

The DALY NEWS 2011



SPRING EDITION Page One

A Semi - annual publication dedicated to the memory of the those who served aboard the USS Daly DD 519 - Hal Boyer Editor - halboyer@yahoo.com

Part One - My Story by John Drake 1943 - 1946

In 1943 John Drake graduated from Citrus High School in Glendora, California. He was 17 years of age. The war rages in Europe and in the Pacific. John asked his mother to sign for him so that he could enlist in the US

Navy. After his boot camp training and basic engineering school he was assigned to the USS Daly and served on her throughout the war until its end in August 1945.



The Daly and her crew returned to the states then on her final voyage, sailed from the Pacific Ocean through the Panama Canal to Charleston, South Carolina, where she was

decommissioned and placed in the mothball fleet.

John returned to Charleston after a 36 day leave but was anxious to end his Navy career and return home. All the transportation out of Charleston was on strike so he hitched-hiked to San Pedro, California where he was separated and honorably discharged from the US Navy.

He stayed with an aunt in California for a short time, then returned home to New Mexico, and life as a civilian.

John's story is dedicated to his grandson, Logan Kye Caspersen, "You are the best thing that ever happened to me, and your magnetism is everywhere!"

My Ship The Destroyer Daly DD 519 by John Drake - 1945

A fighting ship she is, and a good one too.
Laying at anchor waiting to show what she can do.
She's shown her worth at Leyte Gulf and many more.
For this is her second trip, my first to the Japs door.
Yes, she's going back for the kill which we hope is near.
So loved ones pray for us, and have no fear, we'll bring
her back another day, with victory and a hell of a lot to pay.

A young Navy recruit takes to the High Seas during the war in the Pacific against Japan

Iwo Jima

June 1944

I was only 17 when I left home right after high school graduation. My mother signed for me to enlist in the Navy at Clovis, New Mexico. The recruiter sent me to Sante Fe for the final induction. After a day or so, the Navy offered to sign me up as a Navy Corpsman because I was a high school graduate. I was more or less pressured into it as I was very naive and inexperienced as to what the assignment entailed. By the end of the week there were still not a full draft of recruits, so they let me go home for the weekend.

During the weekend I spoke with my brother about the corpsman offer and he quickly talked me out of it explaining to me that I would be emptying bedpans the rest of the war. When I returned to Sante Fe I told the Navy personnel that I had changed my mind and that I didn't want to be a corpsman. They were none too pleased with me, but somehow I was released from the commitment. Fortunately I had not as yet taken the oath so I was not officially a Navy recruit. I later learned that the Navy assigned all corpsmen to the Marine Infantry and they saw a lot of combat. I would have gone ashore with the marines when they stormed the beach at Iwo Jima. As many corpsmen were killed that day as marines during the landing. I was lucky that I was not one of them.

After boot camp and basic engineering school at San Diego, I was sent to Camp Shoemaker for embarkation to a Navy installation or a ship. After two weeks of going on liberty every night in San Francisco, I was assigned to a ship. It was a Fletcher class, 2100 ton Destroyer, the USS Daly DD519. The Daly was docked at United Engineering in Oakland. Due to my basic engineering school in San Diego, I was assigned to the after engine room during normal watches. My battle station was the loader on the center 20mm cannon on the fan tail just aft of the two 5 inch guns on the stern.

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Iwo Jima

After dry dock and overhaul we loaded ammunition and full stores and were underway . We headed out of San Francisco Bay passing under the Golden Gate Bridge. As I saw it fade in the distance I wondered if I would ever see it again.

The skipper never informed us as to where we were headed and to my surprise we returned to San Diego for a few more days. From there we were on our way to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. About a day out at sea we saw large sea turtles. I was called to my 20mm gun position and told to load and shoot at the turtles. I don't know who gave permission to do this however I don't think we hit any of them because the ship continued on its way.

Upon arrival at Pearl Harbor and the destroyer anchorage we were given shore liberty in Honolulu. My shipmate and I went to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel which was a two story wooden structure back in those days. It was used mainly by submariners for rest and recreation. We went swimming at Waikiki Beach and the coral cut our feet. I learned later that in peace time sand was brought in to cover the coral.

After four days we left for Midway Island to refuel. We arrived just in time for the gooney bird nesting which takes place on the island. The gooney birds were so thick, that we could hardly walk on the beach as they guarded their nests.

After refueling and walking around we returned to the ship and were soon underway again, this time for the invasion of Iwo Jima by the way of Saipan, which was almost secure when we arrived. There were enemy air raids every day and night, but the Daly was not attacked.



On the way to Iwo Jima we were able to witness a cone shaped volcano in the Bonin Island chain. Steam and smoke were visible from the volcano. I had just been relieved from my engine room watch after taking sea water temperature readings and noted the water was 10 to 15 degrees higher than normal. I could only assume that the rise in water temperature was due to the volcano.

February 19, 1945. The Daly arrived at Iwo Jima. We were there for shore bombardment, which began at first light.

