

The following Recollections are part of the original Natoma Bay Logbook Project created in the 1970s and 1980s by John J. Sassano, historian and Bob Wall, editor. The current document attempts to recreate, in electronic form, that original LOGBOOK of the Natoma Bay Association.

The entire Natoma Bay Online Logbook Project can be found at:
<http://natomabaycve62.org/logbook/LBindex.html>

Lucinda DeWitt
(daughter of John W. DeWitt, Jr.)
June 2009
Minneapolis, MN 55407

Please send any comments/corrections/updates to:

NEW Mailing Address as of September 2016:
DeWitt DeConstruction
233 Stormy Road
Manahawkin, NJ 08050
lucindadewitt@gmail.com

NOTEWORTHY BITS OF HISTORY (that we made)

Received a lengthy and welcome letter from shipmate Dan Davey (1st Div.) He lives in Santa Ana, Calif., and is nationally famous for his dedicated work in helping the destitute Indian population. Some of you may remember his appearance on the "This Is Your Life" TV show many years ago. Ralph Edwards, the host, praised Danny for his work with the Indians and asked where the motivation came from. Danny explained about his hair-raising experiences aboard the Natoma Bay. One in particular was the day we were re-arming the ship underway. (Historian's note: How well I remember!) A fire broke out on the hangar deck after we had taken about 50 aboard. The flames were approaching the stacks of bombs piled up and ready to be lowered into the magazines. Those who didn't head for the fantail were busy throwing bombs over the side. One man was frantically chopping at the lines from the ship alongside and yelling to steer clear as we had a fire aboard. It didn't take long to get the picture. Men with fire extinguishers were holding the flames at bay until someone remembered the overhead sprinkler system (Carpenter Roy). I was the man in charge of rearming the ship and at the time was below decks seeing to the battening down of the magazines. When I came up through the hatch to see what all the commotion was about, I was greeted by a drenching from the overhead sprinklers, which was a lot better than a big bang. We salvaged the rest of the bombs and rockets. But not until we held the grand-daddy of all "mop up" jobs. By the way, the fire was started from a few drops of gasoline that dripped onto a drop light that was being used to work on a nearby aircraft. Danny stood his ground that day and so did most of the men on that working party. Another one of the reasons most of us are still here today! This was just one incident of many close calls aboard the Natoma Bay.

John J. Sassano, Historian

Danny wants to hear from old shipmates in the First Division.
(See address list.)

"DOUG McARTHUR'S NAVY"

Oh, we're the boys in the CVE's
A little bit shaky in the knees
Our engines knock and cough and wheeze
In Doug McArthur's Navy.

We operate where it's hot as hell
Move in close to ring the bell,
Prime targets for a Zeke or Nell
In Doug McArthur's Navy.

While Jeeps are not dependable
Their actions are commendable,
But gosh, they are expendable
In Doug McArthur's Navy.

They sent us out to the Philippines
Shuffled supplies behind the scenes,
And all that was left for us was beans
In Doug McArthur's Navy.

To make the Leyte show complete
They let us tackle the whole Jap Fleet,
While the big shots sat in a grandstand seat
In Doug McArthur's Navy.

Next they sent us to the Inland Seas
Screened by cruisers and old BB's,
Giving cover by CAP's
In Doug McArthur's Navy.

For the biggest show of the whole campaign
We entered the Sulu Sea again
And the Jap attacks were thick as rain
In Doug McArthur's Navy.

We survived the trip intact (almost)
Near to Lingayen took up our posts,
Our fannies exposed to the China Coast
In Doug McArthur's Navy.

Said Halsey to his big CV's
This time we'll trap those Japanese,
We'll bait the trap with CVE's
In Doug McArthur's Navy.

Oh, we'll bait the trap with CVE's
Those ships sure look like a lot of cheese,
And all that we could say was "Jees"
In Doug McArthur's Navy.

When the war is over I'll tell it true
We took whatever the enemy threw
Weathered it - and McArthur too
In Doug McArthur's Navy.

"THE ADMIRALS LAMENT"

O Mother dear I want to be an
Admiral some day.
With flag and staff and everything
Especially the pay,
I want an aide, a chief of staff,
And a fast speedboat to boot,
But most of all I want to wear
A pure white romper suit.

Ham Lokey, poet
laureate of the
Big NB.

