

HISTORY OF THE LST 729

The LCT 1268 was first manned in October, 2006 near New Orleans and Ens. J. Hubert Greene (my father) served as the first Skipper. The LCT 1268 was welded to the deck of the LST 729 to ride piggyback to the Far East for the purpose of saving fuel.

After the war and while the invasion force was still being held at Ie Shima (Okinawa), the crew of the LST 729 brought my father a copy of the attached "Cruise Book." It was mimeographed and stapled on the left side, but never bound. Dad believes he put the page numbers on his copy. On page seven, the lasting friendships formed between the crews of the LST 729 and the LCT 1268 is mentioned.

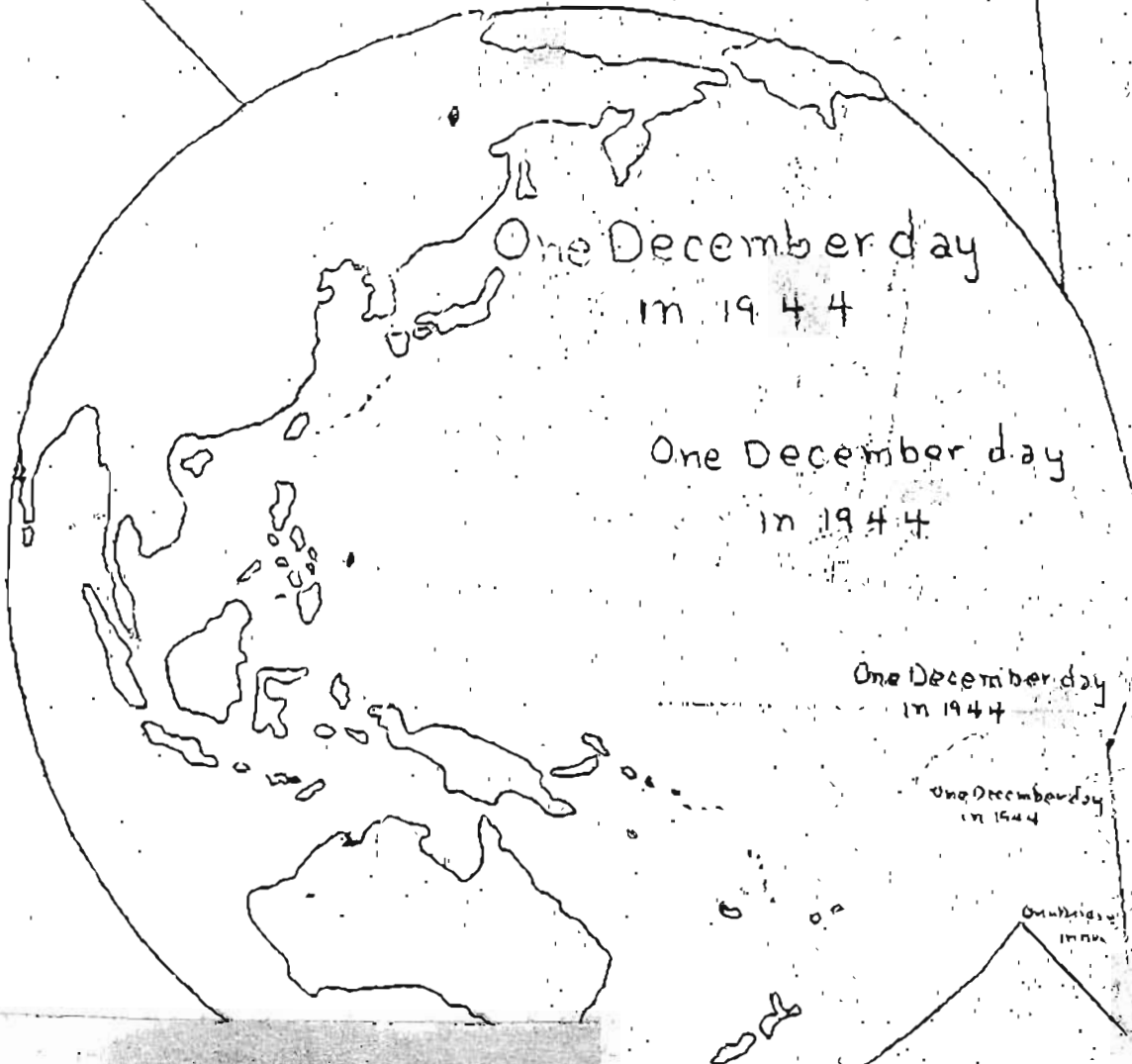
The book was apparently written by the Ens. R. F. Juraschok, for the farewell dinner held at Taku, China.



