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# Hedunit: The Memoirs of an Ex-Blue Jacket

Alex A. Martin

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## “HEDUNIT”

The memoirs of an ex-Blue Jacket – briefly written from his actual experiences as he started out in the old Navy in 1898 and finished in what developed to be the new Navy in 1904, that really is the old Navy today.

by Alex A. Martin

Cedrus Press  
Cedarville, Ohio

2013

Hedunit: The Memoirs of an Ex-Blue Jacket  
Alex A. Martin

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Alex Martin, taken while he was a member of the crew of the U.S.S. Wisconsin



## MY SHIP MODELS

*You stand in shadowed nooks with all sails set,  
Dreaming of phantom seas and flying spray;  
Waiting for winds that whistle eerie tunes  
To proud ancestors of a bygone day.*

*You wait in quiet corners, wistfully,  
With sails high flung to trades that never blow;  
Thirsting for flying spindrift and a gale  
And troughs of rocking green and blue below.*

*Your lines are taut with hidden eagerness,  
To sail the seven seas and plow the blue –  
To listen to the chanting of the trades  
And see dim ports that once, in dreams, you knew.*

*But never may you fly before the wind  
Hull down, with your proud kin of other years;  
While roofs of homes must be your starless skies  
And shelves above a hearth remain your piers.*

Alex A. Martin



## “HEDUNIT”

Previous to December 1898, residents of Cleveland, Ohio -- or the immediate vicinity -- who desired to enlist in the U.S. Navy would have to go to Buffalo, New York, to enlist and be officially sworn in.

However, a Navy Recruiting office opened in December 1898, at 64 Public Square, Cleveland, Ohio -- at the opening of the Spanish-American War -- and elaborate announcements were made in all the Cleveland newspapers. I noticed the article. I was eight months over fifteen years of age at the time, and I was out of a job. Every morning I would look for a job at different factories, etc., with no luck, only to return home and be accused of not even looking by my father and stepmother. Later, instead of going home, I would stop in at a certain blacksmith shop where they would be shoeing horses, and stand near the furnace where the shoes were heated to a bright red for forging, and I would look at the morning paper and get warm. And it was then that I learned the new U.S. Naval recruiting office had opened in Cleveland. I spoke to two friends of mine who were there for the same reason that I was, and suggested that all three of us go downtown and enlist in the Navy! All agreed. When we reached the Naval recruiting office under the command of Lt. Russell, we were all signed up and then taken into a side room for a physical examination. The Chief Petty Officer who examined me said I was not old enough and would have to have my parents' consent. He furnished me with a form for them to fill out and sign. I hurried home and upon presenting it to my stepmother, she signed it right away and told me to hustle on to the shop where my father was working and get him to sign it, and take it right back to the Naval office.

My father wanted us to wait a few days and try to find out more about the new life I was going into, but because my two friends were already in, I told my father I would very much prefer that he would sign the paper right away, and that I was sure of what I was doing.

He signed, although he did not want to, and I took it right back to the Recruiting Officer and was accepted. When my father came home from work that night (December 28, 1898) he asked me, “Well, did you get in?”

“Sure I did,” I answered him, “and so did the other two guys” (Oliver Doyle and Alex Lancaster). “Now all we have to do is report there at 9 o'clock every morning until they have a quota of twenty-five young men to send to Coaster's Harbor Island at Newport, Rhode Island, for introductory training.”

“Didn't they give you any papers or anything to show that you are now enlisted in the Navy? How do I know whether you are telling me the truth or not -- doesn't seem to me they would do anything like that!” This was my father's only question.

Next morning, December 29, the morning paper had an article on the front page: “The first Cleveland lad to enlist in the new Naval Recruiting Office at Cleveland, Ohio,



was enlisted and sworn in today. He is Alex A. Martin of 122 Whitney Ave.” I felt very proud to realize that I was the first to enlist in the Navy at the Cleveland office, and I still feel just as proud of that fact as I was on that day. I showed the paper to my father and asked him if he believed it now. “Yep,” he answered, “you’ve done it now all right. How long are you enlisted for?”

“As an Apprentice, third class, until my twenty-first birthday -- April 19, 1904. Five years and four months,” I told him.

“Well,” he says, “remember one thing, boy. Make the best of it, because you will stay there until your time expires if I have anything to do with it.” (In those days it was possible to buy yourself out if somebody would furnish the money -- it depended on how long you were in.)

On January 2, 1899, the three of us, along with twenty-two others, were shipped to Coaster’s Harbor Island at Newport, Rhode Island, via the Pennsylvania Railroad, and many times we longed for the same ride again, only in the opposite direction -- toward home again!

Next day we arrived at Newport Naval Training Station, and we were put through the same physical examination again that we had in Cleveland. Then we had to have our hair cut -- clipped all over very close. We were vaccinated and issued regulation clothes -- two of everything. Light and heavy underwear, white uniforms, blue uniforms, socks, neckerchiefs, etc. -- and a hammock and mattress and mattress cover -- and a pair of blankets. We were taught the proper way to get into the hammock without falling out on the opposite side, and how to sleep in it. They told us that when a sailor goes to bed at night he sleeps in his coffin! If it is necessary to have a burial at sea, the body is laced up in the hammock with a couple of six inch shells and slid overboard into the sea, with regular funeral services -- as the bugler sounds taps.

We sure did get homesick -- all three of us -- for we had never been away from home before. We could not adjust ourselves to this new life of discipline and routine. We had to scrub and wash clothes, mend our own clothes, and a number of other things we never even thought of doing in civilian life at home.

Lancaster never said much to me, but Doyle was in terrible shape with homesickness. Why, he couldn’t even write his own letters home, and would ask me to write them for him as he dictated -- “Oh Mother, please buy me out! I’ll always be your ideal son, and you will feel proud of me! I’ll work every day and bring home all my pay, and I will do anything you want me to, but please buy me out!” Some of his letters contained a lot of untruths, such as “They are treating me like a dog” -- “I’m not getting anything to eat that is fit for a dog” -- “I have to wash my own clothes and do all my own mending. I am sick all the time -- chills and fever and all they give me is two CCs and a gargle (CCs are quinine capsules).” “I sleep in a hammock and when I turn over I fall out onto the floor. One fellow fell out and broke three ribs! Please, please buy me out while I am still all in one piece!”

On one occasion Lancaster suggested that as long as we were all three together, we should stick with each other and see each other through everything. In other words, each one of us to extend the brotherly spirit and brotherly love toward the other, by sharing everything we had, and consoling each other when homesick, seasick -- or whatever; and fight for one another whenever it was necessary.

Each day the regular routine of training kept us quite busy -- calisthenics, manual of arms, marching, general quarters, clear ship for action, secure, collision drill, swimming, rowing -- and all kinds of boat drilling, including sculling, sailing, life saving, etc. Fire drill, dress parade, fencing with wooden cutlasses, large gun practice, small arm practice, handling ammunition, and everything that we would need to be familiar with when we were ready to be assigned to duty on a man-o-war.

We were also taught the Wig-Wag night and day signaling -- how and when to display the national ensign, and the Union Jack. We were taught seamanship -- splicing rope and cables -- tying knots -- box the compass -- read the barometer -- cast and read the lead line to find the depth of the water, rock, mud, coral, etc. This is necessary when the ship is seeking a right spot to drop the anchor.

After a few frequent and strenuous examinations, we were classified as Apprentice Third Class -- \$9.00 per month and rations. There were some young fellows who did not make very good grades in examinations, and they were not too interested anyhow. It seems they could not hold on to a first class conduct rating because they were always on report for breaking some rule or other. One fellow decided to desert one night by jumping off the sea wall surrounding the island when the tide was out. He thought he could walk out onto the mud and sand part way to the City of Newport, and swim the rest of the way across. However, he made a mistake and jumped off the wall when the night was very dark, and the tide was in and the water was about twelve feet deep at the sea wall, and he was drowned.

Three times a day we were called to assembly for marching across the island to the mess hall for meals. We all got our turn for assignment in the mess hall to prepare the tables, etc. -- wash dishes, clean up after meals -- for one week. Those assigned to this duty were called "Strikers." Every morning, an hour before reveille, the Strikers all had to get out of their hammocks, dress, and go to the mess hall galley -- draw a kettle of hot cocoa, and take about ten or eleven granite cups and go back to the barracks to supply members of his "mess" of twenty-one men, whom he served at meal time. When reveille sounded and they all heaved out of their hammocks, they had about fifteen minutes for this and to lash their hammocks and stow them for the day. Hammocks had to be lashed regulation -- seven half hitches of equal distance apart, the full length of the hammock, with the mattress and the blankets neatly tucked inside. Woe to the one who stowed his hammock with six or eight half hitches! They ALL had to be right up to regulation.

After about three months on the island, we were examined for promotion to Apprentice Second Class and \$13.00 per month, with rations. As Second Class

Apprentices we were allowed to go “ashore” to Newport, Rhode Island, on Saturday afternoon for four hours. On Sundays we all went to church service in the chapel on the island. The chaplain conducted Baptist services and they were complete, even to the choir and the invitation -- but no collection. Those who were Catholics were taken to Newport and marched to a Catholic church, where they attended Mass in a body, and marched back to the dock afterwards and placed aboard a tug and returned to the island, in time for dinner. We always got special food on Sunday -- and it was sometimes better than lots of us had at home -- even ice cream for desert and pie.

We were not allowed to use tobacco in any form while training on the island, and it was surprising how many signed up as Catholics in order to go to Newport on Sunday morning and pick up cigarette butts going and coming from church. However, once in awhile someone got caught doing it and was placed on “report,” getting six or eight weeks extra duty (hard work) -- and no more going to church on Sunday, unless it would be to the Baptist service on the island.

After about six months, we were examined again for Apprentice First Class and \$21.00 per month with rations. All Apprentice First Class and First Class Conduct men were the first to be assigned to go aboard a training ship, for a training cruise to Europe. We worked hard for this as it meant finally leaving the Island.

There was a clipper ship -- full rigged square-rigger -- at anchor at the Coaster’s Harbor Island. We were taught to go aloft and spread out on the yardarms and learn how to make sail -- furl and reef sails -- repair and clean sails. Tie knots and splice rope aloft -- and any other general duties that we might be ordered to carry out when we were transferred to a training ship. (This clipper ship was the old *Constellation*.)

Lancaster, Doyle, and I were successful in the last examinations, and we were promoted to First Class Apprentice and detailed to go aboard the training ship -- U.S.S. *Essex* -- another full rigged clipper ship -- when she came into the harbor. She sure looked beautiful to us, when she came in on June 5, 1899, under full sail. We gathered our bags and hammocks and our ditty boxes and went aboard. We were assigned our billets on either the starboard or port watch. Our detail consisted of seventy-two First Class Apprentices. I was assigned to the port watch, while Lancaster was assigned to the starboard. Doyle? Well, he wasn’t in the detail when we boarded the *Essex*! Lancaster and I hunted all over the ship for him, but no Doyle could be found. Finally we were informed that his mother had bought him out of the service, and the night before he had left for home without a word to either of us. “Well,” said Lancaster, “how do you like that? He’s no man at all to pull a stunt like that -- and we three agreed to stick together ‘like brothers.’ “

I thought it was a good thing to be rid of him, if that was the kind of guy he wanted to be. Lancaster and I renewed our vows to each other -- that as long as we were on the same ship together, and until our enlistments expired, we would stick together! Then we would go home with our Honorable Discharges, and ignore Doyle forever!

We finally got located and settled in our stations -- Lancaster in the afterguards (poop deck) and me in the forecastle. We did not see each other very much -- only in the evening when our daily chores and drills were finished.

One of the first requirements we learned of daily routine was our "waking up" exercise -- 5:30 AM! We climbed up over the mast head, bare footed and in our underwear, and down the other side! How those rattlings would sting the soles of our feet until our feet got hardened to it. Believe me, when we got down we were wide-awake and ready for anything! Some of the boys would try to shirk by grabbing hold of a rope hanging down from the mast head when they had climbed part way up, and swing over to the other side and down again, without going over the top. Whenever one got caught "shirking" he was ordered over the top and down again many times, until the Boatswain's mate thought he had enough, and his feet were starting to bleed.

All my duties were on the port side of the forecastle on the spar deck and on the gun deck below. I was one of the crew on the four-inch gun deck and I was also stationed as bow oarsman in Cutter #2 in the running boat. (A running boat was one of the twelve-oared cutters assigned for the day to run to other ships at anchor, with messages and visitors -- also back and forth to shore for passengers, supplies, and mail.

After our climb over the masthead, the next thing in line was to scrub and wash clothes. We washed all our dirty clothes in salt water, using a salt-water soap that had been issued to us. This soap contained a lot of lye, and it was the only soap we could use with salt water. Our washing was hung on the line with "stops" (little pieces of cord about a foot long), and the lines were hoisted up into the rigging. Then we proceeded to scrub down decks, bright woodwork and paintwork. The old wooden ships in those days didn't carry equipment for fresh water, but they had several tanks that were filled with fresh water from lighters from shore, just before we would leave port. That fresh water was always under Marine guard, even the scuttlebutt where we got a drink once in awhile. The tin cups at the scuttlebutt were chained to it, and it was impossible to steal any water to wash in. We always used salt water from over the side.

Every other morning, in scrubbing decks, we had to use holystone -- a square stone about 4" to 6" square, with a hole halfway through the center. We used this by placing a brush handle in the hole and rubbing the stone back and forth on the wet deck. By using sand also, it made the deck almost as white as a table top back home -- and cleaner. Then we used the fire hose to wash and rinse down, followed by squeegees and swabs. We had to make our own swabs by drawing strings from canvass and binding a cluster of these strings to the end of a long broom handle. They really made excellent swabs. We also made hand swabs the same way.

Finally it began to look like we would soon start on our training cruise. The U.S.S. *Essex* had about six boilers below decks and a marine steam engine and one propeller. We used steam when going out of port and entering a port. All our cruising was done by sails -- mainsail, topsail, topgallant, and royal on three masts and hung from yardarms. On the topgallant, or after mast, was a large sail called the spanker, and on the

forward jib boom was the jib -- second jib and flying jib. Those three masts were known as the foremast, the mainmast, and the topgallant mast.

After about three days of taking on provisions, coal, water, and other supplies, the command came to us by the Boatswain's Mate using his Boatswain's whistle, and passing the word aloud to all parts of the ship: "All hands up anchor! Everybody to their stations -- and all the chain stowers go below to the chain lockers." "Secure all boats for sea -- and lead out the fire hose to wash the mud off the anchor chain and the anchor as it comes up to the haws pipe (a hole in the bow that the anchor chain comes through, leading to the chain lockers)."

The men called "chain stowers" would receive the anchor chain, each link weighing about thirty pounds, and coil it down -- clear for running the next time the anchor was dropped, as the chain would just about fly out through the haws pipe, as the anchor was dropped.

As soon as the anchor chain was straight up and down, it signified that the anchor was free from the bottom, and the ship got under way. Then the anchor was hoisted up on deck and placed in its "cradle" and secured. Everything had to be secured because when the ship began to roll and pitch, nothing could be tossed around. How we "land-lubbers" began to get seasick! Boy, how that ship could roll! She was "top heavy" with those boilers and coal engines and coal -- and a huge smoke stack -- all extra weight. She was not originally built for being a full-rigged clipper ship.

They then proceeded to assign the men on watch to their different stations. The "lookout" went to the masthead in the crow's nest. Four men to the steering wheel, the fore and after guards. Two men on the bridge with the Officer of the Day, signal boys, etc. Half the crew were starboard watch and the other half were port watch. We started with the starboard watch on deck and the port watch below. It sure did sound good whenever they struck eight bells -- that was when the watch on deck was relieved by the watch below -- after a four-hour watch. Eight bells was 8:00 A.M. -- then one bell 8:30 A.M., two bells 9 A.M., and so on -- every half hour until eight bells again, or twelve noon -- then relieve the watch. One bell 12:30 P.M., two bells 1:00 P.M., until eight bells again, or 4:00 P.M., and change watch again. From 4:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. and from 6:00 P.M. to 8 P.M. were two-hour watches, called the dogwatch. These two-hour watches were to break the four-hour watches, so that one watch on deck at night from 8:00 P.M. to midnight, and again from 4:00 A.M. to 8:00 in the morning gave the other watch only four hours on watch at night, 12:00 A.M. to 4:00 A.M., every other night. Eight hours off duty one night, and four hours the next.

I get a big kick out of some folks now when I hear them say, "Oh boy, I got home at eleven bells last night." They mean 11 o'clock or six bells. Time reading on a ship never exceeds eight bells.

Four men were assigned on watch at the steering wheel. This was because sometimes when the wind is strong and the sails are all bellied out and full, it is quite a task for four men to hold the double steering wheel against the rudder that would

be inclined to swing with the force of the heavy seas and the wind direction. One of these four men is the real helmsman, as his position is on the right side of the forward wheel, and he has the compass before him. Of course, the responsibility of keeping the ship on her course is entirely on his shoulders, and the other three men are merely to help him turn and hold the wheel at his command. He watches the compass, and he might tell the others, "Starboard a little," "Port a bit," "Steady." These ships had no mechanical steering gear like the modern ships have, where one man can do all the steering.

