

On Guadalcanal and about 200 yards in from the beach was an enormous hole that you could drive the largest bulldozer into with room to spare. Marines there said this was a crater made by a 16" shell from a battleship during the Great Night Battle. They said the whole thing sounded like the biggest 4th of July fireworks anyone had ever heard in their life. I said that I was aboard the SOUTH DAKOTA out there that night. He said: "Damn you! You guys nearly killed us!" I quickly replied that: "It wasn't us. The USS WASHINGTON did that". "Those bastards!", he yelled and I'd gotten myself off the hook. But, it truly was a revelation to see how destructive and powerful one of our missiles was. Kane and I are about the only two guys from the ship to have that particular experience ...to have been involved in the battle and then later on be witness to consequences from that night on the beach.

When the war ended and the Victory Fleet was assembled in Yokahama Bay to return to the States - via Pearl Harbor - in triumph, the SOUTH DAKOTA was among the leaders of the flotilla. I was serving aboard the aircraft carrier USS BENNINGTON and was one of only two out of 3,000 aboard with enough credits accumulated for immediate return to the United States... and I was only 20 years old at the time (but a "salty old dog", nevertheless.) We were to go home as guests aboard the USS WISCONSIN but I requested, for sentimental reasons, to come home the way I first came to the Pacific Theatre: aboard the SOUTH DAKOTA The request was granted and I happily sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge aboard her and waving to the crowds peering down from the bridge!!! Happy ending.

The return to the States, only a day or so after the Surrender aboard the MISSOURI was meant as an honor and an immediate Honorable Discharge from active duty. But, I still had 5 months remaining on my four year enlistment and, even then, I had to stay another 4 months in the Chelsea (MA) Naval Hospital before finally getting out.

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