. USS CHIPOLA AO-63 , USS KASKASKIA AO-27, USS TALLULAH AO-50, USS PATUXENT AO-44, USS HOUSTONIC AO-35, USS ASTABULA AO-51 , SS MERCER VICTORY AND SS OBERLIN VICTORY. escorted by USS STRAUS DE-408 , USS LAMOUS DE-743 , USS KYNE DE-744, USS CROWLEY DE-403 AND USS LOVERING DE-39. Enroute Fleet Rendezvous. 1603hrs Conducted anti aircraft practice firing.

June 5th Steaming in convoy , with Destroyer escorts , enroute to fleet Rendezvous

June 8th Steaming as before in convoy enroute from Ulithi to Fleet Rendezvous in accordance with Commander Task Unit 30.9.4 dispatch #030009 Of June 1945. 0545hrs. Began steaming on various courses and speeds for joining Task Group 30.8. 0610hrs Formed with T. G. 30.8 took station 1- 3, bearing 027 degrees true , distance 2700 yards from guide. Awaiting further routing.

June 9th Steaming with Task Unit 30.3 in pattern to maintain Rendezvous area.

June 10th Steaming with Task Unit 30.3 in pattern to maintain Rendezvous area.

June 11th Steaming as before , In convoy with Task force 30.8 at Fleet Rendezvous some 300 miles east of Okinawa. Running under condition III. 1121hrs USS STROUS DE-408 came alongside port quarter to transfer mail. 1831hrs formed with Task Unit 30.18.25 Took departure Fleet Rendezvous for Leyte Gulf Philippine Islands. In convoy with USS PATUXENT AO-44 and SS OBERLIN VICTORY Escorted by USS LAMON DE - 743 and USS KYNE DE - 744.

The following message was received prior to leaving the service line :

" Thank you again for all your fine service and help in servicing us in order to assist in keeping out the Rats. On our team as on many teams most of the blocking backs do not get the credit. Goodbye , Good luck and hope to see you soon."

Commander Task Force 30.8

June 12th Steaming as before in convoy enroute to the Philippine Islands. 1853hrs. Steaming on various courses and at various speeds for evasive action against an enemy submarine. 1910 hrs. Resumed base course.

June 14th Steaming as before. 1248hrs. Made all preparations for entering port. Commenced steaming various courses and various speeds in conformance with channel. Captain at the conn, Executive officer and Navigator on the bridge. 1350hrs. Anchored in berth # 435, San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf, Philippines Islands. 1415hrs. Secured special sea detail.

June 15th Anchored as before, San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf, Philippines.in 15 fathoms

of water, mud bottom, with 60 fathoms of chain to starboard anchor, on the following bearings: Old Fort 256 degrees true, Mariquitdaquit light house 104 degrees true. Main engines on twenty minutes notice. No serious activity today all departments performing ships work.

June 16th Anchored as before San Pedro bay, P. I. No untoward activity. All departments, continued ships work. By sections the crew and officers allowed R & R on the beach. *I vaguely remember visiting Tacloban a number of times.* 1230hrs. Jim Hand MM2/c left ship on temporary shore patrol in charge of Joe Proppa MM2/c and Dale Rondo Cox3/c. 1830hrs Men on temp SP returned to ship.

June 17th Anchored as before San Pedro Bay , Leyte, P.I. All Hands taking R&R by sections. Ship providing 3 man Shore Patrol team. Today Dick Bridge Cox, Ralph Bales MM 3c and Floyd Norman WT 3c

June 18th Same as Sunday except SP team Consisted of James Hand MM2c, Clarence Cook MM2c and John Kwasagrock SoM3c

From Tuesday June 19th thru Saturday June 23rd 1945. The ship followed a similar routine. R & R by sections, on the beach, each afternoon. Also each day we supplied 3 petty officers as Shore Patrol at the beach R & R areas. The crew was evolved in " ships work" The nights were a time when movies would be shown on the after deck. Always the Question. What Next?

Of interest : On Thursday June 21st The commander of the Japanese forces on Okinawa committed Hari Kari. On Friday June 22nd All Japanese forces on Okinawa surrendered.

June 24th Anchored as before in Berth 435 , San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf, P. I.
From the :

"PLAN OF THE DAY"

0545 Call Division P. O. 's.

0600 Reveille

0630 Breakfast , Fuel all Boats.

0700 LCVP Trip to Officers Club. Motor Whale Boat trip with mail orderly and movie operator

0730 Turn to ships work as directed by First Lieutenant

0815 Church parties leave ship

1130 Dinner

1215 Recreation party leave ship

1700 Supper

1930 Movies

Note: No bum boats will be permitted near the ship. The aft sentry will keep a charged hose on the stern and play it on any boat that comes near. Numerous boats have been stolen, and mines have been fastened to the bottom of ships by innocent looking bumboats.

2256 LCT-1133 Moored alongside Port Side

Ho Hum so went our days at this mild place.

The following was related to me by Dick Wagner.

Here is the one story I remember about the bum boats. One pulled up astern of us and there was a man, two younger women and one old women in the boat. One of our more intelligent crew members points down at one of the younger ones and says "how much for her". The reply came back "15 peso, she my daughter". He then points to the other younger one and again "how much". "15 peso, she my other daughter". Seeing the possibility for a bargain, he then points to the older one and again "how much". "25 peso, she my wife". About this time the word came down from the Ole-man (spoilsport) to turn on the fire hose, which was done. The bum boat then went over to one of the nearby merchant ship and the two young one were last seen going into the cabin.

June 25th Anchored as before San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf, P. I.

LCT- 1133 Tied up Port Side. Engine room on two hour notice. 0000hrs Commenced issuing ammunition cargo to LCT - 1133. 0345hrs completed cargo operations. 0348hr LCT-1133 cast off from alongside port side. 1816hrs LCT - 1133 moored alongside port side 1903hrs commenced issuing ammunition cargo to LCT - 1133.

Total cargo transferred this day 30.5 tons. Total cargo on board 4154 tons.

June 26th Anchored as before. 0004hrs LCT-1133 moored alongside port side.

Cargo operations in progress. Engine room on 2 hours notice. 0400hrs Completed transfer of ammunition. Transferred 58.5 tons. Total ammunition on board 4095.5 tons. 0407hrs LCT-1133 cast off from alongside port side. Another typical day with SP units going ashore. Officers and crew not on duty also taking R&R on the beach.

2035hrs LCT-798 moored alongside port side. 2125hrs Commenced transfer of ammunition cargo to LCT-798.

June 27th . Anchored as before San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf, P.I. 0004hrs LCT-798 moored alongside port side. Cargo operations in progress. 0734hrs -798 cast off from alongside port side. Total ammunition transferred this day 66 tons. Total tons on board 4029 tons.

June 28th Anchored as before, LCT-1133 moored alongside port side. Cargo operations in progress. 0830hrs Exercised at General Quarters. 0843 Exercised at fire drill. 0904hrs secured from all drills 1025hrs Paul Dudding S2/c While tending hatch at #4 hold fell from the main to the 2nd deck. He managed to land on his feet. No broken bones in sick bay for observation. 1906hrs LCT-1133 cast off port side. Total tons transferred this day 5.5 tons. Total cargo on board 4023 tons.

June 29th Anchored as before. 0835hrs USS AKUTAN AE-13 moored alongside port side. 1831hrs LCT-1809 moored alongside starboard side. 2150hrs LCT-1809 cast off from starboard side.

June 30 Anchored as before, San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf, P. I. 0004hrs USS AKUTAN AE-13 moored alongside port side. 0800 Hrs Commenced cargo operations. 1930hrs Completed cargo operations. Total cargo transferred this date 115 tons. Total cargo on board 3936 tons.

July 1st to July 31st The Month of July was spent loading and unloading ammunition.

R&R daily on the beach by sections.

In chapter seven you will find a list of ships which we serviced during this period. From the Commanding Officer 's official War Diary for this period.

