

USS NOA – FROM CONCEPTION TO ITS UNTIMELY DEMISE.

By Emil Edward Krafft, ex CEM, USN. 279 60 13

USS NOA (DD-343):

A history of the destroyer on which I served from April 11, 1940 until February 10, 1943, excerpted from the "Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships"- 8 volume Reference set published by Naval Historical Center, volume 4, pp. 98&99, and from the book, "Flush Decks and Four Pipes", compiled by John Doughty Alden, Annapolis, United States Naval Institute, 1965, -call number: V 825.3 .A7, with my own comments.

Loveman Noa was born on 5 October 1878 at Chattanooga, Tenn. Appointed to the Naval Academy as a Midshipman 5 September 1896, he graduated in June 1900, and was ordered to the Asiatic station in gunboat Mariveles. The morning of 26 October 1901 Midshipman Noa, with an armed crew of six men, put off from Mariveles in a small boat to watch for craft engaged in smuggling contraband from the island of Leyete to Samar. When ready to return to Mariveles, they found the wind and the tide against them. As the boat was taking on water, they put into a small cove on the island of Samar. While scouting the adjacent jungle, Noa was attacked and stabbed four times by Filipino insurgents. He died before aid could reach him.

(DD-: dp. 1,190; l. 314'6"; b. 30'8"; dr. 9'3"; s. 35 k.; cpl. 150; a. 4 4", 1 3", 12 21" tt; cl Clemson). [Later converted with removal of aft six torpedo tubes to accommodate seaplane configuration, which was later removed in Boston and "K" guns were fitted where aft torpedo tubes had been and a "Y" gun replaced the 3" AA gun. Also, 20 MM guns were installed on an "island just aft of the midship deckhouse and in several other locations, I believe. [After I left, she underwent several other modifications - as indicated.]

Noa (DD-343), was built by the Norfolk Navy Yard, Norfolk, Va. Authorized 6 October 1917, she was laid down 18 November 1918; launched 28 June 1919; sponsored by Mrs. Albert Morehead, sister of Midshipman Loveman Noa; and commissioned 15 February 1921.

Following shakedown out of Norfolk, Noa operated out of Charleston, SC Through May 1922 she participated in Atlantic Coast training maneuvers. In late May she sailed for duty on the Asiatic Station, steaming via the Mediterranean and Aden and Ceylon. She reached Singapore 14 August and 30 September she arrived at her new home yard at Cavite, P.I. Through the summer of 1929 Noa remained active on the Asiatic Station. She patrolled Chinese and Philippine waters and attempted to protect American interests during the raging Chinese Civil War, which was renewed November 1922. She also participated in the fleet exercises, which were designed to keep crew and equipment at peak efficiency. [The story I heard was that she was on Yangste patrol when she was engaged with a shore battery and/or pirate ship/or both and suffered several hits-one in the pilot house and two at the generator platform in the engine room. I recall two patches in the ship's hull at that location, covering about 4" to 6" holes, and I spoke to an 'Old Timer' who had severed aboard her and who relayed this information to me. I also thought that she had been decommissioned after her Asiatic Fleet assignment, then re-commissioned after a short period of time.]

Upon return to the United States 14 August 1929 Noa went into the Mare Island Yard for overhaul before assignment to West Coast operations. Through the next five years she operated out of San Diego as a unit of the Battle Fleet. During the fall and winter of 1929 Noa was called

upon to assist in plane guard duties with Carriers Langley (CV-1) off the California coast. She thus participated in the early development of Carrier-group tactics. She also took part in the fleet exercises from 1930 to 1934. Noa served as cruise ship for NROTC students from the University of California, Berkley 17 June - 8 July 1934, steamed for Philadelphia, Pa. 14 August, decommissioned there 11 November, and was placed in reserve.

Noa was recommissioned at Philadelphia 1 April 1940 and was fitted with a seaplane which nested just forward of the after deckhouse, replacing the after torpedo tubes. At the same time a boom for lifting the aircraft was stepped in place of the Mainmast. She steamed for the Delaware Capes in May and conducted tests with an XSOC-1 seaplane piloted by Lt. G.L. Heap. The plane was hoisted onto the ocean for takeoff and then recovered by Noa while the ship was underway. Lt. Heap also made an emergency flight 15 May to transfer a sick man to the Naval Hospital at Philadelphia. Such dramatic demonstrations convinced the Secretary of the Navy that destroyer based scout-planes had value and 27 May he directed that six new destroyers of the soon-to-be constructed Fletcher Class (DD 476-481) be fitted with catapults and handling equipment. Because of mechanical deficiencies in the hoisting gear the program was canceled in 1943. The concept thus failed to mature as a combat technique, but the destroyer-observation seaplane team was to be revived under somewhat modified conditions during later amphibious operations.

