

Contributed by James Thomas

The U.S.S. FELAND (APA-11), an attack Transport, was commissioned on June 21, 1943 at ROOSEVELT BASE, SAN PEDRO, CALIFORNIA., Captain Clinton A. Misson, U.S.N., commanding. She remained in the yard being fitted for sea until August 1 when she set sail on her maiden voyage to SAN DIEGO. Here, after spending twelve days in intensive training, the ship reported for duty with the Pacific Fleet, on August 12.

On that date she left SAN DIEGO with a passenger list of Marine replacements for TUTUILA, SAMOA. During the voyage the Equator was crossed for the first time on August 20, and the traditional ceremonies were performed. Arriving in PAGO PAGO on August 24, a two day stop was made before proceeding to WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND which was reached on September 1.

Two months were spent in NEW ZEALAND waters during which numerous landing exercises were held off the beaches in the vicinity of COOK STRAITS with various units of the 2nd Division, U.S. Marines aboard.

On November 1, the FELAND set forth on her first combat mission carrying troops of the 6th Regiment, 2nd Division, U.S. Marines. After a practice landing at VIRA on the island of EFATE in the NEW HEBRIDES, the ship continued north, arriving off TARAWA in the GILBERT ISLANDS on the early morning of November 20. As the transport area was reached, the shore batteries opened fire and a number of splashes appeared close at hand, causing the ships to move out to sea until the enemy guns were silenced by the supporting fire of the fleet.

Eight days were spent in the vicinity of TARAWA during which the embarked troops went ashore in rubber boats on the second day and the ship anchored off the reef. By retiring at night the enemy bombers over the island were successfully eluded, and except for a lone BETTY which flew low over the quarterdeck in the early dawn, none were sighted. Casualties were brought aboard and upon securing the island, troops were reembarked. After putting the wounded ashore at PEARL HARBOR, OAHU, the troops were debarked at HILO, HAWAII on December 8.

After conducting landing exercises with units of the 22nd. Regiment 4th Division, U.S. Marines operating from KAHULUI, MAUI, the ship underwent a period of repair and overhaul at the PEARL HARBOR NAVY YARD during which Commander Gordon M. Jones, USNR., took command on December 27.

On January 22, 1944 the FELAND again set sail for the assault on KWAJALEIN, in the MARSHALL ISLANDS carrying troops of the 184th. Infantry, 7th Infantry Division, U.S. Army. Passing through the enemy held MARSHALL ISLANDS, all hands waited in expectation of attack, but the voyage proceeded without incident.

Arriving off KWAJALEIN on the morning of January 31, the ship entered the lagoon on the following day and rode at anchor while the troops went ashore as reserves. After eight days, during which no enemy action was encountered, troops were reembarked and returned to HONOLULU on February 15.

The following day the ship continued on to SAN FRANCISCO, arriving on February 23, and leaving three days later on a return trip to PEARL HARBOR with military and naval casualties as passengers. On March 5 the ship again returned to the West Coast, after a short call at KAHULUI, arriving in SAN FRANCISCO on March 12.

For six weeks the ship underwent repairs at the yard of the Bethlehem Steel Co. in SAN FRANCISCO and upon completion of this work, embarked civilian Navy Yard employees and naval personnel at OAKLAND, leaving on May 1 for PEARL HARBOR.

On May 12, men of the 2nd Regiment, 2nd Division, U.S. Marines were embarked at HILO and after a weeks training at MAALAEA BAY, MAUI, the ship docked at HONOLULU awaiting here next operation.

On May 30 she put to sea for the assault on SAIPAN in the MARIANAS ISLANDS, stopping for two days at ENIWETOK enroute. D-day at SAIPAN occurred on June 15 and the PELAND participated in a demonstration off TANAPAG HARBOR while assault waves landed on the beach north of the town of CHARAN - KANOA. At noon the ship proceeded to the transport area where an evening attack by four enemy planes was driven off by the fire of the ships present.

