

JUNE 1943 --- SEPTEMBER 1944
W.S. STRATTON (SC2C)

BOOT CAMP, SAMPSON, N.Y. JUST SOUTH OF THE CANADIAN BORDER. THEN COOKS and BAKERS SCHOOL, N.A.T.T.C. MEMPHIS TENN. ON TO NEW ORLEANS, FOR FURTHER ASSIGNMENT TO THE FLEET. NEXT OFF TO KEY WEST, FLA. TO PICK UP MY SHIP ... THE DESTROYER U.S.S. NOA (DD 343) AFTER A FEW MONTHS TRAINING "PING-JOCKEYS" OFF THE COAST OF CUBA, NEAR "GITMO"... WE GOT THE WORD THAT FIFTY "4 STACKERS" WERE GOING TO BE TRADED TO ENGLAND (LEND LEASE). SPEED RUNS USING ONLY ONE FIRE ROOM WOULD DECIDE WHICH SHIPS WOULD BE SENT TO ENGLAND, AND WHICH ONES WOULD STAY IN THE U. S. FLEET. WE QUALIFIED TO STAY... NEXT THING WE NEW WE WERE SAILING NORTH TO NORFOLK, VA. FOR SOME SORT OF SPECIAL DUTY.

JUST SEVENTEEN YEARS OLD, I HAD ALREADY SEEN A LOT OF "LIFE IN THE RAW" AND HERE WE WERE HEADED FOR THE CITY WHERE THINGS WERE SO BAD THAT THE LOCAL CITIZENS HAD TO PUT SIGNS ON THEIR LAWNS WARNING DOGS AND SAILORS TO KEEP OFF. TO DECEIVE THE ENEMY WE WERE BEING REFITTED AND CAMOUFLAGED AS A SHIP HEADED FOR THE NORTH ATLANTIC. NOT UNTIL WE WERE WELL AT SEA DID OUR SKIPPER REVEAL THAT WE WERE REALLY ON OUR WAY TO THE SOUTH PACIFIC... AND ACTION. WE DID A ONE-EIGHTY AND HEADED SOUTH TOWARD THE PANAMA CANAL. WHAT A TRIP! WE HIT ROUGH WEATHER OFF CAPE HATTERAS, LISTED FIFTY-TWO DEGREES TO BOTH PORT AND STARBOARD, EVEN TAKING A LITTLE WATER INTO OUR FORWARD STACK.

THIS IS WHAT WE WERE TRAINED FOR, BUT THE CLOSER WE GOT TO ACTION, THE MORE NERVOUS WE BECAME. HAVING LEFT NORFOLK ON OCTOBER 18, 1943 DESTINATION... PEARL HARBOUR... WE WERE ONE NIGHT IN CRISTOBAL, CANAL ZONE... THREE NIGHTS AT SAN DIEGO, THREE MORE DAYS IN DRY DOCK AT PEARL HARBORWHERE OUR CAMOFLAGE WAS CHANGED ALMOST MAGICALLY TO JUNGLE GREENS AND BROWNS TO BLEND WITH THE TROPICS, AND WERE QUICKLY ROUTED ON OUR WAY. WE SPENT A FEW HOURS AT PAGO PAGO, TUTUILA & AMERICAN SAMOA THEN ONE NIGHT AT ESPIRITU SANTO, NEW HEBRIDES ANOTHER NIGHT AT MILNE BAY, NEW GUINEA. JUST FIFTY DAYS FROM NORFOLK TO PATROL DUTY OFF FINSCHAFEN, NEW GUINEA ... WHAT A PACE!!!

OUR FIRST INVASION WAS LANDING TROOPS FOR THE TAKING OF CAPE GLOUCESTER... FOLLOWED BY LANDING REINFORCEMENTS A FEW DAYS LATER. THE INVASION OF CAPE GLOUCESTER, THE DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS, WAS DUPLICATED AT SAIDOR THE DAY AFTER NEW YEARS. (SURPRISE! SURPRISE!) AFTER SAIDOR WE WERE TO GET A LITTLE "R and R" IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA. NEVER HAPPENED. AT THE LAST MINUTE IT WAS CHANGED TO NEW CALEDONIA (FRENCH) BEFORE WE COULD REACH "SAFE HAVEN" OF NOUMEA. A TROPICAL HURRICANE OF TYPHOON FORCES TOSSED US ABOUT, LIKE A TOY BOAT IN A JACUZZI. IT FINALLY PICKED US UP AND LITERALLY THREW US OVER A REEF AND ONTO THE BEACH OF AN ISLAND RESERVED FOR LEPERS. WE GOT VERY LITTLE REST. BY THE TIME WE WAITED FOR THE STORM TO SUBSIDE AND UNLOADED WHAT WE COULD, THEN RUN BACK AND FORTH TO ROCK THE SHIP, WHILE ANOTHER SHIP WAS TUGGING TO PULL US BACK OVER THE REEF.