The Island of Iwo Jima



Iwo Jima is an eight square mile volcanic island in the Pacific Ocean about 760 miles from Tokyo. The battle to take Iwo Jima was one of the costliest in the history of the US Marines. there were 23,000 marine casualties with close to 6000 dead. The taking of Mt. Suribachi did not end the fighting. The island was not secure until March 16th. The battle of Iwo Jima accounted for 1/3 of all Medal of Honor awards for the US Marines.

this information obtained from SignalAlpha.com

The shelling concentrated on all the most likely spots that could hold the Japanese. The 4th and 5th marine Divisions landed on the southeast end of the island. From our position we could hardly see Mt. Suribachi which was obscured because of shell bursts, smoke and dust. In the late evening we sailed out to sea. We joined a group of CVE's (light carriers) as their escort.

Prior to the bombardment on the 19th and joining the carriers, our after engine room's main steam line (900 lbs of superheated steam) was so dry and hot that it was invisible, and began leaking at the bulkhead flange. At the beginning of each watch, we would tighten the leaking flange bolts with an 8ft pipe cheater. It took four of us , two pushing and two pulling to turn the bolts. This was an extremely dangerous procedure because if we broke a flange bolt, the 900 lbs of dry hot super heated steam could have burned and cut us to pieces besides filling the after engine room with steam. In this case it was a risk we had to take and it worked.



The second photo of the raising of the flag on Mt Suribachi. February 23, 1945

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February 21, 1945. We are at sea and part of a task force. We are at battle stations because of the large number of enemy planes in the area of the carrier Bismark Sea, CVE 95. It is almost dark, the Bismark is recovering planes and the flight deck elevator is fully open. Suddenly amid all the activity of landing planes, a Japanese medium bomber hits the Bismark's flight deck in a suicide attack. What I didn't know was that the carrier had already been hit by a Kamikaze on the starboard side crashing through the hanger deck and striking the ship's magazines. The second plane then strikes the deck and slides down the open elevator causing even more internal explosions. The Bismark was quickly engulfed in flame and smoke. I think she sank in about 15 minutes or 20 minutes. The Daly launched her whaleboats and spent most of the night picking up survivors. I can still hear the screams and moaning of the men in the water who were suffering from burns and other wounds as the salt water penetrated their bodies.

About a month after the Bismark went down, a shipmate's mother sent him a bundle of newspapers. One of the papers told how the carrier sank. The paper said that after the sinking the Japanese planes began strafing the survivors afloat in the water. I thought about this, but how could it be true? It was dark after the sinking and survivors were being rescued with the aid of search lights. The story must have been war propaganda to stimulate the sale of war bonds.



The Bismark Sea CVE 95 at anchor

According to the Dictionary of American Fighting Ships the Bismark Sea sank with the loss of 318 men and was the last naval aircraft carrier to be lost during WWII. Three destroyers and three destroyer escorts rescued survivors over the next 12 hours. Between them they rescued a total of 605 officers and men of a crew of 923. The survivors were then transferred to the USS Dickens and USS Highlands. The USS Edmunds directed the rescue operations of the remaining hands saving 378 of the carrier's crew and the commanding officer. In spite of darkness, heavy seas and continuing air attacks, thirty of the Edmonds own crew went over the side to bring the wounded and exhausted carrier men to safety.

Meanwhile our steam leak was becoming worse. The Daly was given orders to head to Leyte in the Philippines. The trip was routine and upon our arrival at Samar, we went alongside the Destroyer Tender Dixie to repair the steam line. In a few days the repairs were completed and the ship was seaworthy. To our surprise we did not return to Iwo Jima.

For the next week we spent almost every day at gunnery practice shooting target sleeves towed by a plane. We had good gunner mates and fire controlmen. The gunners became very accurate and shot down every sleeve that was towed. This delighted the natives as they retrieved the sleeves which were made of fine fabric and were then used to make sails for their boats.

Some of the native boats were out-rigger type made from hollowed trees. Others were made of woven reeds. All the boats had eyes painted on the bows to guide them through the storms and darkness. It seemed like all the natives with the reed type boats were darker skinned and had tight curly hair.

After gunnery practice we returned to Samar each evening and anchored over night. After dark an outrigger canoe would appear at the stern to sell bottles of coke for a dollar. I think it was distilled torpedo juice. This was all accomplished on the sly and in the quiet of darkness. We didn't know it at the time but the ship was waiting for the invasion of Okinawa. The night before we departed the bottles of sake sold to us by the natives were only water. How did they know we were leaving the next day and could rip us off? We didn't know we were leaving, how did they know? I still wonder to this day.