WAR DIARY

0900,1 July 1945 Anchored in San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf, Philippine Islands. Loading and issuing cargo ammunition as ordered and scheduled by ComServRon TEN.

2400 31 July 1945 Total ammunition cargo on board 3955 tons, having unloaded this port, 2161 tons and having loaded this port, 1932 tons.

Perhaps the best description of our time in San Pedro Bay is provided through the diary of Chuck Lindsay.

" The FIRE Drake anchored six miles off Osmena beach. The ship laid at anchor for two months. During that time the men were able to go ashore on beer parties and to buy souvenirs.

The men were not allowed to mix with the people and the buying of souvenirs had to be done through a barbed wire fence with plenty of shore patrol to retrieve any man who might have climbed the fence.

The natives were shrewd in bargaining with the Americans and many displayed large ,very large rolls of American money.

The recreation beach was fenced off to accommodate forty thousand men and it was always overcrowded.

Shortly after our arrival the Firedrake was assigned a new beach for the crew's beer parties. This beach was paradise compared to the previous one. It was never crowded and it was quite easy to sneak past the guards and enter the small towns and villages located nearby.

To the American standard of living the people were poorer than could be imagined. Most of their homes were simple one room structures built of wood and covered with palm leaves. The streets were not paved and sanitation was non existent.

The children played with little or no toys and most were bare footed.

The stores resemble our little highway stands, just three sides and a leaky roof. Cooking utensils are made mostly of wood or anything that will hold food. Flies gather in the thousands the food is covered with them. Pigs are underfoot as will as guinea hens and other livestock.

The women are usually none to pretty and wear cloths to match their looks. There are however some who are easy on the eyes especially to us who have not laid eyes on a woman in many, many lonely months.

The men are small , wiry and strong. They appear to be underfed. They wear straw hats or hats made from Japanese invasion money. This money pasted together and made into a hat makes it look quite flashy and did look well. This was because most were quite gifted in an artistic way. Their workmanship was impressive yet they had little or no tools.

Their carvings and paintings were truly well done.

The people are smart and have picked up American slang. Only a few know how to speak English.

American cigarettes, mattress covers, bed sheets as well as pants, shoes, and shirts are in high demand among the people and they will bargain furiously for them. The women are masters with the needle and thread.

The people had suffered much during the Japanese occupation. Many a young girl carries the child of a Japanese soldier.

The people seem to live lazily from one day to the next without much ambition.

During this time, while one section was on R&R the other section was very busy doing ships work. Chipping hammers and painting was making the ship look it's best in many months.

We in the Shipfitters shop were busy repairing and performing maintenance on all the equipment assigned to us. I remember the focsle bilge pump was not working. and the bilge was partially filled with water. Our handy billys could not take out more. Due to poor design the Ventura pump was located about 15 feet from the access hatch. Pete Pearson ask me if I could get to it. I stripped down put on a safety rope and entered the bilge. With the help of a waterproof flashlight, I made my way through the bilge to the pump. The bilge was less than 20" high and was honeycombed with small compartments the 4 sides of which had oval holes. Their purpose was to slow the movement of water from one side to the other and help stabilise the ship in heavy seas. I had to go through 4 of these compartments to reach the pump. It was a very tight squeeze and I had multiply scrapes from the rough sides of the oval holes. When I reached the pump I found a number of rags packed around the input side of the pump, probably left somewhere in the bilge by the shipyard workers in Jacksonville. After removing them and yelling back to try the pump. " it Worked".

So went our days at San Pedro Bay

August 1st to August 6th

Anchored as before in berth 435, San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf, Philippine Islands, in 15 fathoms of water, mud bottom, with 75 fathoms of chain to the port anchor on the following bearings: Mariquitdaquit light 106 degrees true, Buoy 150 degrees true, Old Fort 256 degrees true, engine room on 2 hours notice.

Derived from the authors diary:

The days continued in a monotonous sort of way. Occasionally we would exercise all general drills. Ammunition was being loaded in an unhurried manner. Ships work continued with shore R & R continuing by sections almost daily. There was a feeling of what are we doing here? Shouldn't we be back up on the line? Let's get this over with.

August 7th

Anchored as before, San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf , P. I.

The word came down that the Air Force had dropped a special bomb on a Japanese city called Hiroshima; yesterday August 6th. No further details.

August 9th

Anchored as before San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf, P.I.

This is a period when events were occurring that dramatically affected all of us. A review of recent days.

August 6th

The world's second atomic bomb, Little Boy, a gun type uranium bomb is detonated 1,900 feet above Hiroshima, Japan. It has a yield of approximately 15 kilotons TNT. Some 90,000 to 100,000 persons are killed immediately; about 145,000 persons will perish from the bombing by the end of 1945.

Upon hearing the news of the atomic bombing of Japan on his way home from Potsdam, President Truman remarked that this was "the greatest thing in history"

Leo Szilard, the atomic scientist who had worked so hard to prevent the use of the bomb, writes to a friend, "Using atomic bombs against Japan is one of the greatest blunders of history".

August 7th

Decision is made to drop warning pamphlets on Japan.

August 8th

Soviet Union informs Japan that it is entering the war.

August 9th

At 9:44 am Bockscar, a B29 carrying Fat Man, the world's third atomic bomb, arrives at its primary target, Kokura. The city is covered in haze and smoke from an American bombing raid on a nearby city. Bockscar turns to its secondary target Nagasaki. At 11:02 am the world's third atomic bomb explosion devastates Nagasaki, the intense heat and blast indiscriminately slaughters its inhabitants.

President Truman speaks to the American people via radio broadcast. He states "The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima a military base. That was because in the first instance to avoid in so Hiroshima and Nagasaki were chosen as targets because of the concentration of activities and population. "More than 95 percent of those killed were civilians.

*Although some feeling of remorse is reasonable, the use of the bomb was responsible for the saving of tens of thousand's of American service men and the ending of the war. The Japanese of that era would have gloried in being able to do what we had to do. To better understand the Japanese people I would recommend that you read "The Rape Of Nanking" By Iris Chang. The terrible barbarism of the Japanese military performed on the People Of China and the fanaticism of most Japanese civilians is in itself reason enough to use the **Bomb**.*

August 10th

Anchored as before, San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf, P. I.

From the authors diary:

This is a balmy tropical night, the sky is filled with stars. We are watching a movie "China Sky" on the aft deck. At approx. 2105 hrs The loud speakers interrupted with: "The Japanese have just offered to surrender to the allies."

A loud cheer of joy arose. At first I did not understand what was going on. Bill Franke yelled in my ear "the Japs have given up". Everyone was jumping up and down in a wild fashion. I remember throwing my shoes which I had taken off during the movie. Everyone was shouting and laughing with happiness. Men shook hands furiously and slapped each other on the back. The movie continued but the only ones left to watch it were those too stunned by the announcement to move. The harbor came alive with search lights Ships started firing their guns the sky was filled with flares and tracers.[see photos at end of chapter] Our Captain ran about the bridge firing star shells and signal flares. The mess hall

was filled with men strutting about with smiles of such great happiness that most had tears rolling down their cheeks. Coffee and ham sandwiches were served something that could only happen due to this great event. The officers and chiefs broke out their whisky and those of us that had our homemade brew started drinking to celebrate not concerned about discipline. No one went to their sacks on this wonderful night I remember going to the shipfitters shop a little tipsy and writing letters to my father and girlfriend.

However the future was still uncertain actual hostilities were still going on.

I never found my shoes.

August 11th

Anchored as before.

Reveille this morning was almost impossible. My head was aching, my voice hoarse, my body hurting all due to last nights celebration. Even so a happy mood pervades throughout the Firedrake. Is it really true ? How soon before we can go home ? Questions after questions.

Word comes down that fighting continues.