Noa spent much of the next two years on experimental assignments and on midshipman training operations out of Annapolis. She underwent availability at Boston Navy Yard the first week of December 1941 and then participated in Chesapeake Bay exercises through 27 December. Next she steamed for Key West, Fla. and participated in shakedown of major fleet units in the Gulf of Mexico

She then steamed for Boston via Bermuda. Upon completion of repairs at Boston Navy Yard she was directed to conduct Atlantic coast ASW patrols commencing 25 March 1943. [He's wrong here. It was 1942!] She also participated in the training program for the Navy's Sound School at Key West. Until 28 July [1943] she operated out of Key West, assigned training, patrol, rescue, and convoy escort duties.

Noa reported to the Sixth Amphibious Forces 31 July. During August and September she was converted, at Norfolk Navy Yard, to a high speed transport and was reclassified APD-24 on 10 August 1943. Work was completed 17 September and after shakedown in the Chesapeake she departed Norfolk 18 October and escorted Sumter (APA-52) to San Diego via Panama Canal, arriving 2 November. [I ran into one of my old shipmates (Pappy something or other - an Okie) at the San Diego Zoo, when we pulled into San Diego in December - see Wake Island. -

Noa steamed for Pearl Harbor 4 November, arriving 10 November for a week of yard availability. Underway 19 November she escorted SS J.H.Kincaid to Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides via Samoa, arriving 4 December. She departed 5 December and steamed to Buna, New Guinea where she assumed duty as landing craft control ship 11 December. In this capacity she steamed between Buna and Cape Cretin, New Guinea. She was detached from this duty and anchored off Cape Sudist 21 December.

She steamed for Cape Gloucester, New Britain 25 December and arrived just before dawn the next day. After a preliminary bombardment by Naval and Army units, Noa landed 144 officers and men of the First Marine Division. She returned to Cape Sudist via Buna 27

December to take on 203 more First Division Marines, who reinforced the forces at Cape Gloucester 29 December. Her operations at Cape Gloucester landings extended through 1 March 1944. Noa's participation in the Bismarck Archipelago operation also took her through the Green Island landing 15-19 February.

In the Purvis Bay area of the Solomon Islands she performed patrol and escort operations 21 February - 7 March. She next steamed to Tassafaronga Point, Guadalcanal and took on Fourth Marine Division troops for the Emerau Island assault of 23 March. By 8 April she was back at Cape Cretin, New Guinea, where she took on troops for the Hollandia amphibious operations that extended from late April through 1 May.

Noa steamed for Pearl Harbor 11 May, arrived 23 May, and embarked units of the Second Marine Division for transport to Saipan. She patrolled assigned areas off Saipan 15 June and that day splashed one raiding aircraft. The next day she landed her troops and continued patrol operations until 24 June, when she steamed to Eniwetok Atoll. Noa departed Eniwetok 30 June and escorted Clamp (ARS-33) to Saipan, arriving 4 July. She conducted patrol and screening operations off Tinian and Saipan through the next week. During the Guam operations of 12 July-15 August Noa served as a screening ship. By 16 August she had returned to Guadalcanal and the next day she commenced patrol operations out of Purvis Bay.

Departing Purvis Bay 16 September she steamed for the Palau Islands to conduct underwater demolition activities. While enroute she was rammed by Fullman (DD-474) at 0350, 12 September. She immediately began to settle. The order to abandon ship was given at 0501, but by 0700 Noa's skipper, Lt. Comdr. H. Wallace Boud, USNR, had returned to her with a salvage party. Salvage efforts failed, the second order to abandon ship was given at 1030, and the old ship sank by the stern at 1034 with no loss of life. [I knew Boud. He was a Second Lieutenant when I left the ship. I was surprised that he had stayed on her so long. I wonder if any of my shipmates were still on her at this time.]

Noa received the Yangtze Service Medal for China service in 1927 and five battle stars for World War II service.

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I went on board the Noa in the Philadelphia Navy Yard on 10 April, 1940, having just graduated Naval Basic Electrical School at the Norfolk Naval Operating Base. It was my first assignment with real Sea-going sailors and it was a revelation. A lot of the ship's company were reserves, recalled to active duty because of the imminence of war, and some of them were not all of good repute. Needless to say, they were not the kind of people that any decent person would hang out with. While at the Philadelphia Navy yard, I saw the USS Washington, the Navy's newest and largest Battleship, (At that time) launched from her ways, just across from the pier from where we were berthed. We later acted as escort ship to her on her shakedown cruise in the Gulf of Mexico.

