A Little on the SALTY Side

FALL, 1995

LOYAL, DEDICATED, AND DEVOTED

TO GOD, FAMILY, AND COUNTRY

I know very little about my great-grandparents. On my mother's side of the family, my great-grandfather, Henry Thornelow, was born November 14, 1829, in England. He came over and settled in Canada, where he met and married my great-grandmother, Ann Wakefield. She was born October 20, 1835. After their marriage, for some unknown reason they moved and settled in Gilford College, North Carolina, just outside Greensboro.

My Great-grandmother Thornelow was supposed to have had a fiery temper. According to what was told to me by my Aunt Pete, my great-grandparents, Henry Thornelow and Ann Wakefield Thornelow, used to eat their meals from a wooden table as they sat on wooden benches. One day when she was very angry, she threw one of the benches through the kitchen window!

Fourteen children were born to my great-grandparents:

Martha A. Thornelow
born February 1, 1853
William T. Thornelow
born October 8, 1855
Ellen E. Thornelow
born August 5, 1858
Mary A. Thornelow
born April 18, 1860
John H. Thornelow
born January 19, 1862
Clara Thornelow
born September 18, 1863
Samuel W. Thornelow
born July 26, 1865
Charles C. Thornelow
born February 1, 1867
Hannah J. Thornelow
born August 9, 1869
Emma J. Thornelow
born August 9, 1869
Mary A. Thornelow
born February 20, 1871
Walter Mc. Thornelow
born December 3, 1872
Thomas J. Thornelow
born June 3, 1877
Josey Thornelow
born May 13, 1881

Charles Cole Thornelow was my grandfather. He married my grandmother, Zylphia Nelson.

Born to my grandparents were eight children: Marjorie, Ernest, Bertie, Capelia, Fetnie, Myrtle, Velma, and Percy.

My mother was Fetnie Glee Thornelow, who was born December 31, 1895. She married Charles Lee Whittington, who was born October 7, 1885; he was my father.

I, Kenneth Thornlow Whittington, was born June 3, 1923. I was the first of Mom's three children.

For some unknown reason--probably in the early 1900's or perhaps when I was born--the "E" in THORNELOW was omitted and the name became THORNLOW.

I was born in a large frame house on Green Street in Greensboro, North Carolina. Also in this house lived some of my father's sisters and brothers, perhaps my Grandmother Whittington, my Aunt Jessie, and my Uncle Joe. I am told that all lived together in peace and harmony. All had their own separate bedrooms but shared the same kitchen. I have a picture of my grandmother holding me on her lap on the front porch of this house before her death. I was perhaps one year old.

My mother and father and I moved to Wharton Street soon after I was born. My Uncle Joe gave me a little mahogany rocking chair for my first Christmas.

On another Christmas I remember my father and me playing with an electric train down on the floor when I was only two or three years old.

My father was an electrician by trade, and I have been told that he was extremely good. He died at an early age, when I was perhaps three years old. He was buried in Green Hill Cemetery. Things started getting tough after my father's death.

We moved to South Elm Street in Greensboro, and Mom started taking in boarders. It was in this house that I remember turning over backwards in my highchair. It was also while we were living in this house that Mom had my tonsils taken out in the doctor's office.

Mom couldn't make a living with boarders, so she got a job at the Blue Bell overall factory. Mom's father helped us a lot with food. My Aunt Velma and Uncle Arthur also helped us a lot.

After South Elm Street, we lived on Pearson Street, on West Lee Street up over a donut shop, and then farther out on West Lee Street up over a store. It was while living there that I used to hop slow-moving freight trains. And it was about this time that I started to school.

Things were really tough in my younger years. We were very poor, and a lot of our relatives helped us. Mom was not a good manager of money, but she cared a lot for us.

It was right after I started to school that we moved to Richmond, Virginia. We lived with my Uncle Percy and his wife and their two daughters, Jeanette and Dorothy. Our family slept in one room, and we ate our meals with them in the kitchen. I believe the address was 1109 West Main Street.

Mom applied for welfare, and we moved to the 2400 block of West Main Street, into a two-room apartment. Things were still tough, and I started helping a pie salesman on Saturdays to earn a little money.

From West Main Street, we moved to the corner of West Main and Davis, up over a store across from the Mosque Theater. From there we moved to Pine Street. This was where we were living when I got my first bicycle. It was used, but I was very proud of it.

I had several accidents on my bike. Coming down Cary Street one day, I slammed into a large dog that darted out from between two parked cars.

Another time I slammed into a car door being opened by the driver of a parked car. I finally wrecked my bike beyond repair attempting to come down the steep hill of the reservoir at Byrd Park.

I also used to shoot a lot of marbles during this time in my life. Today I still have over a thousand that I won playing for keeps.

From Pine Street we moved to the 400 block of West Main Street. I turned fifteen while we were living there and went into the Civil Conservation Corps. I was promoted to assistant leader, and after a year and a few months, I came out and joined the Navy at seventeen years of age.

Having dropped out of high school at the age of fifteen in the 10th grade and having just completed a year in the CCC's, I had been undecided on what to do with my life. My cousin, Charlie Johnson, had joined the Navy a few months earlier, and in talking with him, I started thinking that maybe a Navy life would be good for me.

About this time in my life, I commenced to smoke a little. I didn't have much money, so at times I would buy "Bull Durham" tobacco and roll my own.

On January 7, 1941, I was sworn into the Navy in the Post Office Building downtown on Main Street in Richmond, Virginia. Mom had to sign for me, since I was only seventeen. As I recall, she did not want me to go, but I finally talked her into it. I enlisted on what was known as a minority cruise, and my enlistment would expire on my twenty-first birthday. I believe to this day that was one of the best decisions I ever made.

At seventeen, coming from a poor family, having no job, and being a high school dropout, I really didn't have much to look forward to. I was undecided on what course to steer my life. As I know now, I didn't have much choice and really had not given it much thought. Yet even though I had not become a Christian at that time, I think God was in control of my life.

I was glad and happy when I was accepted and sworn into the Navy. I realized then I was on my own, and it was up to me to make it or break it. I felt proud for the opportunity to serve this great country, especially as a member of the Whittington family.

I have always had a lot of love and concern for my mother, sister, and brother. The tough times we had in my younger life caused that love and concern to become stronger and stronger. I am glad and thankful to God for my strong disposition and leadership capability, and at the same time, I am very sensitive to those in need.

Mom worked hard, sacrificed and struggled a lot to get the job done in raising her three children. As I grew older, I assumed more and more responsibility in helping the family. At fifteen years of age, when I went into the CCC's, I was helping to support the family. My sister married young, and after I went into the Navy at age seventeen, I continued to send Mom a monthly allotment.

Today, at seventy-two years of age, I feel proud of my loyalty, dedication, and devotion to God, family, and country. But it wasn't until I was about twenty-nine or thirty and after I had married my wife Ann and our two sons Ronnie and David were born that the Lord came into my life.

Yes, when I was young, Mom would send us to Sunday School occasionally. After I joined the Navy, I would attend worship services occasionally

when I had the opportunity--which was seldom. Now as I look back, I realize that Someone mightier than I had control over my life and was watching over me.

Having taken a written test and been given a physical and interviewed, my first order from the Navy was to report on the morning of 7 Jan. 1941 to the Navy Recruiting Office in the Post Office Building in Richmond, Virginia, to be sworn in. By noon, I was a sailor in the United States Navy, on my way, along with several others, to the Naval Operating Base in Norfolk, Virginia, for boot camp.

Upon arrival, we passed through Gate Two at the base and were taken to one of the brick barracks in the boot camp complex. We were issued sea bags and hammocks. In a few days, after our uniforms had been altered to fit, we were told to pack all of our civilian clothes in a box that had been provided and address it home.

We were assigned to a platoon under the command of a chief petty officer. I recall him telling us, "While under my command, do anything you want to--just don't get caught!"

Boot camp was a tough transition from civilian life to military life. We quickly learned that we were not there to reason why--but to do or die!

We learned how the Navy wanted their sailors to dress. We learned how to wash our own clothes. We learned that all of our uniforms would fit into the sea bag that was issued. We learned how to roll our clothes into neat little rolls and tie each end with "clothes stops." We learned how to lay them out once a week on our cots for sea bag inspection. We learned how to make our beds and that we went to bed at "Taps" and got up at "Reveille."

We learned a daily routine. It was up early at "Reveille," wash and shave, fall out for muster and march to the mess hall for breakfast. Afterwards it was to the drill field for calisthenics and marching, classroom work, lectures, marching to lunch, more physical exercise, drilling, lectures, instructions, marching to supper, and then maybe to the PX and a movie. Then we would turn in at "Taps."