A night scene of the violent explosions that sank the carrier Bismark

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Okinawa - The first time the Daly is hit by a Japanese suicide plane

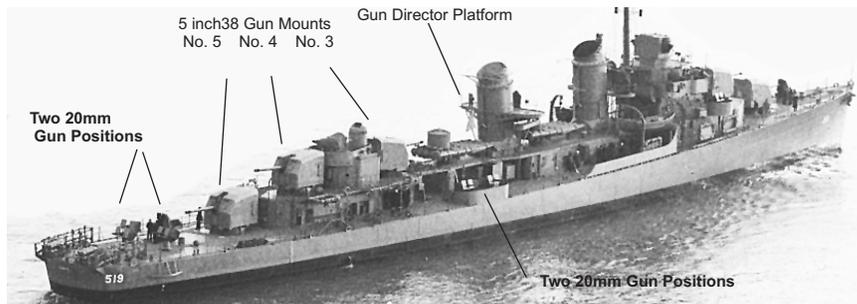
March 31, 1945. The Daly was part of the mighty invasion force that stretched from one horizon to the other. It was an awesome sight. The invasion force consisted of troopships, landing and supply ships, battleships, cruisers and destroyers. We knew at the coming of the next day we would be assigned to shore bombardment prior to the landing of the invasion ground forces.

April 1. At first light all of the war ships began shelling the initial landing areas on the west side of the island. The landing began as scheduled and we changed our position from time to time to enable the guns to have a better line of fire at their targets.

Near 1600 hours we were approximately one half mile from the battleship New Mexico when from over the hills of the island, three Japanese medium bombers suddenly appeared coming directly toward us. They had obviously used the hill to avoid radar detection. All three planes went for the New Mexico. The first was splashed by the concentrated fire of the battleship. The second plane crashed directly into the a 40 mm gun station of the battleship killing and wounding many of the crew. The third plane was hit and smoking. The pilot obviously realized he could not make it to the New Mexico and turned toward the stern of the Daly. The plane was coming in fast and was already 50 to a 100 yards astern when our five inch gun made a direct hit on the plane. It exploded into many pieces. One of the wings skipped on the water and hit the Daly's stern just below my 20mm gun station where I was the loader.

The 5 inch stern gun that fired on the plane was directly over our heads. The concussion from the gun blast was deafening and so severe that it blew us all down on the deck singeing our hair and caused a ringing in our ears. If the suicide plane had made it all the way in, it would have probably hit our gun station and the 5 inch gun and magazine blowing away the stern of the ship and killed us all. We were all lucky to be alive.

The wing of the suicide plane that hit the stern made a visible dent in the hull just below the painted name DALY. The hull carried that dent the rest of her days. We were so lucky we did not suffer any casualties. The New Mexico reported 55 dead sailors and marines in that attack.



Tin Can Sailor Archives

The destroyers played a vital role in the victory at Okinawa by keeping enemy planes clear of the transport landing areas. Another of their important missions was as radar picket ships to provide early detection of incoming enemy aircraft. They suffered heavy losses during this assignment. The Navy lost 118 destroyers to Japanese Kamikaze planes. 7,735 dead and wounded. It was the longest and hardest battle of US Naval history. It lasted eighty days.

The chance of our number five - 5 inch gun firing directly over our heads while at our 20mm General Quarters station was unexpected. The destroyers were built as a fighting ship the guns could fire in almost any direction.

This experience made me realize how dangerous it was to serve on a destroyer, and even more so when we were hit by a second suicide plane while on radar picket duty in the area of Okinawa. After the invasion bombardment we spent all our time on radar picket duty until we required fuel or ammunition.

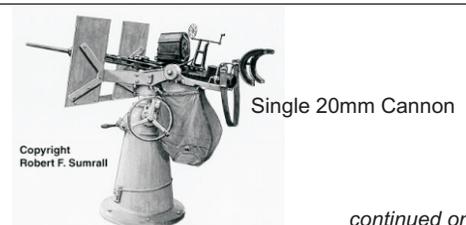
April 5. We were relieved from picket duty and sailed for Kerma Retto for fuel and ammunition. We spent the night near Okinawa under smoke screen anchorage.

April 6. We were assigned to Task Force 54 to intercept the remaining Japanese warships returning to Okinawa. The fleet included the mighty battleship Yamato with 18 inch guns, the largest ever on any battleship, one heavy cruiser and eight destroyers

While joining the task force we were attacked by Japanese Betty, medium bombers carrying manned Baka bombs, which were rocket propelled bombs that could achieve speeds of over 500 mph. Although both of the Betty bombers we encountered were destroyed by naval gun fire, several ships were struck and one destroyer was sunk by one of the rocket bombs.

During the course of the sea battle our carrier task force (58) attacked the Japanese, sinking the Yamato, the cruiser, and four destroyers. The remaining Japanese ships turned tail and ran.

We were hopeful that this was going to be our last sea battle of WWII. We gave thanks to the brave carrier pilots who were our heroes. The Daly then returned to radar picket duty and anti-submarine patrols.