I left the ship on or about February 5, 1943, after having re-enlisting for another four years, and went to the Electrical Interior Communication School in Anacostia Station - a suburb of Washington, D.C., from which I graduated as a Chief Petty Officer - (CEM) and after which I was assigned to the USS Wake Island (CVE-65), an Escort Aircraft Carrier. I had advanced from

Fireman Second Class to Electrician's Mate First Class while on board the Noa.

A few other observations incorporating my experiences and memory:

After the ship was outfitted in the Philadelphia Navy Yard, we went out into the Chesapeake several times on shakedown and it wasn't until later that we had the airplane exercises. After we left for the final time, we picked up ammunition at Yorktown went to Norfolk and thence to Key West, where we engaged in "Neutrality Patrol" ostensibly to keep our shores neutral to all combatants but, in reality, to assure that no German activity occurred. We stayed there the rest of the year, with the exception of a short assignment at Annapolis, and, early in '41, after leaving the dry dock in Baltimore, we were assigned as station ship at Annapolis.

July of 1940, on Independence Day, we steamed to Baltimore and took part in the annual celebration and, that night, I directed our searchlight on the American flag, flying over Fort McHenry.

After completion of our overhaul in Boston, during which I had taken leave to go to Louisiana, we were escorting the Coast Guard lightship Portland to her station off the coast of Portland Maine and zigged instead of zagging and rammed her dead center. (Zigzagging is a term for steering the ship in an indirect course to take evasive action against enemy attack.) As a result, we went right back to the dry dock and had a new bow installed, replacing the one which we had so badly damaged. The Portland lightship also returned with us and had to have extensive repairs. While we were there this time, Jeanie decided to come up but did not tell me and, as a result, she arrived the day after we had departed. We stopped in and anchored just off Staten Island on the way south. (I have given a framed photograph of the Noa, at anchor off of Staten Island, to James Moore - my oldest son-in-law.) A shipmate and I had made some kind of arrangements to see our wives in New York but our signals got screwed up and we missed connections. So they went back to the ship to await our further signals, which occurred when we finally wound up in Key West. In those days, in time of war, no one ever knew where they were going - it was always top secret.

Then, we headed south, took on ammo at Yorktown, and went back to Norfolk - then on Anti Sub Patrol with the Dahlgren (I think). In March and April, off the East coast of the Carolinas, we saw many ships, which had just been sunk by the German Subs, and many bodies floating on the surface of the ocean. It seems that we no sooner were given orders to go to one location than another ship would be sunk from the direction in which we were heading. These were old merchant ships that had been pulled out of red-lead row, from Nine Mile Point, north of New Orleans; patched up and put out to sea, one at a time, and it seemed to a lot of us that it was deliberate and that the merchant service was getting paid for the junk that they had sent out, even to sending innocent sailors to their watery grave. They had absolutely no defense and were not in convoys.

We probably engaged submarines at least a dozen times - I'm sure some of the same ones more than once - and in mid-April, we caught one on the surface and, when he saw us out of the dense fog, he crash dived under us, just managing to submerge enough to clear, as observed by one of our own sailors who happened to be standing on the deck railing. We attacked it with depth charges from racks, K guns, and Y guns (K guns were on the outboard sides of the deck and fired only one depth charge at a time - outboard; Y guns were amidships and fired two depth charges - outboard; and the racks were mounted on the stern and the depth charges rolled off the

ends astern, as they were released). We dropped a total of 74 and the other ship about the same number. After several hours of this, the cigar shaped outline of the submarine was clearly visible- lots of oil, battery acid, and other flotsam and jetsam. Surely, we thought that we would be credited with a "kill" but we never were.

Later that year, we were back in Key West and, while we were on patrol in the gulf, we got orders to go to New Orleans for some reason. As luck would have it, Jeanie chose that time to go to Key West - Anyway, as we were sailing up the mouth of the Mississippi, a torpedo just missed us and exploded on the bank ahead of us. Further up the river, about a mile from the mouth, there was a large ship, sunk right in the middle of the river! I managed to get up to Ponchatoula for just an overnight visit; saw my Mother and Jeanie's Mom and Big Gram, and some of the neighbors. Then, back to Key West.

Some time, either before this time or afterwards, we were on fleet maneuvers, as mentioned earlier but I don't recall anything about the Carrier but I do recall us in line of battle with the Battleship North Carolina, engaged in simulated battle with the Battleship Washington and the 16 inch shells falling between us and the N.C.! During these maneuvers, we made a quick run into Pensacola for provisions. That was notable because the harbor there was not all that great and we really had to maneuver to get in and out. It was night-time and I was on the searchlight.

