

Lenahan

Post WWII





When did you enter the military?

“Ahhh that’s a good question, I brought notes with me, because I can’t remember anything hahaha. Ok let’s see, I was in the navy, and I enlisted at 4-18-45 I guess that would be April, 14, 1945”

How old were you?

“I was let’s see, I was in high school so... I was 18 years olds

How long were you in the military?

“Oh let’s see well I was discharged in 8 7 46 so I imagine close to 2 years about a year and three quarters. “

What boot camp did you go to?

“Sampson NY”

How long was the boot camp?

“Um..I’d be guessing... I’d say at least 6 weeks”

Did you go to a second Boot camp? If so then why?

“No I did not. right from boot camp I got on a ship”

Did you join the military voluntarily?

“Yes I did”

Why did you choose the Navy?

“Well I was 18 years old, my brother was in the army at the time and I was probably a little jealous, so I waited until I got out of high school, I joined the navy, because he told me don't join the army and don't get drafted, join the navy and see the world.”

I bet a lot of brothers would do that.

“Ohh yes, Well that was the times, today's a lot different.”

You were in the navy correct?

“Yes I was”

What equipment did you use on a daily basis?

“Well I was a gunner's mate, so I used big guns, five inch 38 guns on a heavy cruiser.”

Did you also have the 30 caliber rifle?

“No in the navy the only time where we used a riffle was on Guard duty.”

Was it mandatory to have it with you at all time?

“No it was not”

What was the name of the ship you were on?

“The U.S.S. Helena”

What rank you did you achieve?

“I was gunner’s mate third class”

Were you wounded while you were in the military? If you were in what way were you wounded?

“Not really, I was accidently hit on the head with one of the shells hahaha”

What kind of shell?

“It was a 5 inch 38 shell, it was about this big (shows with arms) and then they have a powder case that goes in the back of that, and what happened was-“

Was it almost like a gun shell?

“Yes, almost like a gun shell, but they’re big and when you pass them down, your suppose to pass them down gently because they can slip out of your hands, and this one slipped out of someone’s hands and hit me on the top of the head, and gave me a couple of gashes on my head.”

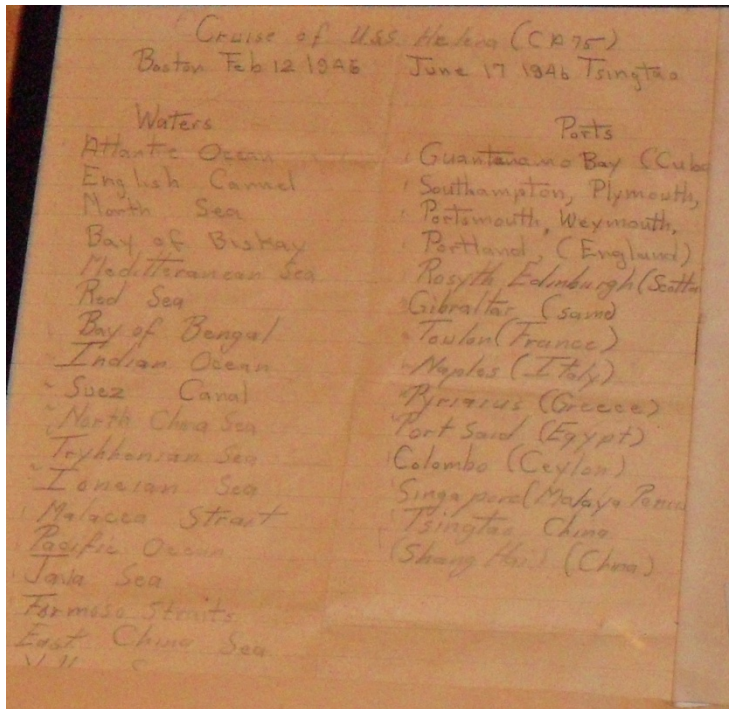
Were you in any famous campaigns or battles?

“No I was not.”

Did you receive any awards or medals for your service?

“Oh yeah quite a few, but let’s see, can you read them? Cause I didn’t bring my glasses with me. This the ports that I had visited, these were the waters that I was in, so uhm I was in the Atlantic,-

Scout reading: **English canal, North sea, Bay of Biskay, Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, Bay of Banal, Indian Ocean, Suez Canal, North China Sea, Tyrrhenian Sea, Ionion Sea, Malacca Strait, Pacific Ocean, Java Sea, Formoso Sea, East China sea... wow**



“I almost went around the world on that one ship”

Was it exciting for you?

“Yes that’s the word; I would do it again if I had the opportunity”

Was your ship ever in battle?

“No it was not... a lot of target practice but no battles”

What did you do on a “normal or average Day” while you were in the military?