The " Feather merchants" publish a long " PRESS NEWS" dated August 11 1945, which provides considerable detail concerning the proposed surrender. [see copy at end of chapter]

we wait

August 12th *We wait*

August 13th

Anchored as before, San Pedro Bay, Lyetta Gulf, P. I.

A bright clear morning. There is a lot of activity in the harbor. Ships moving about a few leaving the area. Suspect we will also be leaving shortly.

0004 hrs Engine room on 12 hours notice. # 1 boiler in use for auxiliary purposes. 1105 hrs. Lighted fires under # 2 boiler. Engine room placed on standby notice. 1700 hrs YO-46 moored alongside port side. 1708 hrs commenced fuelling ship. 1825 hrs Completed fuelling operations having received 53,000 gallons fuel oil.

We are ready , we wait.

August 14th

The Japanese surrender unconditionally

Anchored as before, San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf, P. I.

0515 hrs Made all preparations for getting underway. 0530 hrs Stationed all special sea detail. 0611 hrs underway in accordance with Com Serv Div dispatch 131023 of August 1945 and CTU 30.9.16 sortie plan. Steaming on various courses and at various speeds conforming to channel. 0629hrs Observed sunrise , lighted ship. Passed can buoy # 3 abeam to starboard, distance 100 yards. 0745hrs Secured special sea detail, set condition III. 0833hrs formed with Task Force Unit 30.9.16 in company with USS Mazama AE-9 [The only ammunition ship known to have been torpedoed and survived] , USS Akutan AE-13 and USS Tamalpais AO-96. Escorted by USS Waller DD-466 and USS Weaver DE-741. 1030 hrs Commenced Zig Zagging. 1155hrs With Suluan Island Light abeam to port took departure Leyte Gulf Area enroute to Fleet Rendezvous. 2000hrs ceased Zig Zagging.

We have 4025 tons of ammunition aboard and will supply the fleet going into Tokyo Bay.

August 15th

Today the Allies in a joint statement declared today as being:

VJ DAY

Emperor Hirohito of Japan , in a radio broadcast to his nation announces that Japan has lost the war. The Emperor's message is hard to understand because he speaks in archaic court Japanese but one fact is understood: *Moreover , the enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to damage is indeed incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives.*

The Firedrake is steaming as before in convoy, formation is on a Zig Zag course, enroute to fleet rendezvous off the coast of Japan.

1105hrs Received orders to cease all offensive action against Japanese forces.

August 16th to 19th

The Firedrake is steaming as before in convoy on a Zig Zag course to fleet rendezvous off the coast of Tokyo Bay. Our mission to participate in the arming of the fleet, which will enter the bay, for the formal Japanese surrender ceremonies.

August 19th

From the Plan Of The Day ; 0345 Reveille, 0400 Breakfast, 1st and 2nd and NC Divisions eat at head of chow line. 0415 Station special sea detail, on deck 1st and 2nd Divisions. 0430 Ten hand working party from E Division report to Lieut. Eaton at #2 hatch. Commence breaking out cargo as soon as we get the requirements. 0500 First ship due alongside. Note: Cargo gangs from condition two will be used unless we are rushed , then all hands will be called. When word is passed "all hands on ammunition" that is exactly what I expect [all hands] , without having to chase anyone. This looks like a one or two day rush, we are here with two ammunition ships who are here for the first time. After the job we done on our last trip up here , we have to put out. We are to service Task Force 38 formerly Task Force 58 "

0408hrs Steaming as before. 0440hrs Commenced Zig Zaging . 0455hrs Observed sunrise, lighted ship. 0539 hrs Ceased Zig Zagging. 0546hrs Commenced steaming various courses and speeds for joining Task Unit 30.8.1. 0640hrs. 0640hrs Reported to Commander Task Group 30.8 for duty. Released by Commander Task Unit 30.9.16 to take position with Task Unit 30.8.1 for servicing of various ships as ordered and scheduled by Commander Task Group 30.8. 0810hrs Took position in service line, speed 8 knots. USS Massachusetts BB-59 took position alongside to port. Commenced discharge of ammunition. 1105hrs USS Ringgold DD-500 took position alongside to starboard, Commenced rearm. 1326hrs USS Ringgold stood off from starboard side. 1403hrs USS Harrison DD-573 took position alongside starboard side commenced rearm. 1405hrs The Massachusetts stood off from port side. 1421hrs USS Indiana BB-58 took position alongside to port, commenced rearm. The USS Harrison stood off from starboard side. 1511hrs USS Collett DD- 730 took position alongside to starboard. Commenced rearm. 1633hrs USS Collett stood off from starboard side. 1805hrs USS Indiana stood off from port side. 1845hrs Joined Task Group 30.8 took position 4-6.

Total cargo transferred this date 605 tons, total ammunition on board 3,420 tons.

August 20th

At the fleet rendezvous approx. 200 miles southeast of Tokyo bay. We are arming a group of capital ships which will be part of the fleet entering Tokyo harbor, for the formal

signing of the documents of surrender by the Japanese.

From today's PLAN OF THE DAY. To all hands ---" A very well done" for the six hundred and five tons we issued yesterday. If our convoy commander had gotten us here on time we would have set a record. Today looks like more of the same, lets get rid of it.

0450hrs Took position on the service line. Speed 8 knots. USS Belleau Wood CVL-24 took position alongside port side . Commenced rearm. 0604hrs USS Swensen DD-729 took position alongside to starboard. Commenced rearm. 0846hrs Swensen stood off from starboard side. 0908hrs USS McKee DD-575 took position along the starboard side. Commenced rearm. 1010hrs McKee stood off from starboard side. 1015hrs The Belleau Wood stood off from the port side. 1034hrs USS Rogers DD-574 took position starboard side. Commenced rearm. 1026hrs USS San Jacinto CVL-30 took position port side. Commenced rearm. 1149hrs Rogers stood off from starboard side. 1510hrs San Jacinto stood off from port side. 1525hrs USS Boston CA- 69 took position along port side. Commenced rearm. 1545hrs USS Dasheil DD- 659 took position along starboard side. Commenced rearm. 1632hrs Dasheil stood off from starboard side. 1648hrs USS DeHaven DD-727 took position along starboard side. 1733hrs DeHaven stood off from starboard side. 1751hrs Boston stood off from port side . Completed cargo operations for the day. Cargo transferred this day 370 tons , Total cargo on board 3,050 tons.

August 21st

Steaming as before, in convoy at the fleet rendezvous of Task Force 38, some 200 miles south east of Tokyo Bay.

Interesting note: The arming of these ships occurred underway at approx. 8 knots. We were experienced enough that tows were no longer necessary. We directly armed capital ships travelling a parallel course as shown in the photos, behind the "Forward".

The only exception was the transfer of 5" shells for the "Tin Cans." In this case a line from one of our hold booms was passed to the Destroyer and they would fasten it to a "eye" located high on their forward 5" gun turret. We would place a trolley car on the line. The 5" shells would be placed in the trolley car box. The boom operator would raise the line on our end which would send the loaded trolley car down the line to the Destroyers deck. The speed of the transfer was a function of the boom operator and a snub line fastened to the box facing our side. The snub line was controlled by a number of our deck hands. The snub line was used to return the trolley to us.

Well as you can imagine in the haste of the moment the trolley box would sometimes careen across the water smack up against the gun turret and dump its load on the Destroyers deck with shells scattering some over the side. I think this is where the "Finger" originated.

0410hrs Took position on service line. 0455hrs Observed sunrise , lighted ship. 0557hrs USS Indiana BB-58 took position alongside to port, commenced cargo operations. 0527hrs USS Bush DD-745 took position off starboard side. Commenced rearm. 0648hrs Bush stood off from the starboard side, Commenced rearm. 0801hrs Indiana stood off from the port side. 1005hrs USS Schroeder DD-501 took position off our starboard side. Commenced rearm. 1021hrs USS Benington CV-20 took position off our port side. Commenced rearm. 1107hrs Schoeder stood off from our starboard side. 1208hrs USS Blue DD-744 took position along side starboard side. Commenced rearm. 1429hrs Benington stood off from the port side. 1446hrs. USS Lexington CV-16 took position off the port side. Commenced rearm. 1512hrs Blue stood off from starboard side. 1636hrs Lexington stood

off from port side.

