




**LELAND KARL FELS**



**Rate / Rank**  
MR3

**Service Branch**  
USN

**Service Dates**  
9/1956 - 9/1959

**Born**  
8/31/1939  
GREEN BAY, WI

NORFOLK, VA 1957

**NAVY LOG**

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**SIGNIFICANT DUTY STATIONS**

- USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT CVA-42
- PORT LYAUTEY, MOROCCO
- NORFOLK, VA
- WASHINGTON, DC
- NTC GREAT LAKES, IL



### I Signed up in U.S. Navy Reserve on September 18, 1956 at age 17 for 6 years

On a Monday evening in September of 1956, Paul Falck and I were hitch hiking along South Broadway in front of Minahan Stadium in De Pere. We were on our way to Skateland, on the corner of East Mason Street and Lime Kiln Road in Green Bay. The person we accepted a ride from happened to be the Commander of the US Naval Reserve in Green Bay, T.W. Phelan, who made a deal with us. He said if we went to the Reserve Center first and let him show us around, he would get us a ride to Skateland from there. He must have been one heck of a salesman because we both signed up for six years in the Navy before we left that night.

I don't believe my mother was too happy when she found out, and I probably caused her to gain a few grey hairs. I also don't remember anything about roller skating that night, but from then on until I had to go on to active duty, I had Reserve meetings every Monday night. My hitch in the Navy was to include two weeks at Boot Camp at Great Lakes Naval Training Center near Chicago, a two-week cruise every year, Monday night meetings, and two years of active duty in the regular Navy, to be taken after one year in the Reserve.

My service number was 486 38 76, which wasn't too hard to remember after having to write it a couple hundred times while signing the paperwork. I found out that my name was not Leland Karl Fels, Jr. as I was led to believe for most of my life. The reason was that my middle name was not the same as my dad, so I wasn't Junior. Unfortunately, this was not caught until all paperwork was signed, so I had to do it all over again.

We were given a choice as to where we wanted to be assigned. My choices were duty on board a ship, with my home port in Florida and overseas port in the Mediterranean. Paul was not quite as adventurous as I was, and asked for shore duty, preferably in the U.S. As you will read later, we both got our wish.

Leland K. Fels, SR, 486 38 76  
 Company A-11  
 Reserve Battalion, Bldg. #1102  
 Recruit Training Command  
 USNTC, Great Lakes, IL

May 29, 1957 ..... June 11, 1957

I received orders to report to the US Naval Training Center at Great Lakes, IL, on May 29, 1957 along with a small contingent of friends from the Green Bay Reserve Center. We took the Chicago & Northwestern 400 from Green Bay to Chicago and then rode the North Shore commuter train back to Great Lakes.

The strategy must have been to wear us out, because I wrote, "All we did today was sign papers, get our bunks ready, pack our clothes in our lockers, march to dinner, march back, march to the store to get two boxes of Tide, march back, march to supper, march back. It's 8:00 PM now and we just scrubbed the place down, washed our clothes, and took a shower. I'm pooped!"



This is the Company I was assigned to at Great Lakes, A11. I am that good looking guy in the fifth row, third man from the left. Paul Falck is standing right next to me.

My mother wanted me to write lots of letters, and in order to get me to do that, she did the same. Little did I know that she would save every one and give them back to me when I got discharged. I stored them away till now, and this essay is a result of my reading them after fifty years.

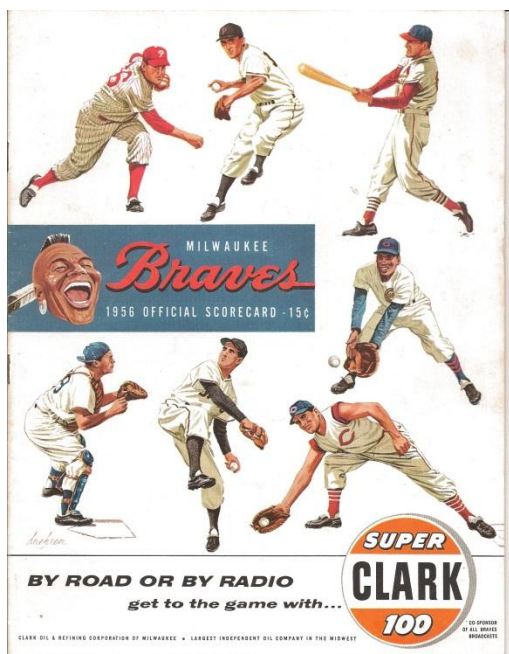
On day two, we had swimming qualifications, which were very important if I wanted to be assigned to a ship. There were 14 steps to pass and I wrote, "The first nine steps are fairly easy. You just swim 70 yards and at the end of the pool you tread water for five minutes to keep above water. I was just about to go under when he said time was up so I could get out."

"Station 10 was doing the Military Backstroke. I didn't get it right the first time, but I learn fast when I'm drowning. Station 11 was easy. All I had to do was swim under burning gasoline and surface as many times as I had to in order to get out of it. I stayed under for 30 yards and didn't have to come up." I passed all 14 steps with flying colors.

We did a lot of marching and had a lot of classes to attend. I wrote that I was impressed by the big indoor hall. It had the outline of a full-sized destroyer on the floor so we could practice General Quarters drills.

I also had to stand quite a few late-night watches. On one watch, two guys on dumpster watch came into the Battalion Office where I was on duty and started talking. Unfortunately, a Chief Petty Officer caught us and put us on report. We had to go before the Battalion Commander who scared the devil out of us and then let us off with a warning that if we did anything more, he would make us stay for another week.

The first Sunday found us on liberty at the USO in Milwaukee. We also got there on the North Shore train that stopped right at the main gate at Great Lakes. The Braves Cheerleaders, called the Bravettes, were also hostesses at the USO, and gave us free tickets. The Braves were hot that year and beat the Cardinals 3-1.



*U S Navy Training Center  
Great Lakes, Illinois*

I still have this Braves program in perfect condition. In 1957, the Braves won the World Series 4-3 over the New York Yankees. Players in the book include Hank Aaron, Eddie Mathews, Warren Spahn, Joe Adcock, and Del Crandall. Needless to say, it was a great game.



We had gas mask training the next morning, and I wrote that some wiseacre stole some of the teargas and spread it all around our barracks. That lasted for another day before we found out who was doing it and gave him a GI shower with stiff scrub brushes and Ajax cleanser.

The next day was fire-fighting school. I wrote, "Was that ever fun. We had to put oil fires out in steel compartments. Someone would spray us with water and we would spray a foam on it until the fire was out." I also wrote that I wouldn't mind staying at Boot Camp longer because the food was good and the classes were a lot of fun.

Some of us were actually sorry to see the end of the second week, but we were also very glad to be heading home as real sailors.

<p align="center"><b>Promoted from SR to FA on July 12, 1957</b>  <b>(SR – Seaman Recruit ..... FA – Fireman Apprentice)</b></p>
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My time between graduating from East De Pere High School in June 1956 until I received my orders to report for active duty on September 30, 1957 found me fixing fence for my dad close to highway 96 when Lyle Schwan, an area trucker stopped and asked if I would work for him hauling milk from farmers to the cheese factory in Hollandtown.

Because I had spent two summers before that loading pea vines for the Larson Company and Hubert Kiekhaefer, I knew I could handle the full cans and throw them on the truck, but I told him I had one other problem. I wouldn't be 16 to get a driver's license until after my birthday on August 31.

This didn't matter to Lyle and I started hauling milk the next day. After a few weeks, he also had me driving a gravel truck in the afternoons and weekends. My only claim to fame is dumping gravel for the new highway 67 between Kiel and Milwaukee.

One morning, on my milk route, I was coming down the hill on highway 96 into Greenleaf when I discovered that my brakes were gone. I had a full load of milk and I could see a long freight train coming from the south so things weren't looking to good. I still had some hand brake left so a little way before the bank parking lot, I pulled it to slow down some and rolled the truck on its side as I turned in.

The train was already at the crossing, so I missed it, and the truck rolled so gently that I didn't spill a drop of milk. When the Brown County cop came to investigate, he never asked to see my driver's license either. They were rather liberal in those days.

When I finally went to Green Bay with my dad to get my license, the officer at the desk told me that he saw me drive into the station parking lot, and asked if I drove a lot. I said yes, so he said that giving me a road test would just be a waste of time, and issued the license.

I was still going to Navy Reserve meetings every Monday evening, but that would soon change.

**Leland K. Fels, FA, 486 38 76  
c/o General Detail  
US Naval Receiving Station  
Washington 25, DC**

**September 30, 1957 ..... October 24, 1957**



My orders to ship out for a 2-year stint on active duty arrived in August of 1957. I was ordered to report to the US Naval Receiving Station in Washington DC by September 30<sup>th</sup>. The sleek looking aircraft in the picture above was what I flew on to DC. The Capitol Airlines Viscount was considered top of the line in 1957 in both speed and quietness. Flying in a DC3 at that time was almost like riding in a truck with no muffler so it was a big improvement. I still have the plane tickets – GB to Chicago was \$16.61 and Chicago to Washington, DC, was \$49.30. Post cards and stamps were free on the airplane, as well as a huge lunch.

There were at least 25 other sailors on board the airplane, all headed for the same place. I was seated next to one of Bev's ex-boyfriends, Mickey Kraft. Once on the ground and settled in at the Receiving Center, I looked for Paul Falck, who had been there for almost a week. We met at the PX over a few beers. I had no assigned work as yet, but Paul was working in the Crew's Mess, so we got together again the following evening and went to a Roadhouse called the Anchor Club that featured live western bands.

It took 7 days for me to be assigned to a work detail, but I didn't seem to be complaining in my letter. I had found the bowling alley and swimming pool to pass the time. Luckily, the guys at the rec center took a liking to me and got me assigned to work there. I wrote, "I'm on a detail that cleans up the recreation hall now. We usually

clean up, swab the deck, buff it, and then we're through. After that, we bowl or shoot pool, play basketball, or even lift weights the rest of the day."

Paul and I spent almost every night at the Anchor Club, where we met one of the girl entertainers who was singing with a four piece band. Her name was Virginia Pugh, from way down south somewhere and could she belt out the songs. She sat with us quite a bit when she wasn't on stage. About ten years later, she made the big time with a song called "Stand By Your Man" with her new stage name, Tammy Wynette.

Paul and I had some good experiences in Washington, DC, but he finally got his orders and had to head for New York City October 8<sup>th</sup> on his way to Argentcia, Newfoundland. On the same day, I was asked to choose what rating I wanted to strike for, and I settled on Machinery Repairman, which is actually machinist in lay terms.



As of that date, I was allowed to wear the above symbol over my 2 red Fireman Apprentice stripes.

On October 10, we were informed that Queen Elizabeth was going to visit DC on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, and some of us would be chosen to be in an Honor Guard for the parade. I immediately started to clean and polish everything I owned.

"Orders for the Green Bay contingent are finally starting to come through. Jerry Koppens is heading for Ethiopia in two weeks."

I wrote the following on October 15, "I'm on the sick list today, but my name came up for transfer this afternoon. I leave for Norfolk, Virginia, but not until after next Thursday because I was also picked to be on the Queen's Guard. I'm supposed to catch an aircraft carrier, Franklin D. Roosevelt, CVA-42. I think the ship is in Greece right now so I will have to fly there to catch it."

"Almost the whole base was sick with the Asiatic Flu, but the doctor told me that by Thursday I should be OK to be on the Queen's Guard. We have to stand on Constitution Avenue by the Capitol and keep people off the street. We wear dress blues with white gloves and white guard belts. When the President and Queen go by, we have to come to attention and salute."

On the actual day, October 17, I wrote, "We stood at "parade rest" for about an hour before the motorcade came through. There were about 20 limousines with about 2,000 newspapermen following them around. We just about got mobbed when the Queen went by. There were 5 girls poking and tickling me so I had a hard time standing at attention. We got liberty after the parade too, so I really had fun."



**President Ike Eisenhower was host to Queen Elizabeth during her visit to the US in 1957**

On the 17<sup>th</sup>, I had a list of where some of the Green Bay guys were headed:

Ken De Bauche – USS Vogelsang, Destroyer

Mickey Kraft – USS Valley Forge, Aircraft Carrier

Bruce Campbell – USS Fort Snelling, LSD

Paul Falck – Argentcia, Newfoundland, Shore Duty

Bob Vanden Heuvel – USS McCord, Destroyer

Ken Cumbers – USS McCord, Destroyer

Bob Danelski – USS Huntington, Destroyer

Jerry Koppens – Ethiopia, Shore Duty

“I got my immunization schedule on the 18<sup>th</sup>, along with 14 shots. Not a lot of notice, but I didn’t care. I only had five more to go on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and I was done. Oops, leave it to the Navy.....After having the Asiatic flu for a week, they say that I also need a flu shot.”

I received the balance of my shots on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and after 24 days in Washington, DC, I was on my way to Norfolk, Virginia, the first leg of my trip to Athens, Greece, and the USS FDR.

**Leland K. Fels, FA, 486 38 76  
US Naval Receiving Station  
Barracks C  
Norfolk, VA**

**October 25, 1957..... November 4, 1957**

Three of us sailors caught a ride to Norfolk with another sailor who was giving rides for \$8.00 per person. He was supposed to be licensed like cabs and busses to do that, but he wasn’t, and we didn’t care. It was cheap. We got a room at the USO, and, because I didn’t have to report until the following evening, we went out on the town. I wrote, “Things are really cheap. Our room was \$1.00 per person, a hamburger was \$0.15 and French fries were \$0.10.”

After reporting for duty, I was assigned to the mess hall as a night cook. I wrote, “There are 6 of us working in the mess hall at night. I start work at 5:00 pm and work until 3:00 am. We don’t do much, though, and the best part is we can eat anything we want to make. I had two steaks and some fried eggs last night, and all the ice cream I could eat.”

I also remember some of the fun things we learned, like playing basketball with the corn fritters (tossing them about 20 feet into big vats of boiling oil), opening 5,000 loaves of bread by standing them on end and exploding the paper with a fist on the top of the package, and washing the mess hall and the galley with high pressure fire hoses.

On November 1, I wrote, "I finally got my orders today. I got off work last night at 4:30 am and at 6:30 am they woke me up and said I should start checking out. I leave for Charleston, South Carolina by Navy bus in the morning of November 4<sup>th</sup>. I stay at an Air Force Base there overnight and then I catch a flight to Port Lyautey, in French Morocco."