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Okinawa - The second time the Daly is hit by a Japanese suicide plane

April 28. Radar picket duty off Okinawa. We are under attack by a number of Japanese planes. The exact number was never verified but 6 were splashed by the Daly guns during the attack. In spite of the intense fire a single Kamikaze came through the shower of shell bursts in a steep dive just missing the bridge. The plane hit the forward port 20mm gun position, killing A. Scheit, SK3/C. It passed over the forward port 40 mm gun station so close that the gun captain, Lt. Martin Jablon says he reached up and touched the plane as it passed over. It was carrying a large, probably 500 lb bomb, which exploded as the plane hit the water. The explosion tore and ripped the metal plating to shreds killing and wounding other shipmates. Three crew members lost their lives, one being our ship's doctor, Lt. T. Curby . There were a total of 21 wounded.

A detailed account by Lt. Jablon is posted on the Daly Web site , under History/Stories/ Kamikaze Attack.

Due to all the noise of the gun fire and loading the 20mmm, I didn't see the bomb blast but experienced the affect of it for a few seconds as hot water rained down on us. At the time I thought one of the ships's boilers had blown up.

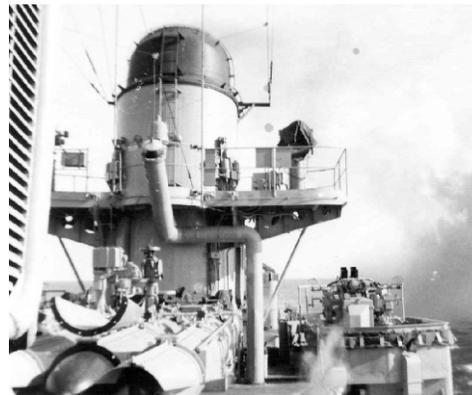
The damage to the Daly forced us to retire and we were relieved by another destroyer. A second destroyer in the company of the Daly who recorded one enemy plane splashed took a suicide plane in the bow. The crippled ship was later sunk by yet another attack by suicide planes.

The Daly and a second destroyer returned safely to an anchorage at Okinawa under their own power. During the entire trip the sky was lit with the flashes of tracers but the Japs did not attack the Daly again. We spent the night in the anchorage area protected by a smoke screen. The dead and wounded were removed. At first light we headed for Kerama Retto and the destroyer repair ship, Dixie. For the next thirteen days and nights we worked with the Dixie crew to repair the damage. I don't think we ever went to bed while alongside the Dixie. We had little rest and were asleep on our feet from being so weary. The repairs were completed along with additional guns and the ship was ready for sea.

In spite of a drizzling rain we had to take on more ammunition and reload the number 5 magazine. We had to hand carry each 5 inch 38 projectile which weighed 65 pounds to the number 5 magazine. During the loading a shipmate slipped and dropped the projectile he was carrying. The projectile dropped down the after engine room hatch which was open. This was a ten foot drop and it landed on a steel deck below. A 2nd class machinist named Skurja was on watch at the time and heard the projectile hit the deck. He thought the shell fuse might be activated by the drop and he immediately picked up the projectile and climbed straight up the ladder to the main deck and threw the projectile overboard. In a matter of seconds the projectile exploded below the ships hull, shaking the whole ship. Skurja was awarded a Silver Star Medal for his heroic effort that saved the ship and crew.

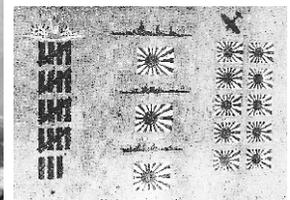
After another night in Okinawa under protection of the smoke screen we were again assigned to radar picket duty. I will never forget the fear and loss of sleep while being on radar picket watch. It was a mental and physical drain.

Where are our cruisers and battleships? Due to the heavy losses of destroyers, a new system was put into effect for radar picket duty when there were enough ships



A view of the gun director platforms on the rear stack. Note the torpedo tubes between the stack.

A scorecard was posted on the bridge to display the Daly's record of kills.



and L.C.I. (Landing Craft Infantry) available. Four destroyers in a diamond shaped formation one thousand yards apart followed aft at three thousand yards four L.C.I.'s in a second diamond shaped formation nicknamed the " Pall Bearers" to pick up survivors. There were hardly enough ships to make up this formation but it was a good idea.

All during the Okinawa campaign we fired our 20mm guns so much that the barrels over heated and became brittle. We had one blow up and pieces of metal went through my life jacket causing burns to my body. The life jacket was part of the uniform during action station. Destroyer duty can be dangerous work!

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April 18, 1945. The Daly escorted the 77th Infantry Division and fired on shore targets a good distance from shore due to the heavy enemy return fire. A LCT or LCI took a direct hit and was burning near the landing area. We moved in to pick up survivors when we heard that Ernie Pyle had been killed. It was a sad day for all as he was much admired by the crew.