To go back to the subject of "up anchor" and how it is hoisted by use of the capstan and capstan bars -- the capstan was like a large wheel hub with square holes around the top to place the capstan bars, and it resembled a big wheel. It had lugs around the bottom to grasp the anchor chain that led in from the hawse pipe around the base of the capstan, and down into the chain locker. The spokes, or capstan bars, were manned by four men on each bar, and they would shove on these bars and walk around in a circle, causing the capstan, or hub, to circle around and wind the chain in, bringing up the anchor. As these men walked around with the capstan bars, they would "chant" a sea chorus and keep step with the music.

The songs were also used as the men walked along the deck pulling on a rope to make sail aloft. Sometimes the ship's bugler would blow a bugle-march to help the men along. When the ship is pretty well at sea, the command is given, "All hands make sail." The engine is stopped and from then on the ship is to proceed under sail. Every man has a certain station and certain duty when this command is given.

We had several old-time sailors in our crew, and a Lieutenant Commander who was second in command of the ship, and a captain. They were all genuine "old salts" when it came to sailing a clipper ship like the U.S.S. *Essex*. So with these two officers on the bridge, and the navigator in the chart house, and the men at their stations in the rigging waiting for the word to go aloft and make sail (each mast had four yards: the top yard was the "royal," the next one down was the "top gallant," the next one down was the "topsail," and the lower one was the "main") -- when everyone was properly accounted for at his station, the Lieutenant Commander would call out, "Aloft, royal yard men," then, "Aloft, topgallant yard men," then, "Aloft, topsail yard men," and last, "Aloft, main yard men."

It is really a most beautiful sight to see the men on the foot ropes of each yard arm, on each mast, waiting the next command. There are men on deck who receive the word to "man the downhauls." These are ropes from the lower corner of each square sail aloft that lead down the mast to the deck. The order is given to unlash the sails and "away downhauls," drawing down the lower edges of all sails and securing all downhauls to the belaying pins on the rails. When the sails are spread and the ship is on her course, and they have "tacked" ship, or turned and adjusted the yard arms according to the wind direction, everyone is ordered down from aloft except the look-out in the crow's nest. Of course, when the men are working aloft they have an "old timer" with lots of sailing experience astride on the end of each yard arm to help the land lubbers up there and tell

them what to do and how to do it. It makes no difference to the officers and boatswain's mates and other petty officers who is seasick or how bad he feels. He must go on with his duties just the same. If he tries to hide someplace to get out of doing his duties, he goes on report for shirking. Some fellows got seasick as soon as the anchor was up and stayed sick until it was down again in some port. Our Lieutenant Commander sure was an "old salt," and he was never seen on deck smiling. He gave orders, and he saw to it that his orders were carried out immediately. If he saw one of us younger fellows lying on the deck, really seasick, he would yell out, "Get out of there, you \_\_\_\_\_, and get busy!" If you did not jump up at that order, he would call out, "Some one of you seamen get over there and kick that fellow out of there, someone with heavy boots on!" However, the sick one would be on his feet quickly enough and would hunt another spot in some other place on the ship. He would not go below decks, because all the port holes and gun ports and hatches would be closed and clamped, to be water-tight, and there would not be any fresh air down there. Sometimes inside one of the lifeboats would be a good place to hide. I never did get the full name of our Lieutenant Commander, but I guess I did not like him, either. We all called him "Vinegar Bill," and he was really sour! As I think of him today, though, I cannot even imagine what would have become of us in some of those terrific storms at sea if it were not for "Vinegar Bill." He sure was a sailor and knew how to handle a clipper ship in all kinds of weather. He brought us through many storms, especially storms at night, when we were sure we were finished, with the strong winds and the heavy seas striking our ship's side, and the salt spray striking us 'way up on the yard arm while we shortened some sails, reefed the topsails, and furled the upper canvas. Whenever we went aloft in storms like that, we had to lash ourselves to the masts and yards to keep from washing overboard.

Our first destination was Queenstown, Ireland. We were making about eight to ten knots per hour, under full sail, when one morning we struck a "calm" (no wind at all), and the ship made no headway. Those who were assigned to certain stations -- the lookout, the men at the wheel, etc. -- all remained at their posts, just as if the ship was going ahead, and the ship was nosed directly on her course. The sails all hung flat and time got pretty monotonous. We just laid around waiting for a wind. We played cribbage, "ducy-acy," "rummy," "seven-up," and even had a minstrel show. There were several musicians and ragtime singers in the crew, so we tried to pass away the time, waiting for even the slightest breeze. But no, the sails didn't even wiggle -- just hung flat.

Finally, after three days, the sails did begin to wiggle and flap around, and everybody cheered and got excited, because we were underway again. The breeze developed into a strong wind and it got stronger. That very night we were in the center of one of the worst storms I ever experienced in all of my five years of sailing. The ship seemed to be completely at the mercy of the storm, the way she tossed and pitched. The entire crew, both starboard and port watch (pretty tough on the watch below in their hammocks, asleep) were called on deck and aloft to reef topsails and furl all the other sails before they would be torn to ribbons or be carried away entirely. All we had on was our underwear, oilskins, and sou'westers -- barefooted. Next morning about four bells (10 o'clock), we began to outride the storm and by about eight bells

(12 o'clock), we were sailing under full sail again, and the sea was not as rough.

It was found that during the storm some of our spud lockers on deck had broken their lashings and tipped over -- there were spuds and onions all over the deck. When we finally gathered up all we could, and lashed down the spud lockers again, all was secure there. We also found some of our provisions below decks in the store rooms had shifted, and several barrels of flour and hard-tack -- cans, etc. -- had to be replaced in their bins and lashed down.

During the three days of calm I mentioned we had a minstrel show -- I was an end man, I sang a ragtime parody to "Go Way Back and Sit Down," entitled "Don't let It Slip." Here it is:

1. In the Navy I shipped and I went aboard a sailing boat  
I got the blues while on the first cruise and sicker than a billy goat.  
So one fine day things were coming my way -- I was transferred then and there.  
I got a tip to a battleship, so what more need I care.  
'Twas a natural born tipper, so I asked the skipper if he'd give me seven days.  
He said, "You're in the Navy and you'll get it, maybe,  
With your conduct now it lays."  
He said, "I'll see your papers and see it if capers with what you've been about."  
Then I was asked to go aft to the skipper at the mast,  
Where loudly he did shout:  
  
"Go way-ay-ay-ay for'rd and pipe down!  
Fourth class conduct and restricted men are easily found.  
You're always in trouble and you're never first class,  
Go way-ay-ay-ay for'rd and pipe down!"
2. Forward I slid, you bet I did. "Go way forward and pipe down."  
I was handed a note and upon it was wrote,  
My babe, my love's in town.  
So I couldn't wait, and thought I'd risk my fate  
And I went over the bow.  
I couldn't float, so I took a shore boat -- and seven days, anyhow!  
I hadn't gone far before I took a car, and homeward bound I flew.  
Was traveling fast, got home at last, and took off my suit of blue.  
Then, strange to tell, I heard the door bell, and was handed a telegram --  
I read, "Mr. Dunce, return at once" --  
But I answered to this man:



Go way-ay-ay-ay aft and pipe down,  
When seven days are up I'd be easily found.  
I'll be back before you sail -- and  
I'll have a good time 'fore they put me in jail.  
Go way-ay-ay-ay aft and pipe down.

That song made a big hit among my shipmates, and I'll never forget it. I had a lot of shipmates that felt just like that. As before mentioned, a lot of us were seasick most of the time, and we did not get over it until we dropped anchor again. When we would answer mess call (meals), we had to go below to our individual tables, and answer our names at roll call. We looked at the food placed before us and would get sicker than ever. Hard tack -- salt horse -- canned willie -- and once in awhile we got canned salmon and potatoes mixed together in what they called a "salmon salad." On Thursday we always got boiled rice and curry, and on Sunday mornings we got baked beans. On Monday and Friday always bean soup. Now some of these things we could eat -- but hard tack and that other stuff -- oh, no! At sea we never had any bread, so we got hard tack. That's a square cracker-like pastry -- but no salt or flavoring, and about four inches square and one-half inch thick! It had the appearance of a soda cracker, but it was hard as a rock and we even wrote our addresses on them and put stamps on them and sent them home as souvenirs! Sometimes at night, before turning in, we would get a bowl of cold black coffee from the galley and put a hard tack into it to soak overnight, and in the morning it would be softened and fit to eat -- there was only one way to eat it otherwise and that was to take a hammer and break it up into little pieces.

As we neared our destination -- Queenstown, Ireland -- everything went along perfectly -- no more rough weather or calms -- our daily routines were all carried out. We were twenty-three days crossing the Atlantic and we reached port on the third day of July, 1900. The Captain gave orders that we would come to anchor outside the harbor -- the next day would be a holiday -- July 4<sup>th</sup>. So we were to clean up the ship from truck to keep -- fore and aft -- remove all the gun covers and life boat covers -- polish all the brass and steel -- and next morning we would "dress ship" -- hoist all signal flags and decorate. Steam into the harbor and anchor. There were several ships in the harbor at anchor -- British, French, German, and the American Naval Training Ship, the U.S.S. *Hartford*, that was on the same European training cruise that the U.S.S. *Essex* was making. The *Hartford* was always ahead of us. We went in about six bells (11 o'clock A.M.) and anchored. At noon (eight bells) according to customs, and being an American holiday, we hoisted the American flag to the top of the fore-mast head, and fired a salute with six-pounder guns of twenty-one guns. All the other "men of war" in the harbor did the same thing, with the American flag at their mast head. This was an international act of courtesy. If a ship of another nation would be in the harbor and it would be their holiday, we would do the same thing for them.

All the first class conduct men of the port watch, who wanted to do so, were assigned to the liberty party and could go ashore at two bells (1 o'clock) until two bells (6 o'clock) the next morning. The liberty party, on going over the gangway to the boats taking them ashore, were each inspected to see that they were in full uniform, shaved, and shoes shined.

When we reached the dock and climbed out of the boat, there were a number of people on the dock. For the time being we actually forgot that we were in a foreign country, we were so glad to get ashore. Someone on the dock wanted to know, "What the devil was all the bloomin' shooting for out in the harbor at noon?" So we told them, "Why it's an American holiday -- don't you know that?" Of course they did not, since they were not Americans. We thought they should surely know it was the Fourth of July. One of them said, "Oh yes, I know what it is boys. It's the day you Americans got your independence from Great Britain," and he took off his hat and said to the others, "Come on, boys, take off your hat and three cheers for the American sailors -- you licked the bloomin' British once and can do it again, can't ye." We really enjoyed our visit to Queenstown.

It is a small city built on a large hill up from the water's edge. From a ship at anchor in the harbor it is a beautiful sight to see the city at night with all its lights, and at the top of the hill is a large cathedral and with the lights at night shining through its stained glass windows, it is a sight to behold! Standing against the star studded sky! I believe the most beautiful music I ever heard came from that cathedral one night. It was a clear warm night, and the water was smooth without a ripple. We were lying about on the deck and inside that cathedral there was a choir of Irish voices and a pipe organ. That music came out to us from that hill, over the water to all the ships in the harbor -- and I don't believe there is any comparison to music like that. We were supposed to turn in to our hammocks every night in harbor at two bells (9 o'clock), but on that particular night no one turned in or left the spar deck until the music stopped.

There was more to see in Cork, Ireland. It is a much larger city than Queenstown. We got on one of those little English trains and went to Cork, and there we saw all that our time allowed us. Even went to Blarney Castle and kissed the Blarney Stone. We climbed up circular stairs in the castle and lay down and had someone hold us by the legs, while we leaned over the edge and kissed the stone, just at the edge of one of the windows -- that we refer to as the window sill.

When Lancaster and I went ashore at Cork, we met some very fine people. One old Irishman and his wife invited us to their home for a visit. It was a one-story house of about three rooms. They had quite a family -- four sons and two daughters, ranging in ages from fourteen to twenty-six. They sure did prove to be excellent hosts. Their home was immaculately clean and the meal that little Irish lady put out for us was very good. Cornbeef and cabbage -- home made scones

and bread, tea, and lots of it. We made up at that table for all the sea food we could not eat while crossing the ocean.

One day the U.S.S. *Hartford* “up anchored” and set sail for Stockholm, Sweden. In those days on these old wooden ships there was no such thing as radio or wireless telegraph -- had not even been heard of. We used the wig-wag from ship to ship, and had to use telegraph ashore when in port. A few days later we “up anchored” and followed along after the *Hartford* to Stockholm, Sweden. Then Christiania, Norway -- Copenhagen, Denmark. We got ashore in all these ports and the Chaplain on the *Essex* told us of all the points of interest to see when we went ashore. Palaces, museums, historic buildings. I thought the most beautiful feature of these three Scandinavian countries were the trips going into those harbors. We had to take on a pilot from the city to bring the ship in. That was a law there -- all foreign ships coming in to anchorage must be guided by a native pilot. Going in the scenery is extremely beautiful -- the clear deep fjords, high cliffs, beautiful trees and vegetation. Next was “up anchor” for Amsterdam, Holland, the country where the water was higher than the land. Canals -- dikes and locks, going in. One can look from the ship and look down onto the farms and huge windmills. Our stay at Amsterdam was short and no one got ashore. We took on coal and some provisions and “up anchored” for Kronstadt, Russia. No one got ashore there, either. However, we did see the Czar’s palace dome about ten miles away. It is supposed to be pure gold and I believe it was, the way it glistened so brightly in the sunlight. Then LeHavre, France. We could have gone ashore there, but we did not because we knew the next port would be Plymouth, England, and we would drop anchor for forty-eight hours. So we thought we had better save our money and get to see London, England.

Sailing through the English Channel was an experience not to be forgotten. We struck one of those English Channel storms that caused us quite a lot of anxiety. We were not quite sure whether the old ship would make it. We reefed topsails and furled the upper sails -- in a dense fog. Our dislike for old “Vinegar Bill” grew stronger with what he commanded us to do. We thought he was doing it on purpose, just to give us the experience. Unstep the royal yard and royal mast and send them down on deck. That is the uppermost top section of the mast -- and with the ship rolling and tossing in a severe storm and strong winds, that old mast head sure was giving us a swing to the right and left -- and I never did understand how we hung on up there and did not get thrown overboard.

When a ship gets into a heavy fog -- and it was plenty heavy sometimes in that English Channel -- it was always necessary to use the fog horn to warn other ships of our position. On a ‘Clipper’ ship, back in those days, we used a fog horn that was operated by hand. It consisted of a wooden box about three or four foot square and on one side there was a hand crank extending from the box, and a big tin funnel -- like a phonograph funnel. We had to relieve one another every hour, day and night, to turn that crank round and round, while a loud moan would come out of that funnel like a dozen dying cows -- just mooing their last. Realizing this

was being done to avoid a collision with other ships, we kept whirling that crank fast and steady -- the faster the louder. There was no sun in the daytime and no moon or stars to be seen at night, because of the storm and heavy fog, and it was impossible for our navigator to use his sextant to get any bearings, so we sighted the old Eddystone Lighthouse and we circled around it all night, so we could tell where we were until the fog cleared away.

We finally reached Plymouth Harbor and came to anchor. Our first duties were to secure all over the decks, put everything back where it belonged after being tossed about during the storm -- lockers, buckets, tables, benches, cooking utensils, spud lockers, etc. -- then scrub down decks and polish all bright work -- scrub and wash clothes and air bedding -- open our hammocks and spread mattresses and blankets on lines on the spar deck.

Next day we went ashore on forty-eight hours liberty. From Plymouth we rode on a train to London. I believe we saw all that there was to see! We rode on top of the omnibus -- we went over London Bridge, over the Thames River. Disembarked from the omnibus and walked along the banks of the Thames to the Tower Bridge -- a high tower on each side of the river, and a bridge stretched from the tops of the towers. We climbed one winding stairway to the top of one tower, then across the bridge, and down the stairway from the top of the other tower. We visited British museums, Trafalgar Square, Westminster Abbey. Saw the old historical mourner's bench, and the old chair with the rock under the seat where all the monarchs of England sat to receive their crown. Saw the change of guards at the Buckingham Palace -- that alone was well worth our little trip to London. It was extremely colorful and those guards were perfectly trained -- full of snap and well-timed.

We met up with a couple of fine young fellows who showed us around. They took us to clean, respectable places to eat and drink. They seemed to enjoy it, too -- escorting American sailors to show us the sights. They took us into the pubs (saloons) and we all sat around a table while one of them approached the bar maid and ordered a shanty-gaff -- a tin pail that held about eight quarts of what they called half and half -- half ale and half beer. He brought it to our table and placed it in the center and said, "Blimey, mates -- sup up." The pail was passed all around and everyone took a drink and when it was empty someone else took it to the bar and the same thing was repeated.

Finally we had to say goodbye -- thanked them for their hospitality and invited them to visit the *Essex* sometime while it was still in harbor at Plymouth.

We returned to the ship and, as usual, the Master at Arms met us at the gangway and we were searched to see if anyone was trying to smuggle on board anything from shore that was not allowed -- such as liquor, grog of any kind. He sometimes missed, too. Some of the fellows would have a bottle hidden away in

his sock and I saw one with a package under his arm and the Master at Arms asked him, "What have you got in the package?"