*The LST 729 with the LCT 1268 welded to the deck
at the Panama Canal.*

PACIFIC ANNIVERSARY

One December day
in 1944



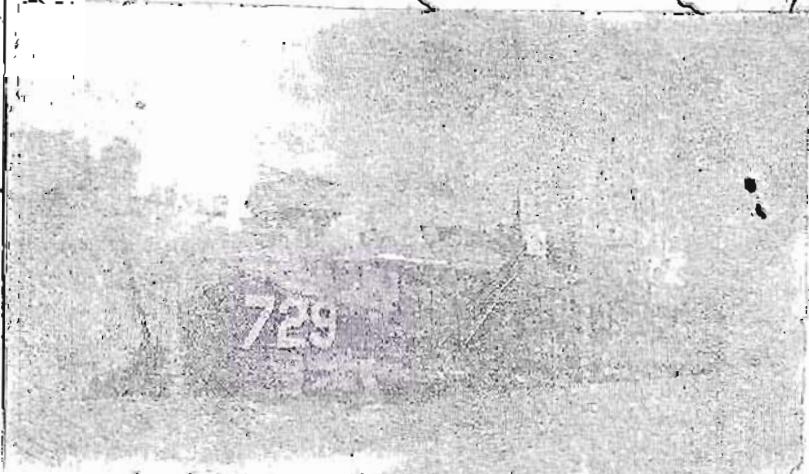
One December day
in 1944

One December day
in 1944

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in 1944

One December day
in 1944

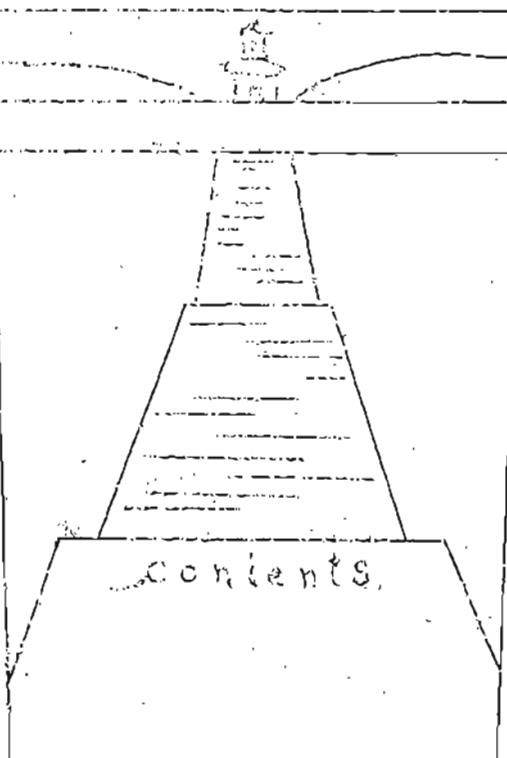
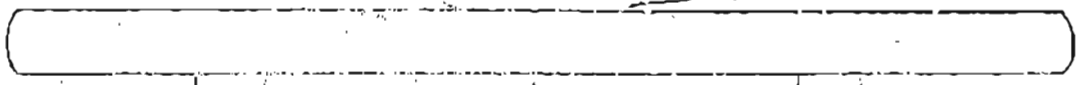
One December day
in 1945



If there is anything of a misleading character in this computation of _____? period, please do not blame it on to the writer, he's under a great strain. After all, my shipmates (and officers too) he, "wants to go home." It is not a breathtaking story nor a fine leather bound edition of a stirring sea saga, but then sentiment and spirit never were materially measured.