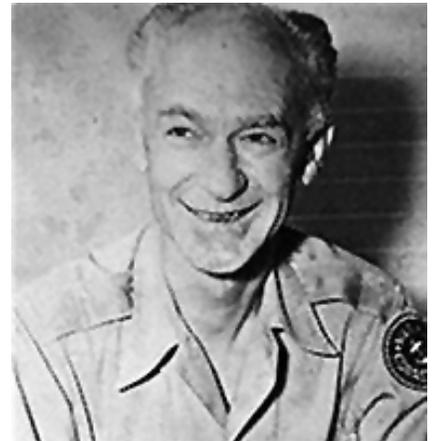
Editors Note: John Drake's Story - Part Two - will continue and conclude in the Fall Issue of the Daly News

Okinawa -WWII correspondent Ernie Pyle killed by enemy gunfire

When Pyle decided to cover events in the Pacific, he butted heads with the U.S. Navy over its policy forbidding the use of the actual names of sailors in his reports and won an unsatisfying partial victory in that the ban was lifted only for him. His first cruise was aboard the aircraft carrier USS Cabot, in which he saw an "easy life" in comparison to the infantry in Europe, resulting in several unflattering portraits of the Navy. Pyle was soon criticized by fellow correspondents, newspaper editorials, and G.I.s for giving apparent short shrift to the difficulties of the war in the Pacific. During the tiff he admitted that his heart was with the infantrymen in Europe, but he persevered to report on their efforts during the invasion of Okinawa. He was noted for having premonitions of his own death and predicted before landing that he would not be alive a year hence.

On April 18, 1945, Pyle died on Ie Shima, an island off Okinawa Honto, after being hit by Japanese machine-gun fire. He was travelling in a jeep with Lieutenant Colonel Joseph B. Coolidge (commanding officer of the 305th Infantry Regiment, 77th Infantry Division) and three other men. The road, which ran parallel to the beach two or three hundred yards inland, had been cleared of mines, and hundreds of vehicles had driven over it. As the vehicle reached a road junction, an enemy machine gun located on a coral ridge about a third of a mile away began firing at them. The men stopped their vehicle and jumped into a ditch. Pyle and Coolidge raised their heads to look around for the others; when they spotted them, Pyle smiled and asked Coolidge "Are you all right?" Those were his last words. The machine gun began shooting again, and Pyle was struck in the left temple (however, the Ernie Pyle State Historic Site in Dana, Indiana, contains a telegram from the Government to Pyle's father stating Pyle was killed by a sniper). The colonel called for a medic, but none were present. It made no difference—Pyle had been killed instantly.

He was buried with his helmet on, laid to rest in a long row of graves among other soldiers, with an infantry private on one side and a combat engineer on the other. At the ten-minute service, the Navy, Marine Corps, and Army were all represented. Pyle was later reburied at the Army cemetery on Okinawa, then moved to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific located in Honolulu. When Okinawa was returned to Japanese control after the war, the Ernie Pyle monument was one of only three American memorials allowed to remain in place. Pyle was among the few American civilians killed during the war to be awarded the Purple Heart.



Ernie Pyle correspondent aboard the USS Cabot

Photos and article from the Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia

Ernie Pyle Memorial Ie Shima Island, Okinawa



B-29 Superfortress Dedicated to Ernie Pyle

The employees of Boeing-Wichita, through the 7th War Loan Drive, paid for and built a Boeing B-29 Superfortress, Serial Number 44-70118, and dedicated it on 1 May 1945. The Ernie Pyle was ferried to the Pacific War Theater by a crew commanded by Lieutenant Howard F. Lippincott (USAF Lt. Colonel, ret, dec). It was initially assigned to the Second Air Force, Kearney AAF KS and sent to the Twentieth Air Force, Pacific Theater of Operations on 27 May 1945. The nose art was removed when the aircraft reached its intended operations base in the Pacific as the base commander thought it would become a prime target of the Japanese for propaganda reasons. The Ernie Pyle survived the war and was returned to the United States on 22 October 1945. It was stored at Pyote AAF TX and disposed of as surplus on 25 March 1953.

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Part Two - My Story by John Drake 1943 - 1946

A young Navy recruit takes to the high seas during the war in the Pacific against Japan



In 1943, the war was raging in Europe and the Pacific. I could hardly wait to graduate from high school so that I could join the Navy. After a June graduation I asked my mother to sign for me as was not 18. I enlisted in the US Navy.

I wanted to kill Japs and see the world. My desire for excitement would soon come true. After boot

camp training and basic engineering school I was assigned to the veteran destroyer USS Daly.

The ship left the states and by late January I was on my way to hell by way of Saipan, Iwo Jima, Philippines, Okinawa, China and finally Japan. There was no fun and excitement. There was fear of dying, kamikaze attacks, long sleepless nights, burning and sinking ships, wounded and dead shipmates, typhoons, 70 foot waves, bad food and the endless repetitive waiting. It was far more then what I had expected but I was going to survive.

Typical Hertz Horn Naval Mine

The Japanese used type of mine exclusively



The projections around the top of the mine called Hertz Horns are the part of the detonation mechanism. Each horn contains acid. Contact with the horn breaks open the acid container which triggers a battery that explodes the mine. During the war a variation was developed that replaced the acid horns with switches that activated the detonation when the horn struck the hull of a ship.

source: Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia

April 1944 - Okinawa Suicide Bay (Later named Buckner Bay)

My ship, the Daly DD519 had just finished escorting minesweepers into Suicide Bay. We had just been assigned to submarine patrol and were at the entrance of the bay when one of the mine sweepers was blown up and sank in a matter of a few minutes. A short time later another minesweeper hit a mine and sank rapidly. I was sure glad I wasn't on a mine sweeper that day.