FINALLY WE WERE REFLOATED AND ONCE AGAIN SEAWORTHY. TURNS OUT WE HAD TIME FOR ONLY ONE QUICK TRIP ASHORE AT NOUMEA ... WHAT A BINGE! MOST EVERYONE BECAME VERY SICK ON "BUTTERFLY" RUM. DESPITE PREVIOUS WARNING FROM THE "DOC" TO STAY AWAY FROM THAT "POISON". I'LL ONLY MENTION THE "PINK ELEPHANT" IN PASSING.... ANYONE WHO VISITED NOUMEA DURING THE WAR CAN FILL A WHOLE BOOK ABOUT THIS "HOUSE".

FEBRUARY 1ST OF 1944 FOUND US AT GUADALCANAL PICKING UP NEW ZEALAND TROOPS FOR A LANDING AT GREEN ISLAND. WE GOT UNDERWAY ST. VALENTINES DAY AND WERE BESIEGED BY JAP RECONNAISSANCE PLANES. AT THE LANDING ITSELF WE UNDERWENT OUR FIRST AIR ATTACK. IT WAS NECESSARY FOR US TO GET OUT OF THERE AND RETURN WITH MORE TROOPS AS SOON AS THE ROUND TRIP COULD BE MADE. ON ST. PATRICKS DAY WE MADE A LANDING AT EMIRAU ISLAND... A FEW MILES NORTH OF KAVIANG.

OUR NEXT ASSIGNMENT WAS THE BOMBARDMENT OF AN ISLAND NAMED ALI.. IN THE ADMIRALTIES. AFTER PLASTERING THIS ISLAND WE RETURNED. TOOK ABOARD MORE TROOPS AND SET SAIL TO INVADE SELEO ISLAND. WE ALMOST GOT IT THIS TIME WHEN A JAP DIVE BOMBER DROPPED ONE JUST OFF OUR PORT BOW. ORDERED BACK TO "PEARL" WE STOPPED ON THE WAY AT FUNA FUTU. ON TO HAPUNA BAY, HAWAII TO JOIN TASK FORCE 58 AND TAKE PART IN THE INVASION OF SAIPAN IN THE MARIANAS. FOR A WEEK OR SO AFTER THE SAIPAN LANDING WE EXPERIENCED NIGHTLY AIR RAIDS. ON THE NIGHT OF JULY 5th WHILE WE WERE ON PATROL HARRASSING THE JAPS ON TINIAN WE UNDERWENT ANOTHER CLOSE CALL. WHILE PATROLLING BACK AND FORTH LESS THAN TWO MILES OFFSHORE

TWO SALVOS EXPLOADED JUST SEASIDE OF US. AND SECONDS LATER THREE MORE SHORESIDE OF US. IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR THE QUICK ORDERS OF OUR SKIPPER... TO GET OUT OF THERE, THE NEXT SALVO WOULD HAVE BEEN A DIRECT HIT.