The bus turned out to be a chartered Greyhound that left Norfolk at 7:00 am, with a dinner stop at Wilmington, North Carolina, and a stop in Charleston, South Carolina for supper before we were taken to the Air Force Base. After 10 days in Norfolk and a 13 ½ hour bus ride, I reached the second leg of my journey to the ship.

**Leland K. Fels, FA, 486 38 76 USNR  
USS Franklin D Roosevelt  
Fleet Post Office  
New York, New York**

**October 25, 1957..... November 4, 1957**

At this point in my travels, all of my mail would be forwarded to the ship, so I had to inform everybody to send my mail to the FDR at the above address.

I wrote, "The South is really different than the North. All they have is swamps and alligators. They really have segregation though. They have separate restaurants and even separate heads (bathrooms for you civilians) at gas stations and all over."

"I think I joined the wrong outfit. I'm at the Air Force Base at Charleston now, and guess what. The barracks only have four men to a room and are as nice as a hotel. The air station is also very nice, just like a civilian airport." "My flight doesn't leave here until 4:00 pm tomorrow. We are going to Casablanca, French Morocco, instead of Port Lyautey. There are going to be 70 people on a Military Air Transport Service Super Constellation."



**Military Air Transport Service Super Constellation**

"We've been in the air for 8 ½ hours now and it's around 12:30 pm. We ran into some mighty rough weather around 10 pm, so we had to fasten our safety belts for 1 ½ hours. The wind threw the plane around like it was a Piper Cub. I didn't get sick, but many others did. We got quite a scare, too.

The engines died way down so we were just about coasting and we started to lose altitude. The kid sitting next to me was praying and kept saying, "We're gonna die!"



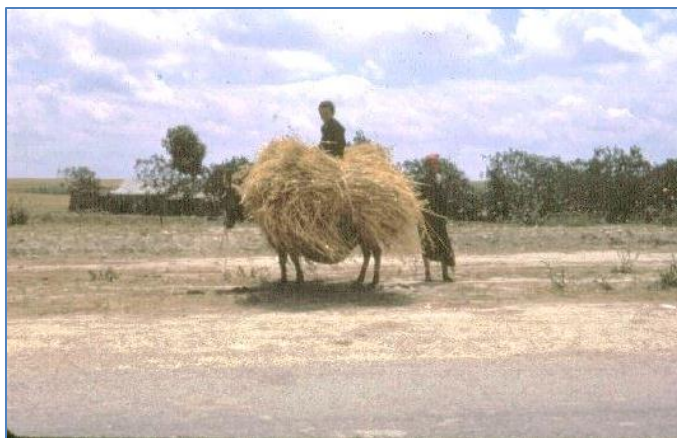
“Finally, the captain announced that they were resetting the superchargers so we could climb another 20,000 feet. He said that it was necessary to run the engines at half speed for a length of time and everybody relaxed again. It still is rough though, and we’re rocking just like a ship.”

“We’ll be in the Azores Islands for refueling in about 5 hours. We have a layover of 2 hours there to get something to eat and then we take off for Nouasseur Air Force Base where we land. I don’t know how we’ll get to Casablanca from there, but I really don’t care right now.”

“Does it ever look different up here at night. The moon is shining bright above the clouds, but we can’t see any water at all. I’m sitting right at the rear of the wing so I can see the exhaust from the props shooting out about four feet of flames all the time. It’s really quite a sight to see.”

“There are four stewardesses aboard the plane, along with 6 officers, 5 Navy men and their wives, 53 enlisted men, and even 3 babies. MATS even flies the President around, so we have it pretty nice. We landed in the Azores for breakfast just before daylight, refueled the airplane, and then landed at Nouasseur after 23 hours in the air.”

French Morocco was quite a culture shock for an 18 year old who just left the farm in Wisconsin a month before. I wrote, “I’m in Port Lyautey now. After we landed, we took a rickety old school bus on a two-hour trip to get here. Driving through Morocco was really something. We were dodging camels, mules, bicycles, and Arabs all over the place.”



**Farming equipment in French Morocco in 1957**

“Everything is like going back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century. There’s no jungle in this part of Africa, just rocks and hills mixed with bamboo and fig trees. The people were plowing with an old wooden plow hitched behind one mule and one camel.”

With the help of some modern computer equipment that didn’t exist back then. I finally was able to figure out that the town of Port Lyautey was renamed Kenitra and is about 20 kilometers from Rabat. The Naval Air Station that was there is no more. The Air Force Base at Nouasseur was taken out of service in 1963.

A search done with Google Earth immediately brought up both Nouasseur and Kenitra . And the air strips are also still visible on the interactive map.



Port Lyautey was not a bad place to spend a couple days. I had already spent a day on liberty in Casablanca and another in the Moroccan capitol of Rabat. I wrote, "They have areas that are just like we saw in the movies, with bazaars, narrow streets, and bars with huge ceiling fans. All that is missing is Humphrey Bogart."

"They don't use American money here. We even get paid in some stuff called script. They use paper for silver, so we carry the stuff even for pennies."



One Dollar's worth of American Script

"I found out that the FDR will be in Athens for 10 days, so I will probably leave here before that. I also found out that the FDR will be in Mayport, Florida, in February, and then it goes to Brooklyn for 6 months of repairs."

"I'm moving out again. They told us to be packed and ready to go at midnight tonight (November 10<sup>th</sup>). There's a plane heading for Athens, Greece, so I guess we'll be on it." I didn't write anything in my letters, but I remember that we flew to Athens in a cargo plane that had jump seats against the walls on both sides of the cargo bay. When we got there, we had to unload the plane.

Somewhere along the way, our plane got hit by lightning and a fireball came through one side of the airplane and slowly traveled towards the front and out the other side. The pilot called it 'St. Elmo's Fire', and said that happened quite a bit. I had seen it happen once before at my parent's house in Shirley where a smaller fireball came through an electrical outlet, went slowly across the floor and through an outlet on the other side of the room. Luckily, there was no damage in either case.

I wrote, "Was it ever rough coming out to the ship. It was anchored out about 1 ½ miles, and the waves were pretty high. We were in a little liberty boat, and the waves were coming right over the top."

"Last night I met one of the guys that work in the machine shop. After hearing that I had training as a machinist, he passed the word on to the Chief Petty Officer, so today they assigned me to the shop."

**Leland K. Fels, FA, 486 38 76**  
**A Division**  
**USS FDR**  
**c/o Fleet Post Office**  
**New York, New York**

**November 11, 1957.....August 28, 1959**

#### **November 11, 1957.....On Board The FDR in Athens, Greece**

After 43 days of floating around on Temporary Active Duty, the address above was to be my permanent address for the next two years. The A in A Division stands for Engineering. I wrote, "Living on the FDR is a lot different than on shore stations. I bunk on the 300 deck, or 3 decks below the hanger deck and 4 decks below the flight deck."

"I found out that I have three more shots coming, and I got another one today. I'm getting afraid to drink water because I might spout all over my clothes."

"The machine shop is really nice. They have 3 lathes, a milling machine, drill press, and a power hack saw. The shop is about as big as the dining room and front room of our house, and there are 13 machinery repairmen aboard. I don't always get to work in the shop, though. Every fourth week I have to clean a passageway, but I still get a lot of experience."

#### **November 14, 1957.....In Port**

"There was a variety show on board last night in hanger bay #1. I was part of the duty section that had to rig the stage so I stayed to watch. Everyone in it was Greek and they put on a pretty good show."



"Did we ever have a fun on liberty last night! I went on the beach around 1630 and came back at 0130. We asked a cab driver how much it would cost to rent the cab all night. He said 2 dollars for 4 guys, so we took the deal."

"If you ever want to see a mess, you need to go to the Fleet Landing when liberty is over. Everybody was waiting for

**Greek Entertainers in Show**

the liberty boats to take them back to the ship, and about three quarters of them were drunk. Then they stack you three high in a boat and take off. How everybody made it back to the ship is beyond me.”

#### **November 19, 1957.....At Sea**

My first experience at sea on a carrier was not what I expected. I thought the size of the ship would cancel out the effect of the waves, but that was not the case. I wrote, “Now that the ship is up to speed, I can feel it rock and roll, and I can feel the vibration from the huge propellers.”

“We’re really moving now. It’s about 1830 now and they are taking off with jets at the rate of one per minute. The FDR is really rocking. There’s an angled flight deck on the ship, so every time a plane takes off we slant to one side and rock back.”

#### **November 22, 1957.....At Sea**

The ship was holding General Quarters drills at the rate of three a week to get ready for a Navy-wide inspection. I was assigned as a Telephone Talker on the 2JZ line, and my job was to keep communications open to the other Damage Control Stations on the ship. Most of the drills lasted about two hours, and were filled with problems that each area had to deal with, such as fake fires, bomb damage, even nuclear bomb blasts. Never a dull moment.

When General Quarters sounded, regardless of where you were, you had to get to your duty station before all of the hatches were sealed. Sealing the hatches would help prevent damage and keep the ship from sinking in a real emergency.

#### **November 23, 1957.....At Sea**

“I just came down from the 0500 deck, which is in the superstructure of the ship on the part above the flight deck. They were having flight quarters so we went up to watch them take off and land. I don’t see how they land some of these planes on the deck. There are close to 20 twin-engine jet bombers about the size of a DC3, as well as smaller jets and piston engine bombers and passenger planes that land on the deck. There are just over 100 planes on the ship right now.”

“We also reloaded food and supplies today, so we were alongside 5 different ships taking on stores. There were more that 36 ships that you could see around us at one time. There’s another carrier, the Randolph, close to us, but it is a lot smaller.”

#### **November 26, 1957....In Port - Salonika, Greece**

“We pulled into Salonika, Greece this morning about 0830. I guess all of the cities in Greece must look the same from out in the harbor. They are all built on a mountainside and surrounded by mountains. It really is a nice sight.”

#### **November 27, 1957.....In Port**

“Tomorrow is Thanksgiving so we have Holiday Routine aboard ship. I have liberty, so I think I’ll go and look around Salonika. There are supposed to be ruins from Biblical times and the ship has tours that will take me there. The Apostle Paul went around preaching to the Thessalonians, and they are the people that live here.”

“We had a fire on board last night. I’m on the ‘In-Port Fire Party’ so I had to go to my station, pick up my equipment, and go to the scene of the fire. It wasn’t much, but it could have been real bad if it got worse. Right after we got it out, they found an avgas leak about 50 feet away. It was just a pile of packing crates, but aviation fuel goes up pretty fast.”



### **December 5, 1957.....In Port**

I only got on shore in Salonika once because of the weather. Because of snow and fog, our liberty boats were only allowed to make the 2-mile trip to shore during good weather, which was not very often.

“Some poor guy fell overboard at noon today. He was looking at the scenery on the plane elevator on the port side, and all of a sudden he wasn't there anymore. We looked down and there he was, trying to get out of his foul-weather jacket. We threw him a life-line and told the guy on watch to pass the word so the crew would launch a lifeboat. By the time they got to him, he had all his clothes off and was close to being frozen. We couldn't help him much because the elevator is around 30 feet above the water.”

### **December 6, 1957..... In Port**

“I just came back from a ‘Smoker’. That's a sporting event in Navy language. We had ten 4-round boxing matches with the Greeks and some other ships around us. Only 2 went the full 4 rounds though. There were 7 TKO's and one knockout.....Two of the guys from the FDR were All-Navy Champs in 1956, and it looks like they will also be in 1957.”

I wrote, “We still have no idea where we will be for Christmas. Scuttlebutt was betting on Athens, but as of today, all bets are off.”

### **December 7, 1957.....At Sea**

“The ship got underway at 0730 today and left Salonika.”

“We ran into a little bad luck this afternoon. Around 1530, two of the planes that were practicing bombing exercises collided and one crashed in the water about 5 miles from the ship. The other one landed on the flight deck, but it was burning when it landed and just about ruined. This pilot was ok, but the other one was burned pretty bad, and was in the water for 20 minutes before they found him. The guy bailed out just before the plane exploded.”

### **December 14, 1957.....At Sea**

“The temperature today was in the 80's and the sun was shining all day. The weather is really nice for a change. I got a chance to make use of it too, because I got secured right after dinner. I was up on the 0700 deck watching ‘flight quarters’ all afternoon, and just about all night.....The 0700 deck is six decks above the flight deck so the view is really good. It's really something to watch the planes getting catapulted off the ship and then watch them land. It's even better at night.”

“This afternoon we were off the coast of Sicily and went by an active volcano. We were circling it until 2000, so it was dark and we could see the fire shooting out the top. There were only a few of us up there watching. What a beautiful sight.”

### **December 16, 1957.....In Port – Cannes, France**

“Cannes is really a beautiful place. It's right at the foot of the Alps, and the mountains are snowcapped while the rest of the land is green.”

I was also contemplating buying a camera back then so I could show everybody back home what life on the ship was like. I finally bought a Zeiss Ikon Contina II 35mm slide camera in the ship's store for \$31.00. I also commented that the same camera was selling in the USA for \$115.00.

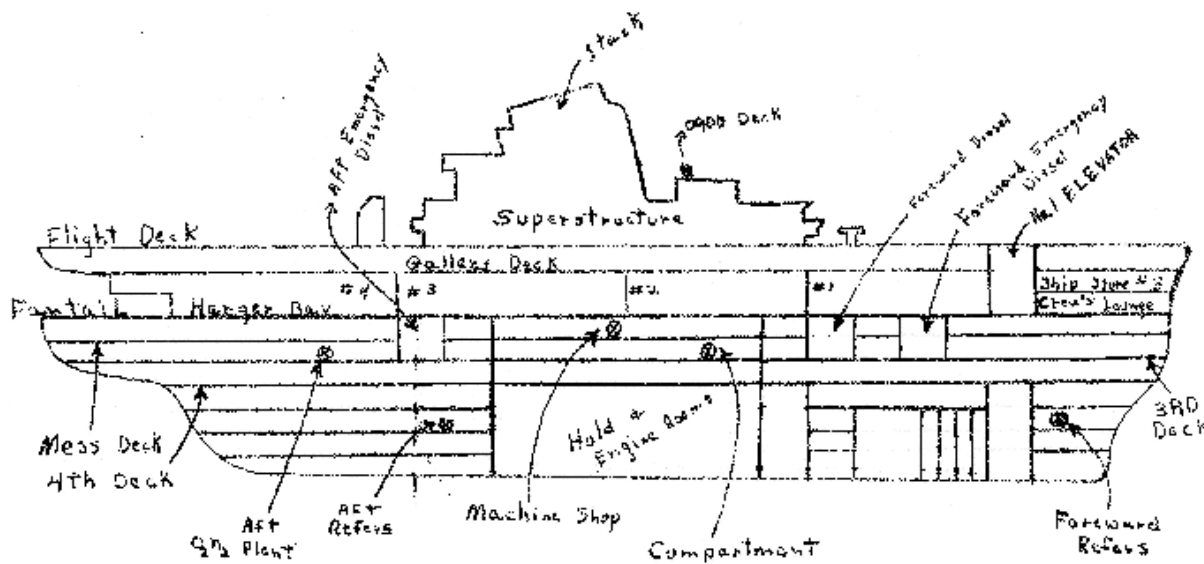


This was the first picture I took with my new camera. Cannes, France coastline

### **December 21, 1957....In Port**

Mom and Dad wanted to know more about how the ship was laid out and my hangouts, so I sent them the drawing below. I also wrote, "The ship is 980 feet long. The main deck is the Hanger Deck, so to number them 0100, 0200, when going up from there, and 200, 300, 400, when going down."