We continued submarine patrol throughout the day. We remained at General Quarters (battle stations) almost continuously well into the night due to the a number of Japanese planes detected by our radar. Sometime around midnight we went to condition "One Easy". This meant taking turns going to the chow hall and sleeping on battle stations with only one person awake wearing the headphones.

At approximately 0100 hours I had my turn wearing the headphones. I was positioned on the stern with the 20mm gun crew. While the rest of the gun crew was asleep I heard this strange bumping and scraping sound coming from the starboard side of the ship. I went to investigate. It was a moonlit night and I could make out a black shape, to my horror I could see the largest blackest mine covered with horns that I had ever seen in my naval career. The mine was bumping and scraping it's way back towards where I was standing. I immediately called the Officer of the Deck describing the location of the mine. He quickly appeared and gazed at the mine with me as it bumped and scraped it's way aft and finally cleared the ship and disappeared.

The ship was unable to stop or spotlight the mine because of the danger of Japanese submarines spotting our position. Ordinarily in daytime we would have opened fire with our 20mm guns and set off the mine to destroy it.

Now even after 57 years I still hear that ghostly bumping and scraping along the hull of our ship and I thank god that the mine didn't explode and blow us out of the water. Life aboard a destroyer at sea has its risks.

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China Sea sweeps - June 1945

After the Japanese had lost most of their planes in suicide attacks at Okinawa the Daly was assigned to Task Force 95. We swept the East China Sea from Formosa to Shanghai hunting for enemy shipping.

Task Force 95 consisted of the new battle cruisers, the Alaska and Guam plus five destroyers. The China sweeps were to hunt down Japanese ships that used the many islands as refuge during the day and moved only at night.

The typical China Sea sweep began in the afternoon from Okinawa and by daylight the next morning we were in sight of Formosa and next the mainland of China. We would turn north and hunt out islands and intercept Chinese junks and fishing boats and interrogate the occupants. Because of the many Chinese dialects encountered during one particular sweep we carried six different interpreters to gather information as to where the Japanese shipping originated and where they may be hiding.

Our air force had dropped tons of pamphlets on Chinese coastal cities telling them that American warships were going to occupy their waters hunting for Japanese shipping, as well as war ships, and small boats. The problem facing the Task Force was that the Japanese were using Chinese junks as radio stations which made every vessel out there a potential enemy target. At night a Chinese junk picked up on radar was indistinguishable from a surfaced Jap submarine which made it a target to be fired upon.

After a target was fired upon and damaged it was the job of the nearest destroyer in our zigzagging formation to investigate the target and evaluate the damage. In one instance we fired armor piercing shells at a wooden junk. The shells went clear through the junk without destroying the junk leaving two to three foot holes in the side. Four of the eight occupants aboard the target were wounded. They were carrying rope and spices and it smelled very good.

We took the wounded and the other occupants aboard as prisoners and helped ourselves to some of the rope they were carrying. The prisoners were bowing and crying and obviously confused. One of the prisoners was severely injured with a missing leg and died during the night from his wounds. One prisoner was without shoes and I gave him a pair of my work shoes. He thanked me over and over again during his short stay aboard the Daly. We really felt sorry for them, the cooks made a big pot of rice for them. It had weevils in it but they ate it willingly, weevils and all.

In several instances we questioned the junk and fishing boat people if they had read the pamphlets our planes dropped

asking them not to go to sea. They all said that they had either not seen the leaflets or not read them and further explained that the Japanese had forced them to be at sea in order to fish and provide food so that they all could eat.

In one area we patrolled, the water became very shallow and our screws churned up the mud clouding the water. Along the way we could see fishing poles stuck in the bottom to hold fishing nets in place. Several times the ship screws got tangled in the nets that were strung out along the river. We could hear the poles banging along the hull as the screws chewed up the nets.

By midnight we would be near the Yangtze River and were able to see the lights of Shanghai stretching 50 to 75 miles before us. This is when we changed course and returned to Okinawa.

We never found any shipping larger than coastal or sea going junks, but we did sink several and fired upon many more. The gunners mate that fired the 20mm at my station where I was a loader let me fire the weapon when I had the urge. After learning that many of the junks carried families including women and children we gave up the shooting. These people lived on the boats, it was their home where they were born and died.

Our planes from Okinawa called Privateers also searched the area for Japanese shipping and were very successful in sinking larger ships. Early one morning at first light on our return to Okinawa after a China Sweep, the ships radar picked up planes. We went to Battle Stations and soon after the targets came into range our 5 inch 38 guns were firing directly overhead. It was light enough that we could see the black shell burst both under and above the planes. As it turned out these planes were not the enemy but US aircraft. They flew into the area without identifying themselves by using the proper code. They were lucky as none of the planes were hit as they rectified the mistake. This was not the first time that I witnessed our ships firing on and hitting US aircraft.