For the seven or eight weeks of boot camp, we were restricted to the base. There was no liberty, and only emergency leaves were permitted.

We learned how to swim, to shoot a rifle, to semaphore, to have respect for senior ratings and discipline.

We had to pack our sea bags and tie them together with our hammocks in "sea-going" fashion and most of the time carry them on our shoulders to another barracks maybe a block or two away. Seventy-five or eighty pounds on my shoulder and only weighing about 125 pounds got pretty tough at times. This was training for transferring from ship to ship or station to station.

Our recreation was an occasional movie and an occasional visit to the PX.

I did not have a hard time adjusting. I was a little homesick at times, but perhaps my time in the CCC's helped me a lot. I made up my mind I would play their game by their rules. It was the best way to survive.

I went into the Navy as an apprentice seaman with a monthly pay of $21.00, and at the end of each month I always had a little left over to send home.

Finally the big day arrived--graduation, final inspection by the officers in charge. We had made it!

We were granted seven or ten days' leave, with orders to report back to the Norfolk Receiving Station for further assignment.

Mom and my brother were fine when I arrived home. It was really good to see them. I wore my Navy uniform proudly when I walked the streets of Richmond.

In 1941 the war in Europe had started, and people were wondering if the United States would enter the war. I think everyone thought that the question was not "if" but "when." Our allies in Europe were taking a beating. Supplies, munitions, and equipment were running low. The United States was sending supplies in large convoys, but German U-boats were sending a lot of them to the bottom.

About the middle of March 1941, my leave was expiring. I returned to Norfolk and reported in at the Receiving Station as ordered.

Within a week I had my orders to report for duty aboard the USS Russell (DD414), tied up at one of the piers at the Naval base. I was furnished transportation to the docks. I shouldered my sea bag, walked up the gangway, faced the colors, saluted, turned to the Officer of the Deck, saluted, and requested permission to "come aboard."

The OD replied, "Permission granted." Not only was I in the Navy, but now I was a crew member aboard a United States man-of-war.

They were expecting me, and I was taken below deck and assigned a bunk and locker. The locker was small, but everything fit.

The ship was small and very compact. There was no wasted space. I was on the deck force at first, and I was very excited. Every day was a new experience. I was also excited thinking about putting to sea in such a small ship.

Shipboard routine was not a whole lot different from boot camp. There was a time for everything, and I was told when to do it. There was a little more freedom aboard ship. I could go ashore, and there was time for relaxing.

The ship was built at the Newport News Shipyard and commissioned 3 November 1939, with Lt. Comdr. J. C. Pollock in command. The Russell, a new ship with a crew of about 250 men, was a "SIMMS" class destroyer: two stacks and a broken deck, four 5-inch gun mounts, eight torpedo tubes, twin racks of depth charges, and "K" guns. We were well armed for a small ship.

We had the capability of sinking subs with depth charges and K-guns. The 5-inch gun mounts could be used for surface action and beach bombardment as well as anti-aircraft protection from enemy aircraft. The torpedoes were for use against enemy surface ships. We also had four 40-MM guns for defense against enemy aircraft.

Destroyers were known as "small boys" and "tin cans," and the men that sailed in them were cocky and proud. The destroyers were the work horses of the fleet and could do almost anything. To be classified as a "tin can sailor" was something special.

Soon after I reported aboard in the spring of 1941, we got underway. As we cleared the harbor of Hampton Roads and the ship began to roll and pitch a little, I knew I was in for some exciting times.

During the spring, summer, and fall, we were part of what was known as the Neutrality Patrol. Patrolling the Western Atlantic from Iceland to the Caribbean, including the Gulf of Mexico, we were guarding the coast of the United States, our ships and allied ships from German U-boat attacks. We were sinking U-boats during this time even though the war did not commence until December 7, 1941, for the United States.

The North Atlantic is awesome during the cool months of the year. The waves are mountainous. It was not uncommon for the Russell to roll 45 or 50 degrees when steaming parallel with the sea, and if steaming into the sea, the ship would crest on a big wave and then plunge down and plow into the next oncoming wave. The ship would shudder and vibrate as salt water rolled back over the super-structure and gun mounts. These little "greyhounds" of the fleet took a beating in the North Atlantic. It was dangerous, spectacular, unbelievable, and awesome!

It didn't take me long to gain a lot of respect for the sea, and I gained my sea legs quickly patrolling in the North Atlantic. Every couple of weeks or so, we would come into ports like New York; Boston; Portland; Halifax, Nova Scotia; and Reykjavik, Iceland, for a little rest. It was resupply and refuel and then return to the open sea to patrolling and convoy escort duty.

I recall when we would make port in Iceland, the city of Reykjavik had some of the best pastry shops in the world--at least I thought so at that time.

During rough weather at sea, our meals were in accordance with the sea. Many days during this

time it was just soup and sandwiches. At night we raised our bunks up to form a "V" so that we could sleep without falling out.

I did not stay in the deck force long. I wanted to get into one of the specialty ratings. One day, having been paid in the ward room, we exited up to the 01 deck and passed by the radio room. I paused and looked in, and I liked what I saw. I talked with some of the radiomen on several occasions and visited the radio shack several times. It wasn't long before I requested to become a radio striker. I commenced learning the International Morse Code, and I stood most of my watches on the bridge manning the underwater sound equipment, searching for enemy subs.

It was late spring of 1941 that I was promoted to second class seaman, and my pay increased to $36.00 a month.

During the summer of 1941, I had the opportunity to attend the Navy Underwater Sound School in Key West, Florida. I believe it was about a six-week school. We went to sea about every day on one of the old four-stack destroyers and practiced making runs on one of our subs attached to the school. We also had a lot of classroom

study, and it wasn't long before I graduated and was transferred back to the Russell. Since I was a school grad, my battle station became underwater sound operator during submarine attacks. I don't know if I ever made a successful attack on an enemy sub, but I was involved in several attacks during the late summer and fall.

I made first class seaman, and my pay increased to $54.00 a month. We were still patrolling and escorting in the North Atlantic, looking for German subs and defending allied merchant convoys. My training as a radioman continued.

In late November and early December, we were operating out of Portland, Maine. The Russell was assigned some additional duty--to tow targets for the USS New Mexico so that she could practice with her big guns.

It was December 7, 1941, while about fifty miles off the coast of Portland that we received word that the Japs had attacked Pearl Harbor.

We were ordered to escort the New Mexico into Portland and proceed to Norfolk, Virginia. Arriving at Norfolk the next day, we went into the shipyard and they installed one of the first radars. The United States had declared war on Japan and Germany, and the Second World War had begun.

In a few days we were under way. Just outside Hampton Roads we joined forces with the USS Yorktown (a carrier), two cruisers, and four or five destroyers to form Taskforce 17.

We steamed south through the Caribbean Sea at full speed. We arrived at Panama and passed through the Panama Canal into the Pacific.

What a difference! The North Atlantic had been green, vicious, angry, and wind swept. The Pacific was deep blue and peaceful.

After traversing the Panama Canal, we headed for San Diego, California, where we took on fuel and supplies, and whence on 6 Jan. 1942 we sailed west, screening reinforcements to Samoa.

By the time of our arrival on 20 Jan. 1942, the Japanese had moved into Malaya, Borneo, the Celebes, the Gilberts, and the Bismarck Archipelago. Within a week Rabaul fell, and the Japs continued on to New Ireland and the Solomons and extended their occupation of the Netherlands East Indies.

On the 25th of January, 1942, the Russell sailed north with Taskforce 17, screening carrier Yorktown as her planes raided Makin, Mili, and Jaluit in the Marshall and Gilbert Islands.

The Russell and other surface ships moved in and bombarded these islands. This was the first offensive action of the war by U. S. forces.

After the raid on the Marshall and Gilberts, we steamed at high speed to Pearl Harbor. Each ship was cheered as it entered the harbor for somewhat avenging in a small way the Jap attack on Pearl.

The destruction and damage at Pearl Harbor was unreal and unbelievable. A huge oil slick, perhaps a foot thick, covered the surface of the entire harbor. Five battleships had been sunk and were resting on the bottom. Four other battleships had been severely damaged, plus cruisers and destroyers. Death and destruction were everywhere. The Japanese, in their sneak attack, had done an outstanding job in destroying or damaging about ninety percent of the Pacific fleet. Fortunately, no carriers had been in port.

Things were not going too well for me at this time. Somewhat worried and concerned about Mom, my brother and sister, I was perhaps a little homesick. Being at sea a long time caused tempers and nerves to become edgy, and seeing all the destruction at Pearl was very demoralizing. Getting used to wartime conditions took a lot of getting used to.

At eighteen years of age, I was maturing fast, what with a lot of sea duty, skirmishes with and sinkings of German U-boats, and the raid and bombardment on the Marshall and Gilberts.