Sometime during that summer, while we were on patrol, we were bombed by one of our own patrol bombers at about ten o'clock at night. It was a clear moonlit night and the sea was absolutely calm, when suddenly, whoosh, whoosh! Fortunately, he just barely missed us with a bomb just ahead of us and one just astern- no harm done - just messed up the seats of our underwear! - Nuff said! Another incident of note (noted in FD&FP, P?) "Other less violent adventures were experienced by the flush-deckers in the course of their wanderings about the Atlantic and Mediterranean. Noa took time out from fighting, in August 1942, to deliver 21 million Cuban pesos to the treasury in Havana". I did not go ashore there but did have one of my shipmates get something for me to give to Jeanie and a box of cigars, which I later gave to Uncle Fritz, at some time later - and then they were stale and no longer smokeable. .

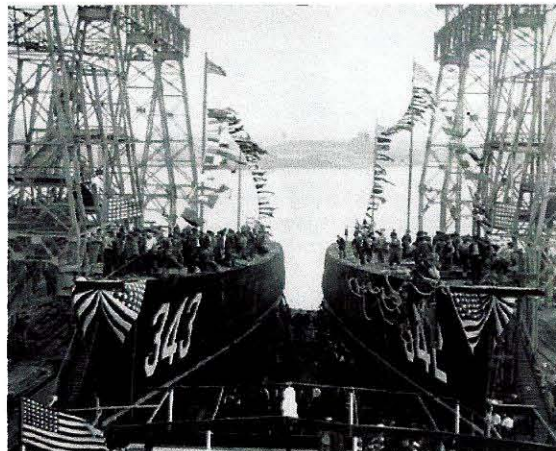
. [Jan. of '41, we were in Baltimore Dry Dock undergoing major overhaul. Then, back to Annapolis as training ship for Middies. Jeanie and I were married in Annapolis on July 7, 1941] Noa left Annapolis on November 21, 1941 for Boston for overhaul and degaussing gear. [Left for points south on December 8 and were attacked by German submarine (two torpedoes) just off the coast of New York City (Blackouts had not yet been in effect and we could still see the lights over the horizon). We dropped a bunch of depth charges and went on our way to Norfolk. Upon arrival next day, we were congratulated for having "sunk a sub". Of course, it turned out that we had not done so and we learned that it took a lot more than a few depth charges to disable a sub. We also learned that "news travels fast" because it had only been a few hours between the time of our action and our arrival.]

. [Sometime during 1941, the Reuben James 9DD-245), pulled in alongside of the Noa at the pier in Annapolis, on it's way, escorting the the submarine , the USS Tautog).(I have a photo

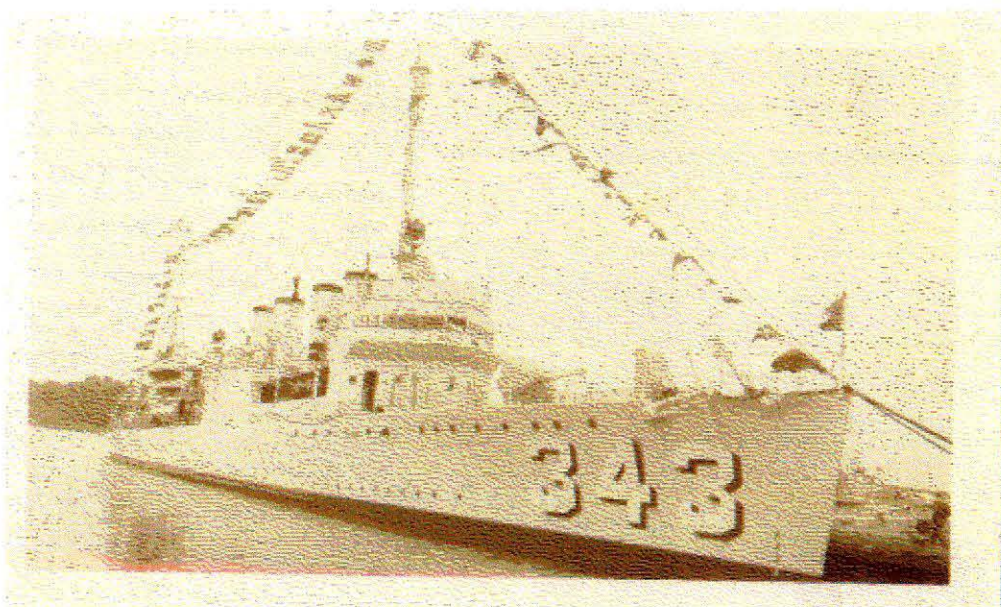
of them alongside the Noa) It was at that time that I learned that I knew two of its crew, another electrician's mate and the Chief Electrician's Mate - John Calvin Greer, who had been my earlier boss. He did not survive the sinking of the R.J. on October 31, 1941, by German submarine U-562. - ref. DANFS, V 4, P85.].