After the China Sweeps we were scheduled to escort mine sweepers to Japan. Their mission was an important one. The objective was to sweep clear the mine fields surrounding the homeland island of Japan in preparation of the world's largest invasion force ever seen.



Typical Chinese Junk home to a family for life

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Nagasaki August 1945

The Japanese had finally used up most of their planes and the air attacks lessened. We came in from the China Sea Sweeps duty to a new anchorage. We were in Buckner Bay, off of Okinawa in sight of the battleship USS Texas.

It was time for evening chow, Ted Bayhurst and I were in the chow line on the main deck. We stood there watching a plane coming in at a low altitude. It had obviously given the friendly code as no one seemed concerned. To our surprise the plane continued in over the water and flew directly into the stern of the battleship Texas. The stern of the ship had less armor and was a vulnerable area. The plane carried a huge bomb that exploded on impact causing many deaths and injuries as well as destruction of the stern. We immediately went to battle stations, however there were no more enemy planes and the attack was over. The next morning the stern of the Texas was under water that extended up to the aft 16 inch guns.

The Marines assigned to the battleship Texas were quartered in the stern compartment. A total of eleven were killed. How the enemy plane obtained the "friendly code" and was able to complete its attack is a mystery that was never solved. It could have been a mistake made by our own people. The ship was repaired and brought home. It is now a museum ship and is located in San Jacinto as a memorial.

We were assigned to minesweepers again and were organizing to sweep landing areas on Honshu, Japan, when the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, August 6, 1945. Then on August 9, my birthday, they dropped a second bomb on Nagasaki. We were told to stand by and kill time as it could mean the end of the war. Apparently the terms of the surrender were being negotiated. We returned to the western anchorage and learned that the Japs had agreed to an unconditional surrender. We were one happy crew, everyone was cheering, hugging and crying. Every ship at anchor was firing guns into the air. The tracers and incendiary flares lighted the sky like daylight. We heard the next day that 3 sailors were killed by falling shrapnel.

Part of the surrender deal was that the Japanese would paint a large plane white and fly it with the surrender personnel to MacArthur's headquarters in the Philippines. We were at the western anchorage when we saw the plane fly by.

After the surrender was verified we were immediately assigned to an aircraft carrier headed for Sasebo, and Nagasaki in Honshu, Japan. Our mission was to recover American and allied prisoners of war from the prison camps on Honshu.

The entrance to the Nagasaki channel was narrow, but became larger as we entered. We were the first American ship in the channel. There were probably a million Japanese civilians lining each side of the channel as we made our entrance. It gave everyone concern as we were worried about having so many Japanese within sight of our ship.



Actual photo taken from the B-29 that dropped the bomb on Nagasaki

The Destruction of the Nagasaki

The second atomic bomb nicknamed "Fat Man" (a reference to Churchill) was dropped on Nagasaki August 9, 1945. It was selected as an alternate target when the main target Kokura, was obscured by clouds. About 6.7 sq. km (2.6 miles) was reduced to ashes. About 73, 884 people were killed and 74,909 injured with the survivors suffering log-term catastrophic wounds from the radiation and mental trauma.



When we finally anchored we could see both hills. The side towards ground zero were seared brown. The opposite side was still green. What we observed was the destructive force of the atomic weapon.

The ship electricians had rigged large lights to illuminate the water surrounding our ship. We also kept both motor whale boats circling the Daly. The boats were authorized to fire on anything that came too close. We also had special lookouts on the deck of the ship armed with Thompson sub- machine guns.

The aircraft carrier was anchored off our stern. A special staff of extra doctors was assigned to the carrier in preparation to receive the prisoners that were to begin arriving by train the next day.

The first train that arrived was loaded with prisoners who were considered to be in the worst health condition. The plan was for them to remain seated or stay on stretchers until the train came to a full stop, then they would be taken to the flag of their country. Many jumped from the train before it stopped. They could not control their actions or contain their happiness at gaining freedom from their confinement.

I was there on the beach helping in the processing. We removed their foul, ragged clothes and burned them. They were given a dusting to rid them of pests, then put them in hospital gowns or new coveralls. Next they were transported to the aircraft carrier for further care. Some were very feeble and near death. Others were able to walk on their own. It was obvious their condition depended on the treatment they received from their captors and how long they had lived in captivity.

Before their first meal aboard the carrier, the released prisoners were cautioned about eating too much food on their first meal they were about to receive. Those who ate too much were sick. After eating they were treated by the Navy doctors. The weather was warm and sunny. Most of the prisoners rested and lay on the flight deck. While all this was taking place an American plane, a P-51 fighter, buzzed the flight deck. It was the first P-51 I had ever seen. It really upset some of the prisoners and several had to be restrained from jumping overboard. If the pilot had known how stressed the prisoners on the deck were, he may have not elected to do the flyover. After a week of processing the carrier left with all the released prisoners and returned to the US held islands.