"The gallery deck is mostly living quarters for the airmen and air officers. Number one elevator is the plane elevator on the forward part of the flight deck and right in the center. It takes planes from the Flight Deck to the Hanger Bays below. There are three plane elevators all together on the ship."



Layout of the decks on the FDR, along with positions of my hangouts on the ship



**December 24, 1957.....In Port**

"Merry Christmas from Cannes, France."



I saw the following poem in our ship's paper, "The Presidential" and sent it home in a letter.

Vas der night before Christmas  
Ven all through der ship  
Not Vun Person Vas Stirring  
Not evun a VIP.

Der Bosn's ver snuggled in der pads  
Mit care  
In hopes that Saint Nick would bring  
Dem a new Bosn's chair.

Und the crew in their skivvies  
Und socks and watch caps  
Had just settled down to a long  
Winter's nap.

Ven all at vunce  
I heard such a clatter.  
(Vas der J.O.D. falling down  
Der after brow ladder.

Ven up in der sky  
Eight reindeer so quick,  
I thought for a moment  
It must be Sputnik

Ven it landed on der flight deck  
I heard someone say,  
"Red flag for landing  
And chock up that sleigh."

Vas a liddle old man  
So happy and round.  
I knew in der moment  
It must be "\_\_\_\_\_."

Ven he vas launched in der night  
I heard him by chance  
Say, "Merry Christmas to all,  
And Vive La France!"



### **December 25, 1957.....In Port**

Christmas away from home for the first time was a bummer. I wrote, "It doesn't seem like Christmas day at all. We had a big turkey dinner, but that's all. It rained all day besides, so it's really a blue day."

### **December 27, 1957.....In Port**

"Guess what I got last night! A French hangover!! Did I ever have fun though. There is a Carnival set up right at Fleet Landing and everything is real cheap. I won two bottles of French wine for 300 Francs (75 cents). They had some of those bumper cars and I must have bumped into everybody in Cannes."

"For supper, we had a big loaf of French bread and a salami with a bottle of wine. We even went to a couple of burlesque shows in town."

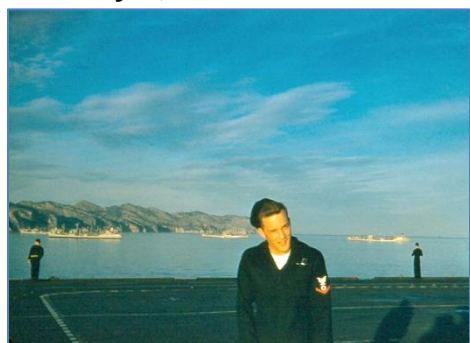
### **January 3, 1958.....At Sea**

"I just finished eating supper, and before that I was up on the 0900 level taking pictures of 'Flight Quarters'. I got some pretty nice shots if they all turn out."



Watching "Flight Quarters" from the 0900 deck on the superstructure

### **January 5, 1958.....In Port – Pollensa Bay, Spain**



Shipmate RC McCoy at Pollensa Bay

I wrote, "Just about the whole Fleet is anchored in here. The USS Randolph, another carrier, is about ¼ mile from us, and there are 3 battle cruisers, 35 destroyers, 10 cargo ships, 5 tankers, and even 5 submarines."

"The city at Pollensa Bay is so small that we only have half of one liberty section go on the beach at one time, and then only on four-hour shifts."

"We're in a small bay surrounded by mountains with a few large missions on the mountainside. "Our next port will be Genoa, Italy in five days, and we'll be back at sea tomorrow morning. Scuttlebutt has it that we will be having 'General Quarters' as part of getting underway. That doesn't sound like fun."



### **January 10, 1958.....At Sea**

"We had a couple bad accidents since last night. Around 2130 last night, an A3-D cracked up while landing on the deck. An A3-D is a large, 2-engine jet. They were coming in after dark, and when they hit the deck, they thought they missed the arresting cables. There are 6 cables around 10 feet apart, and they had actually caught the last one."

"Instead of stopping the engines like they should have, they opened both of them wide open. The cable held and they shot straight up and bounced down on the deck, breaking the nose right off the plane. None of the pilots and crew were injured, but they were a little shook up."

"This morning one of the airmen on the catapult gang was killed. He had to hook the cable onto the plane and then go over about 10 feet and lay on the deck when the plane takes off. I guess he lost his balance, and instead of laying down, he stood up just when the pilot opened the plane up to full speed. The jet blast threw him into the exhaust barrier behind the catapult and he was killed instantly."

### **January 11, 1958.....In Port – Genoa, Italy**

"I guess we must be having a streak of bad luck. Today we had a fire in the aviation storeroom. It didn't get very far, but it did quite a bit of damage. I didn't have to fight the fire because I was on liberty. I didn't go on the beach though, because the temperature was only 15 degrees above zero."

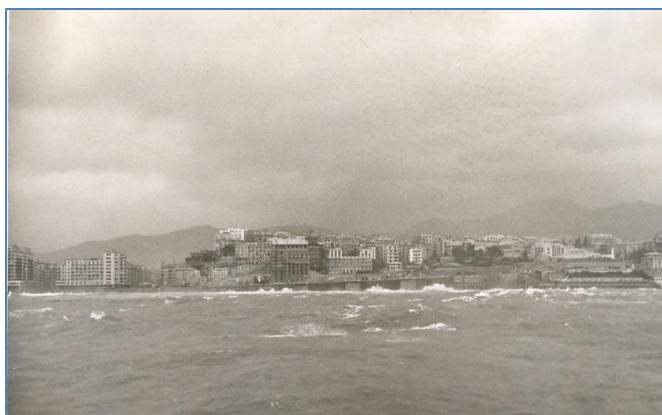
### **January 14, 1958.....At Sea**

"We pulled out of Genoa for just one day, and we'll be back in Genoa tomorrow morning. I guess our bad luck is still with us. Another plane crash landed tonight. I don't know what kind or if anyone was hurt."

### **January 19, 1958.....In Port – Genoa, Italy**

"I just got back from the beach about 10 minutes ago. Is Genoa ever a modern town, even nicer than Chicago's loop. The old section of town is best though. We saw the place where Columbus lived and the highest restaurant in the world. It's built at the top of a skyscraper, and it rotates around real slow."

"I volunteered to work in the Engineering Department office, typing up log reports for yard repair work. They asked for someone who could type so I said OK."



Modern city of Genoa, Italy on a rough weather day.

### **January 20, 1958.....In Port – Genoa, Italy**

"Is the sea ever rough today! They cancelled the liberty boats last night around 2330, so I'm lucky I didn't get stranded on the beach. Quite a few guys did. We are underway right now even though the anchor is down, just to keep us from drifting into shore. If we get much closer, we'll pull out and leave the remaining liberty boats here."

I think we got all the boats back on the ship. Those who were stranded were brought back and had to come aboard on cargo nets off of #3 elevator.



Stragglers returning to the ship from liberty in Genoa, Italy, had to board the hard way using cargo nets. Notice the hats in the water.

### **January 27, 1958.....At Sea**

“The way it looks, our streak of bad luck isn’t gone yet. This morning right after reveille some airdale fell overboard. It was still dark when he fell in, but somebody heard him yell. They searched for him with helicopters and planes all day, but still didn’t find him. About twenty minutes after he fell in, some Chief walked off the flight deck onto #3 elevator. Trouble is, elevator #3 was not at the flight deck level. He broke his pelvis, leg, arm, and had a brain concussion.”

“As if that wasn’t enough, we had an aviation fuel leak in hanger bay #1. The whole deck had about an inch of gas on it, so we had ‘General Quarters’ to be ready in case of a fire. They hosed the deck down with salt water and put a list on the ship so it would all run out into the sea.”

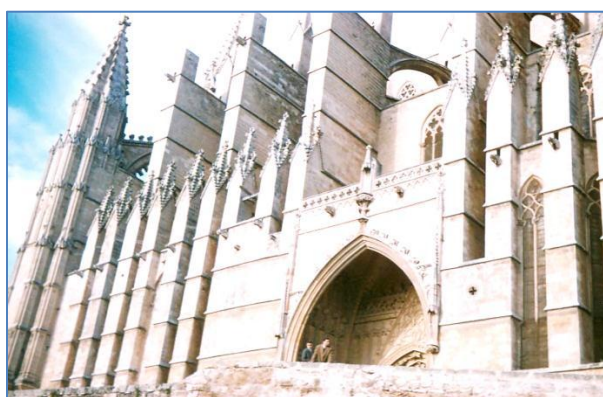
### **January 29, 1958.....In Port – Palma, Spain**

“The view of the bay we’re anchored in is really nice. We are very close to a breakwater that was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and there is a large cathedral right on the beach that was built in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. There are also a couple castles we can see on the mountainsides.

### **February 2, 1958.....In Port – Palma, Spain**

“I rode one of the liberty boats to fleet landing and back with my buddy Pat Walton. That’s one way of getting there without a liberty card. We had about 1,000

visitors aboard the ship today. They can't go below the hanger deck, but they run all over the place. They are very friendly people though, especially the girls.



Here are some scenes from my first impressions of Palma, Spain. That was a working railroad at the time. Notice the steam and smoke coming from the engine. The FDR was anchored three miles out.

### **February 10, 1958.....At Sea**

"We had an air demonstration today for some admirals. I was able to watch it since it started at 1615. I guess they scared some of the pilots who were watching. They sent out a remote control drone plane and let it get quite a ways away. Then one of the guided missile cruisers let loose one of its rockets. The drone disappeared in a puff of smoke before anyone knew what happened."

"We weren't allowed to take any pictures of anything that they did. They even had an anti-missile missile where they shot one up and then shot another one from another ship. In a couple seconds, they both blew up. If I was a pilot, I think I'd retire."

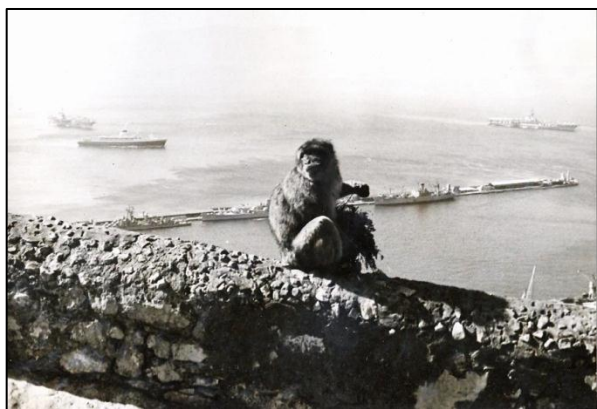
### **February 13, 1958.....In Port – Gibraltar**

"We finally hit the Rock of Gibraltar this morning. We are anchored in a bay on the Atlantic side with the USS Saratoga. The Sara is one of three carriers larger than the FDR."

"I am going on a tour tomorrow to a castle, a bunch of caverns, and to the top. They say that there are monkeys and apes running all over the streets, and they throw rocks at you if you bother them."

"We had a fire drill tonight, and I'm on the In-Port Fire Party. It was a class B fire, so I had to be the first man down to put it out. I'm the Navy Pickup Unit Nozzleman."





**The Rock Apes were quite friendly. We were about half way to the top of Gibraltar.**

“That is a nozzle for fog-foam to put out fires that start from liquids like gasoline. One man has to hold a hose shooting a high-velocity spray over me while I go down the hatch into the compartment on fire.”

“The drill went for 9 minutes so we didn’t do too bad. We don’t actually spray water and fog during a drill, but we do everything else, like de-energize light circuits, rig casualty power, and bring in all firefighting gear. It’s as close to the real thing as it can get.”

### **February 15, 1958 – March 5, 1958..... At Sea**

Because we were heading across the Atlantic and going back to our home port at Mayport, Florida, there was no mail delivered or sent from the ship during this three week period. As near as I can recall, we were due to dock on February 28, but the ship got involved in a search and rescue operation in the North Atlantic, looking for a civilian passenger plane that went down.

All I can remember is that the weather was really rough during that time and we had no luck in finding any remains of that airplane.

### **March 6, 1958.....In Port – Mayport, Florida**

“Our entry into port was a real big deal here in Mayport. It was on national television, and there was a crowd estimated at 6,000 people waiting for us on the dock. After the crowd subsided, we went on liberty by bus to Jacksonville, which is about a 45-minute ride. After eating all the hamburgers, fries, and ice cream we were deprived of in the Med, we took the bus again and were back at the base by 1230.”



**Part of the huge crowd that came to welcome the FDR back to the United States**



### **March 18, 1958.....In Port – Mayport, Florida**

Mom wanted to know what kind of work I had to do now that we were in port in the USA. I wrote, “I’m not compartment cleaning anymore, so I’m in the machine shop full-time. I do mostly lathe work so I’m getting used to working around them.”

We are really getting the jobs in the shop lately. There are only two boilers online now, so the rest are being repaired and all of the valve work comes to us. I have a few watches to stand now that we are in port, and I am still on the In-Port Fire Party.”

We were allowed to go ashore without being on liberty as long as we stayed on the Base and we were not on duty. We spent a lot of time at the Enlisted Men’s Club and at the little Beer Garden just across the dock from the ship. On the Base, we could drink beer at 18 years old, but in town it was 21.

“Our operating schedule is out now. We leave Mayport on April 2 and come back in port the next weekend. We go out again on that Monday and come back the next Friday. We leave Mayport for Norfolk, Virginia, on the 18<sup>th</sup> and unload ammo. We leave there on May 2<sup>nd</sup> and go to Bayonne, New Jersey, to take off our stack and mast. Then we go to the Brooklyn Navy Yard on the 4<sup>th</sup>.”

### **March 25, 1958.....In Port – Mayport, Florida**

“Working in the ship is getting better now. Our new Chief knows I can do accurate work, so he gives me quite a few jobs, instead of cleaning up small jobs and drill press work.”