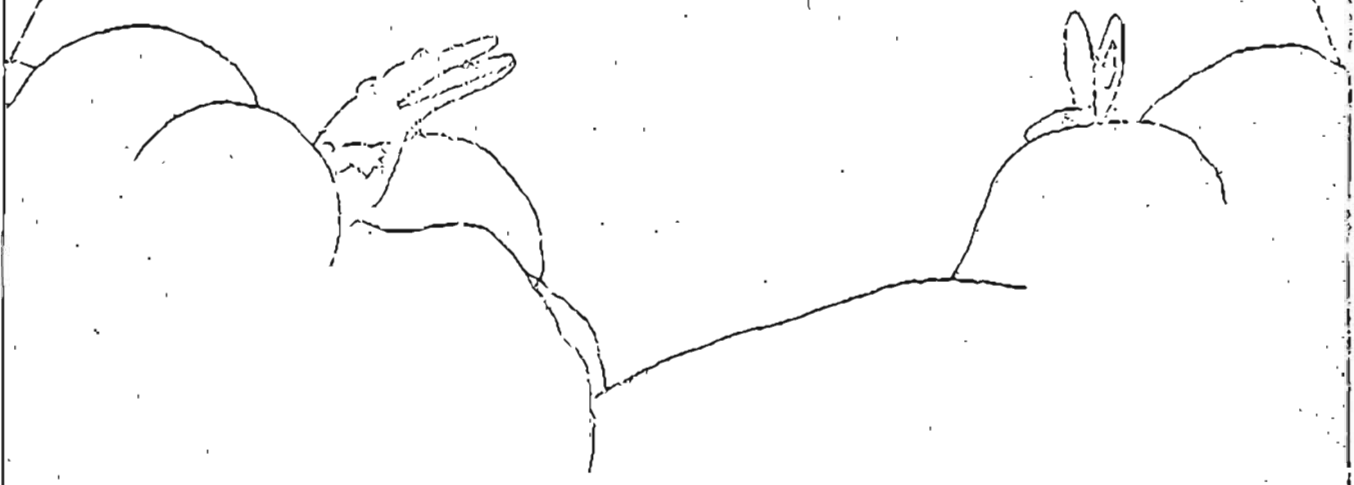
It is said that slipping into the past is a bad form of adaptation to the present situation, but heaven knows we wouldn't mind taking our minds off of it for awhile. So let's meander in memory through the not so long ago past and conjure up a day dream or two for friendship sake.....

RFJ



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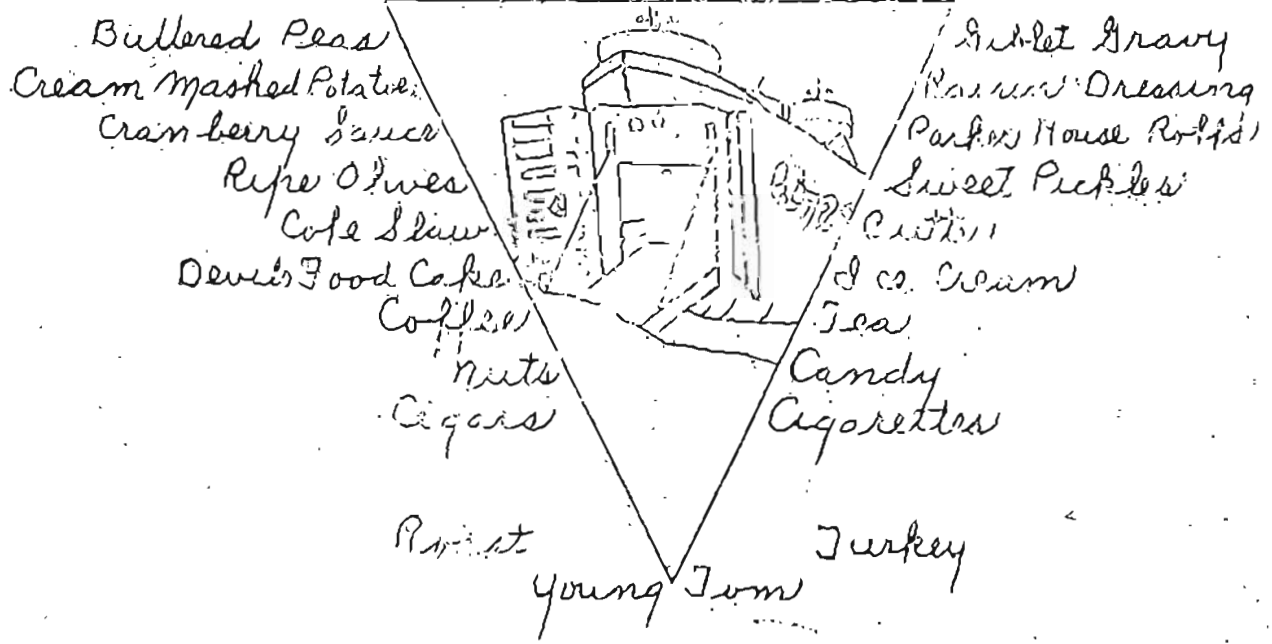
- Pacific Anniversary Dinner Menu
- Map of Travels
- Our Tale of Woe
- List of Crew and Staff Personnel