Very limited liberty was granted in Pearl, but I did manage to go ashore and have a beer and get a haircut. That was another "first" for me--a woman barber! Honolulu was very crowded with a lot of service personnel. I didn't care too much for it, but it did offer the opportunity to relax a little and walk around on solid ground.

After a few days in port taking on supplies and fuel, on 16 Feb. 1942 the Russell put to sea and rendezvoused with the carrier Yorktown; the cruisers Louisville and Astoria; and the destroyers Anderson, Hughes, Walke, and Mahann to form Striking Taskforce 17. We were steaming S-SW--destination unknown. Ships' movements were always classified, and we always steamed "darken ship"--no lights visible topside. We had been steaming "darken ship" since the very beginning of the war, and it took know-how to go forward and aft in heavy weather with waves breaking over the side. I do not recall any of our crew being washed overboard, but it did happen on other ships occasionally.

As we steamed south and southwest, we made several sub contacts, but each one got away. On 2 March 1942 we crossed the 180th Meridian.

The Japs had moved into Malaya, Borneo, the Celebes, the Marshall and Gilberts, the Bismarck Archipelage, Rabaul, New Ireland, the Solomons, and the Netherlands East Indies, and were on their way to Australia. On 6 March 1942 we rendezvoused with the carrier Lexington, the cruisers Chigago, San Fransisco, Indianapolis, Pensacola, Salt Lake City, Minneapolis, and Australia, and the destroyers Hamman, Patterson, Phelps, Dewey, Clark, Dale, Farragut, Hull, MacDougal, and Bagley. This was a huge striking force in early '42.

On 9 March 1942 the taskforce increased speed to 24 knots and headed north into the Bay of Papua. Early on the morning of 10 March 1942, before daylight, the carriers Lexington and Yorktown launched a strike force of over 200 planes over the Owen Stanley Mountain Range, to strike the Japs attempting to land at Lae and Salamaua. We were at battle stations for two days as we headed south, but no counter-attack by the Japs occurred. During this time, in early March of '42, we also sank several Jap subs.

We had to be alert and always ready for anything at any time. If an enemy contact was made at midnight and general quarters was sounded, battle stations could be manned and the first shot in the air in a matter of two minutes. We were well trained, and we responded to the situations automatically. We knew our survival rested on each crew member doing his job to the best of his ability.

The results of the raid at Lae and Salamaua were five transports sunk, one cruiser and one destroyer. We lost one plane. The surprise attack was successful.

After the raid we headed south at flank speed. Our forces were small compared to the Japs, and we could not risk any unnecessary loss of any ship. We realized there would be some kind of retaliation as soon as the Japs could re-group and additional support arrive.

Fuel and supplies were running very low, so we headed for Tonga Tuba, arriving April 20, 1942. We worked around the clock, bringing aboard supplies and stores. I managed to get ashore for a short time. The natives were very friendly.

During this time I advanced to third class radioman. It was a tough struggle for me, not being able to go to radio school and having to learn International Morse Code, copy at 20 words a minute, and learn procedures and duties on my own. I did it, and my pay advanced to $63 a month. My rating began to have a little meaning.

Having taken on fuel, stores, and ammunition, we put to sea again, joining Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey's Third Fleet. Depending on what task force we were assigned, we sailed under the immediate command of Admirals Fletcher, Fitch, Mitscher, and Spruance. Admiral Nimitz was the overall commander of the Pacific Fleet. During the war all of these admirals made big names for themselves, and I am proud to say that I was a small part of their fleets and sailed under their commands.

As part of the Yorktown striking force, we patrolled the Coral Sea from the Solomons to Australia. We also knew the Japs had re-grouped and were looking for us.

We played a lot of cards during these long cruises at sea--Pinochle, Hearts, Cribbage, Acey Ducey, and--yes--Poker, too. I did play some Poker, but always for very small stakes.

On May 5, 1942, the Yorktown and the Lexington joined forces. One of Yorktown's patrol planes shot down a 4-motor Jap patrol plane. Our position had been discovered. The taskforce increased speed to 22 knots. Our patrol planes had also sighted a large Jap striking force.

On 7 May 1942 the Coral Sea Battle commenced. The U. S. battle force consisted of two carriers, four cruisers, and ten destroyers. The Jap force consisted of three carriers plus cruisers and destroyers. This was the first battle ever to be fought entirely by naval carrier based aircraft. About 1150 on this day, we were attacked by about 40-50 Jap fighters, dive bombers, and torpedo planes.

The fighters were the first to come in, straffing and drawing fire from every ship in the force. Just when you began to think all hell had broken loose, the dive bombers began their attack from high altitude, followed by the torpedo planes coming in flying low and close to the water. The sky was black with anti-aircraft fire.

On the evening of the first day of battle, about dusk, several radar contacts were made on incoming planes. None of our carriers had planes aloft, and the incoming aircraft formed a landing

pattern, as they attempted to land on our carriers. At first we were not sure they were Japs, but we discovered their identity quickly when we spotted red balls painted on their wings. We commenced firing, and they headed out to the east.

During the first day of battle, we had sunk one Jap carrier, and we had lost only three planes that were shot down.

We headed south, and the Jap fleet headed north, but during the night the Japs changed course to the south and by daybreak were about 270 miles south of Guadalcanal.

Early morning both forces launched scout planes, and by mid-morning on the second day of battle, the scouts had located the opposing fleets. The Lexington and the Yorktown launched an attack group of 82 planes, while at the same time the two remaining Jap carriers were launching their attack aircraft.

The Japs came in just as they did the day before. Ships were maneuvering at high speed to avoid being hit. Destroyers were in close to the carriers to provide protective anti-aircraft fire and take any enemy torpedoes aimed at the carriers.

The "tin cans" (destroyers) were awesome during the Coral Sea Battle, shooting down planes, screening, and providing protective coverage in any way they could.

During this first attack wave on the second day of battle, the Lexington took torpedoes on both sides (port and starboard) but managed to stay underway until a Jap dive bomber put a bomb down her stack. The ship literally exploded from stem to stern. Several destroyers moved in alongside and passed fire hoses over to help fight the fires.

By 1500 that afternoon the ship was dead in the water. One bomb had exploded deep inside the ship and had ruptured gasoline lines. Suddenly there was a series of internal explosions, and the fires were out of control. There was danger of the ship blowing up.

About 1700 Admiral Fitch ordered the captain of the Lexington to abandon ship. About 3,000 men went over the side, and destroyers moved in ever so gently to pick up survivors. The destroyers did a super job. About an hour later the captain and the remainder of his staff were the last to leave the ship.

An hour later one of our destroyers was ordered to torpedo the Lex to keep it from falling into enemy hands. At about 2000 the Lex listed to starboard and sank beneath the waves.

The cost to the allies during this battle was heavy: carrier Lexington sunk, destroyer Simms sunk, fleet oiler Neosho sunk, carrier Yorktown damaged, 66 aircraft lost, death toll 543 officers and men.

The Japanese loss was one carrier sunk, one destroyer sunk, two carriers severely damaged, 80 aircraft lost, and about 900 officers and men killed.

The Japanese push to the south had been halted at the Equator.

No one knows what it is like to be in a battle of this magnitude except the ones who fought it--the danger, the exhaustion, the fatigue, the suffering, nerves stretched to the breaking point.

During the Coral Sea Battle the Russell had fired 300 five-inch shells and 2,000 20-MM shells. We were very low on ammunition, fuel, and stores as the battle group joined together and at high speed headed for Pearl.

The Russell put into Tonga and dropped off 170 Lexington survivors and immediately headed back to sea to join the task force.

The Coral Sea Battle was only the beginning. The allies in Pearl had broken the Japanese code and learned of a large Japanese invasion force headed for Midway under the command of Admiral Yamamoto. It consisted of 10 battleships, 5 carriers, 18 cruisers, 57 destroyers, a number of subs, and auxiliary vessels with 3,500 case-hardened troops.

Yamamoto knew that our carrier Saratoga had taken a torpedo and was in the Seattle shipyard, that the Lexington was sunk and the Yorktown damaged. Believing the Hornet and the Enterprise were in the South Pacific and there were no others, he thought he could take Midway easily. But little did he know the capability of the American sailors!

Admiral Nimitz was assembling every fighting ship available to fight the greatest sea battle ever--the Battle of Midway.

On May 27, 1942, we arrived Pearl with the damaged Yorktown. The extent of her damage had been relayed on ahead of our arrival, so that the shipyard was ready and waiting for us.

Upon our arrival we worked night and day, taking on ammo, fuel, stores, and supplies while the Yorktown was being patched up.