WITHIN A FEW DAYS MARINES FROM SAIPAN BEGAN INVADING TINIAN BY SMALL BOAT TO BATTLE FOR THE AIRSTRIP ON TINIAN... WHICH HAD TO BE TAKEN. SITTING OFF TINIAN WE HAD A GRANDSTAND VIEW OF THE WHOLE INVASION. WE WERE TO WITNESS THINGS THAT WOULD BURN AN INDELIBLE IMPRINT OF THE HORRORS OF WAR INTO OUR YOUNG MEMORIES. THREE LITTLE JAP BI-PLANES FLEW RECON RIGHT THROUGH EVERYTHING OUR SHIPS AND SHORE GUNS COULD PUT INTO THE AIR. NOT SO FORTUNATE ONE OF OUR OWN BOMBERS.... SOMETHING WENT WRONG WITH HIS FRIEND OR FOE IDENTIFICATION.. AND BEFORE HE WAS ABLE TO IDENTIFY HIMSELF HE WAS BLASTED OUT OF THE SKY BY "FRIENDLY FIRE". JUST AFTER THIS SOMEONE SPOTTED ACTION ON THE END OF THE ISLAND ITSELF. WE ALL GOT TO WATCH THROUGH OUR GUNSIGHTS THE AWESOME HORROR OF MASS SUICIDE AS OVER TWO HUNDRED WOMEN AND CHILDREN PLUNGED OVER THE ROCKY CLIFFS SMASHING HEADLONG INTO THE ROCKS AND SWIRLING SURF... HUNDREDS OF FEET BELOW. IT WAS SOMETHING WE WILL NEVER FORGET. THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN ALL DRESSED IN PURE WHITE CEREMONIAL ROBES STOPPED FOR A BRIEF MOMENT AT A MAKESHIFT IMPROVISED ALTER, AND THEN STEADFASTLY WALKED STRAIGHT OVER THE CLIFF EDGE TO THEIR DEATH. WHAT A TERRIBLE WASTE OF HUMAN SOULS.

AFTER TINIAN WAS SECURED WE WERE SENT TO PURVIS BAY, FLORIDA ISLAND WHERE OUR CHRISTMAS MAIL FINALLY CAUGHT UP WITH US. ONE PACKAGE I RECEIVED BRINGS A CHUCKLE EVERY TIME I THINK OF IT. IT CONTAINED A FROSTED SPICE CAKE, MY FAVORITE, A COUPLE OF PAIRS OF SOCKS, AND WHAT DO YOU THINK... A BIG TUBE OF SHAVING CREAM. ONLY TROUBLE WAS... THE TUBE HAD SPLIT WIDE OPEN... WHAT A MESS. LONG TIME BEFORE I TOLD MOM ABOUT THAT ONE.

WE LEFT PURVIS BAY ON SEPTEMBER 6th, STOPPED AT MAUI TOOK ON FIFTY TONS OF TETROL, A VERY POTENT EXPLOSIVE, AND SIXTY-FIVE FROGMEN. AS THE SHIPS BAKER, I WORKED ALL NIGHT SO I BECAME ACCUSTOMED TO SLEEPING MORNINGS TOPSIDE IN A HAMMOCK, SLUNG UNDER THE STARBOARD OVERHANG OF THE AFTER DECKHOUSE. ON D-DAY MINUS TWO, WE WERE SCHEDULED TO DISEMBARK THE FROGMEN TO DO THEIR THING WITH THE TETROL... BLOW UP THE REEFS, SO THAT THE "HIGGINS" BOATS COULD GET THROUGH TO THE BEACHES ON D-DAY.

IT WAS THE NEXT DAY SEPTEMBER 12th 1944 THAT WAS I BELIEVE THE CLOSEST TO ALMIGHTY GOD I HAVE EVER BEEN. THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED.. AFTER SITTING AROUND SINGING SONGS AND TELLING TALES WE "HIT THE SACK" TO AWAIT THE DAWN WHEN WE WOULD RE-GROUP FOR THE FIRST WAVE OF FROGMEN TO HEAD FOR THE REEFS. ABOUT 4:45 A.M. I WAS AWAKENED BY A LOT OF COMMOTION. AND LOOKING UP FROM MY HAMMOCK, PEERING OUT INTO THE MURKY DARKNESS. ALL I COULD SEE WAS A HUGE BLACK MASS BEARING DOWN ON US... FULL SPEED. WHAT WAS IT ??? A JAP SUB MAYBE ..THIS WAS ONE OF THEIR FAVORITE TRICKS.... RAMMING THEIR ENEMY

WHAT TO DO... FIRST IMPULSE WAS TO DROP DOWN FROM MY HAMMOCK AND FLEE TO A SAFER SPOT. JUST AS I WAS ABOUT TO THROW MY LEGS OVER THE EDGE OF MY HAMMOCK... I FELT A HAND ON MY SHOULDER... AND CALLING OUT MY NAME.. TOLD ME TO LAY BACK DOWN. FOR REASONS UNKNOWN TO ME I YIELDED TO THIS STRANGE URGING AND DID AS I WAS TOLD. FRIGHTENED, YOU BET I WAS.. LATER THEY TOLD ME YOU COULD HEAR ME SCREAM ALL OVER THE SHIP. WHAT HAD ACTUALLY HAPPENED WAS THAT IN THE CONFUSION OF PRE-DAWN DARKNESS A TWENTY-ONE TON DESTROYER HAD SWERVED OFF COURSE AND RAMMED US JUST TWO YARDS FORWARD OF THE STANCHION TO WHICH I HAD SECURED MY HAMMOCK. SHE BOUNCED OFF, HITTING OUR SCREW AND PULLING OUT FORTY FEET OF OUR SHAFT. THIS WAS TO BE THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