So THIS! is what we fought for

Pacific *University* *Denver*
Mines

Creole of Turkey Soup
Crockers



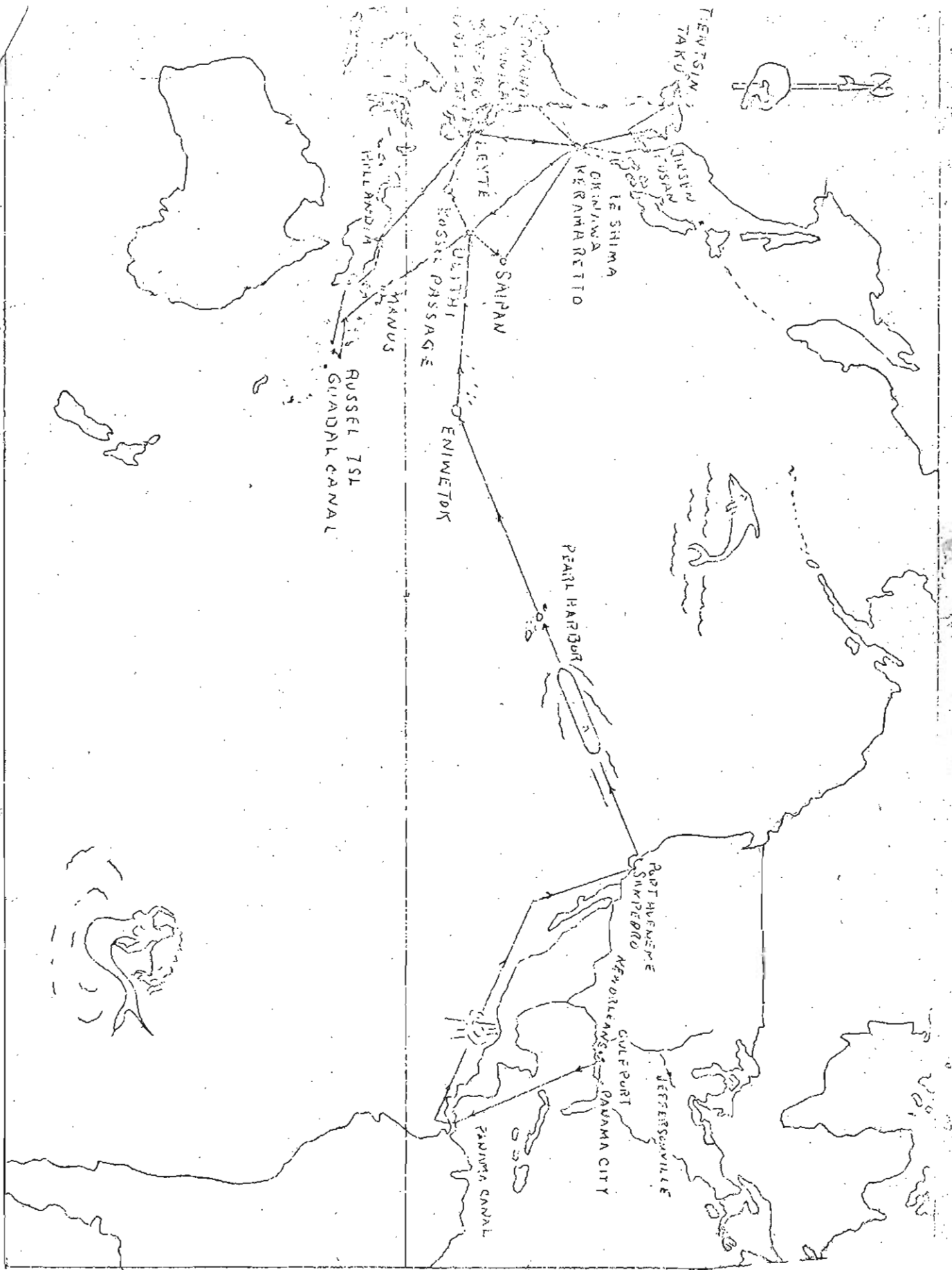
Chas. H. H. H.
Commanding

YAC
Executive

Hugh Simon
Stores Officer

John J. Kuperman
Commissary Steward

USS LST 729
14 DECEMBER 1945
TAKU, CHINA



The date of this Pacific Anniversary is, no doubt, somewhat misleading since the 729 had taken to water of a similar nature months before. However be that as it may it will not concern us here except for the matter of a few remarks to bring us to terms with the date in question.