Early the following morning while returning from night retirement, and officer, eight enlisted men and four Marines were injured by a 20mm projectile from a neighboring ship. Unloading was begun by the next night the transports put to sea to avoid an expected attack by the main Japanese fleet. Four days were spent in cruising northeast of the island and on the afternoon of June 21, the ship returned and anchored off the reef. Despite sporadic attacks by high level bombers through a thick smoke screen, unloading was completed by noon the following day and the ship put to sea at dusk. During the sortie the battleship MARYLAND was torpedoed by an enemy plane.

Arriving in HONOLULU on July 3, the casualties were disembarked and six days later, after taking aboard troops of the 307th. Infantry, 77th Division, U.S. Army, the ship again set sail for the attack on GUAM, MARIANAS ISLANDS. A call was made at ENIWETOK, where Lieutenant Commander Malcolm A. MacPhee USNR, took command on July 17, and on July 22, the day following the initial assault, the ship arrived in the transport area off the town of AGAT. Two days later the troops were landed and unloading was begun. Difficult surf and reef conditions necessitated floating cargo ashore on improvised rafts and though retirements were made each night, the work was finally completed on July 27 without enemy interference and, after embarking casualties, the return voyage was begun. After a short call at ENIWETOK the ship returned to PEARL HARBOR where the casualties were disembarked and on August 11, Commander (later Captain) George F. Prestwich, USNR., assumed command.

At HONOLULU, two weeks later, the 502nd. Anti-Aircraft Battalion, 7th. Infantry Division, U.S. Army embarked and after a week's training exercises at MAALAEA BAY, MAUI, left PEARL HARBOR on September 15.

Stops were made at ENIWETOK and later at MANUS in the ADMIRALTY ISLAND, and early on the morning of October 20 the ship entered LEYTE GULF for the attack on LEYTE, in the PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, anchoring in the transport area off the town of DULAG. The discharge of cargo was begun upon the establishment of a beachhead and the ship remained at anchor throughout the night under smoke screens during numerous Conditions Red alerts. No ships were attacked in the immediate vicinity.

The next morning, despite raids by single enemy planes, the debarkation of troops and the unloading of cargo was completed and the ship put to sea at night under a heavy smoke screen, returning to MANUS on October 27.

Six days later the ship continued on to ORO BAY, NEW GUINEA where the 188th. Glider Infantry, 11th. Airborne Division, U.S. Army was embarked. Returning to LEYTE on November 18, the ship anchored between ABUYOG and TARRAGONA and after unloading without incident, departed the same night.

After returning to MANUS for a five day stop-over the FELAND sailed to ALTAPE, NEW GUINEA and lay at anchor for nearly a month while waiting to embark the 169th. Infantry, 43rd. Infantry Division, U.S. Army.

From there on December 28, the ship set out for the attack on the island of LUZON, in the PHILIPPINES, proceeding for five days through the Japanese held islands bordering the SURIGAO STRAITS and the SUIU SEA. On January 7, 1945 two enemy planes were shot down by the anti-aircraft fire of the convoy in an early evening attack on the formation northwest of MINDORO. Later that night the Japanese destroyer AINOKI was attacked and sunk off the entrance to MANILA BAY by the formation destroyer screen. In a dawn raid the next day an enemy plane was shot down by supporting cruisers.

The FELAND as part of the SAN FABIAN attack force, entered LINGAYEN GULF on the morning of January 9. During the approach a single enemy plane was driven off by heavy fire from the ships. After anchoring in the transport area, the troops were landed in the assault waves, despite mortar fire from the beach which wounded a coxswain and a boat officer. At noon the Australian cruiser AUSTRALIA, two miles astern was hit at the base of the forward stack by a suicide plane, suffering superficial damage. Unloading was completed by mid-afternoon in record time, the Beach Party working under mortar fire much of the time and the ship remained at anchor throughout the night, firing at high-flying planes in the early evening. Many reports were received of suicide boats and swimmers but none approached the ship.