AS I HEARD STEEL CRUNCHING AGAINST STEEL FINALLY SUBSIDE... I OPENED MY EYES, THREW ON MY SHIRT AND SHOES... JUMPED DOWN FROM MY HAMMOCK. RIGHT THERE IN THE BULKHEAD OF THE AFTER DECKHOUSE, WAIST HIGH, AND LARGE ENOUGH TO HAVE CUT ME IN HALF, WERE SHARP JAGGED HUNKS OF STEEL PROTRUDING FORTH LIKE PORCUPINE QUILLS. JUST FORWARD WAS A K-GUN AND A LIFE RAFT.... THE K-GUN. THE LIFE RAFT. RACK AND ALL WERE TORN FROM THE DECK. I UTTERED A QUICK BUT MOST SINCERE, THANK GOD. IN SIX OR SEVEN MINUTES OUR SHIP WAS HALF FULL OF WATER AND SINKING VERY FAST. THE MOST OUTSTANDING THING WAS THAT ONCE AGAIN THE WISDOM OF OUR SKIPPER PAID OFF. HE HAD SOUNDED "GENERAL QUARTERS" INSTEAD OF "ABANDON SHIP" AND WE ALL JUST WENT TO OUR STATIONS. THIS SAVED ALL HANDS WITH A MINIMUM

OF INJURIES. AS I REMEMBER ONLY TWO OR THREE MEN WERE HURT. WITH THE AFT TWO THIRDS OF OUR SHIP UNDER WATER A SALVAGE PARTY BOARDED HER IN AN ATTEMPT TO FIRE UP HER BOILERS AND SAVE HER BY BEACHING HER ON A JAP HELD ISLAND. THIS JUST WASN'T TO BE FOR AT 6:58 WE WERE FORCED TO STEP OFF THE MID DECK INTO SMALL CRAFT AND LEAVE HER FOR THE LAST TIME... AS WE WATCHED WITH TEARS STREAMING DOWN OUR CHEEKS SHE STRUGGLED TO STAY AFLOAT ALL BY HERSELF... BUT SHE COULDN'T.. AT 10:34 A.M. HER BOW SHOT STRAIGHT INTO THE AIR FOR A FEW SECONDS AND SLIPPED SILENTLY UNDER THE BRINEY DOWN SHE WENT TO ABOUT THIRTY FEET... WHEN TWO DEPTH CHARGES NOT PUT ON "SAFETY" BY OUR HEROIC GUNNERS MATES WHO HAD RISKED THEIR LIVES IN AN EFFORT TO REACH THEM ALL.... EXPLODED.. SENDING A GEYSER OF WATER AND DEBRIS HIGH INTO THE AIR. WHAT REMAINED OF OUR GALLANT LADY WENT TO THE BOTTOM OF DAVY JONES LOCKER IN A THOUSAND FATHOMS DEEP AT LAT. SEVEN DEGREES, ONE MINUTE NORTH, AND ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FOUR DEGREES, FOUR MINUTES EAST. A FEW MILES FROM THE ISLAND OF PELELIEU.

DESTROYERS (DD)