"A pie, sir."

"Unwrap it and let me see it." Sure enough, it would be a pie -- the sailor had removed the top crust, though, dug out the filling -- placed a flat bottle of whiskey in it and carefully replaced the crust again; he was allowed to go forward with his "pie." This he did for his shipmates who could not go ashore because they were not first-class conduct. They took the bottle into a secluded spot where no one could see them and each had a swig from it. When it was empty it was called a "dead dog" and they would form a "funeral procession" to walk forward slowly with their heads bowed down, one of them in the lead with a Bible. Behind him would be the "pall bearer" carrying the empty bottle, "dead dog" -- and all who had a drink from the bottle were the "blood suckers" as they had sucked the blood from the corpse. When they reached the bow of the ship the bottle was held out overboard and the "chaplain" pronounced, "I now bury thee into the briny deep, and may the polly-wogs, mermaids, jelly fish and sharks, all have mercy on you." Everyone was sad and sincere as they looked over the side and watched that bottle fill up and sink. It really was a very mournful burial at sea -- having no flowers, the cork from the bottle was dropped overboard to decorate the "dead dog's" watery grave.

Another interesting procedure on these old "wind-jammers" was to "shoot the Charlie Noble." The stove pipe that came up through the spar deck and stood about fifteen feet above the deck, connected with the galley, or stove below, which was known as the "Charlie Noble." Every Friday evening when the galley was not in use, they would put some kind of a cartridge in a special galley gun and fire it up into the stove pipe, or "Charlie Noble," to clean out all the soot and ashes so the draft down in the fire would be clear.

"All hands prepare the ship for sailing, and up anchor." The order was passed around the ship by all the boatswain's mates in different parts of the ship, and we prepared to leave Plymouth, England, and head for Lisbon, Portugal. We steamed out of the harbor and set sail and stopped the engines, and from then on we depended entirely on the winds to reach our next destination. Lancaster and I, and a few others, got seasick again and we sure got "green around the gills" this time. One time, when I was leaning over the rail, feeding the fishes, a "bully" (as I called him) came to me with a piece of salt pork tied to a string and said I should swallow it and he would pull it up again -- WOW! I turned on him and chased him aft and down a ladder to the deck below -- forward to another ladder and up on deck again. There the Master at Arms grabbed me and stopped the chase. If I had caught him I would have made him swallow that pork, string and all -- for that was the way I felt at the time. When I finally did catch up with him I must have been pretty rough with him, because next morning the bugler sounded sick call and he went to sick bay with a sore chin and a stiff neck and

was placed on the sick list.

Whenever you were really sick with fever or something like that, and reported to the ship's doctor, he would treat you and place you on the "sick list," but never for just plain old sea-sickness. However, if you actually were on "sick list" you wore a white band, about three inches wide, on your arm -- with a large red cross on it, to signify that you were on "sick list" and therefore excused from all duties about the ship. Some of these gobs were always trying to be sick so as to wear one of those bands and get out of work or drills -- especially when we knew we were going to "coal ship" next day. This was an all day job and dirty. The night before these fellows would lie in their hammocks and eat a small piece of salt-water soap, and in the morning report to sick bay with a high temperature. The doctor would have to put them on sick list, and give them an arm band -- then no one could make them work as they were strictly under the doctor's care.

We arrived at Lisbon, Portugal, and dropped anchor, where we had the pleasure of witnessing an elaborate boat regatta at night. The procession was conducted by natives and the decorations and illuminations and fireworks were beautiful to behold. It lasted all night.

After five days, we "up anchored" for San Juan, Puerto Rico, with fine tropical weather all the way. It was on this trip we became almost convinced that the most superstitious men in the world were the old time, hard boiled sailors of the old wooden windjammers. For instance: while a ship is moored close to a dock and taking on cargo, and one of the crew sees a rat run down the hawser (large rope) that holds the ship to the dock, and when a rat leaves a ship -- then it is time for everybody to leave. If the ship goes out again, something will be sure to happen to it because the rats were leaving.

Another old superstition they have is "Davy Jones and his Locker." They would rather not talk about Davy Jones and his infamous locker. They would rather leave him an indefinite, unbodied character who stays in his place in the bottom of the sea. They do admit they don't know what he looks like, and his "locker" is something like an ordinary sea chest, or a coffin -- always open to catch any sailor who falls overboard. Some English sailors were inclined to believe that his name came from "Duffer" Jones, a clumsy fellow who frequently found himself overboard.

Old sailors, rather than speak of the devil, called him "Davy" or "Duffy," the thief of evil spirits -- and Jones is from Jonah whose locker was the whale's belly. Jonah was often called Jonas, and as Davy Jones the enemy of all living sailors, he has become the mariner's evil angel. It is generally believed that the Christian sailor's body goes to Davy Jones' Locker, but his soul, if he is a proper sailorman, goes to "Fiddler's Green."

Many years ago the sailors of the old wooden sailing ships adopted the primitive practice of marking the skin by tattooing, in a desire to secure identity in case of death by shipwreck or drowning. It originated among the natives of the South Pacific. The Japanese brought it to a high artistic development. Roman Catholic sailors were the first to adopt it -- having a crucifix tattooed on their bodies, so that in case of serious injury or sickness, they might receive the last rites of their church and burial in consecrated ground. Many sailors not of the Catholic faith were anxious to have the crucifix painted on them, owing to a curious superstition of theirs. They insisted that if you have that mark tattooed on all your limbs, you might fall overboard among thousands of sharks -- all dinnerless and hungry -- and not one of them would so much as dare to even smell your little finger or one of your toes! If a sailor had a pig tattooed on his foot that was a charm against drowning!

At San Juan, Puerto Rico, we did not have any shore leave, although each division had their turn to go ashore and set up targets for small arms target practice. We used the old "See Straight" pull rifle and Colt 38 revolver. While waiting our turn on the target range, we were allowed to use the beautiful coral bathing beach there and go swimming. After target practice, the scores were checked, and the best ten shots in the crew got a prize of a \$10 gold piece, and the second ten each got a \$5 gold piece.

After returning to the ship, orders came for the U.S.S. *Essex* to return to the States -- destination, Hampton Roads, Virginia. To us that meant next trip was homeward bound! As was customary in those days, when a ship is ordered home from any foreign country, every man on the ship contributes enough money to buy one foot each of a homeward bound pennant to fly from the masthead on leaving port, and on entering port in the United States. Our pennant was 183 feet long, and by tying bladders on the end, and near the end to keep it floating in the sea astern of the ship. It made a beautiful sight as it bellied out in the breeze and reminded us we were homeward bound. When we anchored in home waters each man was given a foot of the "homeward bound" pennant for a keepsake of the cruise just completed.

There was loud cheering and great joy about the decks when the order was passed by the boatswain's mate's whistle and the command "all hands up anchor." All during the trip home everyone was on the alert to hear the look-out in the crow's nest call out "land-ho" when he sighted land. When land was finally sighted, everyone cheered again and there was a notice posted on the bulletin board that when we got into port, every enlisted man would have a ten day furlough. Excitement prevailed and all were talking about how they would use the ten days. Some would go to Brooklyn, Chicago, Philadelphia, Savannah, Cincinnati, Cleveland, etc. My shipmate, Al Lancaster, would go home to Cleveland, Ohio, but I thought I would go to Providence, R.I. I had cousins and other relatives there, and a grandmother I had not seen for many years (I was born in Providence, R.I.), and I wanted to see them.

Lancaster and I were told when our furloughs expired we would report to the U.S.S. *Wabash*, an old wooden receiving ship, anchored high and dry in the mud, and never went anywhere. She was used just for an ordinary receiving ship where men would wait to be assigned to a ship somewhere else.

The folks in Providence did not expect to see me, so when I arrived in my suit of blue and white lanyard they were very much surprised, and glad to see me -- and I was glad to see them, believe me. They sure made me welcome and showed us a wonderful time. Busy every day -- and the meals I was having were wonderful, compared to that food I had on board ship. In fact, I was having such a good time and great food, that I overstayed my furlough six days. They did not want me to go back, but I convinced them that I had to.

I reported on the U.S.S. *Wabash* at Chelsea, Massachusetts, near Boston. Because I was six days overdue, I was immediately put "on report" and had to go before the "mast," and the skipper gave me six weeks extra duty. The *Wabash* was about three hundred yards from shore and there was a cable that extended from the dock and out to the receiving ship. They had a flat-bottomed barge -- square, and built similar to a ferry boat. In fact it was a ferry boat with a windlass in the center of it, and the cable had a couple of turns wound around the drum of the windlass. At the side was a wheel with a hand crank on it, and by turning the crank wind the cable around the drum to draw the ferry to the dock and to the ship. This was a means of transportation for anyone going ashore or going out to the receiving ship. That is where I worked off my extra duty, turning that crank!

Also got a real surprise on the *Wabash* when Lancaster failed to show up at all. He went home to Cleveland all right, but he told his folks some pretty dark tales about the life in the Navy and they felt sorry for him and bought him out. Just as Doyle's folks had done. Of course, that left me to finish out my enlistment by myself. I was growing to like the Navy very much -- more and more each day. I decided not to leave, even if I could. I told myself, "Boy, you are going to stick it out and serve a full enlistment and go home to Cleveland some day with an honorable discharge. When you see Doyle or Lancaster again you can maneuver right past them with your chest out about forty-five degrees -- and not even recognize them for what they did to you!"

I finished my extra duty on the *Wabash* and was transferred to the receiving ship at the Brooklyn Navy Yard where they were getting three hundred unassigned men together to send to San Francisco to put a new ship into commission at the Union Iron Works, where they had built the U.S.S. *Wisconsin*. I was one of the draft of three hundred enlisted men of all ranks, and six commissioned officers, with Lt. Wiley in charge -- a splendid man and officer. I served under him later on the U.S.S. *Wisconsin*. We were marched with our bags and hammocks to the pier of the old Dollar Steamship Line that was in debt to the government, and we were shipped to one of their steamships down the east coast



and around Florida and up into the Gulf of Mexico to New Orleans, Louisiana, where we were marched in regular parade to the Southern Pacific Railroad depot. Here we boarded a special train for San Francisco. Our trip on that steamship to New Orleans was not very pleasant, and we were crowded into the lower steerage. There were about thirty Chinese laborers who were being sent back to the Orient, occupying the steerage. They just laid there in their bunks all the time -- some of our boys would go into steerage and hold some of these old-time sulphur matches, lit, under their noses, and then run -- but the "Chinks" did not chase -- they knew we were too many for them. But we had to break the monotony some way, so seeing those Chinamen cough and sneeze seemed to help some.

While on the train to San Francisco, we enjoyed every mile of the ride. Whenever the train would have occasion to stop for coal and water, or for the cars to be serviced, Lt. Wiley would allow us to get off and walk around and stretch our legs a little. After we boarded the train again, the petty officer in charge of each car would call the roll to be sure all the men got back on board and accounted for. At one time, Lt. Williams, another officer in the draft, appeared in each car and told us that soon we would be approaching orange and lemon groves and the train would probably be stopping, so when any one of us left the train to walk around a little and felt that we wanted any oranges or lemons, not to take more than two apiece, and not to destroy any trees or tree limbs, but to have consideration for the farmers and to act like gentlemen.

Some of us did abide by his instructions, but others just shoved those oranges down the front of their blouses and filled them up. Lots of them were lemons, but the fellows did not know it, they were in such a hurry to get as many picked as possible. Some places along the track in the Rocky Mountain area were covered with snow sheds, ten to twenty miles long, built over the railroad to protect from avalanches and minor snow slides down the mountain sides.

When we arrived at our destination, the officers in charge lined us up for marching to the docks where several tugboats awaited to take us out into San Francisco harbor, where the first-class battleship, the U.S.S. *Wisconsin*, was anchored and waiting for her new and complete crew to carry on all the necessary ceremonies -- salutes, flag raising, trial trips, etc. -- to put her in commission as another great and latest addition to the U.S. Navy. As we approached her, she sure did look beautiful to us, and a grand and glorious improvement to the old U.S.S. *Essex*, on which we had made our training cruise. The *Wisconsin* had two large turrets -- one forward and one aft. Each turret carried two thirteen-inch guns. She also had a large battery of guns, seven six-inch guns on the starboard, and seven on the port side. Twelve six-pounders, four one-pounders, four torpedo tubes, eight rapid fire machine guns, for three-inch field pieces, four maxim automatic one-pounders. There were two signal masts and two large smoke stacks, or funnels, side by side. Her huge white sides and spar-colored superstructure, and funnels, all gave us the thought that there was the extreme limit in ships. Never would there be anything larger or more treacherous than she,

and we felt proud to be gazing on our new and one-half million dollar home! As time went on, however, new ships came along and the *Wisconsin* was soon outclassed in size, armament, speed and endurance runs. Wireless telegraph was unknown at that time, so the *Wisconsin* used the old Naval Signal Procedures. The signal flags, and answering pennant -- the wig-wag and the semaphore -- the signal lights, the search lights, etc. Personally, I took more interest in signals and guns; therefore I was rated as signal boy with all my duty assignments on the bridge, and to send messages -- also in charge of the signal chests that held all the different signal flags. At this time I would like to mention one thing about the U.S. ensign -- the Stars and Stripes! There is only one flag ever to fly above the American flag on the same flag pole -- and that is the church pennant. An all-white flag with a blue cross lengthwise on the white, hoisted above the ensign signifies they are having religious services on the ship, or in the fort, wherever it is flying. As soon as the services are over, it is hauled down.

The signal boys are always relieved from their watch on the bridge every eight bells (or every four hours). They must always be neat and are generally excused from any work about the decks, such as coaling ship, etc., but they are responsible for cleanliness on the bridge. The bright brass railing -- the binnacle -- the signal-to-engine room equipment -- and they have to see that the signal flags are kept in repair and replaced when necessary. They also take care of the navigator's chart room and everything in it. When on duty he must always carry a telescope and watch for signal calls from other ships, and from shore when in port.

Our first "up anchor" we headed past Alcatraz Island and out through the Golden Gate. There was no Golden Gate Bridge then. We turned north and headed for Bremerton Navy Yard at Bremerton, Washington, in the Puget Sound. On leaving San Francisco we encountered a heavy fog the first day -- reminded me of the time the *Essex* ran into fog in the English Channel -- only this time our fog-horn was blown by steam and much louder. After we cleared the fog it was a beautiful cruise and going up through Puget Sound to Bremerton, Washington, was more beautiful than any place I had ever seen. There we placed the *Wisconsin* in dry-dock. That was another valuable experience, to be on a large ship like that and go into dry-dock. There were several rafts and catamarans all around the ship in the dock, as the water was being pumped out of the dry dock and as the ship was settling down in the chocks. The ship's crew on the rafts and catamarans, armed with scrapers, had to scrape off the barnacles as the water went down. Finally, the water was all pumped out of the dock; the men finished scraping the barnacles off the ship's bottom. Those large barnacles on a ship's bottom will make the ship's headway much more difficult and periodically the ship's bottom had to be scraped, red-leaded, and painted. It was a most wonderful piece of engineering in those days to place a large ship like the *Wisconsin* properly on individual chocks in the bottom of a dry-dock, true and level.

While in dry-dock the usual daily routine is cancelled, so we who were first class conduct men got shore leave every day, and we reported to the Officer of the Deck. We would tell him of our desire to go on liberty, and he would check and enter our names on the liberty list and allow us to leave the ship over the gangway. Bremerton was a small place, and on the shore of Puget Sound, so we would get a ticket for transportation on one of those flat-bottomed stern paddle-wheelers and go to the city of Seattle or Tacoma, where there were more places of interest and places for amusement -- dance halls, theaters, "Nickelodeons" (where you could see a silent movie for a nickel), or we could go to another theater for grand opera or drama. Sometimes we would spend a lot of time at the Y.M.C.A. However, it was good just to get away from the ship, to eat in a good restaurant, and do as we chose.

We had reveille call one morning and after we had lashed our hammocks and stowed them away, we went on deck and found they were flooding the dry-dock, which meant the ship would be floated. They would then open the locks and we would be under way. We headed for San Francisco again, to take on coal and provisions and "up anchor" for Honolulu. That coal ship job lasted a little over two days, as all the bunkers had to be filled and we took on a deck load of extra coal to dump down in the coal bunkers, as the coal supply went down. On our way to Honolulu, we "heaved-to" for target practice with the big guns and torpedoes.

Before we started any target practice, we had a routine drill called "Clear Ship for Action." This would take about two hours. Lower down on deck, all railing and signal masts; lower all the boats and vegetable lockers on deck and make them fast astern of the ship; secure all water-tight doors and portholes and gun ports; take down everything on the spar deck and all super-structure that might make splinters or flying debris if hit by enemy shells.

I fired the little "one-pounders." I was allowed three shots to find the range to the target for the thirteen inch guns in the turret. Nowadays (1957) they have range finders for that purpose. We would not use the big guns to find the range as it cost quite a bit to fire a thirteen inch gun. One shot took two hundred fifty pounds of powder. Upon completion of this big gun target practice, we were notified that we broke all records in the Pacific Fleet, by loading, firing, and hitting more "bull's-eyes" than the U.S.S. *Oregon*, who held the record up until that time. Then came the order to "secure," when everything is put back into its proper place and the boats are brought under their davits and hoisted.

