

I reported aboard the S.D. on September 3, 1945, the day after the Japanese surrender was signed aboard the Missouri. I was fresh out of midshipman school, graduating July 6. I had my 20th birthday three days later, Sept. 6, so you can see how green I was. Someone was kind enough to give me a "Surrender Card" even though I was one day late. I was assigned to the 10th division (I'm pretty sure that is right). We were in charge of the 40mm quad mount guns forward. The division officer was Lt. J.G. Nuendoffer (sp.?).

I remember going ashore to Yokosuka and exploring the caves and warehouses. We discovered a lot of ammunition caches, a launching site for the famous Japanese two man submarines, warehouses full of shells and torpedoes. Some of the guys found a lot of souvenirs and some great electric fans that they took back to the ship and hooked up. Then, someone made them take them all down and back to where they found them. Never did understand this.

We were anchored close to the Nagato (sp?) battleship. Some of the crews from the S.D. were sent over to help strip the ship in preparation for the big blast at Bikini a few years later. I heard stories of some of the crew getting into the Saki locker and getting in trouble.

As I remember, we had picket boats circling the ships at night to try to prevent divers from bringing explosives underwater and trying to sink the ships.

We were not allowed off the Yokosuka naval base for the first week. There were rumors that some sailors had been found dead outside the base. The ban was lifted and we were allowed to go into the town. I remember the smells of the town. There seemed to be a different smell of each block. There were three Geisha houses there in town. One for officers, one for Chiefs, and one for enlisted men (so I was told). We stood outside the one for enlisted men and watched the geisha girls serving tea and playing those funny looking guitars making strange music. We did not see what was going on up stairs. The thing that struck me so funny that the men had to hold to Japanese custom and take their shoes off before entering the house. Just outside the door there must have been a hundred or more shoes, all black. We wondered how or if they got their own shoes back.
were "off limits".

We were in the first liberty party into Tokyo. We boarded a boat to take us to Yokohama for liberty. When we got ashore the word came down that liberty was now authorized for Tokyo. We all piled aboard the train and went to Tokyo. This was quite an experience. We saw makeshift houses on both sides of the railroad track all the way from Yokohama to Tokyo. When we arrived in Tokyo we saw the devastation. The roof of the terminal building was gone, great gaps between buildings, people on the streets trying to sell what little they had. I remember one poor fellow, all he had to sell were rubber bands. Outside a building that looked like a bank, there were hundreds of pieces of paper lying in the street that we took to be Japanese War Bonds

We toured around the Emperor's Palace.

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The thing I remember most about this was the huge gold fish in the little "moat" around the palace.

We left Tokyo Bay and headed for Okinawa where we picked up about 2000 Sea Bees to transport back to the U.S. Things were a little crowded. I remember one of the Sea Bees had a monkey.

We convoyed back to the U.S. with a two day stopover in Hawaii. If my memory serves, the S.D. was the second ship in the column, right behind the Alabama and just ahead of the Texas. I don't know what other ships were in the convoy.

For some reason, I was always chosen to have the first watch after anchoring or docking. I spent the first day in Hawaii on duty. The second day, there was a jeep (with a full tank) and a driver at the end of the gangway. One of the guys had a friend in the motor pool. We spent the day touring Oahu. We even swiped a fresh pineapple out of Mr. Doles patch. I hope that the statute of limitations has passed on that one!

When we pulled into San Francisco Bay, the S.D. pulled over and the rest of the Third Fleet "passed in review" and each ship gave Halsey a (?)gun salute. There was a big ceremony aft with Admiral Halsey either retiring or passing the command to someone else. There are pictures of this enclosed. I remember that there was a movie that showed the same scenes as the pictures but I don't know the title.

One personal item I remember about coming into San Francisco Bay. I had no responsibilities at the time we crossed under the Golden Gate Bridge. I figured that there was going to be a newspaper photographer on the bridge to take a picture of Halsey's flagship. I got the idea that if I went high up into the superstructure, I would be in position to get my picture in the paper. I went up about half way and waited as we neared the bridge. Just as we got to the place that the photographer took the picture, they blew the whistle. I was just above the whistle and a huge cloud of steam rose up and covered much of the superstructure, me included. Sure enough, the next day, front page, huge picture of the S.D., steam cloud and all.