### **March 29, 1958.....In Port – Mayport, Florida**

“They loaded 10 A3-D’s and 10 Banshees aboard yesterday. We have to take squadrons out and qualify them to operate off of a carrier.”



Loading an A3-D onto the FDR's port side #3 elevator at Mayport, Florida

“I got the surprise of my life tonight. We’re anchored here with another carrier, the Lake Champlain, and two destroyers. I knew that three of the guys from Green Bay were on them, so tonight Bob Vanden Heuvel and Ken Cumbers came over to the ship

and looked me up. They told me that Russell Aerts from Wrightstown, Charles Gay from Green Bay, and three other guys that were in Monday night reserves are on their ship. I went to Russ Aerts' going-away party in Wrightstown. I've got quite a few slides of their ship refueling in rough seas, so I'm going over there tomorrow night.

#### **April 6, 1950.....In Port – Mayport, Florida**

I found out where two more of the Green Bay guys are. Jim Coonen, from Greenleaf, is at New London, Connecticut, and Bob Reobke, from Wrightstown, is aboard the USS Saratoga. The whole Green Bay gang went roller skating at Skateland in Jacksonville last night. It is about three times larger than Fox's in Green Bay and five times as modern....but it is also segregated. No negroes allowed."

#### **April 8, 1958.....At Sea**

"I had to work until taps again last night. Something went wrong with the flight deck control mirror landing system. They had some planes up that couldn't land until the gear was cut, so I had to work overtime."

#### **April 24, 1958.....In Port – Hampton Roads, Virginia**

"I went to a movie on the main base and got back to Fleet Landing about 2230. There were about 8 guys waiting for the liberty boat to pull out when we saw an explosion out across the bay at Newport News. A report came in that it was a Navy tanker so the boat officer asked for volunteers and we jumped in and took off. We just got underway when the thing blew up again just about like an atom bomb blast."

"The bay is about fifteen miles across so it took us quite a while to get over. We had life jackets on and lifelines around us, ready for rescue, but when we got about three-quarters of the way, we could tell it was on land. Five oil storage tanks blew up I guess. The FDR is anchored at the 'explosives anchorage' off-loading ammunition, so we thought at first that it could have been our ship."

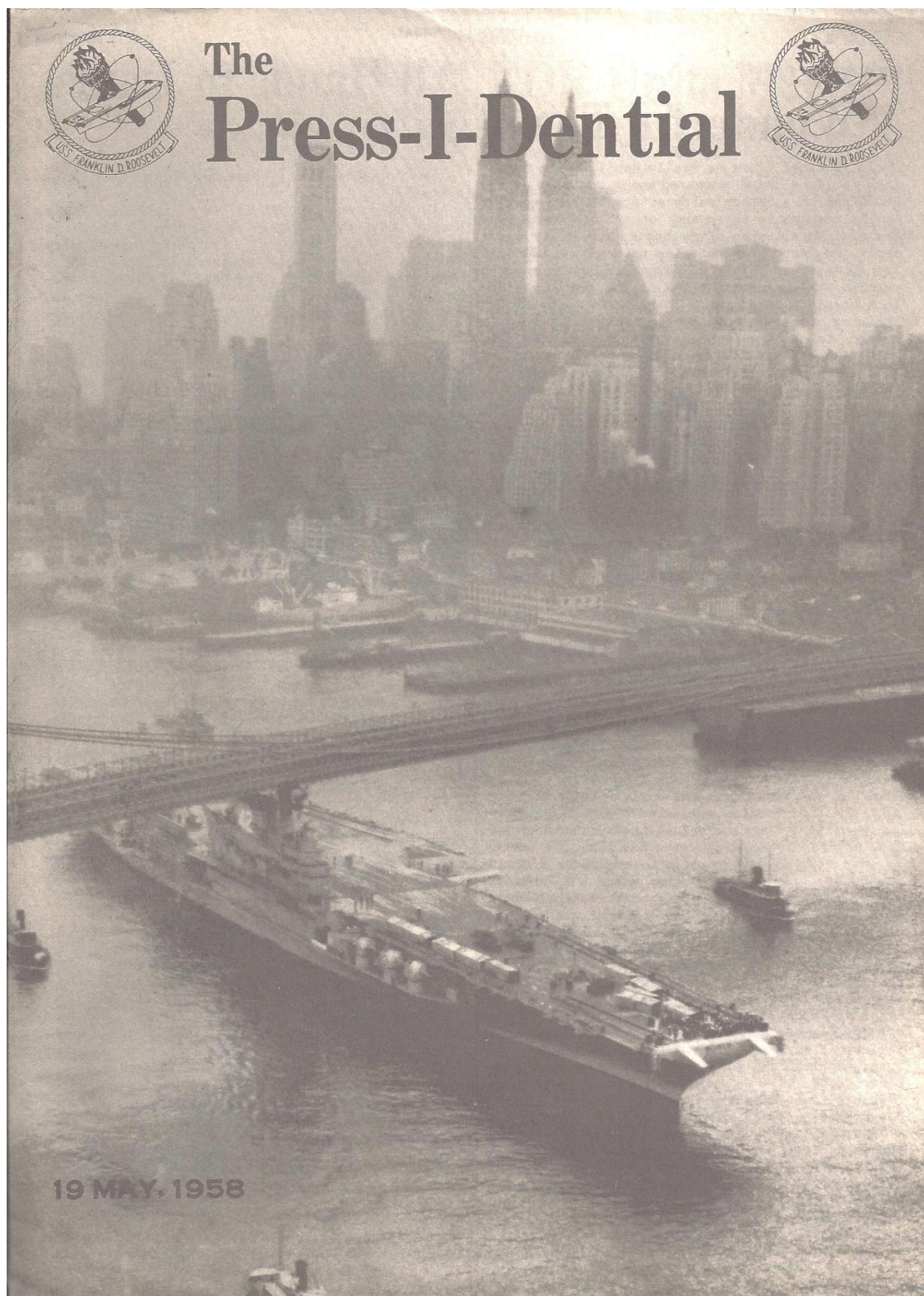
#### **April 25, 1958....In Port – Hampton Roads, Virginia**

"The fire at Newport News is finally under control today. In all, 15 oil storage tanks blew up. We drove over to see it last night. 13 had blown up then and two were so red hot that you could see the oil level right through the steel. They went up overnight. There is an area about two square miles that is completely burned out."

#### **May 1, 1958.....In Port – Bayonne, New Jersey**

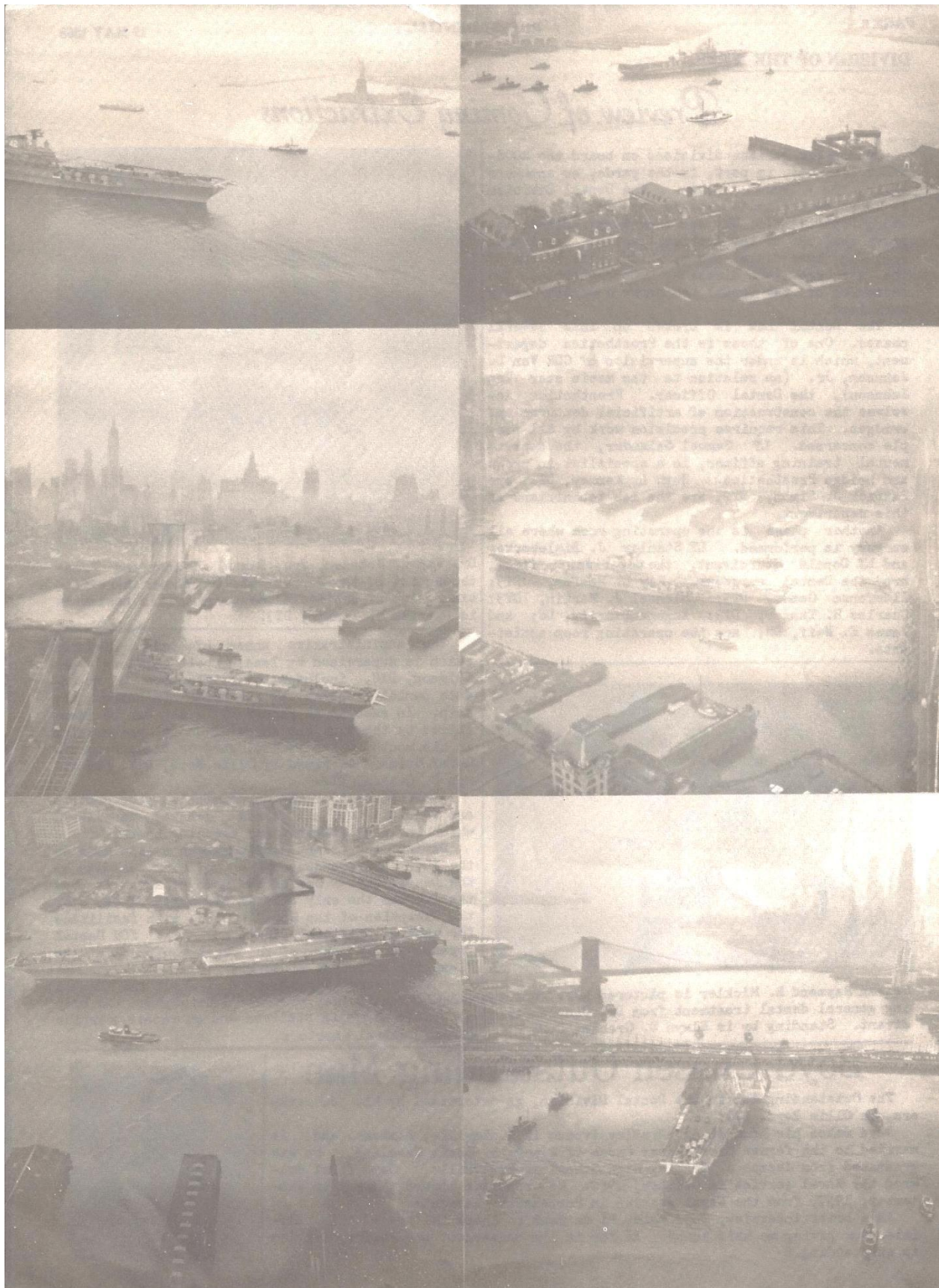
"We finally got a glimpse of New York. We entered the harbor at 1300, and it took till 2030 to tie up at the pier in Bayonne. It really was something watching the coastline of New York going by. We came in past Brooklyn and up to Manhattan. Then we turned into the harbor of New Jersey. I've got pictures of the Statue of Liberty, but it is quite a ways up the river yet. We'll be going past it on Monday on our way up to the Navy Yard."

"Bayonne is just a burial ground for old ships. There is an antique carrier right behind us that must be about 400 feet long. It is the Mission Bay from the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. The battleship 'Wisconsin' is on the other side of the pier. It was decommissioned about a month ago. I guess we're going to get quite a welcome in New York tomorrow. There're going to be fireboats spraying water and a big parade from the pier downtown."



The USS Franklin D. Roosevelt, with her stack and mast removed barely clears the Brooklyn Bridge by 3 feet on her journey up the Hudson River from Bayonne, New Jersey to the Brooklyn Navy Yard.





Above is a collage of pictures that appeared in the FDR's paper showing our trip up the Hudson River. Notice the fireboat spraying water as we passed the Statue of Liberty. I was 'manning the rail', standing at attention on the flight deck, and was able to see all the sights.



### **May 3, 1958.....In Port – Bayonne, New Jersey**

“Joisey, as it is called here, is quite a place. I guess I’ll forget how to talk altogether if I stick around the East coast. Nobody in the city speaks understandable English, and I guess in New York they speak a different language in each borough.”

### **May 10, 1958.....in Port – Brooklyn, New York**

“I finally had a chance to go over and see the town. We went sightseeing around Manhattan and saw 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue from the tip of the island up to Central Park. We went to the top of the Empire State Building and then to Radio City at Rockefeller Center. At 1800 we took a subway to Coney Island. One of my buddies lives on the island so we really had fun.”

“We are going up to the Bronx tomorrow for a baseball game between the Yankees and Senators. We can get in free at the Press gate. They gave us box seats right on the first base line. We were in the front row, too, so I guess they really like sailors.”



**View of Manhattan from the top of the Empire State Building**



**Yours Truly on liberty at Coney Island**

### **May 15, 1958.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York**

The Chief took us over to the USS Enterprise, CV-6 all day today to scrounge material for the shop. The ship was put out of commission in 1949 so we could take anything we wanted. The Enterprise was the flagship carrier during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, so it isn't much smaller than the FDR. It was quite an experience looking at some of the damage the ship took that hadn't been fixed, the largest of which was a huge hole in the flight deck.

### **May 19, 1958.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York**

"The Ship is sponsoring a party for the crew tomorrow night at Roseland Dance City on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Manhattan. They are going to have a chicken supper and then a dance with free beer and food."

Roseland Dance City was a huge, ritzy place just off 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The party was held for two nights so everyone would have a chance to attend. They also had a large group of USO girls attend, as well as having entertainment from the Latin Quarter and Copa Cabana night clubs.

### **May 22, 1958.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York**

"I went to an all-star show at Madison Square Garden last night. We got \$15 tickets free from the USO to see Red Buttons, Polly Bergen, The Four Lads, and the people that were on last Sunday's Ed Sullivan Show. It was sponsored by the VFW so we got free chow too."

### **May 30, 1958.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York**

"Tuesday evening, we went to the 'Treasure Hunt Show' starring Jan Murray, and ended up at 'The Jack Paar Show' at 2300. The TV studios are really different from the way you see them on television."

"Tomorrow I'm going on a hayride party on Staten Island. One of the girls from the USO invited me. I didn't want to get my whites dirty, so I borrowed some civvies from a buddy in the shop."

### **June 1, 1956.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York**

"The hayride really turned out nice. There were about 80 guys and gals there, so they had three wagons. We went over to Staten Island as a group, but on the way back we took a ferry, so Chris and I and another couple went horseback riding until 1800. I'm still so stiff I can hardly walk."

"Chris and another girl came over to the ship this afternoon, so I took them around to see everything."

"Thursday evening, one of the guys in the shop had an accident on one of the lathes. He got his thumb caught in the chuck and took about 1/2 inch off the end. Nobody knew what happened because he just walked out the door. I walked over to shut off the lathe and there was blood all over the place."

"The shop finally got our 'watchstanders liberty' cards, so now we can go on the beach any time we're not working in the shop. It's a pretty good deal, because the Exec doesn't like to give 1300 liberty on Fridays. This way, we can go over anyway. We've got one weekend of duty and six off."