Our stay at Honolulu was shortened, and we were ordered back to San Francisco, where we anchored off the Union Iron Works, where the *Wisconsin* had been built. Another first-class battleship, the U.S.S. *Ohio*, had also been built there, and we were to take part in the ceremonies held for the launching of the *Ohio*. We went ashore in marching order, with Lee straight-pull rifles, leggings, etc. We were lined up, single file, on each side of the *Ohio*, in the "ways" waiting

to be launched. As the last wedge was removed in the “ways” and the *Ohio* started to slide down toward the water for her launching, we presented arms and the bottle of champagne was broken on her bow by President William McKinley, who was a native of Canton, Ohio. He christened the *Ohio* with the words “I now christen thee the United States Ship *Ohio*.” While President McKinley and his cabinet and the other prominent men and their staffs were in San Francisco, several days were proclaimed “McKinley Day,” “U.S.S. *Ohio* Day,” and “Union Iron Works of San Francisco Day,” with elaborate decorations and parades. The men of the U.S.S. *Wisconsin* took part in the U.S.S. *Ohio* Day parade and the McKinley Day parade, along with men from other ships and Marines from Mare Island (a naval station at Vallejo, California, near San Francisco), and soldiers from Sausalito Barracks at San Francisco. This was a completely military parade in honor of our Commander-in-Chief, President William McKinley. Also, the officers and crew of the *Wisconsin* held a Grand Ball in his honor, and each man and officer donated to pay the expenses for the ball. Here is a sample of the invitations that were mailed out. At the top was a photo of the U.S.S. *Wisconsin* as she lay in San Francisco harbor, and under the photo was written:

The “men behind the guns”  
of the  
U.S.S. *Wisconsin*  
request the pleasure of the presence of  
Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and ladies  
at their ball  
at nine o’clock, Tuesday evening, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1901  
Native Son’s Hall, San Francisco, California

The grand ball was a great success and we got to shake hands with President McKinley and Secretary of the Navy Daniels. To this day I am very proud of all these experiences and they were so impressive for me that it seems like it all happened just recently! Boy, would I have lots to tell when I got home again! Especially to Doyle and Lancaster, the two “pals” who had deserted me.

The U.S.S. *Wisconsin* had a crew of seven hundred men and fifty-four officers, and about one hundred sixty Marines. The Marines were mostly assigned to guard duty about the ship, although they had their part of the ship to keep clean, and they took part whenever any special work was to be done, such as “coal ship,” etc.

At one time we had about thirty-five midshipmen from Annapolis School for Officer's Training aboard ship. Later, the *Wisconsin* was assigned as head of the Pacific Fleet as Flagship, and we were highly honored with that assignment. The fleet was placed under the command of Rear Admiral Silas Casey, aboard the *Wisconsin*, and the Rear Admiral's Flag -- a square blue flag with two perpendicular white stars, signifying that we were a flagship -- was at the top of the main mast. The Admiral had his private cabin, and a ten-oared boat called the "Admiral's Barge." I was one of the barge's crew as I pulled the bow oar. All ten of us, and the coxswain of the barge, were members of the Admiral's staff. Our chief duties were to take care of the Admiral's cabin and his barge and oars. When he had occasion to leave the ship, when at anchor, he would always use his barge. Therefore, at all times, when he was aboard ship, the crew of the barge had to keep themselves in readiness for the Admiral's call -- clean uniforms, etc. -- and we were excused from any work about the ship. Belonging to the crew of the barge had one great advantage -- sometimes when we would take the Admiral ashore, he would tell us to tie up the boat and leave one man in the boat as boat keeper, and the rest could go ashore. He always told us when to be back in the boat to take him back to the ship.

When we again hoisted anchor, it was to leave San Francisco harbor for a southern cruise, down the coast of North and South America -- first stop, Panama. As we cruised southward, we passed several merchant ships going north, and it was very impressive to see the merchant ship salute the "Man-of-War" while passing, by hauling down their flag and holding it down while the warship saw the salute and answered by hauling down their flag in acknowledgement. This was called "dipping the colors." The merchant ship would then hoist her flag again and proceed, and the warship would do the same. In some large ports of seacoast cities, where we would lay at anchor, we usually had a man stationed on the poop deck at all times, right at the base of the flag pole, to answer salutes of ships that would pass by.

The Union Jack was always hoisted on the bow of the ship while at anchor (a square blue flag with white stars) to signify she was a U.S. Naval ship at anchor. At the mast head at all times was a long pennant which signified the ship was an official U.S. government boat.

Our trip to Panama was uneventful, except when we were drawing into tropical waters and we noticed the flying fish, jelly fish, Portuguese men-of-war (these were like a toy balloon, floating on the surface, with a fin on the top and almost transparent), and porpoises playing at the bow of the ship at the cut-water. Very interesting! We were to see a lot more as we continued our cruise southward -- sharks, squids, blowfish, and numbers of others.

It developed that we stopped at Panama for a reason. There was some fighting going on there between the Columbians and the rebels, and the fighting was interfering with the progress of building the Panama Canal. Our Admiral

Casey's Flag Lieutenant Blakely was ordered ashore to investigate and to bring back both the Columbian leader and the rebel leader, for some sort of negotiations, to find out what this was all about -- and to cease fire immediately. When Lt. Blakely finally returned with the two leaders, they were followed by a couple of boatloads of natives who paddled around the ship, waiting for their leaders. Some of them were just kids, and the rifles they carried were taller than they were.

We were told that while Admiral Casey was interviewing these leaders, he learned that neither one knew exactly why they were fighting, but as long as the rebels were firing on the Columbians, and the Columbians were firing on the rebels, it would go on. Our Admiral told them to go ashore and cease firing and if they did not do so, the thirteen-inch guns of the boat would be trained on them! From then on, everything was quiet and peaceful. We up-anchored for Callao, Peru.

On our way south to Callao, the chaplain told us about the Port we would be visiting. He said the first thing we would see going in would be an old historical freak of nature, in the form of a large hill that had arisen from the water, red hot, during volcanic eruptions. Its exact dimensions were not known, but it was judged to be about three hundred yards long, one hundred fifty yards wide, and about one hundred yards high. It looked somewhat like a loaf of bread -- square on the two ends and the sides, and rounded over the top. It bore no vegetation of any kind, and it was not rock. It was of a mysterious material. About one-quarter mile from shore, on deck of a ship in bay at anchor, you could look over the side, and the water being beautifully clear, you could distinguish ruins of the old village of Callao that had slid down into the bay, while this large hot hill was rising out there in the bay! All this was due to several volcanic eruptions somewhere in the vicinity. There was not a single survivor. The chaplain told us all this had happened about three hundred years ago.

Not much to see at Callao, just a stopping place for large tramp steamers and fishing boats. We got on a little train and went to Lima, Peru (the capital). I shall always feel very thankful that I got to see this old city of South America with its Spanish castle and plazas. Their police were very polite and cooperative to foreigners -- they are called "Gendarmes" and they carry long cutlasses. I had an experience there that I feel I must mention here, as it somewhat connected with my school days before I ever thought of joining the Navy.

In Cleveland I had attended the Immaculate Conception school, and while in the fifth grade I was chosen to take part in a play that was directed by two of the teachers, entitled "Pizarro." This was a drama in five acts. It was a story of the Peruvians and the Spanish, who were at war. The Peruvian leader was Rolla and the Spanish leader was Pizarro. I was a Peruvian youth named Elviro, and Elviro was quite a favorite in both the Peruvian and Spanish camps. Since Elviro was a Peruvian, he was welcomed in the Spanish camp mostly to give the leader,

Pizarro, a chance to ask questions of him about the Peruvians and what went on in their camp, etc. Being just a youth, Elviro sometimes told things that were wrong and later he was put in prison by the Spanish, and in Act Five he is condemned to death on the torture rack. And then, years later, when on shore leave at Lima, Peru -- here I was -- the lad who had played the part of Elviro so many years before, visiting an old Spanish castle and finding the tombs of Elviro, Pizarro, and Rolla. It was quite a surprising experience to find them there and made me recall the play very vividly.

Also at Lima we saw a bullfight. It seems it was a holiday and every shop and eating place was closed and everyone went to the arena. The matadors were quick -- slim and graceful -- and we thought the poor bull had no chance at all. In the first place, he was skinny and look half-starved. The matadors would make a grand-stay play by placing their spear into a certain spot on the bull and the people would clap and cheer. Finally, the matador would promenade around the ring and the men would toss in their hats -- he would bow and return the hats -- as soon as he would return our white hats to us, we would toss them back in again. Of course, we did not understand, but we had fun. When the bull finally looked like a pin cushion, with more spears sticking into him, the matador would face some spot up in the audience and get permission to finally kill the bull. The animal would then be dragged out and another bull would be brought in. Some of our fellows left their seats and went down to where the dead bull had been left and extracted spears to keep as souvenirs.

After forty-eight hours liberty, we returned to the ship and at the top of the gangway we were met, to be examined before going forward to our different parts of the ship to which we had been assigned. The ship's writer would check off our names with either a "C and S" or "D and D," "C and S" meaning we returned "clean and sober," and "D and D" meaning we returned "drunk and disorderly." If "D and D," we were put on report and next morning reported to the Mast and received penalty, probably second, third, or fourth class conduct. Second class conduct men had two months to become first class again, and got ashore just once in those two months. Third class got ashore once in three months, and fourth class, once in four months.

Another rule aboard ship in those days concerned smoking about the decks. You were only allowed to smoke where the smoking lamp was lit on the gun deck. The smoking lamp was a coal-oil torch hanging from above, with the wick burning. Since no one was allowed to carry matches, we had to go to the smoking lamp to light our smokes. When this lamp was not lit, there was no smoking, the object being that whenever any explosives were exposed -- like open magazines below where the ammunition was stored -- when everything was secure the lamps would be lit and the Master of Arms would be notified. He would order the Boatswain's Mate to pass along the word, "Smoking lamp is lighted." When he passed the word, "Smoking lamp is out," everyone stopped smoking. Sometimes when the lamp was out for a long period of time (too long,

we thought), we would hide and smoke anyway. If you got caught breaking this rule, however, it was very serious and dangerous. The Skipper could sentence you to four months fourth class – and then the fifth month, third class – sixth month, second class, and seventh month, first class.

Our next destination along the South American coast was Valparaiso, Chile. We had beautiful tropical weather all the way, and enjoyed the trip very much, although we carried our regular routine of duties -- drilling, standing watch, etc. Valparaiso is another wonderful old city. We hired a Cook's guide to show us all the points of interest.

On reporting back to the ship, I was given a new assignment, that of messenger for the Officer of the Day. I had to be wherever the Officer of the Day went, so that I could deliver whatever messages he had for the Admiral, the Captain, and the other officers. One afternoon, from the Quartermaster on watch on the bridge, came word that a big tug boat was approaching from shore, loaded with visitors. It seemed this visit had been pre-arranged, because the Officer of the Day, Ensign Soulay, asked me to stand-by until they came aboard. When they arrived, we found it was a party of about forty very pretty young Spanish ladies, from a college in Valparaiso -- "nice to behold." Ensign Soulay said to me,

"Martin, do you speak Spanish?" I said, "No, sir," and he told me, "Well, now is a good time to learn. Show these young ladies around the ship!" Boy! At first I felt a little out of place, but those girls smiled at me and I felt better! I led them to the gun deck and explained how they operated -- and with my little knowledge of the Spanish language, I had a hard time trying to explain -- but I got hold of the firing lanyard connected to the firing pin in the breach plug and jerked it, and when the firing pin clicked I said, "See, I pull string like this and boom -- make shoot big bullet -- one hundred pounds!" One of the girls then said to me, "You may go right ahead and speak English, we will understand." You could have knocked me over with a swab! From then on I had no difficulty at all making them understand.

I guided them to every port of interest on the ship; inside the thirteen-inch gun turrets -- the handling room below, where thirteen-inch shells and powder were taken from the magazines and sent up to the breach of the big guns, all handled electrically -- the inside of the conning tower -- the galley -- the officers' quarters -- the chart house on the bridge -- the brig -- the engine room -- the ordnance room, etc. Believe me, they sure did show a lot of interest and asked a lot of questions. The more I could show them and the more questions I could answer, the more I enjoyed it.

After we had completed the tour, I returned them to the quarter deck and reported to the Officer of the Day, who arranged for their transportation ashore. The girls thanked me heartily, and two of them, who said they were cousins, invited me to visit them when I went ashore. One said her name was Patita Sonsallis, and the other, Carmen Creado. I met them several times when I went



ashore and they showed me the quickest and best routes to the special points of interest in Valparaiso.

After leaving Panama for South American ports, and while crossing the equator, we found we had quite a number of "landlubbers" on the *Wisconsin* -- those who had not crossed the equator before, who would have to be properly initiated by the "King of the Seas," Neptune Rex, and his staff. The night before the crossing, at about seven bells (7:30 P.M.), we were hailed by a loud call from the sea -- "Ship ahoy there." Captain Singer happened to be on the bridge with the Officer of the Deck at the time, and he honored the hail by answering, "Hello there." The voice asked, "What ship is this and where bound?" Captain Singer answered, "The U.S.S. *Wisconsin*, bound for Callao, Peru, and Santiago, Chile." "Heave to and I'll board you," said the voice. The engines were then stopped and as we "heaved to" over the bow came Neptune and his staff.

We played the searchlights on them, and you never saw more frightful looking individuals than they were. (Neptune's party, of course, was made up of members of the crew who had crossed the equator before on some other ship, and had their certificates of membership as "Royal Sons of the Briny Deep.") They came through the large hawse pipes below, and up over the bow to the forecandle spar deck. Neptune Rex usually visited a ship before going south and across the equator on the night before crossing, to consult the Captain of the ship and the other officers, to find out just how many men of the crew, and officers, would be initiated the next day. Neither he nor any of his staff could be recognized by anyone, as they were so heavily made up and disguised. They had combed out strands of rope to make false hair and whiskers. Some of the "bears" had cut open a couple of mattresses to get "hair" out of them and sewed it on to their underwear so as to look like bears. Neptune's crown was made out of a large lard can. His "secretary" was provided with a large black book, bearing all the names of those to be initiated. His "doctor" was furnished a list of all those who were sick and unable to go through with the initiation and his "barber" had to know how many would need a shave. Finally, his visit completed, and after finding everything satisfactory, Neptune and his staff prepared to leave the ship, down over the bow. (Of course, they came back in through the hawse pipe where the anchor chains led through, and they placed a couple of the "bears" as guards in order that no one could see them as they crawled in and changed clothes.)

Next day, we were all waiting to hear the same call from the sea that we had heard the night before. A large canvas tank, about ten feet high, had been rigged up on the forecandle, alongside the forward turret, and it was about one-third full of water. Over the edge of the tank was a plank, and it had a keg on one end of it, directly over the tank. That keg was intended for the barber chair. Also, we stretched a long canvas tube, about three feet in diameter, which was generally used as a ventilator to draw fresh air down through the several decks to the boiler room.

About eight bells (noon) we were again hailed, same as the night before, and when Neptune Rex and his staff came aboard, they relieved everyone on watch -- look-out man, man at the wheel, signal men, etc. Neptune and his wife and his doctor and his secretary and a couple of "bears" sat up on top of the turret, beside the tank. The Admiral's flag was hauled down and they hoisted Neptune's flag, a large yellow flag with a blue, three-pronged spear (resembling a big fork) in the center, to signify that Neptune Rex was now in command. All the "landlubbers" to be initiated had to report before the King of the Seas by crawling through the canvas tube, and as they crawled, their rear ends were paddled by some of the "bears," armed with wooden paddles. When they emerged from the tube they gathered around where they could hear their names called, one at a time, by Neptune's secretary. If anyone was frightened and tried to shirk the initiation by hiding away someplace, one of the "bears" was sent to find him, and then it was just too bad -- for he got a double-dose! When the secretary called your name you answered, "Here, sir," and presented yourself to Neptune's doctor for an examination. He held a nig tin funnel on your chest and the small end to his ear, while he tapped you on the back a couple of times with a wooden mallet. He had a bucket full of round white pills, as big as ping-pong balls, and made out of flour, molasses, and pepper. He placed one in your mouth to give you "new strength" for what you would be getting next, and then you walked the plank to the barber chair, located at the end of the plank over the tank. The "barber" had a bucket of some sort of sloppy mixture he called "lather" and with a big white-wash brush he slapped lather all over your face and head, and then proceeded to shave you with a big wooden razor, about one and one-half feet long. He would then signal with his foot to one of the "bears" below the plank, and down you went, into the tank, where several of those big "bears" enjoyed themselves by ducking you down into the bottom of the tank, until they thought you had enough and would finally let you get out any way you could.

The secretary's assistant then handed you a large certificate, bearing colored illustrations of mermaids, pollywogs, crabs, lobsters and other kinds of fish, as well as pictures of other members of Neptune's family of the sea. It was all filled out with date, description, latitude and longitude -- showing location of the ship when you received the initiation into the "Sons of King Neptune's Briny Deep," and signed by Neptune Rex and all his officers. I am proud to say I still have mine, and it is well preserved. If you ever cross the equator again, and you have no certificate to show, you must be initiated all over again. Everyone has fun during this solemn ceremony, from the Admiral on down to the deck hands, and it was an experience I value very much -- one never to be forgotten.