October 7th, 1944 saw the beginning of a ship and her crew, a combination soon(?) to be molded into an efficient fighting unit. A completed ship slipped her last mooring and slowly rode her way out into the current of the Ohio into the morning mists of October 8th. Out of the Ohio into the broad muddy Mississippi she passed, as did the waning autumn days. Baton Rouge, Louisiana for fuel, Naval Station, Algiers, Louisiana to have her mast stepped and dock prepared for cargo. Then on day of October 24 the 729 sailed out to make her debut with the ocean brine, a crew making their big test. "Shakedown." From October 25 to November 7 nor man nor beast could remain at rest in St. Andrew's Bay, Panama City, Florida, the "Poontang" was on the loose. Victoriously she returned to New Orleans, rightly proud of the commission pennant, bestowed October 15, which flew from the mast, Ponderlon Shipyards for last minute checks and last minute farewells, then on her war career she left, lifting the first cargo from Gulfport, Mississippi, she took the Gulf of Mexico in her stride. But woe, it was not long until the Caribbean took the majority of us in its stride, then our tale of woe, "Why did I ever join the navy."

Coco Solo, Christobal, Colon, Panama, "working for the Yankee dollar, ships, stores and "er" well more shops. All our lives I suppose we had heard of the Panama Canal and wondered what it was like. Our curiosity was satisfied the 25th of November. Out into the broad blue waters of the Pacific, the "Quiet Waters of Balboa", but that guy never did hit the Gulf of Tehuantepec, did he?

I believe we can say we were a pretty salty ship and crew by the 8th of December when all of San Pedro didn't turn out at the harbor's edge to greet us. Incidentally, that salty is to be taken literally.

Now we are catching up with ourselves for after spending a pleasant five days in and about San Pedro, we shifted up to Port Huenceme for an added attraction, pontoons. At the close of the 13th of December we were ready for our real adventures, which brings us up to the date in question.

One December day in 1944, the grazing light of dawn peeped over the Tehachap Mountains at a frenzy of activity in the Port of Huenceme. With all the hustle and excitement of a Queen Mary the USS Lst Maru (so we can't help it if the Orient get's us down) cast off her lines, nosed her bow into the narrow channel and disappeared, to seek adventure upon the broad Pacific and Oriental waters. December 14: Yes that was the date, December 14, 1944, a whole year ago since we left the snow covered mounts of California. A lot has happened since then, trouble and joys alike. I can remember now as clear as if it were yesterday (although some yesterdays really aren't very clear), yet this I could not forget.

Nine beautiful sunlight days we sailed along--small arms practice, boasts of valor in feats of arms and the constant molding together of a green crew and an unried ship--a flagship at that.

Early in the morning of the 23rd the Hawaiian Islands were sighted. A few bumps on the horizon in a plain of blue sparkling water--an island landfall. How many times were we to strain our eyes for that welcomed sight in the year to come, we little knew. At last snug in Westlock we lay at our moorings experiencing our first island liberty. A new cargo, requisitions, transferring men, getting men, paper work, and, of course, liberty.

Christmas Day came and went, the first for many of us in the navy. An added attraction to our crew was a native Hawaiian. An odd sort of mixed mongrel with a forlorn face, but a game heart, was "Poontang, our first dog. Poontang soon proved a great source of amusement and morale builder for the new crew.

Once again the 729 slipped her moorings and headed on her westward journey, ever thoughtful of the purpose of the great business that had been the cause of her birth and building. The prow did not cut deeply into the laughing water because she had none; nor did she present the trim speedily lines of a destroyer. No, instead, straight lines, flat bottom, blunt bow and steeple cone were her characteristics. She was though as steady and sturdy a ship that ever roved the seas, our home, our personality and, like a woman, never the same under any condition, nevertheless a real ship of which we are proud.

A squall or two was all we had experienced so far in our travels of the Western Pacific. Well, maybe a few heavy swells, but on the whole a good sea and perfect sailing weather. Routine morning and evening General Quarters alerts began and ended our daily life aboard, General drills, cleaning details and bull sessions were of daily occurrence. Of the convoy went west, west and still further west until on the morning of January 15th we again experienced the thrill of an island landfall. There it lay, low on the horizon, marked by stubby clumps of palm trees which had survived the fierce fighting of months before. Eniwetok Atoll, a small part of the Marshall Islands, shrouded in dust camps and airstrips, coral reefs and a nine-day lay over.