On May 30 we were underway again, with the Yorktown in fighting condition, heading northwest. We topped off our fuel from the cruiser Astoria on June 1.

June 2, 1942, we rendezvoused with the Hornet and the Enterprise and their battle groups. Now our strike force consisted of 3 carriers, 7 cruisers, 17 destroyers, and some subs. In all, we had 33 ships--to 100 of the Japs.

Admiral Halsey would have commanded this battle group, but he was hospitalized in Pearl, so Admiral Nimitz named Admiral Spruance to take command of this striking fleet.

June 3, 1942--my nineteenth birthday. Excited--high tension--nerves taut. We were steaming at high speed and at general quarters, moving into position to launch strikes at the Japanese fleet at daybreak the next day.

On June 3 land-based aircraft from the Naval base on Midway Island struck the advancing Japanese armada. And on the morning of June 4, we had moved into position for attack. And attack we did.

For four days--June 3, 4, 5, and 6--the battle raged. In every respect it was very similar to the Battle of Coral Sea--in extent, fury, and consequence. It was the Coral Sea doubled and re-doubled. June 3, 1942--my nineteenth birthday! What a birthday party!

The Jap carriers at Midway were the same ones that had raided Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

On June 3, 1942, the Japs had bombed the airfield on Midway. On June 4, they loaded bombs on their planes for another strike when one of their scouts spotted our striking force. Too late the Japanese admiral realized the U. S. Navy was present, ready, willing, and able, and had to be dealt with. He issued orders to remove bombs and re-load with torpedoes.

It was during this operation that our attacking aircraft struck a devastating blow to the Japanese fleet. During the day the Japs lost four carriers, one cruiser, and a couple of destroyers.

In the meantime, the Japs had managed to put a couple of bombs into the carrier Yorktown, causing her to lose speed and become dead in the water and listing heavily to port.

The Yorktown's aircraft returning from the attack did not know the ship had been hit and had to splash down into the sea. We picked up many of the pilots and airmen, as did other destroyers.

Having lost all of their aircraft, the Japs were retreating westward, with the Hornet and Enterprise forces still after them. The attack was broken off on June 6 due to the loss of aircraft and pilots. We did not have the surface power to enter into a surface engagement with the many Jap battleships. The Jap admiral did not realize or correctly evaluate this situation, else he would have been on the offensive rather than retreating.

This battle broke the backbone of the Japanese fleet and was the turning point of the war in the Pacific. The Saratoga was out of the Navy Yard, and new carriers commenced arriving from the States.

After four hectic days without much sleep, at battle stations constantly, eating sandwiches or anything that could be carried from the galley, no showers, and complete exhaustion, it was time for a break. On June 12 we arrived Pearl for some much needed rest.

On June 20 the Yorktown and the destroyer Hamman were sunk by Jap subs.

While we were in Pearl, they added two more 20-MM guns to our armament.

During the next two months we were at sea for only a few days at a time, conducting firing practice and drills.

On 18 August 1942 we were underway from Pearl, steaming in company with the Hornet, two cruisers and squadron two destroyers, base course 215, speed 17 knots. Since losing the carrier Yorktown at Midway, we had been assigned to the USS Hornet battle group.

I think it worth mentioning that during carrier operation and plane guard--trailing the carrier during plane operations in case a plane splashed down and the pilot or crew member had to be rescued out of the water, the carrier always rewarded us with ten gallons of ice cream on their return. That was a real treat when at sea for long periods at a time--especially when the powdered eggs were getting greener, the bugs in the cereal were multiplying, and the powdered milk was getting darker in color each day. We ate a lot of dehydrated foods during those days.

I remember, too, how good that ice cream was! When a supply ship from the States or Pearl would show up and we took on fresh-frozen milk, it would last only a few days because of our lack of storage space. Then it was back to powdered milk.

On 27 August 1942 we rendezvoused with carriers Wasp and Saratoga and their battle groups in the South Pacific. A lot of enemy subs were in the area we were operating in, off the east coast of the Solomon Islands. The weather was hot, and Navy ships did not have air conditioning. We relied on blowers and fans for cooling.

About every day an enemy torpedo was sighted. We made several enemy sub contacts and attacks, dropping many depth charges. At least two subs were known to have been sunk during these patrols off the coast of the Solomons.

On September 1 we parted company with the Saratoga and the Wasp.

On 6 September we were plane guard for the Hornet. One of the planes preparing to land dropped an explosive and exploded an enemy torpedo that had been fired at the Russell. Although I had not accepted the Lord at this time, I felt Someone was watching over me.

On 8 September we hit a bad storm while patrolling east of the New Hebrides.

On 15 September we again rendezvoused with the Wasp and her group. During formation steaming we ran into a Japanese sub wolf pack. The Wasp was hit and sunk. The battlewhip North Carolina was hit by two torpedoes, and one destroyer was hit. We sunk one sub, and aircraft from the Hornet caught one sub on the surface and sunk it with bombs.

On 26 September we entered Noumea, New Caledonia. I could have gone ashore but didn't. I had received no mail for almost two months.

October 1 we put to sea with the Hornet and battle group. On October 4 the Hornet launched an attack on Bouganville and scored two bomb hits on one cruiser, one hit on a tanker, and two hits on two cargo ships. Later in the day our aircraft shot down a Jap patrol bomber. No Jap attack followed, so probably the patrol plane was shot down before they could radio their contact report.

On 25 October we raided Buin in Bouganville but did little damage due to overcast of heavy clouds. Later in the day we were attacked by about 25 dive bombers. All were shot down and we suffered no damage.

During the late summer of 1942, the Japs had pushed south into the Solomon Islands in preparation to continue their push south into the New Hebrides Islands. The Japs managed to hack out an airfield on Guadalcanal which if not destroyed would have severely threatened our fleet operations in the Southwest Pacific.

In August 1942 the Marines had landed on Guadalcanal and captured the airfield. They named it Henderson Field in honor of one of their flyers killed at Midway.

The Japs were determined to have Henderson Field and made every effort to re-take it. It was a real slugfest for several months between the Japs and the U. S.

In one naval battle alone, 32 Jap ships were sunk between Guadalcanal and Tulagi, which are only about twelve miles apart. Of course, we had the help of the new battleships North Carolina and South Dakota. This was some of the worst action of the war. No one can imagine what the Marines went through on the beach as the Navy patrolled and tried to protect them by engaging Japanese shipping that was coming down almost nightly trying to supply and reinforce their forces on the beach.

It was a hornets' nest for several months. The Japs would always come down under the cover of darkness, arriving after midnight to be met by our surface forces. Jap transports and supply ships would be sunk in those shark-infested waters, and men and supplies would be chopped to pieces by ship propellers to prevent them from reaching shore. We lost cruisers and destroyers also. There were so many ships lost in this narrow strip of water that it became known as "Iron Bottom Bay."

We saw a lot of action during this Solomon Campaign and were at sea a lot. My longest time was 102 days at one time.

In October of '42, the captain issued an order to destroy all diaries, fearing that if we were sunk, the Japs might be able to retrieve them for intelligence purposes.

Occasionally we would slip into Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides Islands or Noumea, New Caledonia, in the Loyalty Islands to take on ammunition, supplies, and stores. We always needed fuel and did a lot of fueling at sea from larger ships steaming alongside about 12-15 knots and about 50 feet apart.

When we were able to enter these harbors, we were issued two beer chits that we could take over to the beach and exchange for two beers or sell them for five dollars apiece. Some time we would get up a football game using a dried coconut as a football. There was nothing to do and no place to go on those islands. If there was liberty, it was only about two hours and then back to the ship. Then others would go over for their fun and recreation and return to the ship; and we would head back to sea again. This type of routine went on through the fall of '42 and into the third quarter of 1943.

The Japs continued their all-out effort to re-supply and reinforce their troops on Guadalcanal by sending troops and ships down "The Slot" from their large base at Rabaul. These convoys became known as the "Tokyo Express." And, yes, we used to listen on the radio to "Tokyo Rose" each day to find out how many ships and planes we had lost the day before. She was an American girl turned traitor. She did play a lot of American music. Being so far from home, we found this was the only broadcast station we could pick up.

With the sinking of the carrier Wasp and the carriers Enterprise and Saratoga having suffered torpedo and bomb damage and undergoing repair at shipyards, only the carrier Hornet was left in the

entire South Pacific. Although we were winning battles, we were in danger of losing the war. The Japs had us badly outnumbered in planes and ships. We could not stay long in range of their land-based aircraft. It was mandatory that we use a lot of caution; therefore, we used to employ a lot of strike-and-run tactics.