### **June 5, 1958.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York**

“The USS Independence CVA-62 is being launched tomorrow afternoon. It’s in the second drydock over from us. Right now it is supposed to be the largest ship in the world, but there is a nuclear carrier being built here that is close to 1500 feet long. The Independence makes the FDR look like a midget and we are the fourth largest ship.”

“I invited Chris to watch the launch tomorrow. They don’t slide the ship into the water, though, like they do in Sturgeon Bay. They just fill the drydock and someone breaks a bottle of champagne over the bow. We were at Coney Island tonight and had a ball, but I turned a nice shade of green after a few of those rides.

### **June 12, 1958.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York**

“Well, we’re on the move again. The ship pulled into drydock #5 today starting at 1400. We couldn’t go under our own power though, so they had 10 tugs push us in. It took about 6 hours to get us all the way in, and it’ll be another 6 hours before they have it closed so they can drain out the water.”

“The only things we have on the ship right now are lights from two emergency generators. We had cold chow tonight, because the steam is secured, and the heads and showers are cut off until about 0200.”

### **June 17, 1958.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York**

“The new boat must really be something. I can’t wait till I get to ride around in it. It should be just the thing to catch those fish on our trip to Canada. Mom, you were wondering about Chris. Her real name is Maureen Greaven and she is 19 years old. I guess she is about 5’2” with dark hair and dark blue eyes. You could probably say we are going steady.

**Promoted from FA to FN on June 16, 1958  
(FA – Fireman Apprentice ..... FN – Fireman)**

### **June 19, 1958.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York**

“I finally took the FN test tonight. It was pretty hard, but I’m sure I passed. After studying for four months and having it postponed that long, I better pass.. I guess I’ll be going up for MR3 in November now. The time between FN and third class is 6 months, but the Chief is trying to get me a waiver because the test was cancelled so often. I hope he is able to do it.”

### **June 25, 1958.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York**

“We got our test scores back today. I had a score of 3.28 out of 4.0, and I was the third highest out of the group that took the test. I better start sewing the new stripes on my uniforms. I have to apply for an MR3 correspondence course now and get all my qualifications for 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Petty Officer.

“We had a little excitement last night. A tug with a bunch of barges blew up under the Manhattan Bridge and sunk. Two guys were killed and the subway tracks and cables were burned. I guess a cargo ship collided with the tug. There was oil all over the East River, and even in the Navy yard and drydocks. We are only about 1,000 feet from the bridge.



"I guess I better find out how I will be getting home from the airport. My plane lands in Green Bay at 2:20 pm on Tuesday."

### July 1, 1958.....On Leave – Green Bay, Wisconsin

Quite a bit of my first trip back home consisted of a fishing trip to Witch Bay Camp, Kenora, Ontario, Canada. The fishing crew consisted of Mom and Dad, Ron and Bev, Myself, Elmer and Mabel Lemke, and their kids, David, Billy, and Ann. Below is a collage of pictures from that trip.



Top - Witch Bay Camp

Middle - Mom & Dad enjoying a coffee

Bottom - Carvings of some of my relatives

Top - Mom with part of the day's catch

Middle - Ron & Bev ride the big one

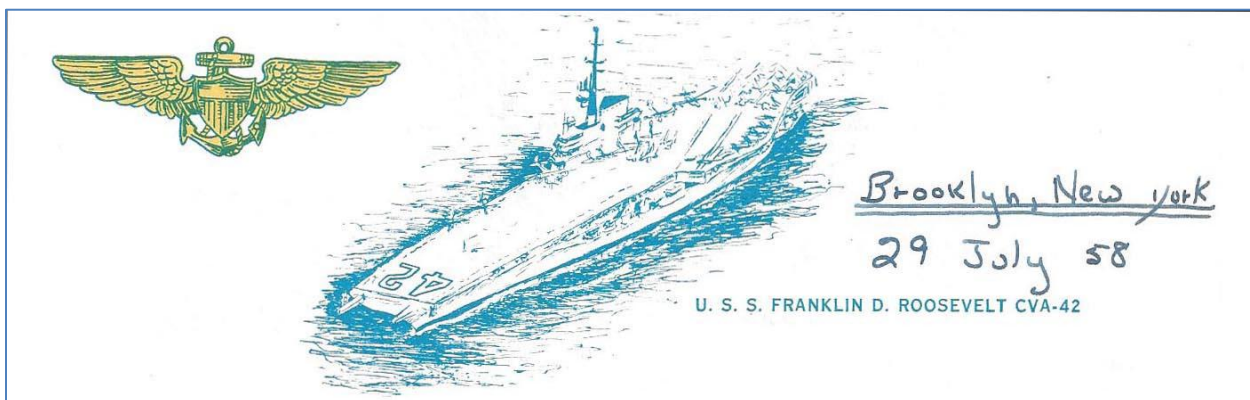
Bottom - Ron & Bev with their day's haul

I ended up with 27 days of leave time, and they threw in one extra day for travel. During my stay in Wisconsin, I attended a Fels Family Reunion at Legion Park in De Pere, and I was asked to show my Navy slides at a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration at the Lark Church for my grandfather and grandmother, Ed and Malinda Fels.





Cruising the Fox River in their new boat



### July 29, 1958.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York

"I guess everything is back to normal again. I didn't have to be back to the ship until 1800 Monday because I'm on the night shift, so I picked up my liberty card and went right back on the beach. I had a date with Chris and got back to the Navy YMCA about 0100. Because the yardbirds are union, we are not allowed to do a lot of the machine shop work, so I stay at the Navy Y quite a bit. Nobody cares, and all I have to do is call in to the shop once a day."

"The ship has changed a lot since I left. I was the low fireman, and now there are 6 men who work under me. We got 8 new guys in the shop altogether. The ship is just about ready to leave the yard. We leave for Bayonne next week and leave there some time in September. We aren't going overseas until February. We have to go to Norfolk and Jacksonville for about two weeks, and then to Cuba for about three months."

### August 3, 1958.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York

"I'm at the Navy Y again for almost a week. The USO is sponsoring a beach party tomorrow and I'm signed up. I guess we're going out to Brighton Beach. Chris and I probably won't be going steady after tomorrow night. I'm giving her ring back after the party. There are many things we just couldn't agree on, so I think it is best that we quit going together."



### **August 6, 1958.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York**

“We’re having a dance on the ship tomorrow afternoon. All of the Waves from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Naval District are putting it on for the FDR crew in Hanger Bay #1. The beach party was really fun. We went out to a private beach out at Rockaway called Breezy Point. The Atlantic really was warm for a change. I still can’t wear a shirt because I got a heck of a burn right over the tan I had.”

“Well, Chris and I aren’t going steady any more. She took breaking up very well, and we are still going to be going out on USO outings and be good friends. I’m not going to be in New York much longer so that sounds like a good way to end it.”

“The Ship is throwing another party for the crew at Roseland Dance City on August 25. I don’t have liberty, but I should be able to get one of the guys in the shop to stand by for me while I’m gone. The last one was so much fun that I’d hate to miss this one.”

### **August 10, 1958.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York**

It’s Sunday night around 2000 right now. One of the guys from the shop and I went out to the Statue of Liberty yesterday to take pictures. We climbed all the way to the top of the crown. The view wasn’t as great as the Empire State Building, but I got some great pictures. We took some pictures of Broadway at night too, so I hope they turn out.”



Heading out to the Statue of Liberty



Broadway at night at Times Square

“Last night, we went to see a live radio show and a TV quiz program. The radio show was “Upbeat Saturday Night” with Jim Lowe, the guy that wrote ‘Green Door’. Then we went to see “Top Dollar”. I guess you watch it at home; at least you did when I was there. We were the only two servicemen there, so after the program they showed us around the set and introduced us to Toby somebody-or-other, the MC, and Dr. Bergen Evans. It would have been better if they introduced us to the girl that won the \$500.00.”

### **August 15, 1958.....In Port – Bayonne, New Jersey**

“We are on the move again. We’re finally tied up at the Bayonne Naval Supply Depot to finish the yard work. We leave port on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> for sea trials, and then wait till September 4<sup>th</sup> to leave New York for good. We got underway at 1530 and at 1900 we were already turned and headed into the pier at Bayonne. The trip up the river took us over 8 hours.

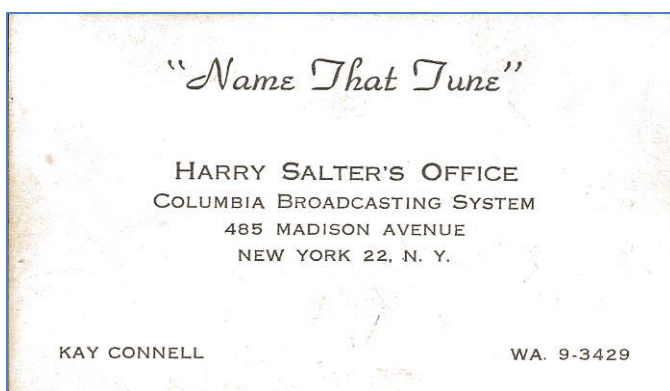


"One of Verna and Carl's neighbors, Tom Smits, is now on the FDR. I met him while I was eating supper last night. He is going to be assigned to R Division, so he will be working in the sheet metal shop right next to us in the machine shop."

"This morning some yardbird cut an oil line by mistake and flooded 6 compartments with 14,000 gallons of fuel oil. We also had three small fires too, but they weren't close enough to be real bad. With my 'Watchstanders Liberty Card', I don't have to be on the 'In-Port Fire Party' so I didn't have to fight these."

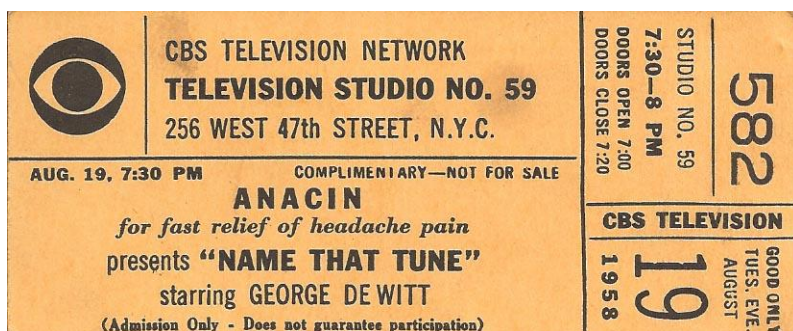
### **August 16, 1958.....In Port – Bayonne, New Jersey**

"I was staying at the Downtown Navy Y again for the last two days, and today I got a chance to be on a TV show before we leave New York. I was picking up some tickets at the USO when a talent scout from CBS interviewed me for "Name That Tune". Her name was Kay Connell and she wanted me to be on the show on August 19<sup>th</sup>."



"I told her that we were scheduled to be at sea on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, but she said she would talk to the ship's PIO Officer and fix it so I wouldn't have to leave with the ship. I could use some extra bucks, so I hope she can get me off."

### **August 19, 1958.....In Port – Bayonne, New Jersey**



"She managed to pull it off and told me to be at the studio at 1830 so the contestants could get some practice. It was fairly simple. Four of us sat side-by-side and the studio band would start playing a song. When one of us figured out what it was, we had to run about 30 feet and ring a bell."

"On the show, I didn't do too well. I was able to guess two of the songs, but being across the pond for 6 months must have put me out of touch. I had a lot of fun, though, and came back to the Navy Y with \$100.00. I hope you were watching, because there wasn't enough time to tell you I would be on."

"We're trying to get tickets to see one more Ed Sullivan show before we leave. I'm going to miss staying here at the Y."



### **August 26, 1958.....In Port – Bayonne, New Jersey**

"I went over on the beach yesterday to see the Yankees play the Tigers in a double-header. After the game, we went to see the Ed Sullivan Show. It was really good this week. The ship gave it's farewell party tonight at Roseland Dance City. I had the duty on the ship so I couldn't go, but from the looks of the guys coming back, it must have been quite a time. I went topside about 0130 and there were at least 15 guys heaving over the rail."

I saw the USS Nautilus go past here this morning on the way to New York, with four fireboats and two destroyers following it. They really gave it a welcome. It just came back from a cruise under the Artic Circle."

### **September 1, 1958.....In Port – Bayonne, New Jersey**

"We had another accident on the ship yesterday. One of the bomb elevators got stuck at flight deck level, so one of the yardbirds went under it to see what was wrong. He must have kicked one of the solenoid valves, because the elevator dropped 8 decks and made a mess of the yardbird."

### **September 5, 1958.....In Port – Hampton Roads, Virginia**

"We're at the 'explosives anchorage' in Hampton Roads again, so that means all hands load ammo. We work from 0800 to 1200 and 1800 till 2400 one day and 1200 till 1800 the next, so we're not getting much sleep. We are supposed to finish by tomorrow, so I guess we'll live."

### **September 8, 1958.....At Sea**

"We are underway for Mayport, Florida again. We pulled out at 2200 tonight, and we should be there either Thursday morning or Thursday evening. It's supposed to take us 30 hours to get there, but we can't go in till the tides allow it."

"The machine shop crew has been busy painting the whole shop. We've got the bulkheads and overheads done and we have only the deck and machines left, so we should finish by Friday morning. It really looks nice in here already."

"I guess we will only be in Mayport until the 15<sup>th</sup>, so we won't have too much time to go on the beach. I'll probably go swimming a few times and also do some roller skating. We were bowling last night in Norfolk, but I didn't do too well. My high game was 154."

### **September 13, 1958.....In Port – Mayport, Florida**

“The Chief from the shop picked George Bergman and I up and took us to meet his wife and kids in Jax Beach, where he lives. We really had fun over there. The ocean is only one block from his house, so we changed there and went swimming in the Atlantic. We even had to stay for supper because his wife wouldn't let us leave till we did. At night, we went to Jacksonville and saw a movie.”

### **September 16, 1958.....At Sea**

“Remind me never to go to Cuba on vacation. The low temperature last night was 94 degrees and the high today was 110. The uniform on the ship is just trousers and shoes, without any shirts at all. We're supposed to anchor off of Gitmo City tomorrow night, but we haven't come close to any land yet.”

“The water is really different from the Atlantic or Med. It's a clear blue color and you can see fish swimming a long way down. I guess I'll have to sleep in the shop tonight under one of the blowers. The compartment only has fans to move the air, and it is around 80 degrees down there already. We have a couple of cots up here in the shop that come in handy.”