Small boats and rough water had not been ours to understand up to this time, yet the carpenters worked overtime repairing this hole, that gun-halo, this, cleat, that whatnot until we wondered, "will our small boats survive." Afternoon liberties were spent upon the beach swimming in the lagoon, drinking beer (always dicorously referred to just as "beverages") and lounging on the coral beach.

January 24th found us hoisting anchor to continue our westward ho! Now we are trying an Eastward ho but it sure doesn't work quite as fast, wonder why? Harmony and efficiency began to raise its beautiful head here and there but was bashed down. What, would our crew have done if it hadn't had Mr. Green and his Let crew to be our scapegoat and, by golly, visa versa, What a time we did have, yet I believe many friendships were formed and a lot of fun was had by all.

Daily life aboard was much the same everyday---a routine to follow, a time for everything---yet each day was wholly different from the one preceding, or the one to come. The personalities of the individuals saw to that. It's too bad a story cannot be written relating the subtle humors of the life of a fine crew--An individual story for each man--- there are plenty of them. Yet if this short account of our travels can recall to memory those incidents to you individually we shall be more than satisfied.

Ulithi Islands, in the Caroline group, appeared the 30th of January. This was the staging area of several of the Pacific invasions and home of large naval facilities afloat. Carriers, battlewagons, cruisers, destroyers, transports, all the way down to a dingy, were present. And we cannot forget that paradise isle of Lamours, the color and glamour of native life such as we found on Mog Mog, the Pacific isle of Paradise. Our first stay was short, remember? I believe we pulled out so fast we left a couple of chiefs ashore.

Kossol Roads, in the Palau Islands-- a thousand sights to be seen, every point of the compass, water! Why even the street car soften islands were floating sheds. Yet it was here we saw our first sign of action, Eabelthuap Island. A by-passed Japanese garrison was daily strafed and bombed.

How we wanted to stand off and pepper the island with our twenties and forties! Damn, but weren't we the formidable terror of the high seas? by February 9th a convoy had been formed, our chiefs again safely aboard, after a short chase in a Dutch merchantman. Once again the 729 pointed her bow westward with Leyte as her destination. We were now getting closer to the frontiers of battle. Leyte had been taken three months before and fighting was still raging in the interior. By now we had experienced several blows, rains, squally weather in general which made us feel pretty well like veteran salts.

Dawn came, a clear warm day on the 9th of February, as we entered Leyte Gulf. So clear it was we couldn't see more than a few hundred yards beyond our bow---A lovely rainy day which seemed to have begun the set precedence of a rain every time thereafter that we entered or left Leyte Gulf.

Mail, mail, mail and you call. Now we did we hunger for mail? Lowering the small boat, we chugged our way into the island, that modern city of a hundred years ago; into the warehouses with stacks and stacks of mail. Muddy, knee deep, mail jumbled into unrecognizable piles. What a heart-sore bunch we were when the net result equaled 7000 Christmas mail has since been received.

The Philippine Islands --- "Watch Dog of the Orient" how it impressed us! Notable more so than ever in Hawaii was the mad craving for, guess what? For souvenirs and our realization of the American sucker, what we couldn't spend to get a souvenir. As we arrived, in rain and mists, so we departed Leyte Gulf the 16th of February, heading south this time in the biggest convoy we yet or since had joined.

Hoist that Jolly Roger! Booy that scuttle or you'll walk the plank. This is Neptune's day of judgment and any swab disrupting the ceremonies will be given the cat-of-nine tails, hung, drawn and quartered. What a day, Fire hose, royal bat ugh? -- Royal barbecue -- my hair is still trying to grow out -- the electric shock and what have you. At last we were all shell backs and true salts of the sea. What a bunch of scalped hair brains we looked to be. The counter had been across the international date line and had been crossed and we were a fully and duly initiated ship born to the rays of the deep. With an overnight stop at Hollandia, New Guinea, we entered the Solomon Seas, enroute to Guadalcanal. What sailing weather! With always a full moon, the nights seemed breathless and the sea a phantom world of glass and shadowy forms. Like stately kings the three Lsts steamed through this land of volcanic islands and smooth sea, the nearest to story book tropical islands we had yet seen. On the 26th of February we dropped the hook a half mile off Guadalcanal of combat fame, sharing the island with Australia and British troops.