And now to proceed with our tropical cruise. We left Valparaiso, Chile, after loading on stores and coal, and headed for the Samoa Islands. While cruising the South Pacific we encountered many monsoons and tropical storms. The *Wisconsin* was more inclined to pitch than to roll. While I was on lookout in the extreme bow of the ship, she would lift her bow up high over the waves and when she would let down again into the trough, it would seem that she was going

down – down -- down -- clear to the bottom of the ocean, but she would rise up again to go over the next wave. Believe me, if you have not been sea-sick and you are detailed to go on that watch, you will be plenty sick when you are relieved after two hours! You are also wringing wet -- with those big waves striking the bow you have to turn your back, while tons of salt water and spray come over the bow as you ride up and down. There is nothing to compare with these motions! The fastest elevator in any office building ashore could not match it!

We passed several islands at Samoa, until we reached the island of Pango-Pango [Pago Pago]. At that time each one of those islands was owned by different nations, and Pango-Pango was owned by the United States. Germany owned the island named Tootwila [Tutuila]. (Since World War I, Tootwila is owned by the United States). There was just a little tropical landing place at Pango-Pango -- no town -- just one of those tropical island villages. After we dropped anchor there, the Admiral's barge was called away, so we lowered the barge and manned the oars and took the Admiral ashore for an official visit with the American Consul. Admiral Casey allowed the barge crew to go on shore until he returned to go back to the ship. I saw something happen there that I believe is worth mentioning.

There was a small hut on the beach that belonged to a missionary and his wife. His boat was on the shore with the bow up on the sand and the stern in the water. It was noticed that the tide was coming in and the missionary wanted to pull his boat up on higher land, so he got hold of the "painter," or rope in the bow of his boat, and asked one of the natives -- who wear only a loin-cloth, and by the way, those natives of Samoa have very beautiful bodies, dark-skinned and very muscular. Their hair is straight like an Indians' and they are very courteous and friendly. He asked the native to go into the water and get behind the boat and push while he pulled, to draw the boat further up on shore so that it would be safe when the tide came in. After that was done, as an act of appreciation, the missionary went into his hut and came out with an old artificial red flower on a long wire stem. It looked like it came from an old hat like the ladies sometimes wear. He gave this to the native and thanked him for his help. That Samoan native grabbed that red flower and held it up and hollered and danced and sang for joy, at having possession of the flower. Then he bent the wire stem to look like a hairpin, and he clamped it down over the bridge of his nose so that the red flower stuck up between his eyes about three inches, where he could see it all the time. The missionary told us the natives love anything bright.

They did not know American money values, and they would come to our ship in their dug-out canoes with outriggers and bring us fruits for sale -- bananas, tangerines, coconuts, pineapples, etc. -- we would toss coins overboard and they would dive for them. Sometimes they would dive under one side of the ship and come up on the other side, with the coin. We would go down the gangway ladder with a bucket and give them a dime or a quarter, and they would give us the fruit.

One of our boys shined up a penny real bright and got a bucket full of tangerines. Of course, that was against the rules, for we were not allowed to cheat the natives. All the money they got they gave to the missionaries, who provided for them when they were sick or whenever they were in need.

Any time your church or your society or club are receiving donations of clothing, books, shoes, blankets -- anything you might have that you no longer use -- to fill a few boxes or barrels to send to the missionaries in some of these far away lands, you may find articles in your attics or basements that you probably feel you do not care to send because they are too dilapidated or too old and not very pretty to look at -- chances are these are the very things these island folks could use. Send them anyway -- you'd be surprised what they will be used for. Remember the old red flower from someone's old hat!

As for old books and magazines, according to the navigator's charts we knew exactly when we would pass a lightship at sea. A lightship is similar to a lighthouse, and is usually anchored above rocks and shoals, or as a marker at the entrance to a channel, to guide ships into harbor. They have a bright blinker light at night and a loud horn or a bell in the day time, used in a fog. We would break out a couple of empty corned-beef or pork barrels and clean them and pack old books, magazines, and newspapers into them -- place the cover on tight so that the barrel would be thoroughly water-tight -- then when we would pass a lightship, we would drop these barrels overboard. The lightship crew would dip their colors and salute us and then lower a boat and pick up the barrels containing the reading matter. These men seldom get ashore -- the lightship is their home and duty station.

Our next destination was a U.S. Marine station on the island of Guam, where the *Wisconsin* received repairs -- a new top signal mast that had been carried away in one of those terrific monsoons that last about six hours. We cleaned the ship from truck to keel, polished all the guns and other brightwork. We received orders to "coal ship" and "up anchor" for Manila, P.I. There we were to join with the Asiatic Fleet and become Junior Flagship of the fleet -- the Senior Flagship was the U.S.S. *Kentucky*, under the command of Rear Admiral Robert [Robley] (Bob) Evans -- sometimes called "Gimpy" Evans, as he limped in his walk. But he was a real brotherly-spirited man and officer. Once I met him ashore -- I saluted and he said, "Never mind that, boy -- give me a match."

At Manila we met with the U.S.S. *Oregon*, the *Monterey*, the *Monadnock*, the *Helena*, the *Wilmington*, the *Kentucky*, the flat-bottomed gun boat *Isle de Suzon*, and several others. When we dropped anchor we noticed a six-oared whale boat leaving the *Kentucky* and heading for us. "Here they come," said our Officer of the Deck. "Now we will be challenged to a boat race." Sure enough, as the whale boat crossed our bow, the crew "tossed their oars" by holding them straight up on end, in the bottom of their boat. That was a challenge for a whale boat race. The Officer of the Deck invited them aboard our quarterdeck and their

challenge was accepted. (We had a whale boat crew in training since leaving San Francisco.) The time and date were set for the race. Anyone wanting to place a bet would report to their Divisional Officer and sign up for a bet and the amount. After all divisions and officers had pooled their bets, the money was sent over to the *Kentucky* and all our bets were covered. All the men of other ships in the fleet also bet on the races. It promised to be an exciting one, as it would be between the Senior and Junior Flagships of the fleet. The *Kentucky* had beaten everything in the fleet in other races, even a couple English and German race boats. The day of the race was set aside like a holiday. The two ships' steam launches towed the race boats to the starting point, six miles up the bay. Each boat had a brass initial, highly polished, on each side of its bow, "W" for the *Wisconsin* and "K" for the *Kentucky*. The fellows on the bridge used binoculars and telescopes watching for the race boats to appear around a point of land beyond which the race started. Suddenly a small white object appeared -- we could see the flash of sunlight on the oar blades as they rose out of the water. A little later came the other boat and very soon we could distinguish the initial on the bow of the first boat, and we announced to those on deck that it was a "W." There was wild cheering and several brooms were hoisted on the signal yards and masts, signifying a "clean sweep." As they passed our bow they tossed their oars -- the end of the race -- and the *Wisconsin* was the winner!

Later we learned that the reason the *Kentucky* was so far behind was that one of her oarsmen broke his oar right at the oar lock. He dipped the blade of his oar too deep and pulled hard and broke the oar. He then had to jump overboard, because no "passengers" are allowed in a race boat. One of the steam launches following the race picked him up.

Next, our fire room forces were challenged to a catamaran race. A catamaran is an almost square, flat-bottomed boat, about 6' by 4'. It is used by men detailed as side cleaners, to scrub the white ship's side and to paint the side when needed. The challenge was accepted by our coal passers, to race the *Kentucky's* coal passers, and use coal shovels for paddles. Three men on each side. That was a race to behold! They splashed and paddled with those shovels and the flat-bottomed boat would spin around -- first to the right and then to the left -- throwing water all over themselves. It did look like the harbor was not big enough for them! Finally the race was over -- about 300 yards -- and the *Kentucky* won. The *Wisconsin* catamaran was about two-thirds full of water at the end of the race, and the fellows were dead tired, but it was comical to watch while it lasted!

Whenever we had general boat drill, all the ship's boats were called away for drill. We had six cutters, manned by twelve oars -- one man to each oar and six on each side; two whale boats; one Captain's gig; one Admiral's barge; two "dinghies," one sailing launch; two steam launches; one wherry, and; four catamarans. In a line-up all the boats leave the ship's side, except the catamarans, and the drill would begin by a signal from the ship for right turns and left turns,

hold water (stop), backwater (back up), form twos, form fours, single file again, etc. A very beautiful sight. Those boats would parade on the water and all the signals were given by hoisting signal flags from the ship. When the flags were hauled down, that was when the boats would respond -- all together. Finally the "general recall" (a flag resembling a checkerboard, white with blue squares) was hoisted as the boats were all in line, facing the ship. The "recall" was hauled down and the oarsmen, upon the command of the coxswain in the stern "give way together," would race to see which boat reached the ship first. Each boat beneath its proper davits, and boat falls were hooked on and the boats were all hoisted in their davits and secured.

At Manila we saw the remains of Admiral Cervera's Spanish ships on the beach -- wrecked and decaying -- as our American fleet, under the command of Admiral Dewey on the Flagship U.S.S. *Olympia* and Admiral Sampson on the U.S.S. *Oregon* had left them in the Battle of Manila Bay -- Spanish-American War. Those ships were too badly shot up and wrecked for salvaging. Later they were condemned as junk.

A signal from the senior flagship, the *Kentucky*, ordered each ship in the fleet that carried thirteen-inch guns out to sea for target practice. A ship a day -- our ship, the *Wisconsin*, had the last day. They went out in sequence -- the *Monterey* first, next the *Monadnock*, then the *Oregon*, then the *Kentucky*, and last, but not least, the Junior Flagship *Wisconsin*. As each ship returned to harbor in the evening, her target practice records with the thirteen-inch guns were delivered to the Senior Flagship in command of Admiral Evans. He filed these records of the number of shells fired -- time of loading guns -- number of bull's eyes -- and the scores that were kept of the other odd shots. Later he submitted the records to the Navy Department, along with records of target shooting with all the other guns on each ship.

By the way, Admiral Evans furnished the commanders of each ship with these records, and the *Kentucky* had everything beat in the fleet, up to the last day, when the *Wisconsin* went out to fire her thirteen-inch guns at the target. We were showing up pretty good with our loading and firing, and it looked like we only had one more shell to fire within a limited time to beat the *Kentucky*, when our Captain Reiter on the bridge whistled down into the forward turret where they were loading for that last shot. He placed his mouth to the tube and yelled, "A \$10 gold piece to the man who makes another bull's-eye in the next 12 seconds!" Then, boom! a shell went right smack into the bull's-eye, beating the *Kentucky*'s record! Everyone was happy, of course. We steamed into port with our band playing and the men lined up at the rails waving their white hats and cheering. The Captain let everyone go ashore overnight, that wanted to go, regardless of what conduct class they had, to return to the ship next morning at six bells (7:00 A.M.). The other ships had liberty parties ashore, too, and when some of the men from the *Kentucky* and the *Wisconsin* met, their feelings got pretty high and there

were a few rough fist fights among those who were drinking. Next day harmony was again in order and feelings were cooled over.

Sunday morning the Senior Flagship *Kentucky* heaved up anchor for a trip north to Yokohama, Japan, and left orders for the Junior Flagship to follow. We arrived at Yokohama and the gunboats *Wilmington* and *Helena* (sister-ships) were there at anchor. Next day some of our men were transferred to the *Helena* and some to the *Wilmington*. I went to the *Wilmington*, as she was undermanned in her crew of signal boys. Quite a difference in my new home! A gunboat compared to a new, first class battleship! The *Wilmington* had one large steel mast and a fighting top with two 50-caliber rapid fire guns in the top; six five-inch guns on the gun deck; four six-pounders on the spar deck, and; one large turret on the forecastle, containing two thirteen-inch guns. We were told that with all that battery of guns, and the heavy, lofty mast, and one large tall smoke stack, she was top-heavy and at sea she could roll heavily, so she was nicknamed the *Rollington*. Her bottom was such that she could not upset. In the center of the ship's bottom, from stem to stern, the keel was sort of caved-in and made a suction, so that when she was rolling heavy, around 45° and 48°, she could not capsize. I was soon to learn that she was well-nicknamed. That ship would roll even when at anchor. At sea I was just like several others -- good and seasick! No matter how seasick you were, you had to carry on your duties just the same. I saw several of her officers that were seasick! In a rough sea there was a man stationed at the base of the mast on the spar deck, to keep his eye on an indicator that showed the number of degrees she was rolling. Over 35° he would call out "37°, 42°, 40°, 45°, etc." to the Officer of the Deck. Heavy rolls were recorded on the ship's log. Our hammocks were slung in two tiers, one triced up high, and the next one low; the next high and the next low, etc. When we turned in at night the hammocks had plenty of room to swing with the roll of the ship. My hammock was slung low.

One night, with the hammocks on each side of me slung high, I heard something like a man choking. I opened my eyes and looked up and saw the fellow in the hammock above me -- his face over the edge of his hammock, and his bulging eyes staring down at me. His hands were over his mouth and his cheeks were puffed out full. Immediately I decided to "stand from under" and I did not turn out of my hammock any too soon! That guy was really sick! Next morning he scrubbed my hammock and mattress cover and blankets for me. I really felt sorry for him -- I knew he could not help it, because he was so sick and I knew how he must have felt.

"Up anchor for Nagasaki, Japan," was the order passed by the boatswain's mate. "Everybody to your stations and lay below in the chain lockers all the anchor chain stowers." Our short trip to Nagasaki was uneventful. The weather was fine -- the ship steamed on southward about twelve knots per hour, but she sure did roll!

We dropped anchor in Nagasaki Bay and lowered a dinghy for our mail orderly to go ashore for our mail. Usually he was the first one to go ashore when we reached port. I was assigned to go over the side with another shipmate named Urqhardt, an ordinary seaman whose home was in Detroit, Michigan. We went over the side on a stage hanging from the railing on deck, with a couple buckets of lye water and a hand swab, to scrub the ship's white side. The hand swab was on a line, so we could dip it down into the water by lowering it down and shaking it around. Once in awhile we would see the fin on a shark's back, sticking up out of the water below us, and sometimes two or three of them. It seemed like there must have been a "school" of them around there. Once, as Urqhardt lowered his swab to rinse, it was snapped off the line by one of them. As we sat on that stage and the ship was rolling pretty heavy, when she would roll toward us, we would be swung out over the water and could not reach far enough to go on scrubbing, so we would sit there until the ship rolled the other way and we would be swung back again and strike the ship's side with the bottom of our bare feet, then we would go on cleaning the white paint work as far as we could reach, until we were swung out again. After we had cleaned as much as we could in that position, we would stand on each end of the stage and loosen our lines and lower the stage a little, then make fast our lines and sit down and clean once more. Once Urqhardt called to me as usual, "Are you ready?" and I would answer, "Ready!" We each loosened our ropes on each end of the stage and started to lower ourselves again, when all of a sudden I let go the running end of my rope and it went out over the railing and down again! There we were with that stage straight up and down and Urqhardt on top with his rope all secure and me underneath hanging onto my rope for dear life -- and watching those sharks underneath. Above me Urqhardt had his feet on the end of the stage and was hanging onto his rope and looking down at me under that board and laughing his head off! When the "*Rollington*" would roll our way I would swing out over the water and those sharks -- and when she rolled the other way, I'd hit that ship's side with my ribs, sometimes my head, or my knees, and each time I would find my grip on the rope was not tight enough, although I gave it all I had, and I would slip down a couple inches towards those sharks! Now the worst thing a man can do in any predicament is holler for help -- he will be kidded plenty -- but I did! I hollered, "On deck there," and the Chief Boatswain's mate looked down over the rail and said, "What's the matter down there?" I said, "Matter, hell, get a couple hands and pull us up out of here." They pulled us up on deck, stage and all -- he told me I was "dopey," had no sense, and a few other things -- and that if he had thought, he would have pulled up Urqhardt and the stage and buckets and let the rest go to the sharks! Well, I took it -- had to -- then he said, "Now, go over the side and finish your job." I said, "Oh, no. I wouldn't go over that side any more if you made me an Admiral." "Do you refuse to obey my orders?" says he. "If you want to call it that," says I. "I will do anything you want me to do, except go over that side again." So he put me on report for refusing to obey orders, and I had to go before the mast next morning. The Skipper gave me ten days extra duty and fourth class conduct. Each day was ten hours work, and I could not go ashore or line up for privileges with the men, etc., such as the first class men were entitled to. I worked off the extra duty by



cleaning and wire brushing the brass coal bunker plates on deck and scraping rust and red-leading inside the double bottoms of the ship.

Finally I became first class conduct again and was entitled to go ashore. I had four months pay and shore leave for forty-eight hours -- and I had a wonderful time! I rode around in one of those gin-rickshaws and lots of good eats and drinks, and I also had four of those Geisha girls mending, washing and pressing my clothes and shining my shoes, and all-in-all my experience there told me that the Japanese people were very accommodating and polite to the American sailor, more so than sailors of other nations who happened to be ashore. Probably because the Americans had more money and were more liberal with it. I bought several curios, as I always did in any foreign country, and sent them to my friends at home. You could get a rickshaw man to haul you around, taxi-like, from one o'clock in the afternoon until midnight, for one Mexican dollar -- about 43¢ in American money.