### **September 19, 1958.....In Port – Guantanamo Bay, Cuba**

“Liberty isn't too hot in Gitmo. We're restricted to the base because Castro is still on a kidnapping spree up in the hills, so we can only go swimming or drink beer. They have a nice pool on the base though, and it wasn't crowded at all last night.”

### **September 24, 1958.....In Port – Guantanamo Bay, Cuba**

“We had a fire on board last night and my duty section had the watch, so I had to go to the scene and help put it out. There wasn't much of a fire, but it was the worst kind that we have on the ship. There was also a leak from a 600# steam line in the same area but obscured by the smoke. We're lucky they told us it was there, because steam under that kind of pressure will cut a man in half very quickly. We were able to find a shut-off valve for the steam, and got the fire out in about 15 minutes.”

### **October 2, 1958.....At Sea**

“We had another plane crash yesterday. An A3-D twin-engine jet came in with landing gear problems. The flight deck crew rigged the safety nets to help slow the plane down when it lands. I was able to get a few pictures of it from the 0900 deck. When it hit the deck, the gear folded and the plane skidded in on it's belly. It was damaged quite a bit and the pilot and three crew members were slightly injured.”



#1 Safety Net is rigged and ready



The landing wasn't real pretty, but everybody lived



### October 6, 1958.....In Port – Port Au Prince, Haiti

"I went on a tour of the island with three buddies. We went way up in the mountains above the clouds for dinner. On the way up, we stopped at a rum factory, where all the samples you wanted to try were free. The tour ended at the Hotel Riviera, one of the best in Haiti. I met one of my buddies that was staying at the hotel as an interpreter, so I stayed with him. We swam in the pool the rest of the afternoon. Some Americans staying at the hotel invited us to a party at night, and we had a ball."



Free Rum at 5,500 feet. Yahoo!



My girlfriend in Haiti



Typical home in the poor sections of town



Fish market

"George Bergman and I went back on the beach on Sunday and I took lots of pictures. You won't believe how these people live down here. The countryside is beautiful but there is so much poverty."

### October 8, 1958.....At Sea

My mother wrote wanting to know if all the General Quarters and extra training we were doing down here in Cuban waters had anything to do with Formosa, and what China was doing over there. The Mao Tse Tung regime was trying to take control of Taiwan by bombing Quemoy and the Taiwan Straits. The USA was standing up for Taiwan, and sent a huge Navy presence there to help protect them.

With all of the big three nations, USA, China, and Russia, flexing their cold war muscle, we were probably as close to nuclear bombs being dropped as we hopefully will ever get. With Cuba just a short distance from the US now aligning with Russia, tensions were running very high.

We could also feel the tension on the ship, but we also knew that a shakedown cruise to Guantanamo was something every ship did every time they had repairs done on the east coast. After all, we are an "Attack" carrier, so we need to be in top notch fighting condition. The only way to do that is practice.

### **October 17, 1958....At Sea**

"We're still in the same routine down here, but we're only going to Gitmo on weekends. We pulled in Wednesday evening, but only because it was payday. Our schedule was put in the Plan of the Day today, so we know what's what. We pull into Mayport on October 27 and operate out of there to qualify aircraft squadrons to land on carriers until November 12."

"We go back to the Caribbean and visit the Virgin Islands till November 26, and then it's back to Mayport till sometime in January.

### **October 26, 1958.....At Sea**

"I guess the people in the states knew what we were doing down in Cuba before we did. We were right in the middle of our Operational Readiness Inspection at our GQ stations when they secured us. They didn't give us any reason, but just said a military emergency existed and we were on our way to an unknown destination."

"The rumors really started flying! China had dropped a nuclear bomb! Russia had declared war! Then the ship changed course with engines at full speed ahead. When the marines started breaking out their machine guns and gear, we knew that the trouble was in Cuba. At that point, I was told that I would be one of the Engineers on a liberty boat to be used for a Marine landing party. They wanted two Engineers per boat to lessen the chance of problems. I was issued a 45 caliber pistol and ammo, so I knew this was the real thing."

"We were going ashore to rescue a bunch of Americans that Castro had taken hostage. The Marines assembled on #3 Elevator, and I went up to the 0900 deck to get a few pictures, and then we brought the boats around to pick them up. We got to the beach and were told that it was all over. We had flown almost every plane we had on board across the Island of Cuba at very low levels, and we must have scared the crap out of Castro, because the Americans were waiting for us on the beach. They were flown back to the ship by helicopter and we took a bunch of relieved Marines back."



**Marine Landing Party readying for a possible battle**



### **October 29, 1958.....In Port – Mayport, Florida**

“We highballed back to the States to return the hostages, so we’re in Mayport again. There isn’t much for us to do today, but we have tickets to see Florida U. play Florida State in the Gator Bowl right on this side of Jacksonville. We are getting free tickets from the ship.”

### **November 5, 1958.....In Port – Mayport, Florida**

“I had to work till 0230 this morning in the shop, so I got to sleep till noon. The electricians tore a motor apart and we had to put new threads and bearings on. The darn thing weighed so much that we had to use a chainfall and hoist to get it on a lathe.”

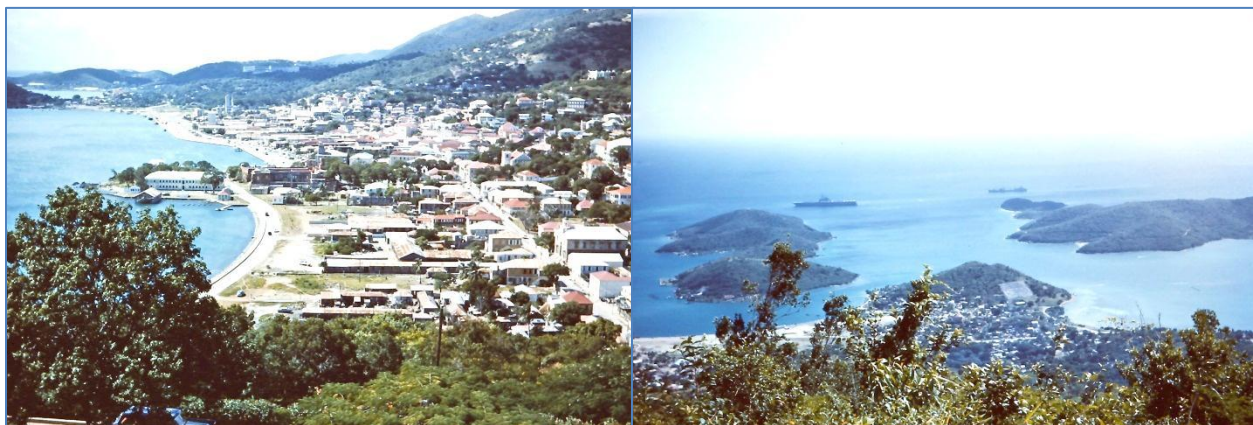
### **November 7, 1958.....At Sea**

Not only do they make us work in the shop, but we have to use our brain, too. I have two pumps to overhaul today that I’m supposed to do all by blueprints without anybody’s help. One is a centrifugal force salt water flushing pump, and the other is a gear type lube oil pump. I’m doing OK so far. I’ve got both of them torn apart, and I’ve got a few parts turned out for the gear pump. I should finish one tomorrow, so I guess I’ll surprise the Chief. He said it would take at least a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Petty Officer to read the blueprints.”

### **November 15, 1958.....In Port – Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands**

“There wasn’t much going on in Jacksonville, so I’m glad we pulled out Wednesday. We had a party at Chief McClurg’s house Tuesday evening. Chief Mac was staying at home so he gave me his ‘59 Pontiac to get everybody else back to the ship. Man, that thing is really a bus!”

“As you can see, we are now down in the Virgin Islands. We’re anchored off the island of St. Thomas near a small city called Charlotte Amalie. It is a really nice place compared to Haiti. There is supposed to be a virgin behind every tree, but I didn’t see too many trees, and very few girls.”



Charlotte Amalie from a mountain vantage point

The Franklin D. Roosevelt and an escort at anchor

### **November 17, 1958.....At Sea**

“We lost a pilot and a plane this afternoon. An A-4D hit the water right after it was catapulted off the port side and went right down. The helicopters were right there, but the plane went under so fast there wasn’t a trace of it 30 seconds after it hit.”



"I had to make a special tap for cutting internal threads this afternoon so the airdales could get one of their planes off the ground. On the outside, a tool and die maker would get \$4.50 an hour for making one, so I guess I'm getting robbed."

"It had to be cut down to the exact thread size and then heat treated so it would be harder than any of the steel it had to cut. It worked for them, so I guess I did alright. The Chief said a tap like that would cost over \$60, but I didn't see any green stuff floating around. PS – It wasn't for the plane that crashed."

### **November 21, 1958.....At Sea**

"We lost another pilot and plane yesterday. It went down the same way, so there was no chance of saving the pilot. This morning, some crazy airdale walked off the end of the flight deck and went for a swim. Another guy saw him fall. They were having 'Flight Quarters' so a helicopter was right there to pluck him out of the water. He's in the sick bay being treated for shock."

"The next test for 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Petty Officer will be held on February 10, and I will be eligible to take it then. I got a letter from Paul today, and he said he didn't make 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Personnelman. He had passed the test but they only allow so many to get rated at a time, and his score wasn't high enough. He'll go up for it again at the same time I do in February."

"We are still operating close to the Virgin Islands, so the temperature is mostly in the upper 80's. Today, the Captain stopped the ship and declared "Swim Call", where everyone not on duty could jump in the water and swim for a couple hours. They put two lifeboats in the water that had Marines with rifles to watch for sharks. I jumped off the elevator at Hanger Deck level, which is about 30 feet, but I didn't jump off the Flight Deck. I may have guts, but not quite that much."



'Swim Call'



Marine shark patrol

### **November 23, 1958.....At Sea**

"We are pulling into Mayport for Thanksgiving weekend. Unfortunately, our bad luck is still with us. We've had one more plane go down since I wrote last, so we have a grand total of three. This time they saved the pilot, though. His jet flamed-out about 40 miles from the Virgin Islands and he ditched the plane before it went down. They picked him up about 15 minutes after he hit the water. Our destroyer escorts had a good time shooting at the remains of the plane until it sank to the bottom. I hope the ship's luck changes soon."

### **December 1, 1958.....At Sea**

"We got off to a good start right off the bat this noon by losing a plane and a pilot again. I was up on the 0600 deck watching flight quarters when an A4-D came in too low and hit the fantail. The plane split in about 4 pieces, so when it went down it only took about 7 seconds. The plane was going about 140 miles per hour when it hit the deck, so I doubt if the pilot was still living when he hit the water. The pilot was from a squadron of Marines we were qualifying."

### **December 4, 1958.....At Sea**

"We're still having our streak of bad luck on the ship. Today an A3-D twin-engine jet crash landed on the flight deck and flipped over in the water. The full crew of 3 guys were rescued by helicopter and the plane stayed afloat. One of the destroyers that steam with us as plane guards finished off what was left of the plane with a torpedo to get it out of the way."

### **December 12, 1958.....On Leave – Green Bay, Wisconsin**

The ship's schedule kept changing at the last minute, so I had to change plane tickets twice and finally cancelled them altogether to go home by Greyhound Bus. It took quite a bit longer, but as it turned out, the plane that I had tickets on was pictured in the newspaper still smoking on the end of the runway where it had crashed in Atlanta.

I used to have a recurring dream when I was a kid where I was riding a bus in the mountains on an icy road. There were flashing red lights all over, and we were sliding backwards off of a cliff. I was sleeping in the front seat of the Greyhound on the way home for my leave, and when I woke up, I thought my dream was coming true.

It was late at night and red lights were flashing all over, and we were moving backwards on the icy mountain road. I let out a yell that probably scared all of the other passengers and was going to jump out of the bus, until the driver told me we were just backing up.

It actually wasn't our bus that was in trouble, but a semi that had gone over the cliff about ten minutes before we got there. I rode the bus till Milwaukee and got on a North Central airplane the rest of the way home.

I don't remember much about this 15-day leave other than I spent a lot of time at Slim's in Shirley, and lived almost entirely on pizza. Back then, Slim's was a hoppin' teenage bar, and the place to go in our area for somebody my age. Eventually, you would meet everyone you know there.

### **December 28, 1958.....In Port – Mayport, Florida**

"I made it back to the ship OK. I had a ½ hour layover in Milwaukee and 1 hour in Chicago, but we made good time. I went to another football game at the Gator Bowl yesterday, to see Florida State play Mississippi. At night, we went roller skating again in Jacksonville.

### **January 5, 1959.....In Port – Mayport, Florida**

"Guess what! I got picked up for stealing a car Saturday morning. Actually, the Chief had his car on the base and had asked if I would bring it to his house in Jax Beach. His wife was real close to having a baby so he wanted it there. I didn't realize that it had a different color of pass on it than a regular sailor's pass, so I got stopped at

the gate. They told me I had to have written permission to drive his car signed by a notary public. They wrote me out a ticket and I had to get the Chief down to bail out his car. He also got a ticket for lending his car without giving permission. We have to go to court Tuesday morning, but I guess as long as neither of us knew about the rule, and Mac's wife really is close to having a baby, we'll just end up with a nice lecture."

### **January 8, 1959.....In Port – Mayport, Florida**

"I suppose by now you thought I was in the brig. Chief McClurg and I made it to court, and when we explained what happened, the Judge started laughing. He said that was the dumbest rule he ever heard of, and dropped all charges. I'm 15 miles from there, and I can still hear him laughing!"



This is the main entrance to my "Home away from Home"

### **January 16, 1959.....At Sea**

"We had some more bad luck yesterday when an A-4D missed the arresting cables and slid into the water. One of the helo pilots jumped in to try to pull the plane pilot out but he wasn't able to. About an hour later, a Chief was directing planes onto the catapults when he slipped and got sucked into the intake of an F8-U Crusader. The intake is about 3 feet in diameter and goes back about 38 feet before it leads to the turbines."

"He lost about 1/3 of his blood and was burned over most of his body. More than 40 guys volunteered to donate blood, so they patched him up and flew him ashore to a hospital. He died overnight from his injuries."

### **January 27, 1959.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York**

"We really had a ball last night in New York. Smitty Bergmann and I went down to Birdland to dig the sounds. They had jazz night down there with about 6 different bands and quite a few guest singers. It wasn't what I expected it to be, but it got pretty



lively after a while. Most of the crowd was college age or under, and more girls were there stag than guys, so we got along fine.”