Guadalcanal gave us our first hot cargo -- ammunition. Half loaded, we proceeded to the Russell Islands to complete our cargo.

Somewhere in our travels we had lost Pointang. What a tragedy! So much was it so, it had a pronounced effect upon the crew so we had proceeded, at Guadalcanal, to find a mascot to fill the empty shoes. A pup was found which came to be known as Salty, who is now a grown dog and none could take his place.

From the Russells to Manus Island, in the Admiralty group, we sailed. Lt. F.S. McCarthy left us as skipper and Lt. G.C. Tomlin succeeded him.

In a convoy we moved on to Ulithi to form the Northern Defense Group in the invasion of Okinawa -- our first combat assignment and with a load of ammunition to boot! The convoy was formed, the time was set, the anchor was raised and we quietly left Ulithi on the morning of the 27th of March. Rain? Of course, it rained, what else did you expect?

At last our chance to deal out the vengeance that was stored in such a seething boiling mass within our bosoms. Dramatic, hey? Woo Woo! Seriously, however, what was in each man's mind as we spent those short, yet terribly long days in transit to our first taste of combat, never really will be known. Some, no doubt, entertained thoughts of fear while others were naively unaware that combat was almost an actuality. No thoughts, good thoughts, feelings of vast emptiness, who is articulate enough to explain the thoughts of men entering into combat? General Quarters, man your battle stations, load your guns, hold fire!

With our preparations set we entered Kerama Retto. Blasting shell fire, a tattoo of ack ack overhead, screaming bombs, geyers of water? NO, those did not quite greet us as our imagination had prepared us. Just a calm blue water in a beautiful spring day. Disappointed? Well, perhaps we were for the time, but a matter of hours brought our first realization of suspense and terror.

Anchored as first ship in a channel among the few islands composing Kerama Retto, we would be the first open to air attack.

Night fell and we were pretty confident that nothing would happen. Near midnight the General alarm ground out its ugly blasts. General Quarters, General Quarters, man your battle stations, flash red, control green. The stillness of

black night was broken with the preparations for battle. Then the waiting began. Not a sound. Eyes and ears strained to pierce the curtain of solid black. Then two lurid blue flames accompanied, of course, by the deeply throated roar of an engine, told us the enemy was near. Off our starboard quarter the Jap plane approached, then began to go away. In easy breath. Yipe! A right angle turn and down she dove on us. Hold your fire, hold that fire men. Closer like a glash of lightning straight for our floating ammo dump. Remember how you felt, it was an eternity. Then Lady Luck smiled, we held our fire, the Jap began to climb out of his dive high above our mast. Had we fired we would have disclosed our position, but she passed. Upon fire and the whole sky was lit with tracks, large bursts as the whole anchorage let go. The Jap as we learned the next day made its suicide dive further down the anchorage hitting, but doing comparatively little damage to another Lst. We were initiated. For five days we lay at Korama Rhetto, then on the 2nd of April we moved into Hagushi Beach, Okinawa Shima. For the next fifteen days night and day we beached and retracted, beached and retracted trying to get rid of our load of ammo. Coral beaches, high tides leaving us dry, flash red, control green, make smoke, make smoke, make smoke. In the middle of a large smoke screen, "You are ordered to beach on yellow one so we creep through an anchorage of hundreds of ships blindly until our nerves can stand no more, we anchor. The smoke clears and we find ourselves headed into a large transport a matter of two hundred yards away. Day in day out, ack ack as an accompaniment, Jap-diving into ships around us as we sat on our powder horse.

Make smoke, and it was so thick you couldn't see. After several days we became veterans and as the sky was full of flak we enjoyed a picture below and swept up the shrapnel from the deck the next morning. Unloaded at last, perhaps a rest is in store. Here comes a message! "Let as smoke screen element south end of anchorage" And so we did until a Jap shore battery got pretty sharp.

"Go in and load and proceed to Ie Shima" Land what could we do, obey right! The 20th of April found us approaching the snake twisted channel to Ie Shima beach. Bam, whizz! bam! bam! Zzzz, whiccc! Three shells crossed our ship as we prepared for our beaching. Just a few hours were spent there then a hurried exit back to Hagushi Beach, Okinawa. Finally on the 29th of April we departed for the rear area and a much needed rest.

