

The following story was furnished by Milt Meehan, who served as a Radar Operator aboard USS Teak AN-35 during WWII. Milt lives at Newport Beach in sunny California. In contrast I am looking out the window here in Fargo, North Dakota where the temperature this morning was 1 below with a windchill of 21 below. Here's his story:

This may be hard to believe, but read on and one event in WWII will not go down in the history books, but will be remembered by the crew of the Teak. As Paul Harvey would say, this is the rest of the story.

For all you non Net Tender Readers, the USS Teak AN-35 was a Net Tender, one of 77 that were scattered around the world in WWII. They were built to lay torpedo nets around harbors and ships that were vulnerable to

the enemy's torpedos. However, they were used for many different purposes other than just laying torpedo nets.

The Teak's last mission of WWII was to salvage the Philippine treasure of silver pesos that was dumped into Manila Bay, off the fortress of Corregidor, at the entrance to Manila Bay. This was to prevent the enemy from finding it when they captured the Philippine Islands. Before the enemy captured Manila in 1942, the submarine Trout loaded all the gold aboard and removed it from the Philippines.

The Teak had just completed it's mission of removing all the scuttled Japanese ships that had blocked the shipping lanes and docks and were assigned this mission to salvage the silver pesos dropped into Manila Bay at the start of the war. This mission began in early summer 1945. The silver pesos were found in about 120 feet of water, close to Corregidor, at the entrance to Manila Bay. The pesos were loaded on the Teak's deck and about once every week the Teak hauled the pesos into a dock at Manila where they were removed by the Military Police from the ship.

Shortly before the war ended in August 1945, Captain Hollett informed the crew that the Teak was being transferred to the mine craft division for the invasion of Japan, not a happy thought. The war ended, our transfer was cancelled and we continued our last mission of the war, the salvage of the silver pesos.

Our contact with the Enemy Cruiser happened several weeks after the war ended. We were all alone, anchored at the entrance to Manila Bay, salvaging the pesos when it happened. Our radar had been secured, no more general quarters, but we still had a 24 hour deck and bridge watch. It was shortly after dawn when the bridge watch asked the deck watch if he had seen the large ship on the horizon coming directly at the Teak. It was a loud yes from the deck watch. The large ship got closer and closer and suddenly came to a halt about 500 yards in front of the Teak and began signaling tge Teak. It was obvious then that the ship was a cruiser, with all it's big guns all pointed at the Teak.

The conversation between the bridge and deck watch went something like this:

Bridge watch: "Did you see the flag that ship is flying?" "How could I miss it" "Good Lord, Now it is signaling us, wake up Red Stephens and get him up here on the double to read their message!!" "Also get the Captain up to the bridge right away!" "Tell him a Jap Cruiser is about 500 yards off our bow, ahead of the Teak, signaling us, and all it's big guns are aimiung directly at us!

Shortly the Captain and the signalman "Red Stephens arrived on the bridge. Captain Hollett, a usually calm man, was definitely startled at what he saw ahead of the Teak. The enemy cruiser was still signaling the Teak and Stephens was writing the message down. "Captain, they want permission to enter Manila Bay and go to their anchorage." Captain Hollett calmed down and told Stephens. "Tell them to stand by until we give them further orders." The Jap Cruiser signaled back, "Roger, we will stand by for further orders." It was obvious Captain Hollett was in his glory, in command of a Jap Cruiser and giving orders to it. He had never thought about this in his wildest dreams.

Captain Hollett told the deck watch to get our radio man to the bridge immediately! When he arrived Captain Hollett told him to contact the Harbor Master and contact the Jap Cruiser with the information it desired. This was accomplished and the Cruiser signaled back that they had received it and thanked us for the information.

As the Jap Cruiser headed into Manila Bay, it passed close by the Teak and the ship's Captain was on the bridge wing, looking down at the Teak, he saluted us. Some of the crew were standing next to the railing on the deck and they all saluted and bowed to us. The enemy was humble in defeat for sure.

We later found out that our high command had requested this ship to come to Manila and make arrangements to go to many Japanese garrisons in the Philippines, that had not surrendered and would not believe the war was over.