“Well when we got up we had to clean our guns and they were a job to clean cause they were big, and we used to have a lot of target practice with the gun, make it so if we ever had to shoot it at a ship we would hit it. But we were kept busy, very busy, cleaning polishing... whatever”

Making sure nothing explodes on you?

“Oh gosh wouldn’t want that”

I'm a bit confused, was the gun an actual big gun or was it like a RPG and grenade launcher???

“Oh no no no guns, huge guns, they were 5 inches round, about this big (shows with hands)”

Big as in like, long, length?

“Both, they were turrets.”

Oh turrets

“yep, and I think there's a picture here.. Oh I guess not”

Would they be up here?(the scout points to one of the pictures)

“Oh, no, no, no, that's the ship I came home on”



“No this is not the my ship that I was stationed at, my ship was a heavy cruiser, imagine that, I don't have a picture of my own ship... but it was a heavy cruiser and there were uh, we had 16 inch guns on there and 5 inch 38s, now the 16 inch guns were huge, they were very big, but the five inch guns were on the side of the ship they were mainly used for aircraft- shooting the planes out of the sky”

Would you mind if showed this plaque so the camera can see?

“Oh no, I would be delighted, would you like to see my handsome picture?HahahaWould you believe that’s me?”

Yes

“Yes? Ah no you wouldn’t (*he laughs*).My daughter put that together for me”

Its very nice

“Thank you”

What was your normal or most common routine while you were at war or battle?

“well I wasn’t at war and I wasn’t at battle, but our routine of the day was get up eat break feast, and do a little detail work on our guns, always polishing the brass always cleaning the barrels of the guns to make sure they’re nice and clean, take an inventory... ah gun practice target practice mostly a lot of target practice to get used to the guns cause this was a brand new ship it was just commissioned. And I came on and we went down to Cuba on what we call a brake down cruise where you go down and you would do everything on a ship to make sure it works and it comes back again and what don’t work they fix, so that it does work, very exciting.”

Where in Cuba did you go?

“Guantanamo Bay”

I have a question. What did you do for target practice?

“Well I used pull drones. They’re called drones and what they do is have a plane fly by and the drone would be way in the back and they would, well ways back you know maybe a mile or so and we would have to go and see if we could hit it and they also would go and pull a barge along the water and we would make believe that was a ship and we would practice on that trying to hit that.”

What was Guantanamo bay like back then?

“Well it was always a navy port, and it still is a navy port and it still belongs to here, the United States of America. “

Is it a famous port? Is it used a lot?

“It was at the time, it was a port where we used to go down when you had problems with your ship, we used to go down there to have it fixed or like with a our ship, its warm weather, it’s a good place, calm seas, and it’s a good place to try out all your guns and all your equipment aboard ship, and when it’s in defect you have to fix it.”

Was it a prison camp back then?

“No, no it was not it was a navy barracks, a navy port”

What type of firearm(s) did you use?

“5 inch thirtyeights which I was assigned and when I was on guard duty I carried a 45, a colt 45 side arm”

Is that a riffle?

“No that’s a pistol”

Did you use any heavy weapon Artillery?

“That is heavy weapon artillery, a 5 inch thirty-eight is heavy weapon artillery.”

While at war, what helped you pass the time?

“Well I wasn’t at war, I was in High school at the war times”

While you were in high school what war was going on???

“WWII”

While in service, what helped you get through hard times?

“Well I had a brother in the war he was in the thick of the war and ah I guess school work is what kept me busy and part time jobs that help my family support to support my family.”

After you came home from war, did your perspective on anything change?

“Well I wasn’t affected by the war while I was in the service, but when I came out of the service I went to school, not high school I went to a drafting school, I became a draftsman and I got part time jobs until I got a steady job at a telephone company and I was with the telephone company for 45 years.”

While you were at military service what helped you pass the time?

“Work, because we were at sea most of the time”

Did you ever swim in the sea?

“Off the ship, yes in Cuba and all the warm waters, we had shark nets we used to put down and we were allowed to swim within the shark net.”

Is there anything you would like to add or say that I missed or is there anything that you would like to talk about?

“No, I guess thank you, for the interview and it’s privilege to for me to talk to young guys. I know you don’t know what war is like but thank god it’s over and we don’t want another one. “

Question, were these pictures taken in U.S. soil?

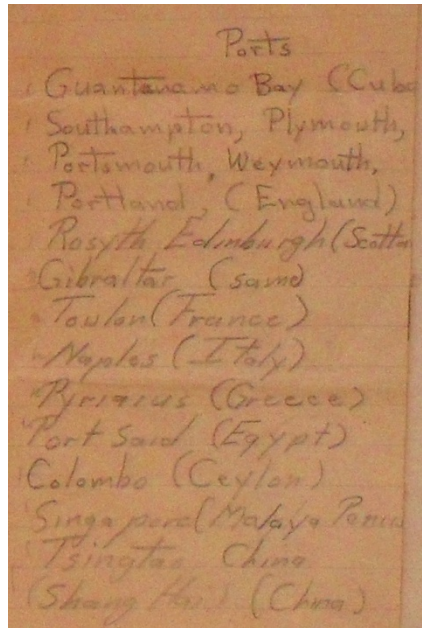
“Yes”

What year was it taken?