Another time, the USS Bear, sister ship to the U.S.S. Constitution, pulled in alongside of us and I went aboard her just to see what I could see.

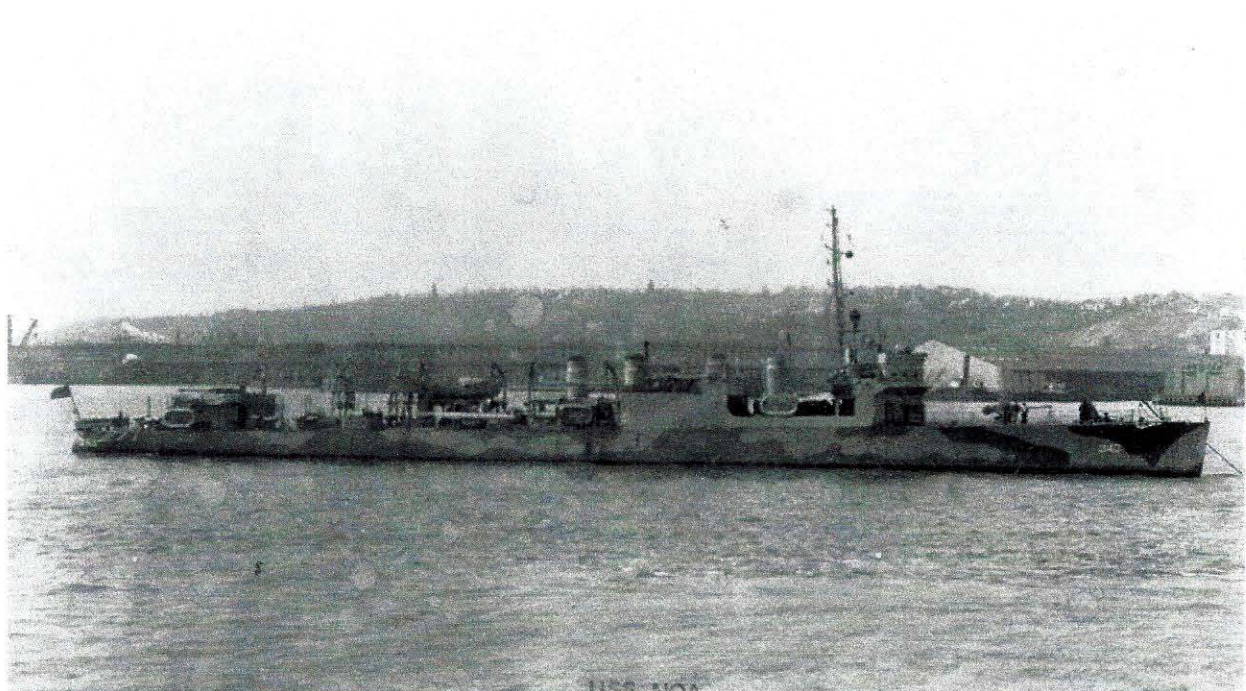
. [We were on Neutrality Patrol off and on from June 1940 to beginning of hostilities (Dec. 7, 1941). I was on landing party as German interpreter as we boarded ships in Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea. At one time, we "stripped-ship-for-action" when it was thought that the German Pocket Battleship, Graf Spee, was headed our way!]. After acting as plane and screen guard for Carrier Hornet she steamed for Hampton Roads. Enroute a large wave carried away part of her bridge and she put in at Charleston, SC for emergency repairs. [Actually, the entire fleet was heading for points north and we ran into a storm off the north coast of Florida and we went under one instead of over.] [We convoyed a ship to Bermuda but did not put into port.]