“We pulled into the Yard here to fix a strange noise coming from one of the shafts that sounds like a bearing problem. Unfortunately, when the ship turned into the dock, it ran over a large channel buoy and got it jammed between the rudders. There was no way they could steer, so they ended up getting 18 tugs to move us in. We have no idea how long we’ll be here. They just got the buoy out of the rudder, so now they can start working on the shaft.”

“It snowed about 5 inches here yesterday. When we got back to the ship from liberty last night, the officers on the bus took on the sailors in a snowball fight. We were having quite a time until some tight-ass officer said it was unmilitary for an officer to act that way. Oh, Well! We’ll get them again when he’s not around.”

### **January 30, 1959.....In Port – Brooklyn, New York**

“We’re getting underway again tomorrow even though I don’t think the yardbirds found any problem with the shaft. We’ll probably end up coming back here again in the near future, which wouldn’t make anyone on the crew unhappy.”

“We went ashore for liberty every night we were in port. We went to Birdland twice, and saw the Ramsey Lewis Trio and Thelonius Monk, and we went to Jersey City again to roller skate.”

### **February 12, 1959.....In Port – Mayport, Florida**

“This will be the last letter you get until sometime after March 1 when we are supposed to arrive in Gibraltar. We’ll be getting underway on my second Med cruise tomorrow morning at 0800.”

“I took the 3<sup>rd</sup> Class MR course yesterday, so that’s over for a while. I can’t say whether I passed or not. It was one of the hardest tests I’ve taken yet. If I do pass, I’ll be in charge of the whole shop. We only have seven men in the shop now and only two Petty Officers. One will be transferred before May, and I have more time in the Navy than the other one, so I’m elected.”

“We had some more bad luck today. They were loading our liberty boats from the pier this noon when one guy was killed and three were hurt pretty bad. One of the trailers used to haul the boats had a tire low on air, so they were pumping it up. The tire blew out and threw the retaining ring off and broke the rim into pieces. The ring almost tore one of the guys in half, and one of the guys was thrown about 70 feet into the water.”

### **February 24, 1959.....At Sea**

“As of 0800 this morning, we are cruising around the Med. We went through the Straits of Gibraltar in a formation that would scare the heck out of any enemy. We had two carriers side by side, with 15 destroyers in front in a bowling pin formation. Four oilers and two refer ships followed us, with 20 destroyers in two ten-pin formations. We took up almost all of the water between Gibraltar and the African coast. Besides the ships, each carrier had 30 planes each flying back and forth above us. Yesterday, they had an air show for the ship’s crew using live ammunition. We weren’t allowed to film it, but it was really something to see. I wish I could get a movie of our grand entrance.”

### **March 10, 1959.....In Port – Naples, Italy**

“We spent the last two weeks holding exercises consisting of lots of General Quarters and Air Operations, as well as picking up some new rookie Midshipmen at Pollensa Bay, Spain. Like last year, we were not allowed on liberty because the town is too small for the number of ships anchored there.”

“We are anchored in our home port overseas, Naples, Italy. I went on a tour to the ruins of Pompeii and Mount Vesuvius Saturday. We went all the way to the top of the crater of the volcano, and then down to the city of Pompeii. It was really something to see.”

“Most of the temples and houses looked the same as they did before the eruption in 72 A.D. You could see the chariot tracks in the stone streets, as well as magnificent paintings in the houses. The tour also took us to the town of Sorrento and the beachheads of Salerno.”



Mount Vesuvius as seen from Naples harbor



Looking inside the volcano from the crater rim



Some of the ruins at Pompeii



Art in a rich person's living room

“I just finished working on a centrifugal pump for the evaporators that I have been working steady on since Sunday morning at 0300. I got to sleep 6 hours out of 65 while the pump was being built up by the welders, but that's all. I finished it about an hour ago after 89 hours, and I'm waiting to see whether it works or not. If it works, we will be pulling out of port for three days to build up our supply of fresh water. I should feel pretty important now. If I hadn't fixed that pump, the ship would have no fresh water at all. The Chief from the evaporator crew just called and said the pump was working at 100% pressure and had no leaks. Hey, I can sleep now!”

### **March 21, 1959.....At Sea**

“There hasn’t been too much happening since we left Naples Wednesday morning, but the way we left was enough to last for a week. About 0130 Wednesday, an officer and two firemen off the Great Sitkin, an ammunition ship, woke me up and said they had a job and wanted to know if I could fix it. I said I’d take a look. About 0230, I heard an awful noise out in the passageway, so I ran out to see what was going on.”

“Here two guys were trying to bring a 450 pound throttle shaft down the ladder from the hanger deck, and it fell from about half way. One guy’s hand needed about 15 stitches, but we managed to lug it into the shop. I had to make a brass bushing that weighed about 20 pounds and fix a valve before 0800, because we were pulling out.”

“I finished at 0730, and instead of trying to get the valve up the ladder, I got hold of the guys that run the bomb elevators. By the time we got the valve to the hanger deck, the ships lines were already cast off and the tugs were starting to push us out of the harbor. The guys from the Great Sitkin had one of their boats follow us under the flight deck crane and we lowered the valve ok, but the guys couldn’t make it to the boat anymore. Our helo took them back to Naples around 1000.”

### **March 22, 1959.....At Sea**

“We’re on our way to Cannes, France, and we’re due to anchor there next Saturday. The Captain just put the ship under Condition III, which means we’re about to go into battle. We’re having a big atomic attack exercise with the whole 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet tonight and tomorrow.”

### **March 29, 1959.....In Port – Cannes, France**

“Yesterday, I went on a ski tour in the French Alps. We went about 150 miles from Cannes in a bus. The main stop was at a ski lodge called Valberg, about 5,600 feet above sea level. A few of us rented skis and went out on the mountain for four hours. I darn near broke my neck, but I really had fun. The tour took us through quite a few towns on the way to the lodge. We stopped at a few for pictures and souvenirs.”

“A few times, we had to walk about ½ mile because the road wasn’t safe for the bus, and there was a drop alongside of the road about a mile straight down.”

“We had an A Division party the night before last at a night club in Cannes. It was a lot of fun. There were three floor shows during the party, and there were about 100 invited guests. I invited a girl I met from Atlanta, Georgia, and took her to the party. She was staying at a hotel with her mother and dad for a month. I really should have got back to the ship earlier. I was really tired on the ski trip.”



Valberg Ski Resort in the French Alps



Part of the Ski Complex at Valberg



### **April 5, 1959.....In Port – Toulon, France**

“Toulon is quite a city. It’s altogether different than Cannes, and it’s about the cleanest port over here. It is the home of the French Navy, so it’s got as many sailors as Norfolk, Virginia. The town isn’t very big, but there was still something for everybody to do besides drink and fight. Usually, when you get French and American sailors together, there is a big brawl, but so far there hasn’t been any.”

“I got a head start by being on the first liberty boat, and 20 minutes later I was paddling a bike to the beach. We met two girls over there and rented bicycles and went to a beach about ten miles from Toulon.”

### **April 9, 1959.....At Sea**

“We’re back at sea again. We pulled out of Toulon at 0800 this morning, and we’re heading for Genoa, Italy. I went swimming on the beach again yesterday, but we didn’t take any girls along this time. Here’s our port schedule for May. We will be going to Athens, Greece, Palermo, Sicily, Pollensa Bay, Spain for a Fleet conference, and some place in Italy. I think the name of the town is Leghorn, but I’m not sure.”

### **April 14, 1959.....At Sea**

“Things have really quieted down since Naples in the shop. Being the man in charge, I dole out the jobs to the guys, and I do emergency work only or stuff nobody else can handle. I had to rebore the liner and cut the piston rings for one of the compressors in the oxygen plant, and recut a babbit bearing for a 3000 pound air compressor.”

“We are getting all kinds of ‘wheels’ visiting the ship from the Atomic Energy Commission and National Security Council to observe our operations. Right now, we are having another atomic attack strike exercise. As the man in charge, I also don’t have to go to a GQ station anymore, so they can play those games all they want. I am still on the In-Port Fire Party, though, and need to be on board when I have the duty.”

### **April 22, 1959.....At Sea**

“I had a close call today. Somehow, the Chief got the idea that I should stay in the Navy for 20 years and get commissioned as an officer. He went over to the Division office this morning to talk to the Division Officer about it, and they started laying a trap.”

“The DO made up a test for me to take to find out how much I knew and called me over about 1300. I didn’t know what it was all about, so I took the test and got every question right. Then he started his ‘shipping over’ talk, and I grabbed a life preserver and swam to safety. The helo picked me out of the water and got me back in one piece.”

### **April 26, 1959.....In Port – Genoa, Italy**

“The water was too rough to run liberty boats until 1300 today, so the ship shifted berths twice. We finally got into a spot where the anchor held, and it was a go. We’re back in a working groove in the shop. Three of the guys checked out to get discharged, so now we only have 5 guys besides the Chief. We’re supposed to get some new guys, but nobody knows when.”

“I started working on a \$50,000 recondenser compressor for the O2N2 plant, so I

am not rushing my work too much. I have to overhaul the whole thing without blueprints, so half of the time I don't know what I'm doing. I'm not sweating the cost though, because if I don't get it to work, they were going to throw it away anyway. It can't be fixed by the company that made it, so if I get it working, I'm a hero again."

#### **May 4, 1959.....At Sea**

"I finally finished the compressor for the O2N2 plant and it is back on line, working like a new one. I want my raise now!"

#### **May 8, 1959.....At Sea**

"We had Navy Admiral Arliegh Burke aboard the last two days. He's the Chief of Naval Operations, so all the wheels are really turning on the FDR. They had a big air show for him today, and he made an inspection of the ship this afternoon. He actually stopped in the machine shop for a few minutes to thank me with some kind lines for my work on that \$50,000.00 oxygen pump. Too bad they don't turn talk into money."

#### **May 13, 1959.....In Port – Athens, Greece**

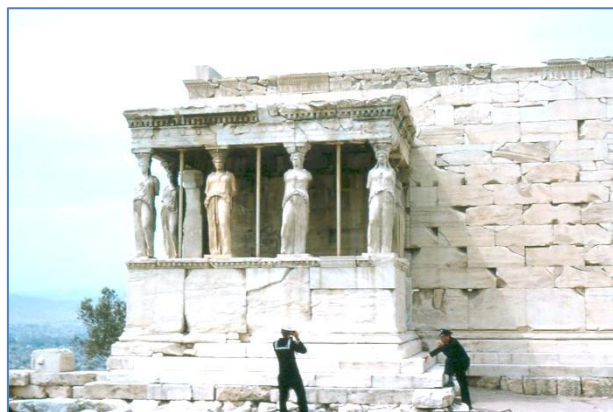
"I was chosen "Sailor of the Month" in A Division for my work in the shop, so I got special leave for two days to go on a tour with 9 other winners. They gave us the use of a Volkswagen bus to take us wherever we decided we wanted to go. We decided on the Acropolis for our first stop. From there, we went into the mountains to Delphi, where we visited the ruins as well as a hermit that was living in a cave. He came out to talk to us with just a pair of shorts on, and it was really cold up around 7,000 feet. We stayed at a ski lodge overnight, but there wasn't enough snow to ski on. We really had a great time on this tour."



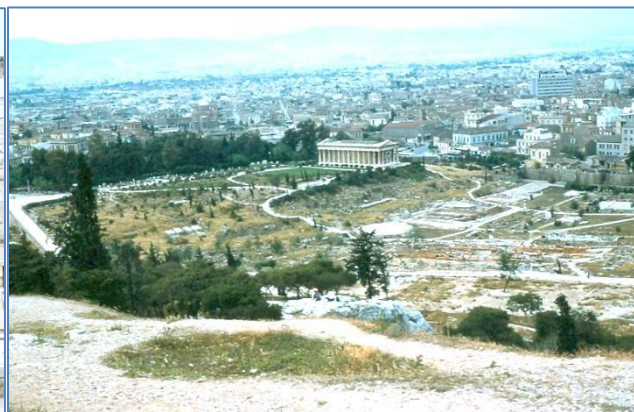
The Parthenon at Athens, Greece



Inside the Parthenon looking out



Temple of the Virgins



Famous Temple with Athens in the background

### **May 18, 1959.....At Sea**

"I licked another crisis for the ship again today. The brush surface on one of the main generators was scored so bad that the generator was useless. I was down there all day grinding the surfaces true again. It was a fairly easy job, but the temperature was 130 degrees. I got one done, and I'll be able to finish the other one tomorrow. Once they start the generator, it takes over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour to get it stopped again because it is balanced so well, so we had to use a stroboscope to see how the surfaces were coming."

"The stroboscope is a light that has a controlled flicker, so you match the flicker per minute with the rpm of the shaft and you are able to see the shaft just like it is standing still."

"I finally got word that I passed the tests and have been promoted to MR3. This means more money in the bank and also more liberty. 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Petty Officer and above are allowed to go on liberty 3 hours before the rest of the peons. I may even get put on Shore Patrol in some ports."

### **May 24, 1959.....At Sea**

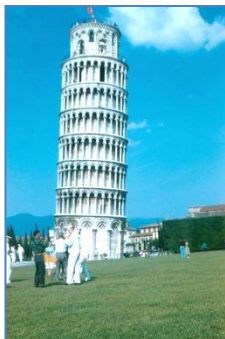
"I had sort of a rough weekend in the shop. Two of the oxygen plants blew up in about three hours' time Friday night, so me and the two other MR3's worked around the clock to make new pistons. The oxygen plants are about the most needed things on the ship because the planes can't fly unless the pilots have oxygen. When they have a breakdown, everybody including the Admiral sweats it. The recondenser I fixed in Athens worked like a charm until the other day, when some blockhead figured he knew how to adjust it better than anyone else. After 85 hours of work, they are making oxygen again."

### **May 31, 1959.....At Sea**

There isn't much doing on the ship. We aren't having GQ any more while we're at sea. The Chief got hold of two quarts of scotch so we had a little private party in the shop last night.

### **June 11, 1959.....At Sea**

"Leghorn, Italy, or Livorno as it is known by over here, turned out to be the best port I've been in since I've been aboard. I went on liberty all five days we we're in port. We went swimming and I met a girl who invited me to her parent's house for supper. Her name was Marisa Paoloni, and her dad owned the Coca Cola bottling company in Leghorn. Marisa showed me almost everything there was to see in Leghorn, so I got lots of pictures. Her mother and dad drove us to Fleet Landing when I had to go back to the ship."



The Leaning Tower of Pisa was only 14 miles from Livorno



"In 5 more days, I'll be officially in charge of the machine shop, even though I have been unofficially in charge since February. Right now, I will have 13 guys working for me, so all I'll do is supervise and work on jobs that others don't know how to do.