Total cargo transferred this day 350 tons, total cargo on board 2715 tons.

From today's Plan Of The Day : Note: It looks like another day like the last two.

Another "Well done " for today.

The following comments were received from ships serviced yesterday :

1. The SAN JACINTO CVL-30

" Thanks for an excellent job, the best ammunition ship we have been alongside."

2. The BOSTON CA-69

" A very efficient crew you have."

3. The DEHAVEN DD-727

" The fastest we have ever received our ammunition "

This can only last a couple of days more and the cargo we have for the line will be gone. Give it to them again today.

August 22nd

Steaming as before in convoy of supply ships servicing Task Force 38. We are steaming in a large pattern to maintain position within an area having the following coordinates: 30.02N , 32.23N by 144. 40E, 141.16E [This is the Fleet Designated rendezvous area and we stayed within this area during our stay here].

0450hrs Took position on service line, speed 8 knots. 0603hrs USS Randolph CV-15 took position along our port side. Commenced cargo operations for the day. 0631 USS Chauncey DD-667 took position along starboard side. Rearmed .0722hrs Chauncey stood off from starboard side.0724hrs Randolph stood off from port side. 0740 hrs USS Monterey CVL-26 took position along the port side. Rearmed. 0750hrs USS Benner DD-807 took position along starboard side. Rearmed. 0853hrs Monterey stood off from port side.0921hrs. USS Bataan CV-29 took position along the port side. Rearmed. 1007hrs Benner stood off from the starboard side. 1016hrs. USS Heermann DD-532 took position along the starboard side. Rearmed. 1032hrs Bataan stood off from port side.1112hrs USS Wilkes Barre CL-103 took position along port side. Rearmed. 1125hrs Heermann stood off from starboard side. 1212hrs Wilkes Barre stood off from port side. 1219hrs USS Springfield CL-66 took position along port side . Rearmed. 1411hrs Springfield stood off from port side. 1421hrs USS Pasadena CL-65 took position along port side. Rearmed. 1450hrs Pasadena stood off from port side. Completed cargo operations for the day.

Total cargo transferred this day 195 tons . Total cargo on board 2509 tons.

August 23rd to Sept 1st

We have completed cargo operations at this fleet rendezvous. The FIRE Drake continues to steam with the Task Group awaiting further orders.

From today's Plan Of The Day:

Note: 1. As far as we know now today will be an easy one for a change.

2. The following message was received from the Captain of the USS RANDOLPH CV-15 " message Captain X Thank you X You have a smart , fast organisation." [We know it]

From Plan Of The Day dated August 24th 1945

Note: 1. In about three and one half working days ,we serviced twenty eight ships. discharging fifteen hundred and eighteen tons, to all hands " well Done"

2. The following received from Rear Admiral Beary, Commander of this Logistics

Group, " Now that victory is ours, I salute every man on each of the ships of the logistics support group! Your many hours of cruising and servicing fleet units have made it possible for our Navy to Successfully conduct a continuous crushing offensive that has finally brought our enemy to his knees. Though your activities have not taken you into the thick of the action [WRONG] assuredly your every effort has been reflected in all the punishing blows thrown by our combatant ships. I wish I could personally congratulate everyone of you, but the circumstances are such that we must still "carry on " with our task to secure the peace. Our job is not done yet and our far flung activities will permit me to contact only a small number of you ; so, I desire to express to all hands my appreciation of excellent services and my pride in having commanded you . WELL DONE and GOOD LUCK in the days to come!

Between August 24th and Sept 2nd

About this time we ran into heavy weather which turned into a full blown typhoon with winds above 80 knots. The Typhoon was later called SUSAN. See attachment which shows the storm track compared to our position.

From Dick Wagner "I remember we were cruising around with a group that included two large British Ships of the line. The Idea being that in case something went wrong in Tokyo Bay , our ships would shoot there way out and we would resupply them.

About the Typhoon I remember that all the fast ships took off and left us slow pokes to fend for ourselves. We all scattered to keep away from each other.

The following is from a letter written by an American naval officer on Sept.2nd:

"On 27 August the initial occupation force proceeded toward Sagami Wan [Tokyo Bay] headed by the MISSOURI. At about 0715 the Japanese destroyer HATUZAKURA was sighted -a pitiful sight compared to our powerful approaching allied forces. The Japanese delegation was transferred to the NICHOLAS which looked like a veritable crusier compared to the little nip destroyer{ Two officers } from Naval headquarters , Tokyo , together with an interpreter , all relieved of their side arms ,were brought to the Captains Cabin ,presented to me ,and ordered to sit down at the conference table. There were no Pleasantries or amenities exchanged , the atmosphere throughout being strictly cold and form
About this time we ran into heavy weather which turned into a full blown typhoon with winds above 80 knots. The Typhoon was later called SUSAN. See attachment which shows the storm track compared to our position.

From Dick Wagner "I remember we were cruising around with a group that included two large British Ships of the line. The Idea being that in case something went wrong in Tokyo Bay , our ships would shoot there way out and we would resupply them.

About the Typhoon I remember that all the fast ships took off and left us slow pokes to fend for ourselves. We all scattered to keep away from each other.

The following is from a letter written by an American naval officer on Sept.2nd:

"On 27 August the initial occupation force proceeded toward Sagami Wan [Tokyo Bay] headed by the MISSOURI. At about 0715 the Japanese destroyer HATUZAKURA was sighted -a pitiful sight compared to our powerful approaching allied forces. The Japanese delegation was transferred to the NICHOLAS which looked like a veritable crusier compared to the little nip destroyer{ Two officers } from Naval headquarters , Tokyo , together with an interpreter , all relieved of their side arms ,were brought to the Captains Cabin ,presented to me ,and ordered to sit down at the conference table. al with every phrase and gesture intended to impress upon them that they were defeated , were in no bargaining position, and were strictly taking orders.

The first piece of business was obtaining the necessary information concerning the entry in to the Bay. As soon as this was accomplished the fleet stood towards its anchorage and by the middle of the afternoon all the initial components were anchored off the very lovely Kamakura shore - the Japanese Riviera and the location of the summer palace- The nips were sent about their business.

At sunset a strange thing happened . The setting sun appeared to descend squarely into the crater of Fujiyama-the spectacle had such symbolism that we endeavoured to photographs of it because it clearly told of Japan's fate

September 2nd

Today the formally Japanese surrendered .

There were many surrender documents , I have chosen two of which I considered most significant

INSTRUMENT OF SURRENDER

We, acting by command of and in behalf of the Emperor of Japan, the Japanese Government and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters, hereby accept the provisions set forth in the declaration issued by the heads of the Governments of the United States, China, and Great Britain on 26 July 1945 at Potsdam, and subsequently adhered to by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which four powers are hereafter referred to as the Allied Powers.

We hereby proclaim the unconditional surrender to the Allied Powers of the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters and of all Japanese armed forces and all armed forces under the Japanese control wherever situated.

We hereby command all Japanese forces wherever situated and the Japanese people to cease hostilities forthwith, to preserve and save from damage all ships, aircraft, and military and civil property and to comply with all requirements which may be imposed by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers or by agencies of the Japanese Government at his direction.

We hereby command the Japanese Imperial Headquarters to issue at once orders to the Commanders of all Japanese forces and all forces under Japanese control wherever situated to surrender unconditionally themselves and all forces under their control.

We hereby command all civil, military and naval officials to obey and enforce all proclamations, and orders and directives deemed by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers to be proper to effectuate this surrender and issued by him or under his authority and we direct all such officials to remain at their posts and to continue to perform their non-combatant duties unless specifically relieved by him or under his authority.