At this time we had managed to stop the Jap push to the south at the Solomon Islands, but the fighting and action were fierce. The Japs were trying desperately to push us out of Guadalcanal. We were in control of Henderson Field, but the Japs were making an all-out effort to re-take the airfield. Jap carriers were waiting just north of Guadalcanal in the vicinity of the Santa Cruz Islands to fly in Jap planes when they took the airfield. But they never did. The Marines managed a miracle and held the field.

Meantime, the carrier Enterprise and the new battleship South Dakota had returned to the South Pacific, and Admiral Halsey ordered the Enterprise and Hornet battle groups to proceed north of the Santa Cruz Islands and intercept the Jap carriers. The Russell was still operating as part of the Hornet battle group.

October 24 and 25, 1942: the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands raged--five Jap carriers to two U. S. carriers. We were always outnumbered. The plane attacks were awesome. How could any human survive such destructive power!

Having just come from the States, the Enterprise and the South Dakota had been outfitted with the newest weapons, which included 40-MM guns. They were deadly against incoming enemy planes. Approximately 95 percent of the Japs' planes were shot down during the battle, but some always managed to get through the screen.

The Hornet took a torpedo but was still operational until a Jap plane that had been hit made a suicide dive into the stack of the Hornet, causing an inferno. The carrier lost speed and became dead in the water. The destroyers Russell and Morris were ordered in alongside to fight fires and take off the wounded. We took aboard over 400 wounded men but had to abandon rescue efforts when attacking planes returned.

The Hornet was hit again and again and had to be abandoned. Two of our screening destroyers fired torpedoes into the ship to keep her from falling into enemy hands.

On the morning of October 27, the Hornet slid beneath the waves just before the arrival of Jap ships that had hopes of boarding her.

We lost this battle: one U. S. carrier lost, one damaged, the South Dakota damaged, plus one cruiser and one destroyer.

Japanese loses were two carriers severely damaged, one cruiser and one destroyer.

The destroyers in the Hornet and Enterprise battle groups were commended by both Admirals Nimitz and Halsey for their outstanding seamanship in fighting the fires aboard the Hornet and in rescuing survivors. To receive commendations from two such high-ranking admirals makes one walk a little taller and with a lot of pride. The destroyer sailors were good at their jobs, and we knew it. We had a lot of experience. We had been there. I feel proud to have served this great nation as a "tin can" sailor in a time of great need.

Although we had a lot of battle experience, there were always drills, drills, drills: general quarters--abandon ship--man overboard--fire--damage control. We trained constantly.

The Pacific was a much smoother ocean than

the North Atlantic, but we still had storms and typhoons. At times when it was rough and waves came crashing over the bow and rolling over the decks, it was dangerous and scary to go forward or aft. You had to go outside on the main deck and make a dash for it. There were no outership passageways; outer doors and hatches were always battened down to keep the sea out. There was only time between waves for one man at a time to make that dash. In your mind you would time the roll of the ship and the frequency of the waves as they crashed aboard. Open the door--step out--close and dog the door and run! One slip could be fatal. You could be crushed against the deckhouse or slammed against a piece of deck machinery and washed overboard if your timing wasn't perfect.

It was particularly dangerous at night when you had to make the "dash." We always steamed "darken ship"--no outside lights. Your eyes had to adjust to the darkness before making the "dash."

In contrast and generally speaking, the South Pacific was warm, calm, and very blue in color. The North Atlantic was cold, rough, angry, and green in color.

I have seen the Southern Cross, which is visible at night only in the Southern Hemisphere. The water in the Pacific is very phosphorus and is very pretty at night as the bow of the ship slices through the sea. It is not uncommon for several porpoises to gather at the bow of a ship and play as the ship steams along. Sometimes they will tag along for miles, swimming up and down, in and out. Flying fish are nice to watch, also. As the ship knifes through the water, they surface and fly out several yards just above the surface of the water.

After losing the Hornet in the Santa Cruz Battle, we operated for a while with the Enterprise and her battle group protecting Guadalcanal. Slowly our main duty and responsibility turned from being part of fast carrier attack forces to screening convoys from Ulithy and Noumea to Guadalcanal to strengthen and re-supply our forces. We were also involved in a lot of bombardment of Jap forces each time we arrived Guadalcanal.

In late spring or early summer of 1943, we were sent to Sydney, Australia, for ten days of rest and rehabilitation. We needed it. The crew

were tired and fatigued. Tempers were short. We needed a good meal. It was great when we steamed into the harbor of Sydney and tied up at the Willomooloo docks. It was the first time we had been alongside a pier in many months, and it was great to be out of the war zone, if only for a little while. We had the feeling we could let our guard down and sit back and relax, although there was a lot of work to do on the ship. At least we were not in the sights of Japanese weapons. The liberty was good in Sydney, and the local people treated us royally.

Upon departing Sydney, we returned to the war zone, escorting merchant ships supplying Guadalcanal.

The battle for Guadalcanal was extremely important to both the Japs and the U. S. Losses for this island from August 7, 1942, to February 7, 1943, included two carriers, five heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and fifteen destroyers--all sunk. Japanese losses were two battleships, one carrier, two heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and twelve destroyers--all sunk. The Japs had been stopped. Much of the fighting for this island was at night, which is particularly dangerous. Death can come quickly from gunfire, torpedoes, and collision.

In late summer of 1943, I was transferred back to the States and new construction. A destroyer escort named the USS Tatum (DE789) was being built in Orange, Texas. But upon arrival in the States, I was granted thirty days' leave.

I remember riding that train across the States (Southern route) through Arizona and Texas. It was hot and steamy, with no air conditioning at that time, and every car filled with servicemen. I think it took about five days to cross the country.

One thing I remember while home on leave was walking into a hot dog/hamburger restaurant on 5th Street in Richmond and ordering a hot dog with chili, onions, and mustard. The guy who took my order looked me in the eye and said, "We don't have onions. There is a war going on." I guess I will never forget it. At twenty years of age, having played a big part in sinking several German subs in the Atlantic, having fought in seven major battles in the Pacific, having been in the battles in which we lost all four of our big attack carriers (Lexington, Yorktown, Wasp, and Hornet), having been bombed, straffed by aircraft, and fired on by Jap subs with torpedoes, having seen dead sailors buried at sea--and this guy tells me there is a war going on! And he wasn't joking!

Although I had my uniform on and my ribbons and battle stars displayed proudly on my chest, he was a foreigner and didn't know.

It was good to see Mom and my brother Bobby. They lived up over a store at Second and Main streets in Richmond. Although I was sending Mom an allotment, she struggled to make ends meet. But my loyalty, dedication, and devotion to family and country remained very strong. I still had not accepted Christ, but I always had a deep-down, sincere feeling that the Lord was in control of my life.

From the time I reported for duty aboard the USS Russell in the late winter of 1941 until I was transferred in late summer of 1943, the ship was building a tremendous war record. She was credited with sinking several German subs while on convoy duty in the North Atlantic before the war started. She also sunk several Jap subs and participated in seven major battles in the Pacific, convoy duty, escort duty, rescue missions of sailors at sea, rescue missions alongside damaged ships that had been hit by bombs, torpedoes and shell fire. Yes, I was--and still am fifty some years later--proud to have been part and a member of the crew of the USS Russell (DD414). For almost two and one half years, this was the life I lived.

The Russell survived the war, earning a total of sixteen battle stars, and was finally sold for scrap after the war to the National Metal and Steel Corp., Terminal Island, California.

After my leave was up, I headed for Orange, Texas, and reported for duty aboard the USS Tatum (DE789) as part of the nucleus crew. The ship was not complete when I arrived, so we were quartered in barracks on the beach.

Gradually as the shipyard completed their jobs in building the ship, it became now the responsibility of the crew to bring the Tatum to life as a fighting man-of-war.

The Tatum was a little smaller than the Russell, but her duties were parallel to the Russell's. Her duties would be anti-submarine warfare, convoy duty, escort duty, bombardment, and invasion screening. But we did not have the speed, endurance, or armament of a destroyer to be part of a fast carrier task force.

The Tatum was commissioned November 22, 1943, in Orange, Texas. We were underway from Orange on November 26 and arrived Galveston, Texas, on the 27th. We departed Galveston on December 11, 1943, stopped in New Orleans, and then proceeded to Bermuda to commence "shake down" exercises and underway training.

December 23, 1943, we arrived Bermuda and commenced shakedown exercises on Christmas Day. There is no difference in the days or holidays during wartime. This was my third Christmas away from home. The last Christmas I had been in Noumea, New Caledonia, in the South Pacific, aboard the Russell.

We continued shakedown exercises through December and until January 16, 1944, when we departed and were underway for Boston, Mass.

After a few days in Boston, we were underway for Norfolk. I managed a few days' leave and was able to see my sister living in Newport News and then Mom and my brother in Richmond.