If an American sailor on shore leave would happen to overstay his liberty, he was picked up by the native police who placed him in confinement, under guard, and they would notify the ship he was from -- then one of the ship's officers would go ashore to get him. The police are paid \$10, American money, for their trouble, and the \$10 comes out of the sailor's pay. Once in awhile the victim tries to get his \$10 worth by beating-up on the policeman who nabbed him, tearing his clothes and yanking and keeping some of those pretty ornaments and buttons on his uniform, to send home as curios.

Every day we were visited by dignitaries and officials from shore, and we had to keep ourselves in clean uniform of the day -- whites and white hats.

When we "coal" ship at any port in China, the job is well done by the "coolies" from shore. They have large baskets they fill with coal in the coal lighters alongside the ship. With the filled baskets they walk up a plank to the coal chutes on deck and dump the baskets down into the coal bunkers. Then they walk down another plank into the lighter, to fill up the baskets again -- a constant stream of coolies, male and female, all day long, until the coal is all on and the bunkers are filled. When they empty a basket, they are given a brass check and when they are finished they turn in the brass checks for their pay. Ten checks brought them 6¢ in American money, or about 22¢ in Mexican money. This they would exchange for Chinese "cash" -- a round brass coin with a square hole in the center -- and they carried these on a string like beads, instead of in a purse or pocketbook. They did not know what pocketbooks or purses were anyway. Coolies were an ignorant, dirty, and scavenger-type of Chinaman -- half-dressed, half-fed, sickly -- and there were millions of them! The census of China was never given completely, as they could not count all these coolies who were mostly loafing around the docks and beaches. Remember, I am writing about conditions in 1901 to 1904, while I was there. There has been a general cleaning up among these coolies since that time, to

overcome plagues and diseases that thrived in those earlier days.

They had numerous superstitions, such as rain joss. A joss is some sort of idol, or a demon -- sunshine joss, health joss, etc. All kinds of idols -- some made of rock, some of metal, different kinds of wood, etc. These carvings and handwork are masterpieces of all sizes and descriptions. Thousands of these coolies live on the water and never land in some of the harbors. They live in little boats known as "sampans." They would do a lot of fishing and would scoop up everything afloat. Babies would be born on these boats and live to be a ripe old age without ever going ashore. These sampans are propelled by one oar extending from the stern, and they float around day and night. They skulk these around ships at anchor and/or at the docks and they meet ships and steamers coming in and follow them when leaving port, as far out to sea as they can, until they reach the rough waters. They had long dip nets and would scoop up anything that had been cast overboard. They would gather around the swill shoots -- a hole in the ship's side just above the water line, where garbage, or "swill," would be dumped -- and they would catch this garbage, cook it in an iron pot in the center of their boats, and eat it. They would fight and scramble to get their nets under the swill shoots and if anyone fell overboard they would not bother to try and pick him up, because one of their old superstitions was that the joss or demon of death was down in the water, and he wanted that person who fell overboard and would reach up and pull him down, and anyone trying to rescue that person would only make the demon or joss angry with him, and he might be the next victim! Sometimes we would pull the poor "victim" out of the water and give him dry clothes, and the first boat going ashore would take him along and put him back on the beach. There were some organizations on shore -- missionaries of some kind -- who would give these coolies rice once in awhile or they would be more starved than they were.

There were some ports on the Chinese coast where you would very seldom see a sea gull. These birds are scavengers, and there is nothing on the water for them to feed on -- the coolies get it all. As the tide goes out, there are shoots of rice plants and other stuff floating out from inland on different outgoing streams, and they catch all that, too.

We "up anchor" and cross over to Shanghai, China. I have tried to describe the Chinese coolies -- the way they live and get and fight each other, and steal. As we entered the harbor of Shanghai -- here they come, way outside the harbor -- to meet us and catch our swill at the swill shoot and to beg for coins or old clothes, or anything we can throw overboard to them. They follow us in to our anchorage and then dozens more sampans came out from shore and stay around our ship, night and day, going and coming all the time.

Shanghai was a beautiful city to visit -- with her wide streets and the elaborate homes of the aristocrats, and their well-kept gardens. I was glad to be on a gunboat in those waters, as we went way up inland on rivers where

a big ship would not enter. The gunboat *Wilmington* did not draw much water, and she could cruise in more shallow water. So we got to see a lot of old China inland and their methods of living. We passed large rice fields and farms, and on the farms would be several small joss houses -- shelters for worshipping idols. When they had too much rain, they prayed to their sunshine joss -- if not enough rain, they prayed to their rain-joss. If someone was sick, they had a good-health joss to pray to. If they had any looting or stealing of any of their crops, they begged the demon of death to take the robbers and destroy them.

We got ashore at Ning Poo [Ningbo] for the afternoon and there we visited the Garden of Balanced Rocks. Some of those large boulders were so well-balanced and so big, you could feel the rock sway a little, back and forth, but you could never force it over.

At Swatow [Shantou], we were notified that they had five or six prisoners who were charged with wife-beating. That is a terrible crime in China. These prisoners were to be beheaded the next morning and any foreigners coming ashore were invited to witness the execution. Some of our crew and officers went ashore to see this and when they returned they told us what they had seen. The prisoners were brought forward, blindfolded, with a square piece of paper fastened to the end of his queue (or pigtail, as we called it). On the paper, in Chinese writing, of course, were the names of their relatives, and if the prisoner turned his head to the right or left, as the blade came down, those relatives were disgraced forever. They could not own property nor vote, nor pay taxes, and were forever in disgrace.

They had no block to lay the prisoner's head on, he just got down on his knees and leaned forward, while an officer took hold of his queue and held it forward to clear the back of his neck. Then, using a long blade about two inches wide and two feet long -- with a small rope tied around one end for a handle, and with a very keen edge -- with one great heave downward by a husky guard or officer -- off went the head! A new knife was used for each head -- the old knife was sold as a curio.

They then followed through with another one of their old superstitions. The body was lowered into a hole in the ground, without the head, and it would be in eternal torment because it had arms and legs to do things, but no head with brains to tell them what or when to do it. The head would be placed in a separate hold -- one-half mile away -- to be in torment forever, because it had the brains, but no arms or legs to do what it wanted them to, etc.

Before these prisoners were beheaded, they were placed in torture racks for a few days to stretch their necks, so that it would be easier to chop off their heads. They had tall bamboo crates -- built square -- with just enough room inside for the prisoner to stand upright. At the top was a square board with a

round hole for the prisoner's head to extend through. He was actually hanging by the neck in there, but the crate was just tall enough so that when he bent his feet down his toes would reach the ground, and by so doing and reaching out a little with his elbows touching the walls of the crate, he would rest his neck. This did not last very long, though, because he was weakened without food or water. Once in awhile when visitors were there, they would see one of the guards take a white china bowl, full to the brim with clear cool water, and hold it up to the prisoner's lips, and the prisoner would gasp and yell and run his tongue in and out, but the water never reached his lips. It was taken away again.

The river current going out was about fourteen knots per hour, and quite often you would see the bloated bodies of cattle (once we saw two human bodies) floating out with the current, from somewhere way up inland. We were told that when cattle, or humans, are drowned, they lie on the bottom for about nine days and then come up like a big bubble and float on the surface. They are so bloated they are hardly recognizable, and they would float with the current, right out to the ocean, along with the other debris.

The *Wilmington* cruised in for a short stop at Hancow [Hangzhou], then back to the mouth of the Yangtze River again and Shanghai. From Shanghai we sailed south to Foo Chow [Fuzhou], one of China's old historic, walled cities, where we were allowed to go ashore for only five hours. Everyone who was not a resident of that little walled city had to be outside the wall at sundown. Some of these people were overcome by some kind of a plague, and their flesh was decaying in spots where the flesh was near the bones, like the ribs, the jaws, the fingers and elbows, etc. They said it was similar to leprosy, but that they were not suffering. We were told not to touch them, and if they would reach up their bony hands and fingers to us, begging, we would just have to raise up a foot and with the sole of our shoe, press them back away from us.

Next we went to Hong Kong -- with Canton twenty miles southwest, the old capital of China. A number of big sailing boats called "junks" came in and out of Hong Kong harbor. These were queer looking craft, with their lofty sails made of bamboo fiber, and they treaded up and down the coast, hauling cargos of miscellaneous freight and supplies, mostly rice, cane (sugar) and bamboo. Sometimes one of these junks would be hailed by pirates and the junk and cargo confiscated by them. Sometimes the pirates are caught in the act by the Chinese coast police, and they were put on the beach and beheaded -- no trial necessary as they were caught outright and that was proof enough that they were guilty. Most of these junks would be manned by one while family. I went ashore in Hong Kong only once, because they day was not very far off when my enlistment would expire and I would be honorably discharged, and it was necessary to be careful with what money I had, to save all I could for going home.

One day I joined up with five or six shipmates and we went ashore together. We pooled our money and hired a guide to show us the points of

interest there. He took us on a very interesting tour. We saw how the old Chinese coolies lived. He took us to the European sections and I bought a model of one of the pagodas, about eighteen inches high; a couple of swords made of Chinese coins, and; a small six-legged drop leaf center table, with its top inlaid and decorated with gold leaf, pearl, and enamels forming beautiful flowers, butterflies and insects. I still have that table, and that is all I have left. I gave away all the other things I brought home. Now I wish I had not been so generous!

There happened to be a U.S. Naval ship in the harbor that was being groomed and loaded with coal and supplies, as she was soon to up-anchor for the good old U.S.A.! The U.S.S. *Solace*, as she was named, was a large passenger steamer that had been converted into a hospital ship during the Spanish-American War (and later used in World War I and II).

I was transferred to the *Solace* to go home on her and get my discharge. She was commanded by Captain Singer. I was assigned to duty on the bridge as acting third-class quartermaster. When it was my turn on "watch," I helped at the steering wheel -- read the log line at the stern every hour to check the ship's speed -- hoisted signal flags and received and answered signals from the other ships -- and made hourly entries in the ship's log. At noon I held the stop watch and helped the navigator shoot-the-sun -- in other words, read the sextant to determine the ship's location.

Our first stop was Yokohama, Japan, for coal and supplies. There is an old extinct volcano in Japan -- it is high up and beautifully capped with snow all year round. The Japanese people idolize it and it is reverently looked upon by them. It is named Fujiyama. Almost every article purchased in Japan has a replica of this mountain on it, especially Japanese pictures. The Japs were very courteous and polite to Americans and Europeans. I saw them step off the sidewalks to allow us the right of way. We wore Japanese attire completely, once we were ashore -- consisting of a loud, light blue kimono with a big dark blue flaring sun on the back, and a wide dark blue sash. The kimono had large deep pockets in the sleeves. We also wore socks that were like mittens, with a place for the big toe separate from the rest of the sock, to allow the sandal strap to come up through the split and around the ankle. We wore these things while riding around in a rickshaw, seeing the town. Whenever we went into a house, we had to leave our shoes at the door and put on sandals, because everything is done on the floor -- no chairs or beds. We squatted down on a fiber mat to sip tea, etc. -- we slept on a large mat, with a block covered with silk or something as a pillow. When we woke up in the morning, our clothes would be washed and pressed and our shoes shined, waiting for us. I brought my kimono home with me, and in one of the big pockets in the sleeve were my mitten-socks. I had forgotten about them. I gave the kimono to my younger step-sister [probably one of his half-sisters, Anna or Irene] and she was delighted to have it.

The *Solace* finally got under-weigh (weighed anchor) for the next destination toward home -- Manila, P.I. Then the U.S. island of Guam, where we coaled ship, and then went on to stop at Honolulu. I did not go ashore any more, since Yokohama, Japan. I had been to these places before, and I was saving my money. Some day I should like to go to Honolulu again -- there have been many changes since I was there. When I was there, there were no airplanes, no wireless telegraph, no radar, etc.

Cruising toward Honolulu, the first sight of land reported by the lookout up in the crow's nest is "Land-ho," answered by the Officer of the Day on the bridge deck, "Where away?" "Four points off the starboard bow," is the lookout's reply. By that time everyone on the ship is on deck to see the land that has been sighted, and what is actually seen is a black lump on the horizon, the top of an extinct volcano called "Diamond Head." As we drew closer, of course, it got bigger and soon you can distinguish palm trees, coconut trees, etc., and the famous beaches. The Hawaiian people always extended a warm reception to ships coming in. Bands played, people cheered and fired salutes -- the same procedure for ships leaving.

Hooray! Up anchor for the last lap of my homeward-bound cruise -- good-bye to the Oriental Station -- set the course direct to San Francisco, California! One day at sea, on the trip home, my divisional officer asked me if I would not like to re-enlist, when I got my discharge, for four more years. He said that I particularly took special interest in all forms of signaling and he would like me to learn wireless telegraph. He said I could make a great career for myself. It really sounded like something fine, and a great opportunity. He said if I would re-enlist after my discharge in San Francisco, he would arrange for me to have a thirty day furlough and four months pay as a bonus. I could go home to Cleveland, Ohio, and have a good time, then report back at San Francisco, with all my traveling expenses paid.

Now, here is the reason that I definitely changed my mind and would not accept. The *Solace* was going to Mare Island Navy Yard at Vallejo, California (near San Francisco), and get prepared for a trip back to the Oriental Station. She would be loaded with all the necessary components and other equipment to install wireless telegraph on two battleships out there. In fact, they were the flagship *Kentucky* and the junior flagship *Wisconsin*. I was to accompany this equipment and study some of the components on the way to the Orient, and then I would be stationed on one of the battleships and witness the wireless equipment being installed, and eventually become a wireless telegraph operator -- learning all the details of the Marconi wireless system. I think about it all now, with all that has developed since that time (1903-1904) -- radio, radar, electronics, etc. -- airplanes, submarines, bombers, mines, minesweepers, jets, atomic power, PT boats, etc. -- but I did not like the idea of going back to the Orient, probably for four years. While I was out there I was afraid every time I went ashore -- there was so much filth and disease -- and I decided I had all the Oriental Station I wanted, and I was

so glad to be back in Uncle Sam's country. I wanted to stay where I was. If they had handed me that offer for any other place but back in China or Japan, I would have grabbed it up right away -- but the Orient -- oh, no!

On April 19, 1904, I followed the usual rules that one must follow on the day his enlistment expires -- that happened to be my twenty-first birthday! I took a bath, shaved, shined my shoes -- got into my clean uniform -- and at 9 o'clock (two bells AM), I reported aft to the Mast to speak to Captain Singer. When he appeared on deck I saluted him and said, "Captain, my enlistment expires today, sir." (Boy, was I happy.) He said, "All right, young fellow. Report to the ship's doctor for a physical examination and then to the Paymaster for your money." (You could deposit money in the ship's bank whenever you wanted to -- and no withdrawals were allowed until the day you were discharged.) "Then report to the Ship's writer for your discharge and transportation home." The Navy always sent an honorably discharged man to the place of his enlistment. After completing all this formality, the Ship's writer gave me my discharge (and I am proud to say I still have it). I got high merits in marksman ship, conduct, signaling, etc. -- but low in seamanship -- I did not care any for seamanship anyway. I was recommended to re-enlist as Third Class Quartermaster. Nothing left to do now but get forward and bid good-bye to my shipmates -- grab my bag and hammock and over the side, into a boat, and get ashore.

Shipmates usually know how many more days each has to serve -- if over two more years, they call it "two-and-a-butt," or "three-and-a-butt," etc. Well, I knew some of those fellows had over two or three more years to do and they were heading for the Oriental Station on the *Solace* -- and I felt sorry for them. I just could not bid them goodbye, so I left the U.S.S. *Solace* in a hurry, without goodbyes to any of them

I got ashore with my discharge money in a leather belt around my waist. I did not trust the beachcombers around the docks and I was told to look-out for the tramps that might waylay me and rob me -- so I hustled to the railroad station and got on the train for home. I sat there for two hours before the train pulled out. I felt safe there and I got acquainted with an elderly gentleman in the car with his two daughters -- they were twins, about nineteen or twenty years old -- and they were heading East to catch a boat for England. That was their home.

They were pretty companionable and we played cards and visited. I wore a special sea-going uniform that I had made in San Francisco for a homeward bounder. On one occasion a well-dressed man came into our car and sat with me. He wanted to know if I was on furlough -- and dumb me says, "No, I have been honorably discharged and am homeward bound!" He invited me to join him and two other fellows in the Smoking Car for some cards. I said that I would after awhile. After my visitor left, the old gentleman came over to my seat and said, "I overheard that fellow inviting you to the Smoking Car to play cards. I advise you not to go. Those fellows ride back and forth on these trains and prey on people

like you -- they are professional gamblers. They will get all you have. Suit yourself, but I would not do it.” I thanked him very much for his fatherly advice and I stayed right where I was until we reached St. Louis, Missouri, where I changed trains. I parted with my fine friends and got on the train for Cleveland, Ohio. Believe me, I was very careful from then on who I made friends with, and I still do, whenever I travel alone.