Arriving the 8th of May via Ulithi, the 729 settled herself at Saipan for what turned out to be a month's rest. Okinawa had taught us our weak spots in organization, and also our ship. One month of chipping, painting, refitting, relaxing and re-whatever you have. However, as too much of even a good thing becomes tiresome we longed for battle again. Our spirits were high, and combat raged in our blood. We must avenge our companions of Pearl Harbor. Now isn't that a creek of bull.

But we did get tired of sitting. We had not long to wait, for a series of shuttle runs which never ceased until we reached Taku, China. That's right, that's where we are now. Tomorrow the ship fitters will weld us to the dock for the duration. Duration of what? You've got us.

Okinawa Shima, arrived 18 June left 1 July. Loyte arrived 6 July left 28 July. Okinawa, arrived 29 July left 8 August. Heavy weather, fair weather, squalls sunshine back and forth, troops, gasoline, tanks, trucks beach and retract, the good old dependable amphibious force and the 729.

Then it happened. You guessed it, out of Manila and on the way to Mindoro peace was declared by Jap sources. Wow! Since then, how's my points, say after the next trip we're due for the states. See you at Christmas, say you must come over and visit us and our new addition. Sort of packs an irony doesn't it? Indeed it does for a lot of us. From Mindoro we returned to Subic Bay for logistics. Say there was a close, remember unloading supplies from an Lcm underway. Man, this ship can do anything. I suppose we will be an ice breaker before we are finished. Provisioning continued from the 17th August to the 19th August when we departed for Loyte and anew assignment.

As usual, you guessed it. Rain, rain and more rain. August 22nd no particular historical interest I assure you, only an arrival date in Leyte.

Liberty, painting, no mail, general routine was the daily diet. There is one remarkable change. The crew had become organized and was running like clock work. Of course I must admit the main spring was a little weak as yet and the hands stuck once in a while but on the whole we were by now a fairly well integrated organization. September 2nd and did the fireworks fly. One thousand five hundred ships popping off at the same time. Peace was officially being celebrated. What could ~~we~~ they possibly use Lt's for now anyway we are comparatively small in cargo carrying and the cost wouldn't be practicable. Just a bit more sarcastic irony.

September 4th we weighed anchor and set out for Iloilo, Panay the second city of the Philippines, that glamorous city of adventure and romance. Ruins of the ancient, culture of the moderns and no balcony at the meat market. Arriving September 7th we dropped hook in the strait and proceeded to enjoy our first city liberty. Alternate rain and sunshine never dampened our spirits. Leyte and Iloilo marked the beginning of the 729's demobilization. Taking on our cargo we headed towards Jinsen, Korea our first taste of the Asiatic Mainland and entrance into occupation assignments. Ten days of almost continuous bad weather which we were to experience the rest of our trip in this area. Winter was beginning to come around with its hoary head of chill winds and nasty storms.

Arrived Jinsen 27th September, departed the 30th. Komenas, china wear, curios, anything and everything had been found. Down the Yellow Sea into the teeth of the heaviest weather the ship has ever experienced, days of rocking, rolling, pitching trying to keep station, trying to keep in you bunk. Part of a typhoon it was called. About the fifth day we put into Okinawa for a rest, to let the storm blow over. October 5th that was. The following day was clear as a crystal so we proceeded to our destination arriving the 10th of October.

Our first liberty in Manila. I don't need to say, I believe, what we thought of Manila, a city of shambles and utter ruins. However the liberty was fair and we were able to get a little salt out of our bones.

On October 15 we again departed from Manila enroute to San Fernando to pick up a cargo of occupation troops and renew our acquaintance with Jinsen once again. The voyage was serene until we hit a cold front or two and the crane broke loose. Two hours the battle continued with 729 emerging victorious again. It was quite a scare though Jinsen was as cold as an ice bank and the boiler breaking down didn't help matters any at all. By this time thirty or so of our men had been sent homeward bound. From this time on our operations were continued in this area. Leaving Jinsen the 1st of November for Okinawa we bid our fond farewell hoping never to see Jinsen again. From Okinawa another load of occupation troops were taken to Fusan, Korea and thence to Taku, China arriving 21 November.

Here we are still in Taku, losing our men, getting replacements, acting as loading authorities for the repatriation of Japanese troops and civilians. Winter is setting in, but hard and we expect a White Christmas.

As I have said in the short career of the 729 she has accomplished an amazing variety of feats, thanks to her crew and officers. What happens from here on out we can only conjecture and hope. Perhaps some day one with talent will take it into his hands to write a real history of our glorious ship and give her and her crew the just due.