We were underway again on February 13 with a small carrier, headed south looking for German U-boats. But by this time the number of German subs had been greatly reduced. On February 18 we arrived at Colon, Canal Zone. In the next few days we made port in Guantanamo, Cuba; New York; and Norfolk.

On April 9 while escorting a tug towing several barges, two of them broke in half during rough weather, and we destroyed the halves by gunfire.

On April 15, 1944, we had our first enemy sub contact and made for attacks. Results: unknown.

On April 19 we departed for Plymouth, England, and upon arriving found half of the city had been leveled by German planes.

We moved from Plymouth to Milford Haven, England, and then on to Belfast, Ireland. The liberty was good in Belfast. While there, I checked the telephone directory and found a Lord Whittington listed, but I did not attempt to make contact.

While at sea May 2, headed back to New York, we found an empty life raft. No sign of life.

On May 28 we were underway again with several other destroyer escorts headed east.

My 21st birthday came and went. On June 6 we arrived Casablanca, French Morocco. This was one of the toughest ports I had ever been in. Given a chance, the Arabs would kill you for the shoes on your feet. We went ashore in groups for protection.

Next day we were on our way back across the Atlantic, convoying and escorting merchant ships. We arrived New York June 17. After a week in New York for engine repairs, we moved to Melville, Rhode Island.

On June 30 we were underway with several small carriers and other DE's.

On July 9 we passed by Gibraltar and entered the Mediterranean Sea--my first time. We made several ports of call--Oran, Algeria; Birzirty; Oran; Malta; Alexandria, Egypt.

It was in Alexandria that the only supplies available was camel meat. After two days and most of the entire crew sick, the doctor ordered all the camel meat thrown overboard.

At each port there were more and more landing craft, supply ships, and escort vessels gathering.

On August 5 we passed through the Straits of Messina. This was quite an experience, as the straits are only $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles wide, with Italy on one side and Sicily on the other. We arrived Naples this date and received a lot of mail.

August 8 we were underway with hundreds of landing craft headed north. On August 12 we arrived Ajaccio, Corsica, rendezvoused with many more landing craft, and headed for the invasion of Southern France.

On August 15, 1944, the invasion commenced, at 0245. There was much bombardment, and at 0920 it was reported our forces were on the beach

and moving inland. The Germans offered very little resistance, nothing like the fierce attacks of the Japs that we had experienced in the Pacific. We experienced several aircraft attacks and made one sub contact but did not receive any shelling by German 88-MM cannons on the beach as expected. We lost very few landing craft from air attacks.

We escorted several convoys between Calvi, Corsica, and St. Germon and Toulon, France. We operated in this area for the next few months, and then on November 24 we departed Oran with a large convoy headed west and back to the States.

Upon arriving back in the States, we went into the shipyard at Staten Island, New York, for repairs and overhaul. On March 16 we were underway headed south. On March 22 we passed through the Panama Canal again, and I was back in the Pacific. We stopped in San Diego and then on to Pearl Harbor, further west, and back into the war zone, arriving in Okinawa on May 15, 1945.

Okinawa was the front line at this time in the war. The fighting was furious, on land and on the sea.

The Japs had tunnels all over the island, and shelling did little good. It was about this time that flame-throwers came into existence, and

the Marines were using them to dislodge the enemy out of the tunnels.

The Japs were very stubborn and determined. Our job was patrolling off the coast of Okinawa, along with many other destroyers and destroyer escorts.

At this time the Japs had very little navy left, and their air force had been greatly reduced. But the threat of Jap suicide planes was constant. This was a different kind of war than what we had experienced before in the Pacific. We no longer were a part of the big battle groups. Day after day we were on picket duty and patrol just off the beaches of Okinawa.

The threat of the suicide attacks was constant, and many days we were at general quarters (battle stations) for fourteen to eighteen hours. We were attacked almost daily, but we always managed to shoot the planes down before they could get close enough to slam into the ship.

The suicide planes would fly low over the island, and as soon as they cleared the beach, they would drop down to just above the surface of the water and make their runs toward a ship. We lost many destroyers and destroyer escorts due to

the suicide attacks. Picket duty was extremely dangerous and nerve-racking.

One evening in May we were under attack. We had the suicide plane on radar, and as soon as he cleared the island, we commenced firing, with every gun trained on that single plane. But on he came, just a few feet off the surface of the water. Shells were exploding close, but he kept on coming straight toward the ship. When he was about 100 feet from the ship, we hit him. He hit the water, but the engine from his plane ricocheted off the water and slammed into the side of the ship, making a big dent in the bulkhead of number two engine room. Two men were hurt from gauges being knocked off.

We didn't know until a short time later during a damage inspection that the 550-pound bomb he was carrying had also come aboard. It had gone through the bulkhead of the superstructure and into the executive officers' stateroom, one deck down and directly under the radio room, which was my battle station. But the bomb did not explode, or I wouldn't be sitting here writing today.

We sent a radio message to some outfit on the island and went into port. We were met by a team of demolition experts who defused the bomb.

With "come alongs" they pulled the bomb out of the same hole it had made when it hit the ship and dropped it over the side. Another close call! My guardian angel has saved me many times. Yes, there really is a God, but at that time I still had not accepted Him as my Savior.

I believe that the two months we were on patrol and picket duty we shot down approximately 20 Japanese suicide planes.

After we were hit, we went to Leyte in the Philippines and went alongside a destroyer tender for repairs. While in Leyte Gulf, the two atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and soon thereafter the Japs surrendered aboard the battleship Missouri. During the time just before the official surrender, Admiral Halsey was asked what should be done if enemy planes were spotted. He stated, "Shoot them down in a friendly manner." He was famous for many catchy sayings like that.

There was a big celebration in Leyte Gulf when the Japs surrendered. Guns were fired, flares were fired, search lights were turned on, and the captain authorized the pharmacy mate to mix up a little alcohol so that everyone could drink a little toast.

Although the war was over, it was several days before any outside lights appeared on any ship.

War was so much of my everyday life that it was hard to imagine that it was over. For almost four years--from 17 years old to 21 years old--all I had known was war. Those years are engraved in my memory forever. It is unreal to think of all the lives that were lost, all the ships that were sunk, all the aircraft that was lost, the destruction, the suffering, the hardships. No one knows what war really is unless they were there. I can't imagine what hell is like if it is any worse than war--and I believe it is.

I had made first class radioman while on the Tatum, and not long after the war was over, I was transferred back to the States for shore duty. I was senior radioman at North Beach, Maryland, research lab. I was responsible for all communications between the base and various aircraft that would come up from Patuxent Naval Air Station and fly against different radar antennas that the Navy was experimenting with. It really was a "gravy job," but I deserved a break.

I used to go home about every weekend with a friend of mine that was stationed in Washington. He had a girlfriend in Richmond who was in training to be a nurse.

One day in late 1946, they gave Ann a ride downtown, and I just happened to be along. And that is how Ann and I met. We started dating each other just about every weekend.

One weekend I took her to the Tantilla, a large dance hall that used to be on West Broad Street. During one of the dances, I kissed her right in the middle of the dance floor. That may have been the first time I kissed her. We became good friends, and about three months later, on March 3, 1947, we were married. Although she had been in training for about two years, she had to give it up when we were married. At that time those in training were not allowed to be married--a big sacrifice on her part for a sailor like me!

It was frightening to me to think about getting married. I was broke every payday. How was I going to support a wife! I was still helping Mom and my brother. But I borrowed $50 from my aunt, and we were married by Rev. Hickerson in his parsonage on the North Side of Richmond.

We got an upstairs room across from the First Baptist Church, on the corner of Kensington and Mulberry streets in Richmond.

I managed to get home almost every weekend. I would ride the Navy bus into Washington and then catch the Greyhound bus to Richmond. It was always good to go home but on Sunday evenings when I caught the bus back to Washington, I would have to sit in the bus station all night waiting for the Navy bus back to North Beach on Monday mornings. It always was a long day on Mondays.

Ann got a job at Retreat Hospital, not far from where we lived. And somehow or other we managed to start saving a little money. Our first Christmas I was supposed to have the duty and would not be able to get home. But somehow I managed. And when she came home from work on Christmas Eve, I was there. She was surprised and happy. I had bought her a cedar chest for Christmas, and when she walked in, I had a little Christmas tree sitting on it.

We didn't have much. We were struggling, but I was the happiest I had ever been in my life. Together we were meeting the challenge of life. The Lord had richly blessed me again, but I still had not accepted Christ.

All that winter Ann braved the cold and the snow walking to work, and she became very sick. She had to miss time from work, and I was not able to be with her. I felt very sorry for her. But slowly she regained her health.