“Well that was right after I got out of boot school and that was 1945. That was like my graduation picture in the navy.”

So these are the ports you went to at sea?

“Yes”



Are these (the ports) connected to the oceans

“Yup, the Mediterranean Sea, Pacific Ocean Atlantic Ocean, I went right around the world, so I started in Boston went all around, came through Africa went through the Suez Cannel into Egypt, and then I ended up in Japan.”

Can you describe some of the documents in this plaque?

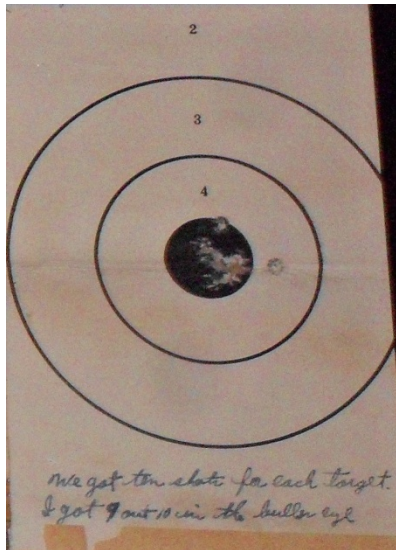
“Sure, sure, ok, well this is ME!” (see below)



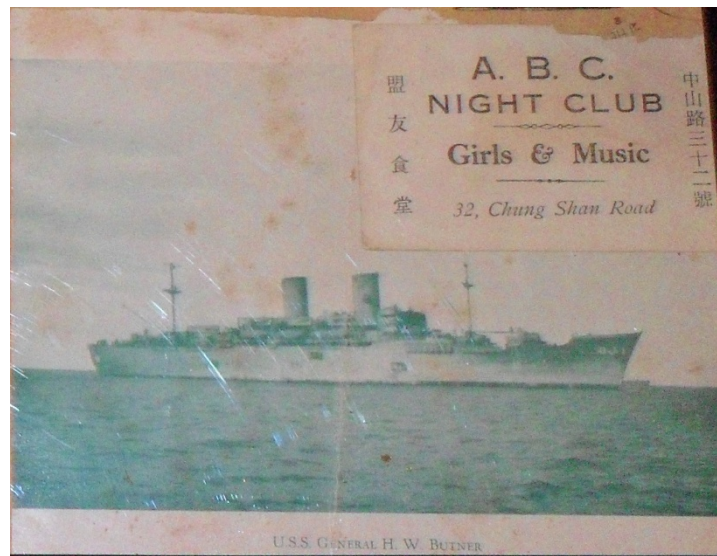
“And this is from boot school, this is target practice, as you see I was a sharp shooter.”(he points to the various pictures as he describes them)

Were you a sniper?

“No I wasn’t you need to remember I was in the navy, I was just pretty good with a gun.”



“And this ship here is what picked me up when I was in Japan, after my tour was up I came home on it and it was a transport ship. It took us I think almost a month to get home from Japan to San Francisco.”