We hereby undertake for the Emperor, the Japanese Government and their successors to carry out the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration in good faith, and to issue whatever orders and take whatever actions may be required by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers or by any other designated representative of the Allied Powers for the purpose of giving effect to that Declaration.

We hereby command the Japanese Imperial Government and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters at once to liberate all allied prisoners of war and civilian internees now under Japanese control and to provide for their protection, care, maintenance and immediate transportation to places as directed.

The authority of the Emperor and the Japanese Government to rule the state shall be subject to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers who will take such steps as he deems proper to effectuate these terms of surrender.

Signed at TOKYO BAY, JAPAN at 0904 I on the SECOND day of SEPTEMBER, 1945
MAMORU SHIGMITSU By Command and in behalf of the Emperor of Japan and the
Japanese Government

YOSHIJIRO UMEZU By Command and in behalf of the Japanese Imperial General
Headquarters

Accepted at TOKYO BAY, JAPAN at 0903 I on the SECOND day of SEPTEMBER, 1945,
for the United States, Republic of China, United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist
Republics, and in the interests of the other United Nations at war with Japan.

DOUGLAS MAC ARTHUR Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers

C.W. NIMITZ United States Representative

HSU YUNG-CH'ANG Republic of China Representative

BRUCE FRASER United Kingdom Representative

KUZMA DEREVYANKO Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Representative

THOMAS BLAMEY Commonwealth of Australia Representative

L. MOORE COSGRAVE Dominion of Canada Representative

JACQUES LE CLERC Provisional Government of the French Republic Representative

C.E.L. HELFRICH Kingdom of the Netherlands Representative

LEONARD M. ISITT Dominion of New Zealand Representative

Translation of Emperor Hirohito's Receipt of the Surrender documents

PROCLAMATION

Accepting the terms set forth in the Declaration issued by the heads of the Governments of the
United States, Great Britain, and China on July 26th, 1945 at Potsdam and subse- quently adhered to
by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, We have commanded the Japanese Imperial Government
and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters to sign on Our behalf the Instrument of Surrender
presented by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers and to issue General Orders to the
Military and Naval Forces in accordance with the direction of the Supreme Commander for the Allied
Powers. We command all Our people forthwith to cease hostilities, to lay down their arms and
faithfully to carry out all the provisions of Instrument of Surrender and the General Orders issued by
the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters hereunder.

This second day of the ninth month of the twentieth year of Syowa

Signed: HIROHITO

Seal of the Empire

Countersigned:

Naruhiko-o Prime Minister

Mamoru Shigemitsu Minister of Foreign Affairs

Iwao Yamazaki Minister of Home Affairs

Juichi Tsushima Minister of Finance

Sadamu Shimomura Minister of War

Mitsumasa Yonai Minister of Navy

Chuzo Iwata Minister of Justice

Tamon Maeda Minister of Education

Kenzo Matsumura Minister of Welfare

Kotaro Sengoku Minister of Agriculture and Forestry

Chikuhei Nakajima Minister of Commerce and Industry

Naoto Kobiyama Minister of Transportation

Fumimaro Konoe Minister without Portfolio
Takatora Ogata Minister without Portfolio
Binshiro Obata Minister without Portfol

In the mean time the weather diminished and the FIRE Drake rejoined Task Group 30.8 which continued steaming in the rendezvous area.

This completes chapter 4

CHAPTER 6 [1946]

Jan 1st Anchored in berth 52, Yorktown, Va. in seven fathoms of water, soft bottom, with forty five fathoms of chain to the port anchor on the following true bearings: Stony Point Pier 149 degrees[t], flashing light buoy 194 degrees [t], water tank 206degrees [t]. All personnel maintaining ships work.

From Jan. 2nd through Jan. 29th All hands maintained ships work. On Jan. the 10th we shifted to berth 48 where we stayed until the 30th.

During this period the ship was painted from the stack to the waterline. In the picture at the end of this Chapter, you will note crewmen on a staging platform as well as on a raft painting the hull of the FIRE Drake.

Also during this period a number of crewman as well as 2 officers were transferred to Processing centers for discharge. A number of new personnel report aboard as replacements.

Jan 30th Anchored as before. 0804hrs Cut in # 1 and # 2 boilers on main steam line. 0850hrs Made all preparations for getting underway. Set special sea detail. 0836hrs Pilot came aboard. 0900hrs Underway, Pilot at the conn, Captain and Navigator on the bridge. Steaming on various courses and speeds conforming to the channel. 1138hrs The pilot left the ship. 1145hrs Secured special sea detail. 1248hrs with Chesapeake Light ship bearing 210 degrees [t] took departure for Earle, New Jersey.

Jan 31st Steaming as before. In route to Earle, N. J. 0510hrs Passed Barneget lightship abeam to port distance 10 miles. 0810hrs Set special sea detail. 0910hrs commenced steaming on various courses and speeds for entrance to Gidney Channel. 1035hrs YTM-474 moored alongside starboard quarter. 1040hrs YTM -474 moored alongside port bow. 1045hrs Pilot S.S. Mc Galla, Ch. Bos'n, USN, came aboard. 1125hrs. YTB-215 moored alongside starboard bow. 1130hrs YTM-474 cast off from alongside. 1134hrs YTM-474 moored alongside starboard side. 1140hrs While making approach for east end of pier #3 Leonardo , New Jersey the ship struck the port quarter against the pier. 1145hrs Moored portside to east end, pier #3, Berth #2. 1212hrs Yard tugs cast off the Pilot left the ship. 2400hrs moored as before.

FROM FEB 1ST TO FEB 9TH The FIRE Drake was unloaded by local stevedores. On Feb. 9th the FIRE Drake was empty of all cargo.

Feb 10th Moored as before. 0400hrs Lighted fires under #1 boiler. 0618hrs Pilot came aboard. 0710hrs Cut in #1 boiler on main steam line. Made all preparations for getting underway. Stationed special sea detail. 0745hrs Underway for Tomkinsville, Staten Island. 0912 hrs Anchored in berth 22. Continued ship's work. Liberty granted by sections.

Feb 12th Anchored as before. 1000hrs 11 men transferred to Staten Is. receiving station, for discharge processing. 1415hrs Made all preparations for getting underway. Stationed special sea detail. 1523hrs Underway to pier 9. 4 tugs took position around the FIRE Drake 1552hrs Moored starboard side pier 9 Tomkinsville, Staten Island. Continued ships work, liberty by sections.

Feb 15th 0856hrs Underway for Orange Texas.

Feb 21st 0021hrs Commenced steaming various courses and speeds conforming to channel for entrance to the Sabine river. 0625hrs Set special detail. 0645hrs With buoy 1 abeam to port made entrance to Sabine river channel. 1100hrs Moored port side to

starboard side USS VESUVIUS [AE-15] our sister ship. At Consolidated shipyard, Orange Texas. Crew begins preparation for "Mothball " the FIRE Drake. Liberty by sections.

Feb. 25th 16th Fleet inspection party came aboard to determine condition of ship and the crews ability to Mothball for eventual decommission. The FIRE Drake is supplying power to the VESUVIUS which is in the progress of Mothballing, our crew is observing as the methodology will be identical in putting the FIRE Drake to sleep.

Mar 8th Eleven men transferred to Philadelphia Navy Yard for temporary duty in connection with Material Preservation course. *I was included in this group.*

Mar 14th Nine men transferred to US Naval receiving station for separation from the service.

Mar 16th The eleven men returned from Philadelphia. Upon our return, the difficult task of preserving the FIRE Drake moved into a studied but increased pace.

