

I feel like something of an imposter in that I didn't go aboard South Dakota until October 1945, in San Francisco. I very well remember the trip down to Long Beach because there was a severe storm, and we lost two or three men over the side who ignored the warnings to stay off the main deck. As I recall, we were sailing with Wisconsin and a destroyer, whose name I have forgotten (I think it was #780, since I have a picture of it I took from South Dakota), and we circled around in the dark for quite a long time trying to find the missing men with spotlights. Since the waves were about 30 feet high, they never really had a chance.

When Halsey retired, we practiced the ceremony for a day or so in advance—all the newsreel people were going to be there. At the end, the master of ceremonies said, "I propose three cheers for Admiral Halsey," and we all did that and then threw our little white hats in the air. Although there were a lot of us, the sound still wasn't very impressive because we were out over open water. Also, when Halsey got his gun salute, they moved the 16-inch guns up and down as though they were firing, but the 5-inch guns were the ones that were actually used—the 16-inch guns were Hollywood stuff for the newsreels. When my friends and I went to the movies a few days later to see ourselves' in the newsreel, the whole retirement ceremony had been jazzed up so that the sound of our three cheers was absolutely deafening!

I have some other interesting memories of our stay in Panama when we were going through the Canal, but they are probably a little too bawdy for publication!

I'll always been very proud of my brief association with South Dakota.

The "HEAD" Story about the "Aspirin" Joke

I just hope somebody doesn't write to me saying, "My grandpa died mysteriously of food poisoning on South Dakota . . . and now I know why!"

I never actually saw the head joke performed, so it may have just been somebody's imagination. The head consisted of a long metal trough with seats placed at intervals. It was at a slight angle, so that sea water pumped in at one end would flow out at the other. This system worked pretty well--despite the dehumanizing lack of privacy--so long as the sea was very calm. What it was like in rough seas I will leave to your imagination.

The joke was called "The Aspirin," and it went like this: when there were several people sitting on the trough, someone would soak a wad of toilet paper with lighter fluid, light it, and drop it in the trough where the water came in. From there, of course, the paper would float slowly down to the other end, scorching all of the exposed bottoms along the way. I doubt that anybody who ever performed this joke won any popularity contests.

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