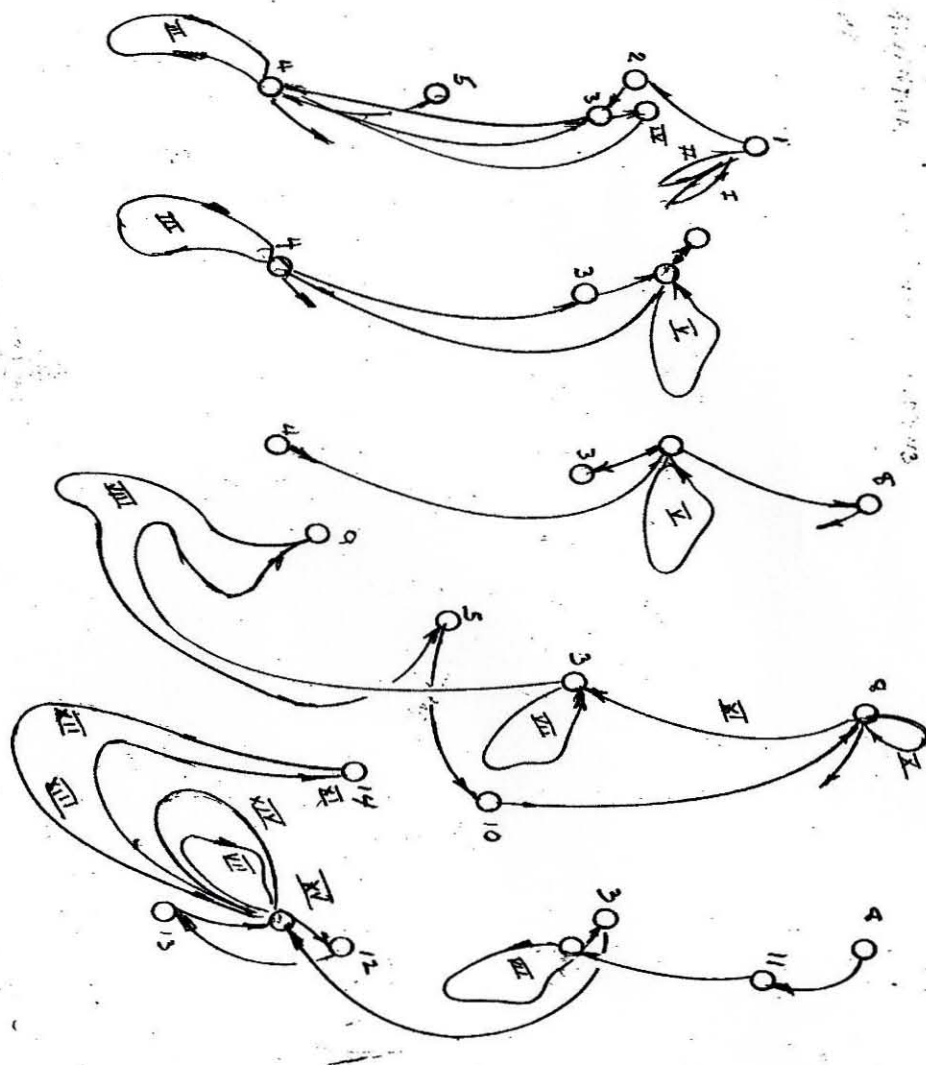
USSNOA (DD-343) – AT LAUNCHING – 28 JUNE, 1919



USS NOA (DD-343) AT ANNAPOLIS – NAVY DAY, 1941 - STILL HAS PORT HOLES



USS NOA (DD-343) AT STATEN ISLAND, 1942, AS IT WAS WHEN I LEFT
THE SHIP w/CAMOUFLAGE PAINT BUT NO PORTHOLES!



ADVENTURES OF THE USS NOA – (DD 343)

APRIL 10, 1940 – FEBRUARY 5, 1943

ADVENTURES OF THE USS NOA (DD343) – Apr.10, 1940 – Feb. 5, 1943.