In a pre-dawn alert the following day, an unsuccessful strafing attack was made by an enemy plane through a dense smoke screen off the starboard bow. At dusk the ship put to sea and shortly after getting underway a Jap suicide plane approached from dead ahead in the darkness.

The forward 40mm opened fire and the plane veered off to the left and crashed into the Attack Transport DuPAGE steaming in the adjoining column. After clearing the mouth of the gulf, an uneventful trip was made to LEYTE where the ship anchored off TAYTAY POINT.

Leaving LEYTE on January 19, the ship proceeded to PORT APRA, GUAM, stopping for thirteen days at ULITHI, in the CAROLINE ISLANDS enroute. Here troops of the 12th. Regiment, 3rd. Division, U.S. Marines were embarked for the attack on IWO JIMA in the VOLCANO ISLANDS.

The ship departed from GUAM on February 17 and after arriving in the reserve area sixty miles southeast of IWO two days later, spent eight days at sea awaiting assignment. On February 27 the troops and cargo were put ashore in LCT's under difficult conditions caused by the heavy surf.

Casualties were taken aboard three days later and on March 5 the ship got underway for the return trip to GUAM. Stopping only to debark casualties, the voyage continued southward to NOUMEA, NEW CALEDONIA, with short calls at TULAGI and GUADALCANAL in the SOLOMON ISLANDS on the way, arriving on March 21.

Here nearly six weeks were spent, broken only by training exercises in mid-April at UARAI RAY, NEW CALEDONIA and on May 3 the ship departed with units of the 906th. Field Artillery Battalion, 81st. Infantry Division, U.S. Army. Stopping for a day at MANUS, enroute, LEYTE was reached on May 16 and the troops were landed on the beach between TARRAGONA and RIZAL.

On May 28, the ship again put to sea, calling at HOLLANDIA, NEW GUINEA and arriving at LAE, NEW GUINEA on June 2, where troops of the 35th. General Hospital, Medical Corps, U.S. Army were embarked. Upon departing two days later the ship headed for MANILA, by way of HOLLANDIA, arriving on June 17 and debarking the troops the next day.

Upon completing the discharge of cargo, the ship again got underway for FINSCHAFEN, NEW GUINEA, proceeding through the SAN BERNARDINO STRAITS and stopping for two days at MANUS enroute. Here Army Service troops were embarked July 1 and the return trip was made to MANILA again via HOLLANDIA.

After a week in MANILA BAY during which the troops and cargo was set ashore, the ship returned to LEYTE but four days later on July 20, was ordered to return to the West Coast. Making the run without stop in eighteen days, she arrived in SAN FRANCISCO BAY on August 6 and on August 9 entered the Moore Dry Dock C. Yard in OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA for repairs.

Here on August 11, Commander Percy A. Crosbie, USNR., assumed command, and was on September 1 relieved by Lieutenant Commander Frederick E. Emmons, USNR.

There the vessel remains at this date twenty seven months after her commissioning having steamed over 99,000 sea miles and having participated in seven major operations.

On September 24, the ship was assigned to the "Magic Carpet" Operation for the return of personnel to the United States and upon completion of the overhaul period, departed from SAN FRANCISCO on October 8, with naval replacement personnel aboard. The following day she was forced to return to port as a result of a burned out shaft bearing and three days later she again put to sea, arriving off the town of GUIUAN, SAMAR, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS on October 29th.

Here on November 4, Naval Construction Battalion personnel were embarked and the return voyage to the West Coast was begun. Enroute the ship was diverted to SEATTLE, WASHINGTON which was reached on November 20, and on the following day she entered the Lake Union Drydock Co. Yard in SEATTLE for repairs.

The FELAND, on December 1, 1945 had steamed approximately 112,000 nautical miles and had engaged in seven major amphibious operations. Of the 50 officers and 325 men who were present on the day of commissioning, only 3 officers and 24 men remained aboard.