In the spring of 1948, about a year after we were married, I was transferred to help establish and become part of Navy Communication Unit No. Four in Tripoli, Libya. It was our job to install a remote transmitter site, remote receiver site, and the main radio room at Wheelus AFB in Tripoli. My specific job was to be in charge of erecting the rhombic antennas at the remote sites. There were only about 25 of us in the unit. We used the same quarters the Germans had used during the war. There wasn't much to do but work and play softball. I did write to Ann often. We used to have sand-storms frequently, and it was a constant battle to keep the sand cleaned out of our rooms and out of our lockers.

During the winter of 1948, while working on antennas at the remote transmitter site, it started snowing. We were told it was the first time in fifty years. There was no accumulation, and it melted quickly.

We were on the air transmitting and receiving during that winter, and we commenced to handle communications from the ships in the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean Sea.

It was at this time that the officer in charge of our unit set up an unauthorized ham station. He was communicating with hams back in the States. Ann had a neighbor in Mineral, VA, who was a ham, and we worked out a schedule whereby we could talk to each other by radio. The hams in the States used to tell us we were coming in like local stations even though we were 5,000 miles away. They didn't know we were using powerful Navy transmitters with rhombic antennas. The British shut us down after a few months because we didn't have a ham license and for using five times more power than was authorized for hams.

Shortly after that, in 1949, I was transferred to one of the primary Naval communications stations in Port Lyautey, French Morocco. We handled messages and communications for bases in Europe and North Africa, the ships in the Mediterranean, and almost all the ships in the Eastern Atlantic Ocean. I was supervisor of one shift, and it was a challenge for us to keep up

with all the messages being sent to ships and stations throughout the world. As I recall, I believe I had 30-35 men on my shift.

One Saturday night while just scanning the broadcast band on one of the receivers, I picked up radio station WRVA, Richmond, Virginia. "Sunshine Sue," a country/western band was playing. That made me feel a little closer to home.

After a year in Port Lyautey, I was transferred back to the States for duty in the classified message center in the Pentagon in Washington, D. C. I had been gone two tough years, and it was good to see my babe once again.

Ann quit work at Retreat Hospital, and we moved to the Shirley Duke Apartments in Alexandria, Virginia. She was now a housewife while I worked at the Pentagon.

All the time I had been gone, we had been saving every penny we could, and we were able to buy a 1947 Plymouth when I came home. It sure made life more enjoyable, we we were able to drive to Richmond and Mineral to see our mothers without having to ride the bus any more.

We had some money left over, and our long-range dream was to have our own home some day.

We continued to be very conservative and were reluctant to buy even a Coke--and Cokes were five cents at that time!

We went to one of our homes every time we got the chance, which was about every week or two, and mostly to Ann's home. Her home was a 100-acre farm about three miles from Mineral, where her mother and stepfather lived. Ann came from a very poor family, also, and her mother worked in a factory in Louisa, Virginia. She used to have to walk about a mile to a hard-surfaced road to catch a ride to and from work. She used to buy her groceries in Louisa on Fridays before she came home. We used to meet her whenever we could on Fridays to help her with the groceries. I had a good mother-in-law, the best friend I ever had, and I thought a lot of her. She thought a lot of me, too.

Ann and I were living happily in Alexandria in our little three-room apartment.

On February 21, 1951, the Lord blessed us with a son. Ronald Lewis Whittington was born two months premature at Bathesda Naval Hospital and weighed four pounds and two ounces. Ronnie was also born with a cleft pallet. He was kept in the hospital in an incubator for several weeks.

He was unable to nurse and had to be fed with a "bottle nipple glass cover." When he came home, Ann and I really had our hands full. Ann was a good mother, and slowly Ronnie began to gain weight. One ounce of milk at one time was a big meal for him, and it took an hour to feed it to him.

I loved Ann a lot when we married, but nothing compared to my love for her when Ronnie was born. My loyalty, dedication, and devotion to family and country became extremely strong and continues to grow to this day.

Ronnie's pallet was closed at Bethesda Naval Hospital when he was two years old.

Sixteen months after Ronnie was born, the Lord blessed us with another son. Kenneth David Whittington was born on June 21, 1952, also at Bethesda, and yes, my love for family was increasing rapidly.

Also in 1952 we commenced to build our home in Chesterfield County, just outside Richmond. I was transferred across the river to a radio photo unit in the Navy Department Building.

My shore duty was coming to a close, and I knew it would not be long before I would be

transferred to sea duty or foreign shore duty. Our home was being completed, and it was our plan for Ann and our two sons to move to Richmond. In the spring of 1954, I received orders to report to the USS Bulwark (AM425), which was being built at the Naval shipyard in Portsmouth, Virginia.

The Bulwark was a new and special type of mine sweeper. It was constructed of wood and was as much "non-magnetic" as possible. This was a completely new type of mine sweeper designed to sweep almost all mines but primarily the super-sensitive pressure-type mines. The ship was designed to be small--172 feet in length and 36 feet wide; it drew only 10 feet of water. We had a "hand-picked" crew of 70 officers and men. Eugene H. Knight was the captain, and he had been an enlisted man who came up through the ranks. I was senior radioman and was in charge of six men. We were small, but we had a good communication gang.

The ship was commissioned in Norfolk, on November 12, 1953, and we reported for duty to the Commander of Mine Forces, Atlantic Fleet, based in Charleston, South Carolina.

Ann, Ronnie, and David were living in Richmond, and it was hard on her to maintain a

household with me gone, but she managed and did an excellent job.

Some time in 1954 she and the boys moved to Charleston. We lived in a trailer, and I was able to get home about every night. We were happy.

During 1954 and 1955 the Bulwark won the Battle Efficiency Award. I personally received a commendation from the Commander of Mines Forces, Atlantic Fleet, and from our captain for outstanding performance of duty that enabled the Bulwark to win the Battle Efficiency Award. I was--and still am--very proud of those commendations.

Ann began taking Ronnie and David to Sunday School, and it was only natural that I attend also. I began to get vaguely interested in church. A new and important milestone was beginning to take shape in my life. But in the meantime, the ship was ordered to the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean for a six-month deployment. Naturally, Ann and the boys moved back to Richmond.

The Bulwark was a rough-riding ship, drawing only ten feet of water. It was a rough trip across. We were back to the days of Columbus' "wooden ships and iron men."

While in the Med, we had an unusual experience transiting the Corinth Canal. It was only three miles long and 100 feet wide, with jagged mountain cliffs on both sides--not much room to maneuver a ship.

Upon our return to the States, I was transferred to the USS Bamberg County (LST209) as a member of a flag command. I wasn't aboard long until I was transferred to shore duty in Norfolk, Virginia, with duty at Commander-in-Chief Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANTFLT) Headquarters, near the Naval Base on Hampton Blvd. I applied for Naval housing, and it wasn't long until Ann and the boys joined me.

Ronnie started to school while we were living there.

In the spring of 1957, some of the radiomen I worked with got me interested in trying to make some "home brew." I followed their instructions carefully, and everything seemed to be going fine. One day while this brew was aging and before it had been bottled, a message came in from Washington that President Eisenhower was going to Bermuda on board the USS Canberra, our first guided missile cruiser, to meet with the

Prime Minister of England. CINCLANTFLT was to provide eight radiomen to go aboard the Canberra as part of the President's staff to handle communications between the President and the White House. I was chosen as one of the eight. I felt good that so much confidence was being placed in me. I went home and told Ann and the boys. Then I bottled and capped the home brew and put it in a box in a hall closet to wait for my return.

A couple of days out of port, it was decided that the President wanted to do some fishing. The captain's gig, a small boat, was used, and he and his Press Secretary Haggarty and a couple of secret service men, along with me to maintain communications with the Canberra, set out to do some deep sea fishing. It is still hard for me to realize that for a couple of hours, I was the only link between the President of the United States and the entire world.

The President disembarked in Bermuda, and we headed back to Norfolk.

When I arrived home, Ann told me that the home brew had been exploding in the closet while I had been gone and she was afraid to open the door! I got the mess cleaned up, and that was the end of my home brew making!

We were happy in Norfolk because I was getting home every night and we were able to live a somewhat normal life. We were doing things together and were able to attend church together. My interest in church was increasing, and in 1957 I was baptized at Northend Baptist Church. I felt very proud of that.

Not long after I had returned from Bermuda, I was called into the office at CINCLATFLT and told they had received a letter of commendation addressed to me from Capt. Aurand, Naval aide to the President, stating the President had asked him to send a letter of commendation to the eight radiomen from CINCLANTFLT for their efficient and outstanding performance of duty in the way the President's communications were handled while he was aboard the USS Canberra. The commendation was written on White House letterhead stationery and was made a part of my personnel record.

I have all of my commendations, certificates of achievements, medals, ribbons, performance of duty awards, etc., and I value them very highly.