I got into Cleveland the next morning -- got on a street car right away for home-sweet-home. I was received with open arms and they really had the “welcome” mat out for me. In those days, a sailor was quite a novelty in Cleveland -- they were not seen on the streets very often, so far inland. It seemed as though my folks had told everyone in the neighborhood just when I was coming home, because they were all out to see me. Some of them I did not know at all. Everyone was swell -- my folks had special food prepared and set before me at every meal. One thing they had for me was eggs at breakfast -- previous to that they never bought eggs because the price was so high they could not afford them -- so they thought it was quite a treat for me to have two eggs in the morning for breakfast. I did not say anything, but I had practically lived on eggs in the Orient. We had them ALL the time -- soft-boiled, hard-boiled, fried, omelets, etc. -- every style. They were only 60¢ a hundred -- and I sure was tired of them!

One day, before I changed to civilian clothes, I thought I would hunt up Oliver Doyle and Alex Lancaster -- my two old buddies that enlisted with me and later deserted me. First I went to Doyle’s house. I knocked on the door and his mother answered. When she saw me she grabbed me and started to cry, and said, “My you look fine. If only I had left Doyle there with you to serve his enlistment, how much better it would have been for him!” I was told later that Doyle was not home very long after they bought him out. He went to another city to get a job and was found dead from a heart attack. The DoYLES treated me fine, and I visited with them several times.

As for the Lancasters -- they had moved away and I never did find out where they lived -- so I never got to see them.

As time went on, I made friends with a lot of fine young folk. Then one morning I found I was almost broke, so I asked my father to get me a job in a factory where he worked. He said, “You don’t want a job in any factory -- shut in all day with hot machinery -- grease and oil. It would be very confining for you, after being out in the open air, sailing around on a ship.” I told him it would just be temporary until I could get outside work of some kind -- so he spoke for me at the factory and got me the job. I was afraid if I went broke, and did not have a job, I would be tempted to re-enlist, and I did not want to do that -- for fear they would send me back to China!!

Eventually, I was introduced to a fine young lady -- about five months younger than I was. She was a little taller -- light complexion and blue eyes. She



had five brothers and sisters -- and she was the youngest of the family. Her sisters were all married -- her father and mother were deceased. The more I called on her, the more I felt sure that she was just the girl for me, if she would have me. So I tried it one night and she said "yes."

We were married on Thanksgiving Day, 1905 -- and we were blessed with a fine family of four boys and four girls -- but one of the boys and one of the girls died as infants -- so we raised six fine men and women. Our fifth child, a son named Stanley, at the age of thirty-one was called into the Air Force during World War II (1942). He was a true Christian, and loved by everyone who knew him. He studied hard and went through all of his training with flying colors -- he became a Tech Sergeant and was appointed Crew Chief on a B-24 bomber. He came home on furlough in November 1943, looking better than we had ever seen him. He reported back to Clovis, New Mexico, where he met his bomber crew for the first time. Ten days later we received the telegram that the bomber had crashed on a routine flight and the entire crew was killed.

Two of our sons are married and one of our daughters. They are all happy with their lovable families and they have blessed us with eight wonderful grandchildren. There are two daughters at home yet, both still single. They are a real blessing and two more faithful and more home-loving Christian girls cannot be found.

In closing now, I would like to advise any young men who contemplate joining the Navy -- stay with it! Especially young men who cannot look forward to attending college and would like to have the right kind of a start toward a career. I say, join the Navy -- and when you are in, give it the best you have. When your superiors see that you are really sincere, and anxious to get ahead, and that you are honest with them and yourself -- as well as dependable -- they will encourage you and help you and you are bound to succeed -- and surprisingly fast!

GOOD NIGHT!

## THE SHIPS ON WHICH ALEX SERVED

1. The U.S.S. *Constellation* was built between 1853 and 1855. She was launched at Gosport Navy Yard, August 26, 1854, and commissioned on July 28, 1855. The *Constellation* served in the Mediterranean and in the Civil War. She was also used as a receiving ship at Norfolk and Philadelphia and as a training ship at the Naval Academy and at Newport, Rhode Island. The *Constellation* is now docked in Baltimore and has been thoroughly restored to her original condition. Armament consisted of sixteen eight-inch guns, four thirty-two-pound “long guns,” two ten-inch pivot guns, and one twelve-pounder “boat howitzer.” She measures 186’ in length with a 41’ beam. There is evidence that the *Constellation* may actually be the rebuilt ship of the same name from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, rebuilt in the 1850s, making it the oldest ship in the United States Navy.

2. The U.S.S. *Essex* was built by Donald McKay at East Boston, Massachusetts. The keel was laid in 1874, and she was commissioned in Boston on October 3, 1876, serving in the South Atlantic and the Orient. The *Essex* later served as a training ship. After being de-commissioned in 1903, she was loaned to the Naval Militia of Ohio from 1904 to 1916, served as part of the Ninth Naval District during World War I, and was finally transferred to the Naval Reserve of Minnesota in 1927. She was used as a receiving ship and as a barracks. The *Essex* was 185’ long with a 35’ beam and 14’ draft.

3. The U.S.S. *Wisconsin* was a first-class battleship, built at San Francisco, California, and launched on November 26, 1898. She measured 368’ in length and 72’ 2½” in breadth, with a mean draft of 23’ 6”. Displacement was 11,552 tons, with a speed of 17.17 knots. The armament consisted of four thirteen-inch breech loading rifles, fourteen six-inch rapid fire guns, sixteen six-pounder rapid fire guns, six one-pounder guns, two three-inch field pieces, four .30 caliber automatic guns, and one above-water eighteen-inch torpedo tube. The crew consisted of 34 officers and 656 men.

4. The U.S.S. *Wilmington* was a light draft gunboat, built at Newport News, Virginia, and launched on October 19, 1895. The ship measured 250’ 9” in length and 39’ 8” in breadth, with a mean draft of 9’. She displaced 1,392 tons and had a speed of 15.08 knots. The armament included eight four-inch rapid fire guns, four six-pounder rapid fire guns, four 1-pounder rapid fire guns, and two 6 mm automatic guns. The crew consisted of 10 officers and 176 men.

5. The U.S.S. *Solace* was originally built as the *Creole* for the Cromwell Steamship Lines in Newport News, Virginia, in 1896. She was acquired by the Navy on April 7, 1898, renamed the *Solace*, and fitted out as a hospital ship. The *Solace* was commissioned on April 14, 1898. The ship sailed the Pacific from July 1, 1899, until October of 1905, carrying mail, passengers, and provisions.

The *Solace* measured 368' in length and 44' in the beam, and displaced 4700 tons. The crew consisted of 13 officers and 110 enlisted men.



Illustration 1 - U.S.S. *Constellation*, 1893, from: Reynolds, Francis J. The United States Navy from the Revolution to Date. New York, P.F. Collier & Son, 1916.



Illustration 2 - U.S.S. *Constellation* in Baltimore, 1914. © The Constellation Museum, Baltimore, Maryland. Used by permission.

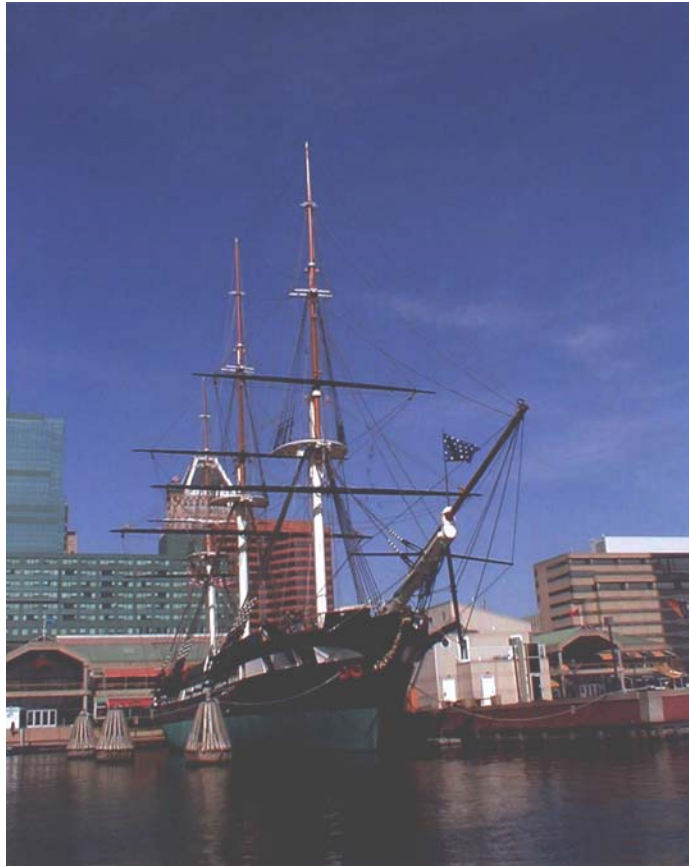


Illustration 3 - U.S.S. *Constellation*, 2004. © The Constellation Museum, Baltimore, Maryland. Used by permission.



Illustration 4 – U.S.S. *Essex*, 1896. © Historical Collections of the Great Lakes, Bowling Green State University. Used by permission.

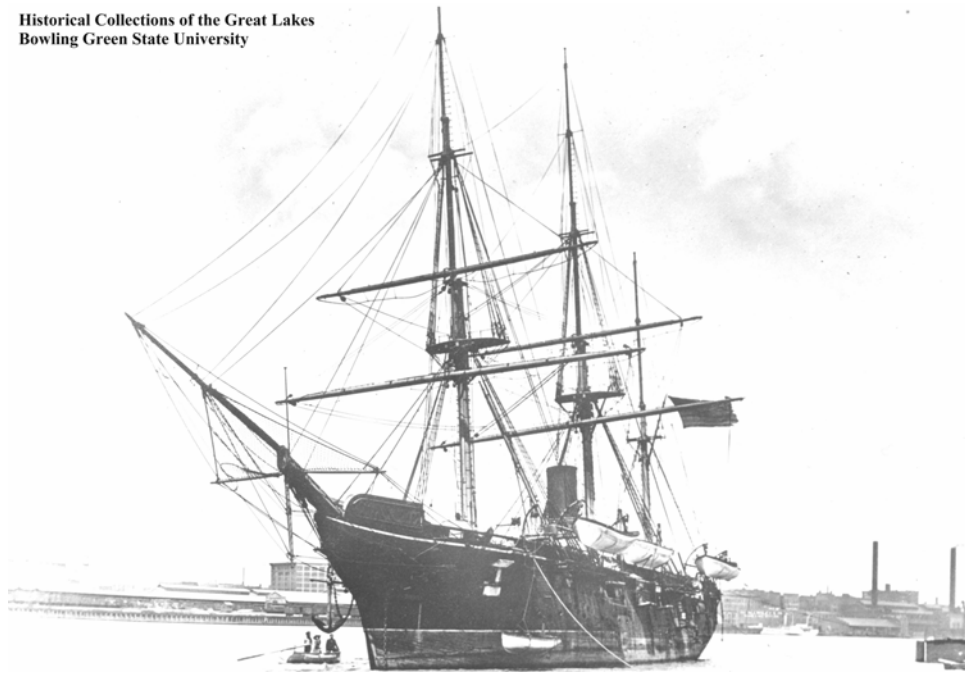


Illustration 5 - U.S.S. *Essex*, on Maumee River, Toledo, Ohio, 1904.  
© Historical Collections of the Great Lakes, Bowling Green State University.  
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Illustration 6 – U.S.S. *Essex*, 1907.  
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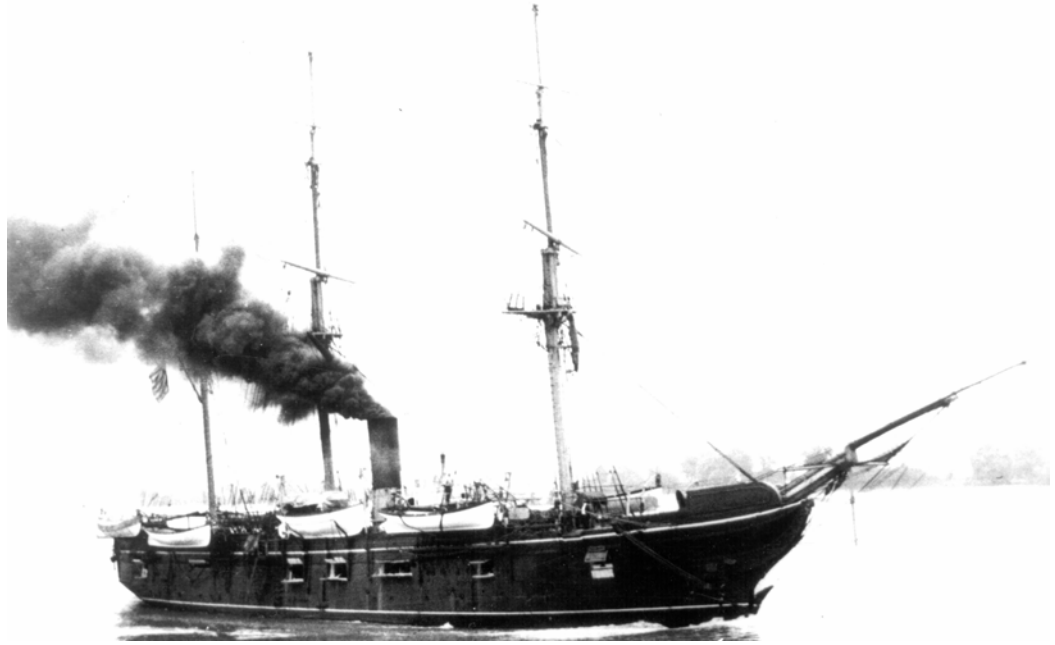
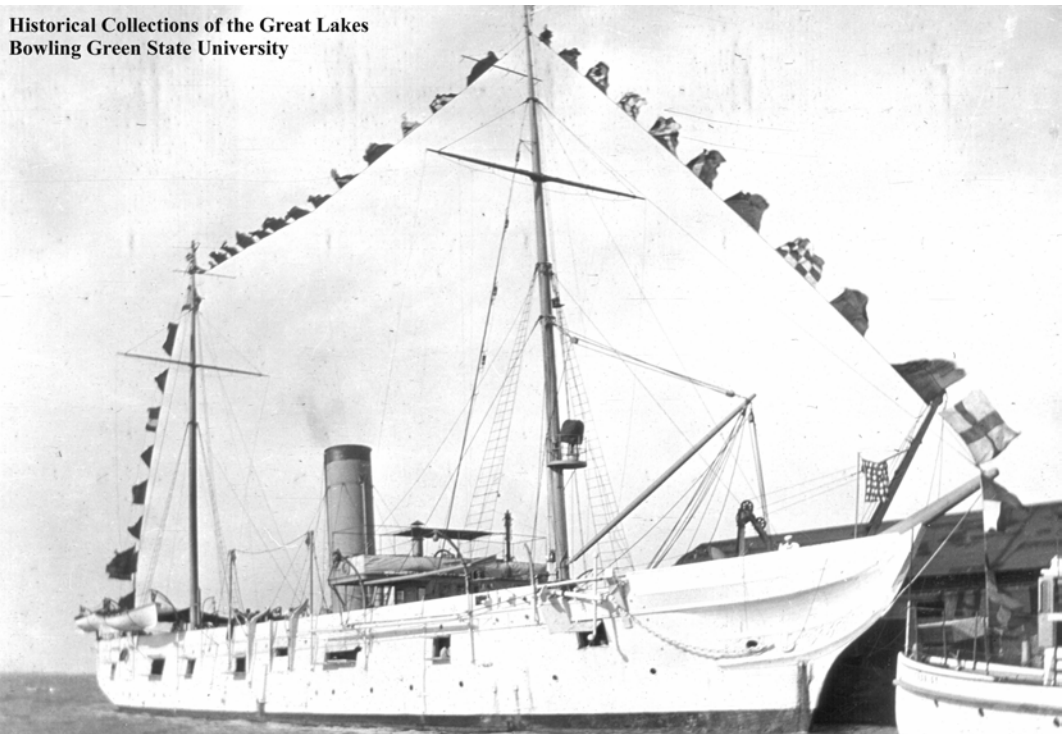


Illustration 7 - U.S.S. *Essex*, St. Clair River, c1910.  
© Historical Collections of the Great Lakes, Bowling Green State University.  
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Historical Collections of the Great Lakes  
Bowling Green State University

Illustration 8 - U.S.S. *Essex*, Sandusky, Ohio.  
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Illustration 9 - U.S.S. *Wisconsin* in San Francisco Bay, 1902.  
Personal collection of Alexander A. Martin, now in possession of  
Gregory A. Martin.



Illustration 10 - Crew on board the U.S.S. *Wisconsin* in San Francisco Bay, 1901  
Public domain.