This is a huge task for all members of the crew. Every square inch of the ship had to be prepared and preserved for a lengthy period of time. Even the bilges and deep tanks had to be cleaned to almost bare metal and painted. Huge humidifiers were installed at various sites after the location had been processed. Topside all the guns were dismantled and preservative applied to all parts. After reassembly a cocoon to totally enclosed the gun was spray applied. After compartments and cargo areas were completed they were sealed.

During these months, occasionally men were transferred to US NAVY receiving station for discharge from the service.

April 6th Cast off from alongside the VESUVIUS and moved alongside USS LUZON [ARG-2]

April 8th 0730hrs Made all preparations for getting underway. Stationed special sea detail. 1335hrs took departure for Galveston, Texas. 1340hrs Secured special sea detail. 1620hrs Galveston Channel buoy 1 abeam to port. Stationed special sea detail. 1709hrs Anchored at Bolivar Roads. 1715hrs Secured special sea detail.

April 9th 1000hrs Made all preparations for getting underway. 1030hrs Set special sea detail. 1059hrs Underway for Todd shipyard , Pelican Island, Galveston. 1217hrs moored starboard side, pier B, Todd ship yards. 1243hrd Secured special detail.

April 10th 1430hrs Secured master gyro. 1435hrs cast off from port side of dock. 1439hrs Bow crossed sill of drydock. 1554hrs in drydock # 1 Todd shipyard , Pelican Island, Galveston, Tex. 1455hrs. Let fires die out under boilers secured main machinery and started auxiliary diesel power. 1506hrs Ship on keel blocks. 1540 hrs Commenced taking salt and fresh water from the dock. 1550hrs Engineering officer inspected propeller, tail shaft tube, all injection strainers and discharge overboard. Condition good. First Lieutenant inspected all outboard valves, rudder and outboard fittings. All 11 fittings in good condition. All zincs were renewed. *I worked with Lieutenant Eaton during this inspection. Working under the hull was a sight never forgotten.* 1845hrs Commenced receiving steam from the dock. The hull of the FIRE Drake is sandblasted and given several coats of paint.

April 13th 1125hrs Secured services from dock. Lighted fires under #1 boiler. 1156hrs Ship is water borne. 1206hrs Changing berths from drydock to west side of pier B.

April 14th to April 23rd Moored starboard side, west side pier B. Galveston Tex. With the assistance of yard personnel continued preservation procedures.

April 24th 0530hrs Made all preparations for getting underway. Set special sea detail. 0515hrs Underway for Orange Texas. 0740hrs Secured special sea detail. 1108hrs With Sabine river jetty light abeam to starboard, commenced steaming on various courses

and speeds conforming to channel. 1442hrs With the assistance of two harbor tugs moored port side to North West end of City Docks, Orange, Texas.

April 26th 1606hrs USS AKUTAN AE-13 moored alongside starboard side.

May 2nd 1300hrs Because the crews quarters, the kitchen and the mess hall were about to be completed and sealed, the crew was transferred to the AKUTAN for berthing and messing. The officers used the AKUTAN for messing.

May 3rd 0736hrs With the assistance of two yard tugs, changed berths with the AKUTAN. We are now outboard of the AKUTAN which is moored to the dock. 0900hrs Commenced receiving fresh water from the dock. 1000hrs Let fires die under both boilers. 1015hrs Commenced receiving power, steam and salt water from the AKUTAN. 1105hrs Secured all machinery.

May 4th Completed receiving steam from the AKUTAN.

May 29th The FIREDRAKE is almost completely "Mothballed

This is a very poignant day for me it is time for me to leave this ship which has been my home for 17 months. There were tears in my eyes as I for the last time ask the OD for permission to leave the ship. Being the ranking Petty Officer I was placed in charge of 38 men our destination, Processing Center, Memphis, Tenn. Most of these men had been aboard at the same time as me. It was a wild train ride to Memphis. I was discharge on June 9th.

From May 29th to July 23rd With a limited crew the Firedrake was finally "Mothballed"

JULY 24TH 1946, 1000HRS USS FIREDRAKE AE-14 DECOMMISSIONED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COMTEXGRP16 FLEET, ORDERS P16-3, SERIAL 3561 DATED JULY 1946.

THE REMAINING OFFICERS, LIEUT E. S. FLEMING, LIEUT. C. H. EATON LIEUT A. C. BETTERS, ENSIGN G. F. DUTHIE, CHIEF BOS'N O. L. WISE, WERE TRANSFERRED FOR FURTHER ASSIGNMENT.

THE FIREDRAKE AE-14 LIES ASLEEP AT ORANGE, TEXAS AWAITING ANOTHER DAY.

CHAPTER 7

Re-commissioned 11 October 1957, with Captain Warner S. Rodiman commanding, Firedrake was based at San Francisco for annual tours of duty in the Western Pacific 1952 through 1962. During the first of these, she rearmed United Nations ships at sea off Korea during war operations. Highlights of the following years included participation in the evacuation of the Tachen Islands in 1955, in calls at a wide variety of oriental ports. When not deployed overseas, she sailed out of her homeport to replenish ships at sea in First Fleet operations. Firedrake received two battle stars for World War II service and four for Korean War service.

In 1953, while on her second and final deployment to Korea, the Firedrake and the USS Princeton (CVA-37), established a new record rate for transferring ammunition. The average was 285 short tons of ammunition per hour, at sea. At the end of the Korean War the Firedrake began operating out of her homeport of San Francisco. Even though the latter part of the fifties was relatively peaceful, the Firedrake made a yearly six-month deployment to the Western Pacific. Little did the Firedrake know that destiny was playing out another hand for her future. During a routine deployment to the South China Sea in early 1964, the Vietnam conflict broke out. Firedrake was extended to rearm combatant ships of the Seventh Fleet. As 1964 came to a close, the Firedrake returned to the United States with the taste of war she was destined to return to again and again

During the summer of 1965 the helicopter landing platform was added just over the fantail. This proved to be of great value because it gave the Firedrake a new form and higher status of rearming and replenishment. Just after this new addition, the Firedrake returned to the combat zone to support American Naval Units. Passing ammunition to combatant ships was not the only accomplishment made by the Firedrake. In December 1966, she successfully located a survivor of a grounded Panamanian Merchant Ship. In another instance, on 26th May 1966, she passed within one mile of the eye of Typhoon Judy in a futile attempt to rescue four persons who had bailed out of a storm swept, Subic bound plane. During the search, Firedrake took fantastic roles of 35 and 37 degrees in extremely turbulent 60-knot winds. Thus to avoid eventual disaster, the Firedrake had to give up its search and had to return to Subic Bay.

After four months in the United States during the summer of 1966 the Firedrake departed on 12 October, again for destination Westpac. Her importance was shown in definite proof for this was the second performance in one year. After arriving in Westpac the Firedrake found how the changes made by war were always prevalent, for her old working area of Pixie Station no longer existed. The emphasis had now shifted to Yankee Station, an area far up in the Gulf of Tonkin. The United States had carried the war to North Vietnam. The longer and harder work hours experienced by the Firedrake were physical evidence of the increased intensity of the war.

Firedrake returned to the United States in April of 1967 and the replenishment records she had set denoted a well deserved rest. After a much needed yard period and two weeks refresher training, the Firedrake was again ready for Vietnam. Her mission was to transport

and deliver ammunition, missiles or other ordinance to the United States Naval Seventh Fleet. Under the command of Captain C. J. Lee, she hoisted colors on the 3rd of November 1967, for the 16th deployment since her commissioning in 1944.

Since her re-commissioning, the Firedrake has made deployments to the Far East participating in operations with such various units of the U.S. Seventh Fleet. Although primary emphases is placed on the performance of her primary mission, that of delivering ammunition to the combatant forces, she has also carried various other items such as freight, mail, Christmas trees and personnel to her customer ships. From November 1967 to April 1968, she performed her primary mission off the coast of Vietnam. During her deployment Firedrake serviced 37 auxiliary ships, 28 carriers, 21 large combatant ships 95 small combatants and for miscellaneous ships for a total of 151 ships.