1. Philadelphia Navy Yard – re-commissioning. (I was an Electrician's Mate striker and reported for duty on the 10th of April.)
- I. Noa sea trials in Chesapeake Bay.
- II Seaplane trials.
2. Yorktown – for munitions.
3. Norfolk Navy Yard
4. Key West Naval Station for assignment.
- III Neutrality Patrol – looking for German merchant traders.
5. Charleston Navy Yard for minor repairs
4. Key West
- III Neutrality Patrol.
3. Norfolk Navy Yard.
- IV July 4, 1940 - Baltimore harbor- Fort McHenry- played searchlight on the US flag at night.
4. Key West.
- III Neutrality Patrol.
3. Norfolk Navy Yard.
6. Annapolis for midshipmen training.
- V. Midshipmen training.
7. Baltimore Dry Docks for overhaul.
6. Annapolis. – training.
4. Key West.
- III. Neutrality Patrol. On one of those patrols, we stopped by the Dry Tortugas- (Fort Jefferson) – where Dr. Judd was imprisoned.
6. Annapolis. – training. Jeanie and I were married in Annapolis on July 7, 1941.
3. Norfolk Navy Yard.- minor overhaul - July 8 to July 15.
5. Annapolis – training.
8. Boston Navy Yard – major overhaul.
- VI. On the night of December 8, 1941, two torpedoes were fired at us just off New York City. We dropped depth charges. * 1 – Combat.
3. Norfolk.
- VII. Anti Sub Patrol. We saw several merchant vessels sunk or sinking but did not make contact with any subs. * 2 – Combat.
3. Norfolk.
- VIII. Fleet sea trials in the Gulf of Mexico.
9. Pensacola - for provisions.
- IX. Storm off the coast of Jacksonville.
6. Charleston Navy Yard for overhaul of damages.
10. Bermuda.
8. Boston Navy Yard.
- X Portsmouth Light ship collision.
8. Boston Navy Yard.
11. Staten Island
3. Norfolk.
- VII. Anti-sub patrol. Sank German sub off North Carolina coast. * 3 – Combat.
2. Yorktown for replenishment of munitions.
4. Key West
12. Miami – to pick up 21 million pesos for Cuba.
13. Havana.
4. Key west

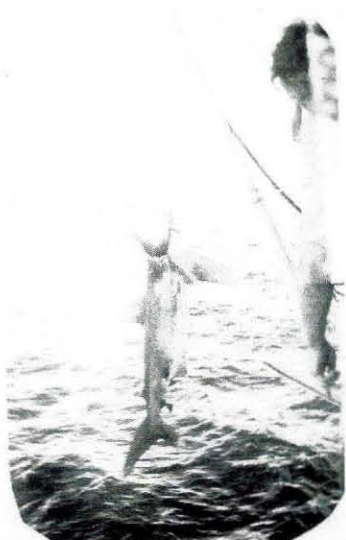
VII. Anti-sub patrol
 XI Torpedo fired at us at mouth of the Mississippi River. * 4 – Combat.
 XII .Passed a sunken merchant ship a mile upstream of the mouth of the Mississippi.
 14. New Orleans. (Boondoggle).
 VII. Continued ASP
 XIII. Saw an Esso oil tanker which had just been torpedoed. Did not make contact with the sub.
 4. Key West.
 VII. Continued ASP.
 XIV. Bombed by a US patrol bomber. Incident investigation next day in Key West..
 4...Key West . Navy Yard. Installed wiring for Identification lights.
 VII. Continued ASP. I had to connect all the wiring of the major wiring system.
 4.Key West.
 XV February 5, 1943. I was an Electricians Mate 1st Class and re-enlisted and was transferred to the Electrical Interior Communications School in Anacostia Station, Washington, D.C., from which I was promoted to Chief on October 4, 1943 and transferred to the USS Wake Island (CVE 65).

A couple of humorous events:

While at the Baltimore Dry Docks, we had our portholes welded shut – to keep from being seen at night. When we went back to Annapolis, Dewey Vincent, the chief Electrician's Mate, had gone on liberty; had had a few beers, and had come back to the ship and was standing on the port side of the foredeck, looking out over the group of visitors who had come by. I guess he had been brooding over the fact that the portholes of the Chief's quarters had been welded shut and he addressed the crowd; saying something to the affect; "Y'all think this is a good looking ship, but I want to tell you something. It's got ninety-nine assholes and one porthole!" (I don't know where that one porthole was)

Another time, at Annapolis (Before the portholes had been welded shut), there was a work detail over the port side, scraping and painting rust spots and one of the men was an Italian seaman, named Vito "Wop" DePerna, and he was working from a stage positioned just below the Officer's Mess porthole, on the port side, which faced through the compartment, directly over the mess table, to the end where the Captain sat. He was still there when mess call was announced and watched as the Captain and his officers walked in and had their seats, in order of rank – he at the far end and the least ranking officer – an Ensign - at the other. The Captain had come from a very prominent family and was a stickler for proper etiquette, even to the point of having flowers at the table, at meals, on this old tub. The Ensign, who was the grandson of Admiral 'Fighten' Bob Evins, had just graduated from the Academy. He looked even younger than his real age; was slightly built, and had a frail (?) voice.