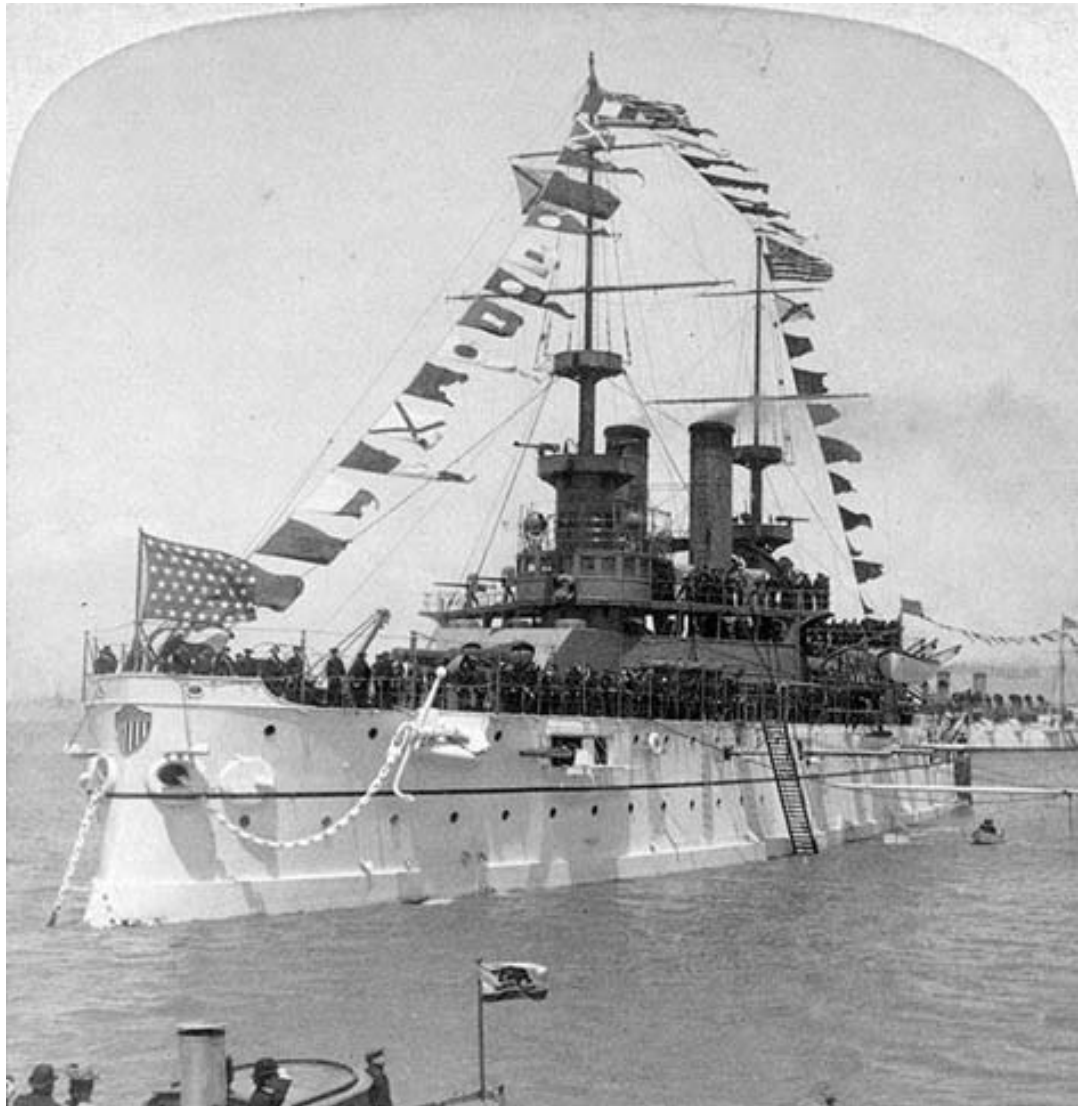


Illustration 11 - U.S.S. *Wisconsin* in San Francisco Bay at the time of the visit of President William McKinley in 1901.  
Public domain.



Illustration 12 – U.S.S. *Wilmington*.  
Public domain.

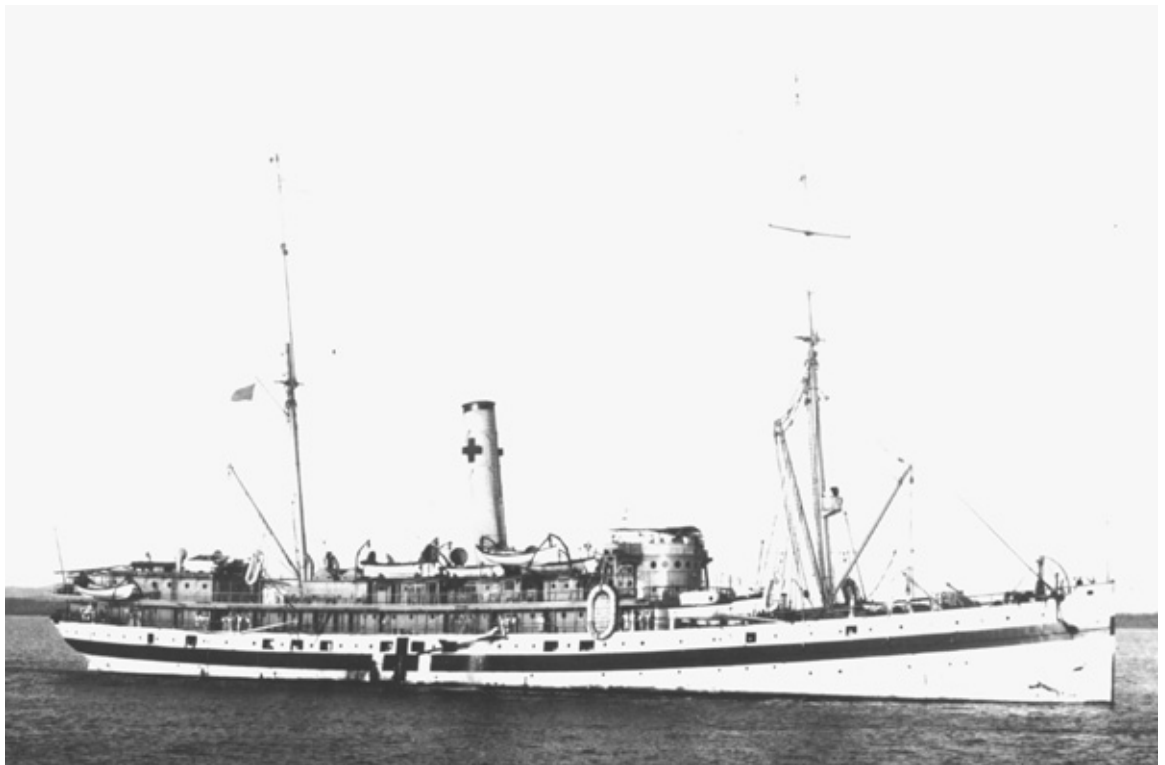
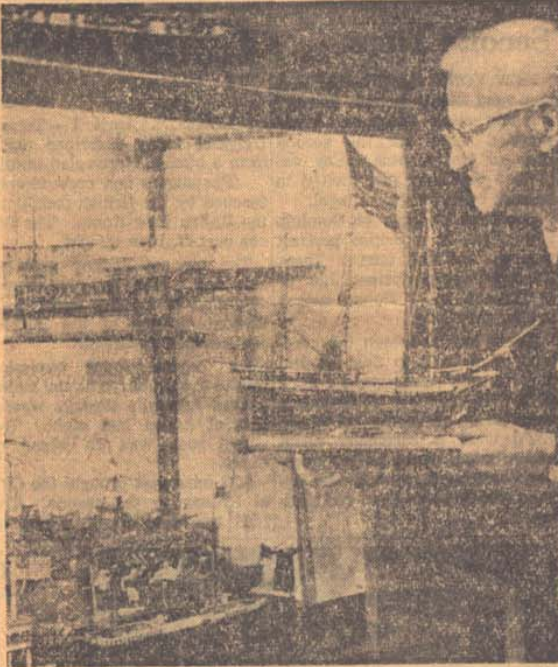


Illustration 13 - U.S.S. *Solace*.  
Public domain.



### He Has Fleet Of His Own

ONCE A NAVY man always a Navy man. Alex A. Martin, 75, of 210 Cambridge avenue, who has just retired as a local Air Force quality control inspector, looks at the private fleet he has hand tooled and plans new models. He served in the Navy from 1899 to 1904.

## Sailing Ships To B-52s, All In Lifetime's Span

A Daytonian whose active career spanned the almost unbelievable period from square rigger sailing ships to B-52 jet bombers this week is settling into retirement at his home at 210 Cambridge avenue.

He is Alex A. Martin, who ended 22 years of federal service March 21 at the age of 75. For the last 17 years he had been with the Dayton air procurement district as an Air Force quality control inspector.

His last duty station was at the National Cash Register company, which has multi-million dollar contracts for B-52 aircraft components. His first was at the Allison Engine company in Indianapolis, Ind., in 1941, after years as a machinist.

Martin enlisted in the Navy in 1899 and saw action in the Far East during the Chinese Boxer rebellion.

His enlistment also included service in European waters aboard the USS Essex, a sailing ship of the "Old Ironsides" square rigger class.

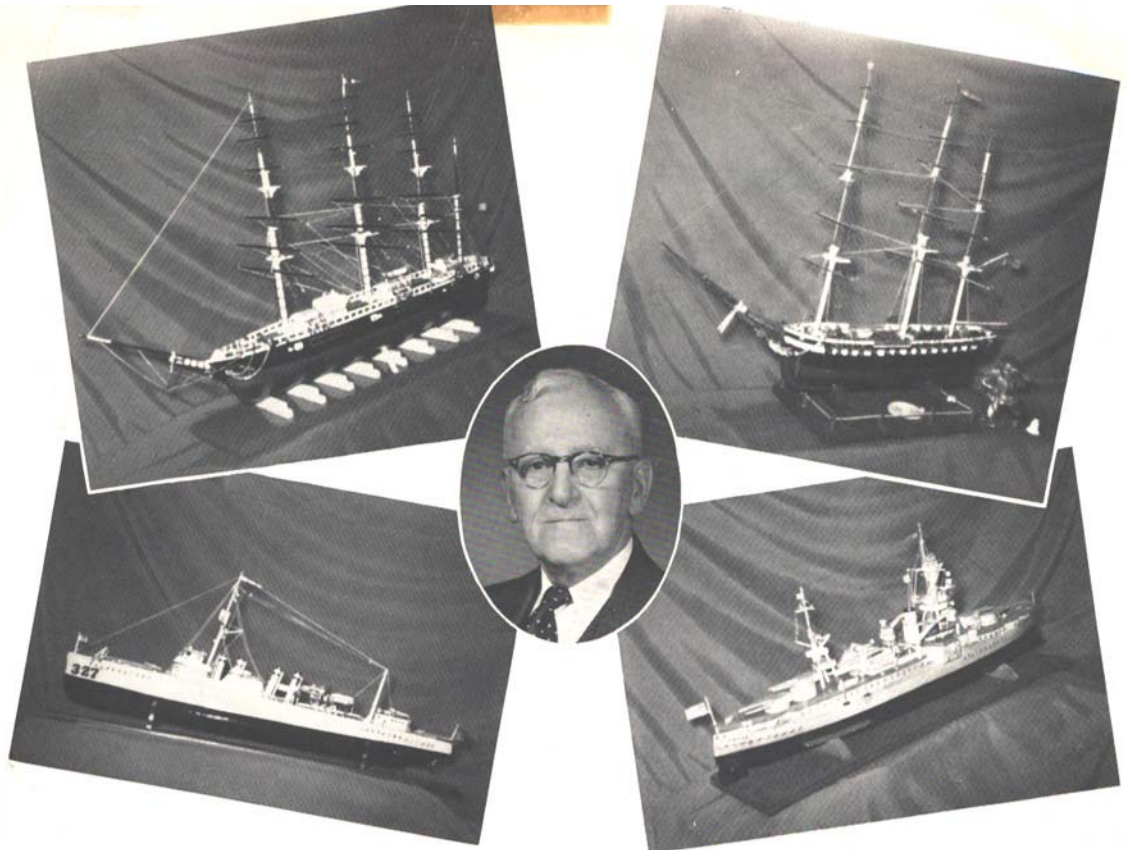
The Essex he remembers for its lack of refrigeration and food which included salt horse,

hard tack, canned Willie (beef), pickles and beans.

Later sea service saw him aboard the USS Wisconsin in the Pacific and on the USS Wilmington, a gunboat nicknamed the "Rollington" because, Martin says, she was top heavy and rolled so much.

In retirement Martin will expand his unique fleet of model ships. It includes hand tooled Roman galleys from the time of Caesar to the latest in sea-going giants.

The fleet has been displayed at the Dayton Art institute and many other points in the city and may be displayed at the new Dayton Museum of Natural History, Martin reports.



A. A. Martin of the Air Force Office at NCR (In Oval) is a builder of model ships. Upper left: "The Great Republic" is the latest replica he has made. Upper right: The "Constitution" or Old Ironsides started him on this interesting hobby eight years ago. Lower left: The U. S. S. Preston which was sunk during World War II. Lower right: This model of the battleship "Texas" took over one year to make. The portholes in the model are eyelets from shoes and are in exact dimension to the actual portholes of the ship.

## He's Still a Sailor at Heart

It can be said of A. A. Martin of the Air Force Office that while his mind is in the sky daily, his heart is still in the sea.

Mr. Martin served five years in the Navy during the Spanish-American War, being one of the youngest ones in the service. He has sailed into all of the major Ports of the world, spending two years in the Asiatic areas, including aboard a gunboat up the Yangtze River during the Boxer Rebellion. About eight years ago, Mr. Martin started a very interesting hobby, that of building ship models. He was inspired to start this hobby after seeing a picture of Old Ironsides in a magazine. Since that time he has built 18 models of various kinds. His collection consists of all types of ships, such as the Viking, Mississippi River boats, Merchant ships, and battleships.

Some of these models were shown at Loew's Theater when the movie "Show Boat" was being shown at that theater. Later, Mr. Martin was interviewed on television and told of his interesting hobby.

He has also given lectures and displayed some of his ship models at the Art Institute.

All ships in his collection are built to exact scale dimensions and Mr. Martin goes to great lengths to secure this information so that his models are accurate in every way. He has made special trips to various places to view personally the ship he wishes to create in miniature and is painstaking in his efforts to secure the exact dimensions. The models are built from scrap materials.

Mr. Martin has his own explanation why a ship is referred to as "she". "It's because it costs so much to rig her," he says.

When a situation becomes badly confused and it is difficult to tell what to do, it may be best to do nothing. That is, it may be best to continue the usual routine while keeping alert for any unexpected openings and novel solutions. Delay and study may show the way.

## Proud of Scale Model Ship



◆ Alex A. Martin, with model of the U. S. S. Texas.

When he was unemployed, Alex A. Martin, 730 Linden av., became interested in carving and whittling intricate parts for ship models, and now that he is regularly employed in his trade as machinist he continues the hobby in spare time.

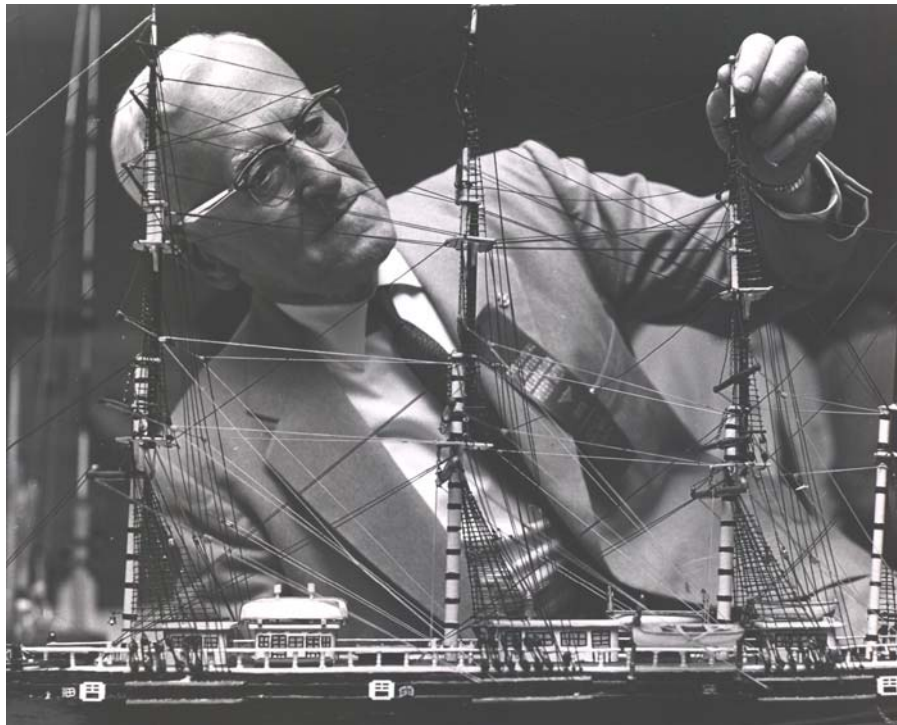
Martin is especially proud of his model of the U. S. S. Texas, which he wrought to precise scale, one-sixteenth of an inch to the foot. The model has been on display in the Dayton Art Institute. He has displayed a number of his models in schools.

Tuesday, Martin says, is Navy Day, which he regards as a day of great importance, for he served five years in the navy, including the Spanish American War. Martin at present is working on a four-mast schooner.

Dayton (Ohio) Daily News, date unknown. Reprinted by permission.



Alex in his basement workshop, c1958.



Alex in November 1960, shortly before his death, after winning Best of Show at a hobby show. The ship is the *Great Republic*.