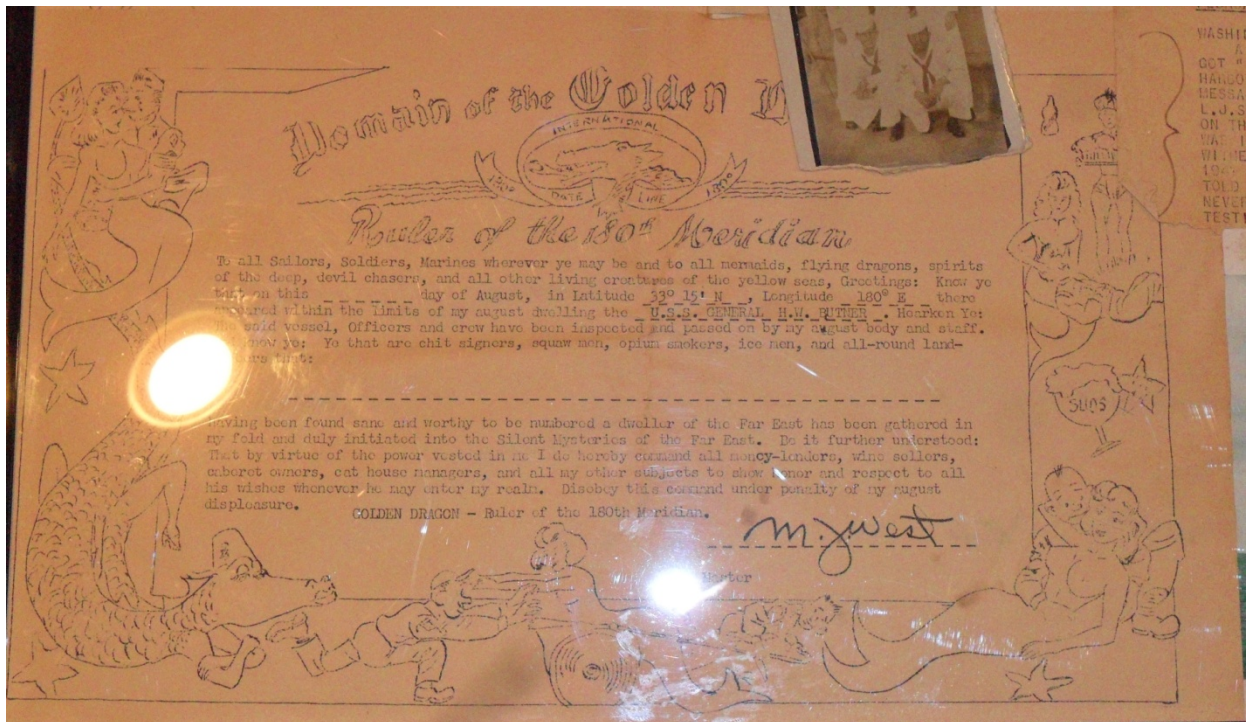
“And these are my buddies I used to hang with.”

When was that picture taken?

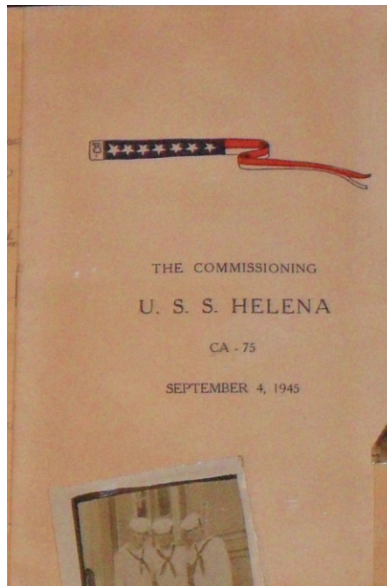
“I think that picture was taken in Egypt it looks like. Yeah I was in Egypt, I went to see the sphinx. I saw a lot of stuff when I was in the navy “



“And this is a award for when you go across 38 parallel, you ever hear that they all dress up in funny clothing and they dunk you in water and stuff like that. They used to do crazy things to the polliwogs and that’s to certify I crossed 38 parallel”



“And that’s my ship the U.S.S. Helena, when it was commissioned and that was in 1945 “



“These are all the waters I was in, and all the ports I was in.”

Cruise of U.S.S. Helena (CA 75)
 Boston Feb 12 1945 June 17 1946 Tsingtao

Waters	Ports
Atlantic Ocean	Guantanamo Bay (Cuba)
English Channel	Southampton, Plymouth,
North Sea	Portsmouth, Weymouth,
Bay of Biscay	Portland, (England)
Mediterranean Sea	Rosyth Edinburgh (Scotland)
Red Sea	Gibraltar (Spain)
Bay of Bengal	Toulon (France)
Indian Ocean	Naples (Italy)
Suez Canal	Piraeus (Greece)
North China Sea	Port Said (Egypt)
Typhsonian Sea	Colombo (Ceylon)
Ionian Sea	Singapore (Malaya Peninsula)
Malacca Strait	Tsingtao, China
Pacific Ocean	(Shanghai) (China)
Java Sea	
Formosa Straits	
East China Sea	

“So I actually almost went around the world on that one ship and it was very exciting, I saw all kinds of people, foods. We were almost like a good, I would call us a good will tour, they were able to come aboard the ship, see our ship.”

Really?

“Yes”

Did you see the pyramids or any other well known objects in Egypt or around the world?

“Oh yes, yes, well when I was in India I saw the great Buda and when I was in France I saw the Eiffel tower, china not too much in china”

The Great Wall?

“No, no wall I was only at the ports.”

So only market areas?

“Yeah and I saw how people lived. I wanna tell you, thank your lucky stars that we live in the U.S. because they were really hurt badly over there. “

Are you still in contact with your buddies in your photo?

“No sadly I believe they are all past away.”

Is there a reason your ship traveled a lot and others did not?

“Yes, there is because first of all it was right after the war and I guess our country was trying to create more friendship with the countries we were at war with. So we went around and more or less like a good will tour. It showed other countries that we do have powerful equipment and that they don't want to mess with us. If you show them a big fist they are going to run.”

Thank you for your time, thank you very much sir.