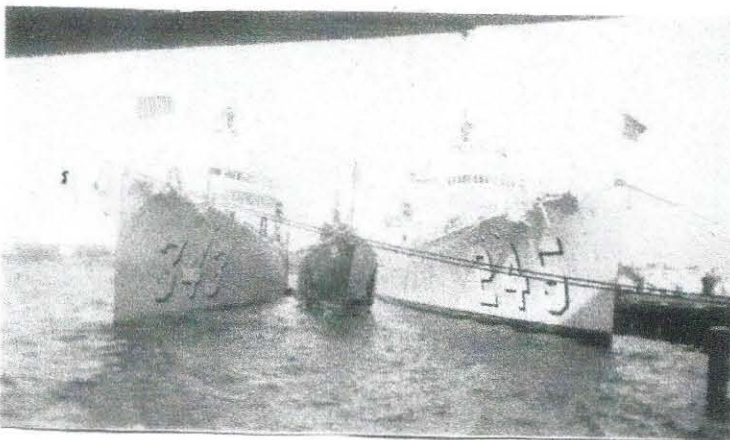
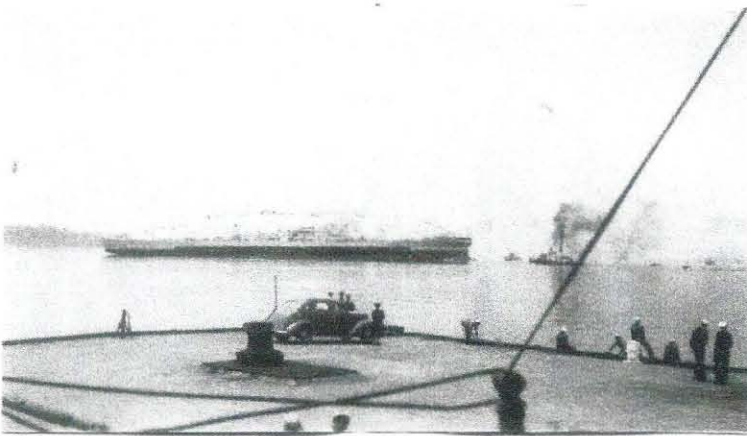
As Wop –(No offence, in those days) - who just happened to be looking in through the porthole at that time - related what happened: the Officers were all seated and the mess boy brought in the soup and gently ladled it out – in order of rank – of course. The Captain picked up his spoon and tasted his soup, and said, "Good soup", followed – in order of rank - of course – by the rest of the Officers, each – in order of rank – of course – lifting their spoon and repeating the words, "Good soup". Well, when it became little Bob's time, he, of course, followed suit and said, "Goooooud sooooup," in that squeaky voice of his. And Wop fell off of the stage and into the drink, laughing. We also thought it was funny!



SHARK WE CAUGHT NEAR ISLE OF PINES, SOUTH OF CUBA. THAT'S ME ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE PICTURE.



RICHARDS, MM2C, W/ LONGUSTA CAUGHT NEAR OLD FORT – KEY WEST



TOP LEFT: SS AMERICA ON MAIDEN CRUISE – BEFORE WW II. MIDDLE: USS WASHINGTON LAUNCHED @ PHILLY NAVY YARD – 1940. BOTTOM: USS NOA, USS Tautog –SUBMARINE 199, USS REUBEN JAMES ALONGSIDE PIER @ ANNAPOLIS. RIGHT-TOP: EMIL E. KRAFFT, EM 3/C, USN. BOTTOM; USS BEAR, SISTER SHIP TO USS CONSTITUTION – ALONGSIDE @ ANNAPOLIS- ON WAY TO ANTARCTICA.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE



TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

I, **Emil Edward Krafft, AS, USN.** do solemnly swear (or affirm)
that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the United States of America, and that I will serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies whomsoever, and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the rules and articles for the government of the Navy.

Emil Edward Krafft

Subscribed and sworn before me this 11th day of April, A.D. 1939, and contract perfected.

E. B. COVER
E. B. COVER
REUT. FOR. S. NAVY



EMIL & JEANIE KRAFFT- MARRIED JULY 7, 1941 @ 7 :27 PM @ ANNAPOLIS, MD.
TOMMY KEETON WAS OUR 'STAND-IN'



TOP LEFT: EMIL KRAFFT, EM 3/C AND DEWEY VINCENT, CEM. TOP RIGHT:-
STANDING: EMIL KRAFFT, WALKER, AND FOSTER, ALL EM3/C'S, AND, SEATED;
DEWEY VINCENT, CEM - ON FORECASTLE (FOCSLE).OF THE NOA. BOTTOM:., JUST
FORWARD OF THE AFTER DECKHOUSE, WHICH WAS ABOVE THE 'BLACK GANG'
LIVING QUARTERS: FRONT ROW: NICHOLSON, SHEERER, LESTINSKY,
COLLINSWORTH, & WEBER. BACK ROW: OWENS, JOSKOVIC, PEDERSON, &
HARDEN.