From February to August 1969, Firedrake again performed her primary mission off the coast of Vietnam. Her "home away from home" where she unloaded her ammunition was the Naval Magazine, Subic Bay, Philippines. During her deployment, Firedrake serviced 18 auxiliary ships, 15 carriers, 13 large combatant ships and 54 small combatants for a total of 100 ships in 72 days on the line, and transferred 10,984.4 short tons of ammunition. Liberty ports for the Firedrake during her deployment were Hong Kong, Bangkok, Singapore and Yokosuka. From September 1969 to March 1970, Firedrake moved among various ports in California. After leave and upkeep periods in Mare Island and Port Chicago, California, Firedrake went to sea in late October to off-load the USS Bon Homme Richard (CVA-31). From early November until late December, repairs and upkeep were obtained at the "AAA" shipyard in San Francisco. After more upkeep in January, Captain Jerome E. Henderson relieved Captain Arthur K. Bennett, Jr. of the command of the ship. The last week of January and the first part of February were taken up with refresher training.

Firedrake deployed 6 March 1970 to once more provide services to the Seventh Fleet Units. During Firedrake's in port periods in Subic Bay, numerous crewmembers, engaged in the people project with the villagers, raised the level of the dam at the village reservoirs, thereby raising the level and water pressure of the reservoir. Consequently, many more villagers were able to receive fresh water. The project received favorable coverage in at least two Manila newspapers. Another highlight of the 1968 and 1970 cruises was the crossing of the Equator and entering into the domain of NEPTUNUS REX and DAVY JONES and the exciting events and happenings which followed for all of the crew. Since the time of her first cruise, the Firedrake has served under 19 Commanding Officers. On 9 December 1970, the Executive Officer, LCDR Leo E. Herbert became the last Commanding Officer of the Firedrake. Firedrake earned numerous campaign and service medals during her long service to her fleet and her country. Among them are: American Theatre, Asiatic Pacific, Philippine Liberation, Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation; Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; Korean Service; Vietnam Service, the Republic of Vietnam Campaign and the WWII Victory medal. It was during Firedrake's last cruise that she earned the CINCPACFLT Golden Anchor Award for the highest reenlistment percentage among the service force ships, which was presented to the command by CINCPACFLT in December 1970. When she sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge on 10 October 1970, she completed her 18th deployment and 26 years of service.

Firedrake was decommissioned 19 March 1971 at Mare Island, Vallejo, California. She was placed in the Reserve Fleet and subsequently sold FOR SCRAP.

***THE USS FIREDRAKE AE - 14
IS
NO MORE***

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I WOULD INDEED BE REMISS IF I DID NOT RECOGNISE THE MANY CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS HISTORY.

SHIPMATES DUG DEEP AND RESURRECTED OLD DIARIES, PLANS OF THE DAY, NOTES, ARTICLES AND PICTURES WHICH PERMITTED ME TO COMPILE THIS WORK.

THEREFORE LET US SINCERELY THANK:

MR. EMANUELE FONTANA
MR. JIM HARRIS
MR. CHARLES LINDSAY
MR. KEN PEARSON
MR. WAYNE STOLL
MR. RICHARD WAGNER

IN ADDITION I WAS ABLE TO RETRIEVE CONSIDERABLE INFORMATION FROM THE NAVAL ARCHIVES.

THE DAILY DECK LOGS
THE OFFICIAL WAR DIARY
THE CREW ROSTER
THE OFFICER ROSTER

I WOULD ALSO THANK THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY FOR THEIR PERMISSION TO UTILIZE SEVERAL MAPS OF THEIR ORIGIN.

IN MEMORY OF JIM WATHEN WHO INITIATED MY INTEREST IN THIS PROJECT.

**The following list of ships were rearmed by the
Firedrake during the period February - October 1945.
Also listed are the ships or ports from which the Firedrake
received ammunition**

2/4/45 to 2/16/45 Moored, port side, Navy Pier , Earle , New Jersey. Received initial load of ammunition. [5,323 tons]

3/21/45 Anchored at berth 170, At the island of Ulithi , Caroline Islands

3/22/45 Chenango CVE - 28 } *The deck logs do not evidence that we rearmed*
3/22/45 Swanee CVE - 27 } *these 2 ships . Private logs do show that we did.*

3/31/45 Discharged ammunition to LCT 760 for further issue to the USS Randolph CV - 15.
Interesting note ; on March 11th while riding at anchor [Ulithi] the Randolf was hit by a Kamikaze "Francis " bomber, killing 25 men and wounding 106. The ship was repaired at Ulithi. After we rearmed her on the 31st she `joined the fleet off Okinawa.

4/5/45 LCT - 759 Rec'd 85 tons additional ammo , Reissue from Nitro AE - 2

TOTAL CARGO ON BOARD 5366 TONS

4/11/45 At sea with Task Force 50.8 , 300 miles east of Okinawa Jima . For subsequent action awarded battle star

4/11/45	Hornet	CV - 12	Underway , under tow
4/11/45	Bennington	CV - 20	Underway , under tow
4/11/45	Bellowood	CVE - 24	Underway , no tow line
4/14/45	Essex	CV- 9 "	Bull" Halsey's Flag ship, Task Force 50.8 , underway under tow [<i>received word of President Roosevelt's death</i>]

4/15/45	Yorktown	CV - 10	Underway , no tow line
4/16/45	Randolph	CV15	Underway , no tow line

TOTAL CARGO ON BOARD 5290 TONS

4/20/45 At Kerama Retto , At anchor , about 20 miles west by southwest of Okinawa , under command of Task Group 51.15. For subsequent action Awarded Battle Star

NOTE: DUE TO THE DANGER OF COLLISION, RARELY DID A CAPITAL SHIP COME ALONGSIDE WHILE WE WERE AT ANCHOR. THE STANDARD PRACTICE WAS FOR US TO UNLOAD TO SMALLER CRAFT [LCT'S, LCM'S AND LST'S] FOR FURTHER ISSUE TO THE LARGER SHIPS. THE LIST TO THE LEFT WAS DIRECT REARM AND THE LIST TO THE RIGHT WAS THE LARGE CAPITAL SHIPS THAT RECIEVED THE REISSUE. I SUSPECT, IN SOME INSTANCES, DUE LACK OF CORRELATION BETWEEN THE DECK LOGS AND SEVERAL PRIVATE LISTS OF SHIPS REARMED, THAT NOT ALL OF THE CAPITAL SHIPS WHICH

RECIEVED REISSUE ARE KNOWN AND THEREFORE NOT LISTED.

4/20/45	Shanon	DMS - 25		
4/20/45	Picking	DD - 658		
4/20/45	Putman	DD - 757		<i>Coming alongside the Putman punched a 10" hole starboard side</i>
4/20/45	Mustin	DD - 413		
4/21/45	Beale	DD - 471		
4/21/45	Wichita	CA - 45		
4/21/45	Bennion	DD - 662		
4/21/45	LCT- 466			
4/21/45	LCT - 1266		4/21/45	New York BB-34
4/21/45	LCT - 900			
4/21/45	LCT - 1414		4/21/45	Arkansas BB - 33
4/21/45	Hutchin	DD - 476		
4/21/45	LSM - 90		4/22/45	Savo IsInd ???
4/22/45	Colorado	BB - 45		<u><i>The Firedrake was moved alongside the Colorado for this rearm</i></u>
4/22/45	Hall	DD - 583		
4/22/45	Laws	DD - 558	4/22/45	Texas BB35
4/22/45	Wm. D. Porter	DD - 579	4/22/45	Sawannee CVE - 27
4/23/45	LSM - 144		4/23/45	New York BB - 34
4/23/45	Macomb	DMS - 23		
4/23/45	Barton	DD - 722		
4/23/45	LCT - 466		4/23/45	Marcus Is. CVE - 79
4/23/45	LSR - 190			
4/23/45	LST = 267			
4/23/45	Preston	DD - 795		
4/24/45	Brown	DD - 546		
4/24/45	LSM - 900		4/24/45	Texas BB - 35
4/24/45	Rooks	DD - 804	4/24/45	Arkansas BB - 33
4/24/45	LST - 701		4/24/45	Chenango CVE - 28
4/24/45	Irwin	DD - 794		
4/24/45	Wadsworth	DD - 516		
4/25/45	Hall	DD - 583		
4/25/45	LCT- 416			
4/25/45	LCT - 1276		4/25/45	New Mexico BB - 46
4/25/45	LCT - 1266			
4/25/45	Leary	DD - 664		
4/25/45	LST - 267			
4/25/45	LCT - 1406			
4/26/45	Wichita	CA - 45		
4/26/45	LCT- 900		4/26/45	Sumter CVE - 29
4/26/45	LCT - 1330			
4/27/45	Salt Lake City	CA - 25		