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The Daly was left alone in the Nagasaki channel, awaiting a new assignment. By this time our marines were in Nagasaki and they controlled everything on the beach. They had collected thousands of Jap rifles and other weapons. We stored them in buildings outside the atomic bomb destruction area. Our Captain Bradley made a trade of potatoes for Jap rifles and truck transportation. Each member of the Daly crew received two rifles and a tour of the bombed area in a marine truck. No one seemed aware of exposure to radiation and I will never know how much I received but it must have been a lot. The tour was something I have never forgotten. There were thousands of Japanese civilians searching for the remains of the dead in the ruins. They all wore handkerchief over their mouths and nose. The smell of death was all around us. Their were dead people, horses and other animals visible everywhere among the ruins. It was a horrific sight and smell. Another thing I remember seeing was a 1934 Ford Coupe with a one cylinder engine bolted to it's frame for power. Steel buildings looked like they had been heated red hot and then blown away from Ground Zero. Stone and cement buildings were piles of crumbled rubble. All that remained of wood and paper structures were a pile of gray ash. Where there had been trees, only burnt stumps remained. It was a sobbering sight.

After a few days the Marines secured one of the main streets. It was declared on limits for liberty and a little fun and recreation. Only one third of the crew was allowed ashore at a time. I will never forget when my liberty section was allowed to go ashore. The officer of the deck had a verbal warning to everyone going on liberty. " Those Jap girls are waiting for you out there with razor blades and broken glass in their pussies. Have fun but beware!" We were also cautioned about poisoned alcohol and other drinks. We were not allowed to leave the designated street assigned to liberty as the rest of Nagasaki was off limits.

There was a money exchange station just as we left the ship however our cigarettes were the best thing to use for trading. In a few days of liberty the entire crew was out of cigarettes and if you wanted a smoke you had to buy them back from the Japanese at double the cost. With all these warnings in mind my shipmate buddy and I went ashore and headed for liberty in Nagasaki. After walking about a mile or so a young boy approached from an alley and was talking in Japanese which we did not understand. We thought he may have been a pimp for girls. He kept pulling our sleeves, leading us further into the alley. After a short distance we saw an older man in a kimono behind a trash container. As we approached him he threw open the kimono and drew out a large samurai sword. Thinking he might use it on us we quickly retreated. We finally realized he wanted to sell this trophy to us. It was illegal for him to have such a sword, as specified in the surrender agreement all weapons of war were to be confiscated. We didn't have enough Japanese money to buy it so there was no transaction. We had always thought we might get a sword as a souvenir being a member of the Daly Crew but that never happened.

After trading cigarettes for a couple of Japanese kimonos and a vase, we had seen as much of Nagasaki as we could from one street. Our liberty time was up and we returned to the ship.

The next day the Daly was reassigned to Sasebo to halt Japanese soldiers that were returning to Japan from China. The military set up a blockade that we manned mainly at night without making any contacts in our sector.

A week later we began taking mail to our occupation forces. We dropped it off in major port cities as far north as Yokosuka, which is near Tokyo. On one mail delivery several of the Daly crew were sent to Tokyo

to pick up mail at or near the Japanese Imperial Palace. At least some of the crew made it all the way to Tokyo.

On a later mail delivery trip our port was Wakayama. As we approached the mail delivery point we saw a building with the faded writing of Woolworth on the side. It suddenly seemed that I was back in the states. I also met a Japanese girl in Wakayama who spoke English.

Back at Sasebo our home base for mail delivery, we could go ashore. A shipmate and I decided we would take a hike up to the terraced fields on the surrounding hills to see how they were farmed. We were on a trail between two sections of terraced gardens and met a girl carrying double canvas buckets on her shoulders full of human excrement. It was for use on the vegetable garden. We noticed the sewers were level with the streets with wooden covers that can be easily removed for access. We gave her some chewing gum but we didn't want to share any of her garden vegetables.

Yokosuka was another regular port on our mail run and it became quite a liberty port for our sailors, soldiers, marines and paratroopers. It had the largest brothel and the longest bar in the world. The Navy chaplain frowned on this type of recreation but it was still operating when we left for home and the good old USA.

GOING HOME! Two atomic bombs and the Japanese surrender. The War is over, we are going home. I can't stop remembering how many times I have died. Now, in my later years, as I reflect on all that passed, I can't say that I helped make a better world, but only that I extended the time for the things I believe in. Again it seems that the world is at it's worst, but we must hope for the best and salvation. God help us!



John Drake

John is now retired and lives with his wife in New Mexico. His family lives nearby. He loves to garden and share his stories with his favorite grandson.

A short poem of John's reflections during his Navy years.

I wish I could tell you about the South Pacific the way it actually was.

The endless ocean, the infinite specks of coral we call islands.

Coconut palms nodding gracefully toward the ocean reefs upon which the waves broke into spray and inner lagoons lovely beyond description.

I wish I could tell you about the sweating jungle and a full moon rising and the waiting, the timeless repetitive waiting.