#### **June 14, 1959.....In Port – Palermo, Sicily**

"We pulled into Palermo on Friday, and I went on liberty for the first and last time. The scenery over here is ok but the people live like pigs. There were at least three riots on the beach since we've been in port, started by the communists, so it isn't too healthy over here. The people are really poor, so I guess communism spreads fairly easy."

"The weather is great here. We found a bar with a bunch of cool cats hanging out that didn't have a hammer and sickle behind the bar, and got along fine. We also went to a movie in an outdoor sit-down movie theater."



Cool Cats and good beer in Palermo



Mondello Beach

#### **June 18, 1959.....In Port – Asinara Bay, Sardinia**

"Well, it looks like we won't be going to Spain after all. We had a big fire in the cylinder of the port catapult, so the whole thing has to be tore apart and overhauled. We are anchored in Asinara Bay, Sardinia, for a Fleet Conference, and we leave for Naples for repairs tomorrow morning."

**Promoted from FN to MR3 on June 16, 1959  
(FN – Fireman..... MR3 – Machinery Repairman 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Petty Officer)**



**Yours Truly proudly wearing my new "Eagle"**

### **June 26, 1959.....In Port – Naples, Italy**

“We’ve been working steady since last Thursday on the catapults, with about four hours of sleep a day. So far, I haven’t had a chance to get on the beach, but we just about have the crisis licked. The ‘cat’ crew was testing the starboard cat this morning by shooting off 93-ton weights, so #1 catapult is back in commission. The cylinders on the port side are in place, but the deck plates have to be put back in.”

“There was a little excitement on the ship the other night. I was standing a lower deck security watch (something new that comes with higher rank), and I found some guy trying to commit hari-kari by slashing his wrists. He saw me coming and took off down into the hold. I got another guy to help me and we followed the trail of blood down to the 700 deck, where we found him collapsed. We put a tourniquet on and carried him down to sick bay. He’s ok now, but he’ll be sent to the headshrinkers soon.”

“Wednesday morning, a seaman got electrocuted while he was trying to fix an electric drill while it was plugged in. The doctor tried massaging his heart but he still died.”

### **July 1, 1959.....In Port – Naples, Italy**

I didn’t have a whole lot of time left before being discharged in September so I started sending some of my stuff home. I wrote, “I sent two boxes home today. One has my radio, two slide magazines, a six-inch scale, some pictures, and a few charts in it.” This box never made it home. The post office traced the box to a plane that crashed in the Atlantic Ocean. Unfortunately, 72 pictures of Athens and my “Sailor of the Month” tour around Greece, and all my pictures of Livorno, Italy were lost.



Naples as seen from the Bay



The shipyard where the FDR was fixed

### **July 4, 1959.....In Port – Naples, Italy**

“This is sure one dead Fourth of July. It doesn’t pay to go on the beach. There is another carrier, 5 destroyers, 4 Minesweepers, two oilers, and a cargo ship in port, so there is around 10,000 sailors here in Naples. The Chief brought back two quarts of bourbon, so we are going to have our own party in the shop this weekend.”

“Everybody is on Holiday Routine, and I think the shop deserves to be too. Some guy brought in three gears this morning and said they had to be done by 1600. I told him that as soon as he finds a Commander that thinks they should be done before Monday, he should come back. So far he hasn’t been back, so I think we may make it through the weekend without work for a change.”



### July 9, 1959.....At Sea

"We pull into Barcelona, Spain, tomorrow for 5 days of liberty. 'A' Division is having a beach party Monday and Tuesday, so I won't be spending much money over here. I've got Shore Patrol the first day, and my section is having the party the second, so I will be there both days."

### July 14, 1959.....In Port – Barcelona, Spain

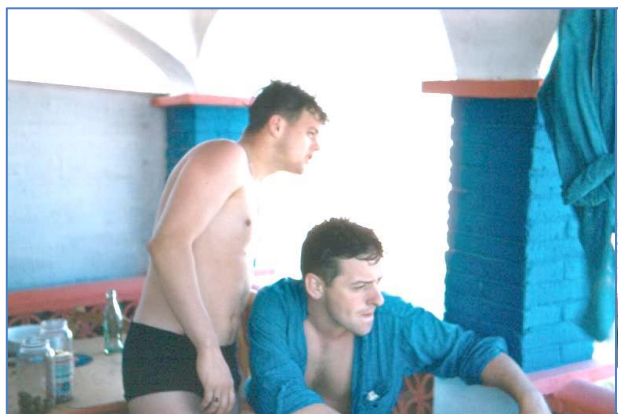
"Nobody got drunk or disorderly at our parties so being on Shore Patrol was easy. Liberty here was great. The town has a lot to see and take pictures of. Chief McClurg and I went to a bullfight on Sunday."



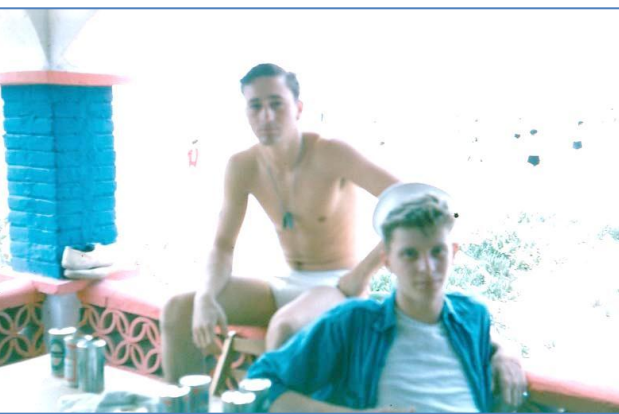
Who says Shore Patrol is tough Duty?



Memorial to Columbus in the harbor at Fleet Landing



Neville & Brouhard check out a hot chick



Reel and Seiple enjoying the 'A' Division party

### July 20, 1959.....In Port – Gulf Juan, France

"We are anchored in the harbor in Gulf Juan, France, to get a group of Midshipmen aboard for a three-week cruise, but there is no liberty call. We did have another "swim call" all afternoon though, like the one we had in Cuban waters. Almost the whole crew was swimming this time. There were no sharks and everyone had a great time. I still didn't jump off the flight deck."

### July 26, 1959.....At Sea

"We held an air show for some dignitaries on the ship from Turkey. I have been engraving cigarette lighters and things for some of the pilots with a Pantograph machine we bought for the shop, and it finally paid off for me. One of the pilots said he was going to be allowed to take a passenger in his jet for the air show and asked if I wanted to go, and I said yes. What a ride!! We were catapulted off the deck and flew around for almost an hour."



“When it was his turn, he was supposed to make a high speed pass, and flew about 70 feet above the ocean past the ship at just under the speed of sound. The ship went by so fast, I barely saw it. Landing was even more exciting, watching that little flight deck getting bigger and bigger. We landed on the first try. I guess my claim to fame is that I didn’t have to use the barf bag.”

### **July 29, 1959.....In Port – Palma, Spain**

“We lost another plane Thursday before we entered port. The pilot was taking off in a jet on the starboard catapult and didn’t quite get up enough speed to get airborne. He hit the water and skipped a couple times like a flat stone, and then the plane blew to smithereens. That makes the third plane since the start of this cruise.”



Downtown Palma is pretty modern



Old Spanish Military Post still in use

“We pulled into Palma, Spain, this morning for a little liberty. We were here last year, so I know my way around pretty well. The ship leaves here Monday for Cannes, France, but I will not be on it. Three of us from the ship, George Bergman, Russell Reel, and I are going to rent bicycles on the ship and pedal from Palma to Cannes. We have some leave time built up, so we’re going to use it. There are some mountains on the way, but lots of sailors have done it before, and they are telling us we should have no problem making the trip.”

“We will have the five days the FDR is at sea and another six days that the ship will be in Cannes to paddle our butts off. And, speaking of butts, we plan to take cartons of American cigarettes along to use as barter for food and lodging. We won’t get caught because we’re going to get off the ship on the rope ladders that go to the liberty boats. One advantage of being in ‘A’ Division.”

### **August 11, 1959.....In Port – Cannes, France**

“Our bicycle trip really turned out nice. Bartering cigarettes was the way to go, too. I don’t think I had to spend more than \$20 on the whole trip. The scenery was great, and the route was fairly easy and not a lot of mountains. Unfortunately, because of weight, I decided to leave the camera on the ship, so I didn’t get any pictures. We got to Cannes on the same day the ship did, but our leave was good for two more days, so we stayed at a hotel on the beach.”

“I ended up with a side job in Cannes. Someone had called the ship wanting to know if there was someone in our machine shop that could overhaul the clutch on his yacht. I figured I could get it done before we left port so I volunteered. The yacht belonged to actor Errol Flynn. He was a nice guy to work for and the girls around him weren’t too shabby either.”



**Errol Flynn's Yacht**

"I'm lucky I wasn't on the ship from Palma to Cannes. The evaporators turned into a crisis again, because they can't make enough fresh water to supply the ship. They had to go on water hours, so **FDR Taking on fresh water in Cannes** there was no drinking water for a week and showers could only be taken a few times a week. They had a ship bring the FDR a supply of fresh water when they tied up in Cannes."



"This will probably be my last liberty in the Navy, so I better make the best of it, especially in Cannes, with all those beautiful bikinis on the beach."



**My favorite picture is this one I took of the Fleet Landing in Cannes, France**



## August 19, 1959.....In Port – Gulf de Palmas, Sardinia

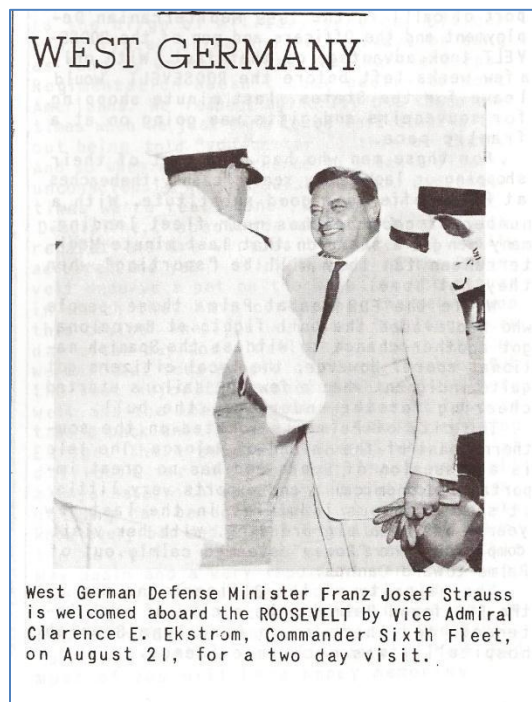
"I've got two good guys who can operate the milling machine now so I don't have to work too hard, but the Bureau of Ships sent a message saying that the shop has to test all of the bridles that are used to shoot the planes off the deck for cracks. I'm the only person on the ship that knows how to run the magnuflux testing unit, so I'm stuck with the job for now. Someone in the shop is going to be a quick learner, though."

"I am really getting to be a short-timer now. We will not be having any more liberty over here in the Mediterranean. Here in Gulf de Palmas, we are just having a 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet Conference. Our schedule is holding, so we should arrive in Mayport on September 1. Our mail is going to be cut off on the 23<sup>rd</sup> so hopefully our schedule won't change. All you need to do is watch TV or listen to the radio stations down there, and our schedule will be on every newscast.

## August 23, 1959.....In Port – Pollensa Bay, Spain

"The Navy and the city of West Berlin got together and gave me one more "Job well done" on August 22. The West German Defense Minister, Franz Josef Strauss came on board and personally thanked me for work that I did on one of the town's main generators. Because of the Soviet blockade and the Berlin Wall, the town was split, and so was the electric power. West Berlin was only running on emergency generators when one of their main ones broke down, so they really had a crisis."

This took place back in early May, so I don't even remember the date. Our government got involved and someone told them that we had a lathe in our shop that could handle the repair job. We looked over the pictures of the damage, and I told them we would have no trouble doing the work, which took me about 60 hours to complete with no sleep. The ship flew the repaired part back to Berlin, and they were up and running again in about four days. Unfortunately, this guy's visit was a complete surprise to me, so I have no pictures.



This was my Zippo lighter with engraving done by me. Many of the ship's officers had to have one with their name, so in return I traded for lots of perks, which included a nylon parachute bag tailored to be used as luggage, a great Phillips reel to reel tape recorder, and a ride in a jet during an airshow, as well as a few bottles of booze.



“We were relieved by the USS Forrestal today in a change of command ceremony on the ship, so we are now officially on our way back to the states. As usual, there were a large number of ships anchored in Pollensa Bay for this big event.”

### **August 25, 1959.....In Port – Rock of Gibraltar**

This was our last stop before heading for home. We are still on schedule to arrive in the USA on September 1. The Navy had already announced that anyone scheduled for discharge in September or October will be discharged early on arrival.

All I had to do on the way back to the states was indoctrinate the new guys in the shop. From here on, it's their baby.

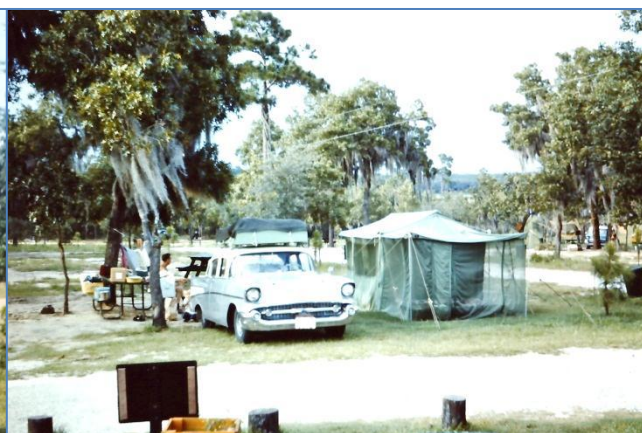
### **September 1, 1959.....In Port – Mayport, Florida**

As usual, we had about 4,000 people on the dock when we arrived. We docked at about 1000 and Mom, Dad, Karen and Lon were not hard to spot. I was able to give them a tour of the whole ship, and then we drove to Chief McClurg's house in Jacksonville Beach for dinner.

From there, we went back to the campground where they were staying in Georgia. It was at least a two-hour drive, so they had to get up pretty early to be on the pier when we arrived.



Lon in Georgia on my way home



Mom and Dad camping in Georgia

### **September 30, 1959.....At Home**

After attending three Monday night reserve meetings, I received a letter from the US Naval Reserve stating that I was excused from all Reserve activities, including weekly meetings.

**I received my Honorable Discharge from the USNR  
September 17, 1962 after serving 6 years**