Since the South Dakota was Halsey's Flagship, it attracted a lot of attention. When we stopped in San Francisco Bay to allow the fleet to salute the admiral, we were boarded by hundreds of reporters and the Governor of California. All these people rode the South Dakota to the anchorage area in the Bay. When we anchored, we had the regular ship's company, about 2000 I am told, half of whom had not been home in years and were scheduled to begin leave that day, all 2000 Sea Bees heading for home, the Admiral, the Governor, and countless reporters who needed to get to shore and file their stories.

I was scheduled to be the Junior Office of the Deck as soon as the anchor was dropped.

I was there on the quarterdeck when the con was moved from the conning tower to the quarterdeck. The scheduled Officer of the Deck was no where to be found. There I was, hundreds of people on the quarterdeck each wanting to be the first off the ship. There had been about a dozen picket boats assigned to the South Dakota to act as water taxis. The Admiral's aide, a Marine Master Sergeant, said that the Admiral was ready to leave the ship. It struck me that my best move was to move the Admiral's gear off the ship. I called up the Admiral's barge and somehow we got the Sergeant and gear off.

Next, I called the governor's yacht to come along side and got the Governor and his party aboard and on their way. Then it was a free-for-all. I managed to get several boats filled and on the way to shore before the Officer of the Deck finally got there. It was only a few minutes I am sure, but it seemed like hours.

I think that it was the first day we were in San Francisco that we unloaded all the munitions from the Ship. There were a couple of barges alongside taking on 16 in. shells and canisters of powder. Another one taking 5 in shells, and another one or two taking 40mm and other things off. I remember watching them slide the canisters of 16 in. powder bags down a chute onto the barge. I just knew that we were going to blow up half of San Francisco. Fortunately, it all went well.

We stayed in San Francisco a short while, and then went down to Long Beach for a few more weeks. On Jan. 4, 1946, we left Long Beach bound for the Panama Canal and ultimately to Philadelphia Navy Yard. It was quite a trip, one that I will never forget. Just as we passed through the Canal and headed North, it got cold, and the further we went, the colder it got.

Going through the Panama Canal was an experience I will never forget. We had to wait in Balboa for a day waiting our turn to go through the "Ditch". I had watch on the after gangway at the time General Hap Arnold and his wife toured the S.D. The word was to keep the after gangway clear because the General would come aboard the forward gangway, tour the ship, and then leave by the after gangway. There were several "tipsy" marines trying to come aboard at the time it was closed. They finally got the idea that they would have to wait and left. Later, when the General had left, they came back, but one of them was completely out. Four of his buddies carried him aboard, each had a leg or arm and the marine was face down. It was quite a sight.

The Panama Canal locks are 110 feet wide, and the South Dakota was 106 feet and 6 inches wide. (I was told). In six locks, we touched the concrete lock only once. The guys operating those "mules" were very skillful.

As soon as we cleared Panama, the weather began to get cold. By the time we got to Philadelphia, it was snowing slightly, the wind was blowing, and all those guys who spent a lot of time in the south Pacific were really miserable.

We docked in the Philadelphia Navy Yard and began to "retrofit" the ship. I spent a couple of days scribing cams for 20mm machine guns. After a few weeks, we got orders to begin to put the old gal in moth balls.

In June of 1946, I got my separation papers and went back to Texas. In the few months that I spent on the South Dakota I learned to love and respect The "old Girl". I can see why all of the guys that spent a long time aboard the S.D. care about her so much.

Since I could not say that then, let me say it now, "I salute all of you who served so bravely and turned a bunch of steel, wood, and stuff into a legend." It was an honor to be associated with you even for a short time.

(An After thought)

Sometime during the winter of 1945, I can't remember just when, the State of South Dakota sent a lot of frozen pheasants to the ship for the crew to enjoy. We feasted on pheasant for three days and everyone enjoyed it very much. Every time I meet some one from South Dakota, I mention this to them and thank them for the treat.

While we were in San Pedro harbor in Los Angeles (or was it in San Francisco?) Bob Hope did his radio show from the fantail of the Ship. This was quite a treat for the entire crew.

Sincerely:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Orion C. Malier". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.