An interesting note ,we were at anchor the Salt Lake came alongside. When she backed down to align the ships the Salt Lake came too close , one of her gun buckets raked our port side from bow to mid ship. Most of the crew cheered as we hoped enough damage would be done to get us out of that "hellish" place. No such luck the port side forward 3" gun bucket and the 20mm gun bucket were only moderately damaged.

4/27/45	Preston	DD - 795		
4/27/45	LCT - 449			
4/27/45	LCT - 1277			
4/27/45	LCT - 418			
4/28/45	LCT - 583		4/28/45	Arkansas BB - 33
4/28/45	LCT - 466		4/28/45	New Orleans CA - 32
4/28/45	LSM - 83			
4/29/45	LST - 267		4/29/45	Colorado BB - 45
4/29/45	LST - 735		4/29/45	Tuscaluosa CA - 37
4/29/45	LCT - 266			
4/29/45	Hall	DD - 583		
4/30/45	LST - 735		4/30/45	Steamer Bay CVE - 87
4/30/45	LCT - 416		4/30/45	Suwanne CVE - 27
5/2/45	LST - 737		5/1/45	Rudyard Bay CVE - 81
5/2/45	LCS - 51		5/2/45	Tulagi CVE - 72
5/3/45	LCT - 1414		5/2/45	Chenango CVE - 28
			5/2/45	New Mexico BB - 40
			5/3/45	Sargent Bay CVE - 83
5/3/45	LCT - 1409			
5/3/45	LST - 622			
5/3/45	LCT - 1330			
5/3/45	LCT - 1277			
5/3/45	Evans	DD - 552		
5/3/45	LCT - 418			
5/4/45	LST - 267			
5/5/45	LST - 735			
5/6/45	LST - 267			
5/7/45	LST - 737		5/7/45	St. Louis CL - 49
5/7/45	LST - 918			
5/8/45	LST - 918			
5/9/45	LST - 663		5/9/45	Suwanne CVE - 27
5/9/45	Boy	DD - 544		
5/9/45	LST - 701			
5/10/45	LST - 663			
5/10/45	LST - 267			

5/11/45 Departed Kerama Retto area

TOTAL CARGO ON BOARD 963 TONS

5/16/45 Anchored berth 528 , at the island of Ulithi , Caroline Islands

5/17/45 Shifted to berth 1

5/21/45 Yorktown CV - 10 } Not recorded

5/22/45 Independence ????? } in deck log

Received ammunition from various ships

5/17/45 to 5/26/45	David Gullard	MS
5/20/45	Mt. Rainer	AE - 5
5/23/45 to 5/25/45	Mauna Loa	AE - 8
5/25/45/ to 5/27/45	Northern Victory	Ms
5/27/45 to 6/1/45	Rutgers Victory	MS
5/27/45 to 5/28/45	Mt. Baker	AE - 4
5/31/45	Provo Victory	AK - 228
5/31/45 to 6/2/45	Furman Victory	MS

6/4/45 Departed Ulithi Island area

TOTAL CARGO ON BOARD 4184 TONS

Islands

6/14/45 Anchored in Berth 435 , San Pedro Bay , Leyte Gulf, Phillipine

		6/23/45	Wisconsin	BB- ???		
6/25/45	LCT - 1133					
6/26/45	LCT 798					
				6/26/45	Bennington	CV - 20
				6/28/45	Vicks Burg	CL - 86
6/28/45	Wadsworth	DD - 516		6/28/45	Bon Homme	Richard
	CV - 31					
6/29/45-7/1/45	Akutan	AE - 13		6/29/45	Anzio	CVE - 57
6/29/45	LCT - 1809			6/30/45	Essex	CV - 9
7/1/45	LCT - 798			6/30/45	Bennington	CV - 20
7/2/45 - 7/5/45	Moved ship alongside					
	Cramulaut AK - 22 , Berth 115					
7/3/45	LCT - 794			7/2/45	Tussalosa	CA - 37
7/5/45	Returned to Berth 435					
7/12/45	LCT - 1309					
7/12/45	Manderson Victory	AK- 230				

TOTAL CARGO ON BOARD 2097

RECEIVED AMMUNITION FROM THE FOLLOWING.

7/13/45 - 7/16/45	Twin Falls Victory	MS
7/14/45	Blue Field Victory	MS
7/17/45	Simons Victory	SS
7/20/45	Whitman Victory	SS
7/20/45/ - 7/23/45	Tuskegee Victory	SS
7/23/45	LCT - 798	
7/24/45	Bucyrus Victory	AK - 234
7/24/45	LCT - 880	

—
7/25/45 Akutan AE - 13
7/30/45 LCT - 1309
8/5/45 YF - 703

8/6/45 LEARNED THAT THE AIR FORCE HAD DROPPED A SPECIAL BOMB ON THE JAPANESE CITY OF HIROSHIMA THE DAY BEFORE 8/5/45

8/10/45 ABOUT - 2000 HOURS , 1ST NEWS OF JAPANESE SURRENDER , UTTER CHAOS, LEYTE GULF HARBOR SEE ATTACHMENT.

8/11/45 Forman Victory - SS

8/14/45 DEPARTED LEYETE GULF AREA

TOTAL CARGO ON BOARD 4025 TONS

8/14/45 NEWS CONFIRMS JAP SURRENDER

APPROX. 200 MILES OFF THE ENTRANCE TO TOKYO HARBOR. LOADING CAPITAL SHIPS [TASK GROUP 30.8] WHICH WILL BE PART OF THE FLEET GOING IN FOR THE FORMAL SURRENDER , WHICH OCCURRED ON SEPT. 2ND 1945.

8/19/45	Renggold	DD - 500
8/19/45	Massachusetts	BB - 59
8/19/45	Harrison	DD - 573
8/19/45	Indiana	BB - 58
8/19/45	Collett	DD - 730
8/20/45	Sevenson	DD - 729
8/20/45	Bellawood	CVE - 24
8/20/45	McKee	DD - 575
8/20/45	Rodgers	DD - 574
8/20/45	San Jacinto	CVL - 30
8/20/45	Deshiel	DD - 659
8/20/45	Boston	CA - 69
8/20/45	Dehaven	DD - 727
8/21/45	Brush	DD - 745
8/21/45	Indiana	BB - 58
8/21/45	Schroeder	DD - 501
8/21/45	Blue	DD - 744
8/21/45	Bennington	CV - 20
8/21/45	Lexington	CV - 16
8/22/45	Chauney	DD - 667
8/22/45	Randolph	CV - 15
8/22/45	Monterey	CVL - 96
8/22/45	Benner	DD - 807
8/22/45	Bataan	CVE - 29
8/22/45	Heermann	DD - 532
8/22/45	Wilkes Barre	CL - 103
8/22/45	Springfield	CL - 66
8/22/45	Pasadena	CL - 65

**OFFICERS
AND
CREW**

**USS FIREDRAKE
AE-14**

JULY 1945