CLASS OF 1917-1918, INCLUDING 29 CEASED AS AUXILIARIES

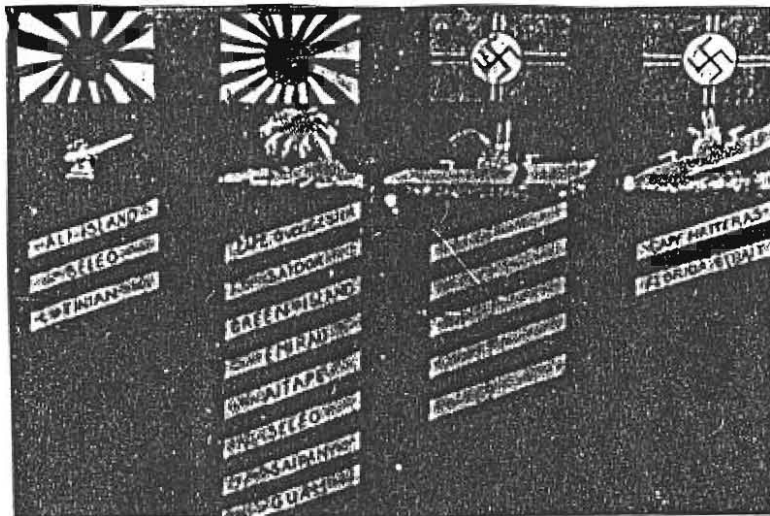


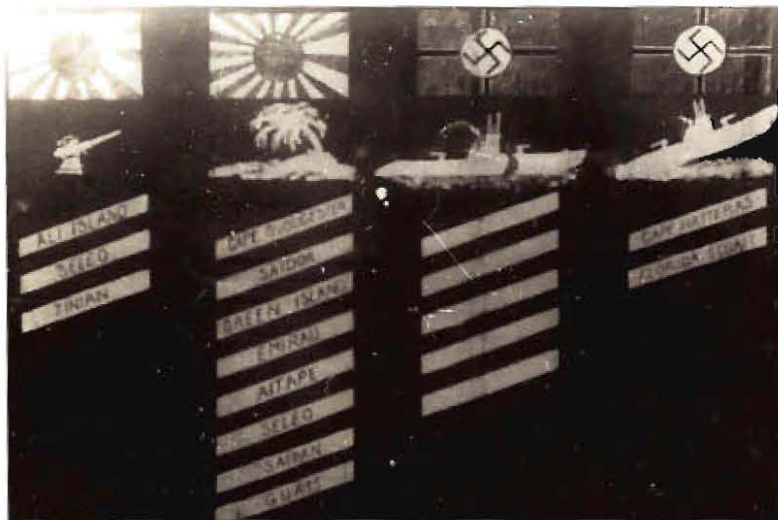
U.S.S. SANDS (243)

Official U. S. Navy Photograph

As refitted during 1941, six after tubes and mainmast removed, small AA's and de-gaussing gear fitted, hull ports plated over. Splinter protection built in after view was taken. Many of the 186-147 Class now have three stacks as in DU PONT. Those converted into AVD's and APD's have two. A number here listed as Destroyers are classed as Auxiliaries. Some have been rearmed with 20 and 40mm AA's. Spare torpedo-tubes from flush-deckers are fitted in some of the new DE's.

No.	Name	First Comm.	No.	Name	First Comm.	No.	Name	First Comm.
235	KANE	1920	247	GOFF	1921	337	ZANE (DMS-14)	1920
236	HUMPHREYS	1920	248	BARRY	1920	338	WASWORTH (DMS-15)	1921
237	McFARLAND (AVD-14)	1920	249	HOPKINS (DMS-13)	1921	339	TREVIN (DMS-16)	1922
239	OVERTON	1920	250	LAWRENCE	1920	340	PERRY (DMS-17)	1922
240	STURTEVANT	1920	251	BELKNAP (AVD-8)	1919	341	DECATUR	1922
241	CHILDS (AVD-1)	1920	255	Os. INGRAM (AVD-9)	1919	342	HULBERT (AVD-6)	1920
242	KING	1920	260	GILLIS (AVD-12)	1919	343	NOA	1921
243	SANDS	1920	266	GREENE (AVD-13)	1919	344	W.B. PRESTON (AVD-7)	1920
244	WILLIAMSON (AVD-2)	1920	267	BALLARD (AVD-10)	1919	345	PREBLE (DM-20)	1920
245	REUBEN JAMES	1920	270	THORNTON (AVD-11)	1919	346	SICARD (DM-21)	1920
246	BAINBRIDGE	1921	336	LITCHFIELD	1920	347	PRUITT (DM-22)	1920





2/20/93

Wilma:

HERE'S A CHECK TO COVER
2 REUNION DINNER TICKETS FOR
U.S.S. NOA - - - Bud & ELLIE STRATTAN
(WALTER & ELEANOR)

P.S.

INCLUDED A FEW PAGES Bud
FROM MY DIARY 1943-1944 (GLINY BOARD)
etc.

THANKS,

SEE YOU
THURS!