Early in 1959 the time was approaching for me to be transferred to sea again. Ann and the boys returned to our home in Richmond, and on 6 Feb. 1959 I was transferred to teletype

maintenance school at the Naval base in Norfolk. It was a tough school for me, but I was extremely interested, and I put in a lot of study and graduated at the top of the class.

I then applied for and was accepted to cryptographic maintenance school at the shipyard in Portsmouth. Both schools were somewhat related. Because of the secret classification of crypto machines, I went to school in a vault. Security was tight. I remember you could take anything into school you wished--such as newspapers, lunches, etc.; but you were not allowed to take anything out--no books or notes. At night you had to study from memory only. No conversation between students was permitted outside school. I also enjoyed this school. It, too, was a real challenge for me, and I felt good to graduate in the top half of the class.

I was able to get home to Richmond almost every weekend while attending these schools. The bus trips were tiresome. Then upon arriving in Richmond, it meant riding a streetcar to the end of the line and a two-mile walk to our home in the country. But it was worth it!

Yes, we attended Sunday School and church each Sunday, and that meant a mile walk to and from church with two small sons. Even when I wasn't able to be home, Ann would take them by the hand and off to church they would go.

Although I had accepted Christ and been baptized, my love and faith in the Lord were continuing to grow. There was a third dimension that had entered into my life. It no longer was just family and country. It was now my loyalty, dedication, and devotion to God, family, and country. To this day my faith and love in the Lord continues to grow. A lot of credit goes to Ann for her demonstration to Ronnie, David, and me of her love and dedication to God. She taught the boys to pray. She read Bible stories to them. She taught them good habits. She always showed them an abundance of love and concern. Not only was she a good witness to them, but also to me.

It was always tough each Sunday afternoon for me to say goodbye for another week and make the two-mile hike to catch the streetcar. Always without fail, upon my arrival at the bus station, I would call home and talk until bus time. Then

there would be another goodbye. It was heart-breaking, but we both realized it was for the best that I stay in the Navy until I reached retirement because of so much time I already had in the Navy.

Ann measured up in every way to meet everyday problems at home--sickness, appointments, furnace breakdowns, water leaks, etc. No matter what the problems, she always managed to measure up for both of our responsibilities and duties.

There was a lot of sadness and heartache in our lives from the time we were married in 1947 until I was discharged from the Navy July 20, 1960--a lot of goodbyes, a lot of worries at times. But there were also a lot of good times and joy. I am thankful to God that He gave us courage and strength to see us through. We have so much to be thankful for, and we owe it all to Him.

After completing cryptographic school, I was assigned to the USS Nantahala (A060. I went aboard as senior radioman. Imagine me--senior radioman on such a large ship!

We operated locally off the coast of Virginia and North Carolina until August 1959. I was still able to get home a lot of weekends.

On Friday 7 August 1959, we deployed to the Mediterranean Sea for a six-month tour of duty with the Sixth Fleet. I did not know for sure, but I strongly suspected this would be my last long deployment.

On the way across the Atlantic, we encountered a severe storm, and we lost a lot of deck cargo. I took my Bible with me on this cruise and read it through. It was the only book that was allowed to remain on the table in the petty officers' lounge. As we entered the Med, I plotted our daily position on the map in my Bible. We crossed and re-crossed many of the same courses that Paul had sailed many years ago. We visited many of the same ports in the Eastern Med that Paul had visited. This was all very interesting to me. I could hardly believe it.

Then we made port in Beirut, Lebanon. Different tours were being planned in the area, but I had decided to stay aboard; it was hard for me to go ashore for pleasure and enjoyment when I was so far away from the family. However, the officer in charge of tours said he had more tours than he could cover and asked me if I would take charge of a group to Jerusalem. I said, "Yes!" I couldn't believe it!

I assembled the men, and we boarded a twin engine plane, climbed to 13,000 feet to get over the mountains, and landed in Jerusalem an hour and a half later. We flew over the Jordan River and could see the Dead Sea in the background. It was quite a contrast, Jerusalem so close to the Dead Sea and the difference in elevation. The Dead Sea is 1,297 feet below sea level, and Jerusalem is 3,577 feet above sea level.

We entered the old city of Jerusalem through Saint Stephen Gate. We saw the Church of Saint Anne and the Pools of Bethesda. We visited the Umariyyah School for Franciscan monks. Jerusalem has been destroyed and rebuilt 29 times, rebuilt the last time by Franciscans. Every Friday at 3:00 P.M. a Franciscan procession, including tourists, retraces the steps of Jesus and stops to pray at each of the 14 stations along the "Way of the Cross." It was Friday, and we had the privilege of walking the Way of the Cross with the Franciscan procession. The last five stations are in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre:

10th - Jesus Is Stripped of His Garment
11th - Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross
12th - Jesus Dies Upon the Cross
13th - Jesus' Body Is Taken from the Cross
14th - The Tomb

We had seen Calvary! How great! It was unbelievable!

We visited the Garden of Gethsemane that had olive trees still alive and growing, dating back over two thousand years and still bearing fruit in 1959. The same trees that I saw were the same trees that were in the garden where Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. Unbelievable for me to be in such a holy place!

On the following Sunday we returned to the ship.

The following week we were underway again, making our way westward through the Mediterranean, fueling ships, stopping at various ports. On our way back through the Med, one of the destroyers, USS Hale, was having crypto machine problems. Since I was the only cryptographic repairman in the task force, I was "high lined"--transferred between ships at sea--to the Hale. It was quite an experience to be pulled from one ship to another while steaming at 12 knots and about 25 feet apart!

Each day we were heading farther and farther toward the west as we fueled the ships of the Sixth Fleet. Finally we sailed through the

Straits of Gibraltar. Our next port would be Norfolk, Virginia. Happy days!

The ship was scheduled to go into the shipyard for repairs upon arrival Norfolk. This was my last Med cruise and also my last sea duty.

Since we had departed Norfolk on 7 August 1959 and returned on 26 February 1960, we had steamed 30,589 miles; fueled 24 carriers, 22 cruisers, and 264 destroyers; pumped 35,808,282 gallons of fuel; and visited 5 countries and 19 ports of call. Length of cruise had been 29 weeks--124 days at sea and 79 days in port.

What a way to wind up a Navy career! I was granted 30 days' leave upon arrival Norfolk.

Upon my return to the ship, I was still able to get home on weekends. In early July, I was transferred to the receiving station in Norfolk for discharge.

Repairs had been completed, and the ship was scheduled to get underway.

On July 20, 1960, I was honorably discharged from the United States Navy with 19 years and 6 months of service, and credited with 20 years' service. I was retired to the Fleet Reserve at 37 years of age.

I feel very proud of my Naval career and the privilege to serve the greatest country in the world throughout the Second World War.

Enough good things cannot be said nor enough credit given to my wife Ann. I love her so very, very much. Only the Lord knows how much. And I am grateful and thankful to Him for the privilege of being her husband.

She has had a hard life being married to me: the million "goodbyes," my long overseas deployments, all the sacrifices she has made, all the decisions she had to make alone, the responsibility of raising two sons. Thank You, O Lord, for blessing me with the greatest wife of them all.

May I always be remembered for my loyalty, dedication, and devotion to God, family, and country.

PROFILE OF ME

I believe it is important for those who will be reading this to have an understanding about the one who wrote it. A lot of people have their own opinion of me and think they really know me, when in reality they don't.

I am loyal, dedicated, and devoted to things and people I believe in.

I am strong in character. I am very positive, honest, up front, and somewhat outspoken.

I am a very determined person and will put forth a lot of effort to achieve the goals that I wish to accomplish.

I feel very capable of making my own decisions. Yes, I like opinions, suggestions, and advice from others, but I carefully evaluate them in my own mind; and the bottom line is that I want to make my own decisions.

I am very good at evaluating people--by their conversations and actions. And I am seldom wrong. I do not like "pretenders"; I like for people to be "themselves."

I am very impatient with people when they are slow to answer or to make decisions. I do not like for people to avoid a direct answer when asked a direct question.

I do not like to wait. I like for people to be prompt and on time. I like for people to be trustworthy when making promises. I do not like disappointments.

I have a lot of common sense. I am very sensitive to people and situations.

I love to help others when there is a need and my help is appreciated.

I am fair and impartial, but I can play rough when the situation requires. And I always play to win.

A lot of people think I am somewhat rude and rough at times, but I am very sentimental inside. I love people and have a lot of consideration for people, but I like for everyone to play fair, be honest, up front, dependable, and be themselves.

And, yes, my thanks to God for making me ME.

My sincere thanks and appreciation to Joan Everhart for her friendship and interest in compiling all this information and making this book a reality.