RECORD OF VC-81, Seventh and Third Fleets
South and West Pacific Areas WWII

DUTIES

NAS, Seattle
NAS, Pasco
NAS, Holtville..
NAS, Ream Field
NAS, San Clemente
NAS, Inyokern
NAS, San Diego
USS, Savo Island
NAS, Kaneohe
NAS, Ford Islands
USS Natoma Bay
Western Carolines
Admiralty Islands
Invasion of Leyte
Battle for Leyte Gulf
Battle of San Bernadino
NAS, Pitylu
Transit of Surigao Sts.
Invasion of Mindoro
Invasion of Lingayen
Invasion of Subic Bay
Patrol of S. China Sea
Invasion of Iwo Jima
Strikes on Chichi Jima
NAS, Agana
The City of Paris

COMBAT MISSIONS

Sorties2,232
Combat Air
Hours8,914
against: Aircraft,
Warships, Enemy
Troops & Equipment,
Cargo Vessels,
Submarines and Airfields;
PLUS Combat Air
Patrols, Observation,
Strike Direction,
Searches, Air-Sea
Rescue, Supply and
Propaganda Drops &
Photo

DESTROYED

1 Battlecruiser,
1 Destroyer,
14 Cargo Ships
26 Aircraft

**PROBABLES OR
DAMAGED**

18 Cargo Vessels,
1 Battleship,
6 Cruisers,
2 Destroyers,
33 Auxiliaries and
Numerous Aircraft

HONORS

Honored Dead 16
Purple Hearts 25
The Presidential Unit
Citation*
Philippine Presidential
Unit Citation*
Asiatic-Pacific Medal*****
American Defense Medal
Philippine Liberation
Medal**
PLUS
Individual Decoration
which include:
Navy Cross
Silver Star
Distinguished Flying
Cross
Air Medal & Navy
Commendation

WEAPONS

FM-2 Wildcat
TBM Avenger
Torpedoes
Depth Charges
Armor Piercing &
Demolition Bombs
Napalm
Rockets,
50 cal. and 30 cal.

We need some historical data for VC 63 and
VC 9. Does anyone have anything?

**RECORD OF MC-81, Seventh and Third Fleets
South and West Pacific Areas WW11**

DUTIES	The City of Paris	HONORS
NAS, Seattle	COMBAT	Honored Dead 16
NAS, Pasco	MISSIONS	Purple Hearts .. 25
NAS, Holtville	Sorties 2,232	The Presidential
NAS, Ream Field	Combat Air	Unit Citation*,
NAS, San Clemente	Hours 8,914	Philippine
NAS, Inyokern	against: Aircraft,	Presidential Unit
NAS, San Diego	Warships,	Citation*,
USS Savo Island	Enemy Troops &	Asiatic-Pacific
NAS, Kaneohe	Equipment,	Medal*****,
NAS, Ford Islands	Cargo Vessels,	American Defense
USS Natoma Bay	Submarines and	Medal,
Western Carolines	Airfields; PLUS	Philippine
Admiralty Islands	Combat Air Patrols,	Liberation
Invasion of Leyte	Observation,	Medal**,
Battle for	Strike Direction,	PLUS Individual
Leyte Gulf	Searches,	Decorations
Battle of	Air-Sea Rescue,	which include:
San Bernadino	Supply and	Navy Cross,
NAS, Pitylu	Propaganda	Silver Star,
Transit of	Drops & Photo	Bronze Star,
Surigao Sts.	DESTROYED	Distinguished
Invasion of	1 Battlecruiser,	Flying Cross,
Mindora	1 Destroyer,	Air Medal & Navy
Invasion of	14 Cargo Ships,	Commendation
Lingayen	26 Aircraft	WEAPONS
Invasion of	PROBABLES OR	FM-2 Wildcat,
Subic Bay	DAMAGED	TBM Avenger,
Patrol of	18 Cargo Vessels,	Torpedoes,
S. China Sea	1 Battleship,	Depth Charges,
Invasion of	6 Cruisers,	Armor Piercing &
Iwo Jima	2 Destroyers,	Demolition
Strikes on	33 Auxiliaries and	Bombs,
Chichi Jima	Numerous Aircraft	Napalm, Rockets,
NAS, Agana		50 cal. and 30 cal.

We need some historical data for VC 63 and VC 9. Does anyone have anything?

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THE DAY THE MOUNT HOOD BLEW UP

The Natoma Bay lay at anchor in Manus Harbor, Admiralty Islands, just back from the invasion of Leyte and the unforgettable Battle for Leyte Gulf.

The ship's magazines were empty of all ordnance material. We had expended all our ammunition on October 24th and 25th, 1944, holding off and chasing the Jap Fleet. It was time to rearm the ship. The date was Nov. 9, 1944. Our destination was the ammunition ship Mount Hood (AE 11). She lay at the other end of the harbor, about 2 miles from our anchorage. A working party of about 20 men got into some of those landing crafts, LCT, LCI, LCE (never could get those letters straight)(try LCM, John), and off we went to load up. As we pulled alongside and waited our turn, I noticed the handling of the bombs by the ship's crew! I shuddered, and mentioned to someone that these guys must think they are handling sand bags! They were actually sliding bombs down a makeshift wooden ramp from 3 decks above to the landing craft below and bouncing them off the steel decks and sides of the waiting boats below! When our turn came, I insisted that we get some type of cushioning for those bombs to land on. That was quite a sweat job that day - but come to find out when we got back that we only half filled our magazines and would be off bright and early next morning for another load. I told Pagni I wanted him up on top and to not let those guys heave those bombs, to let them slide gently as possible down that chute, as I had noticed quite a bit of seepage (exudate) coming out of the nose cones and all it would take was one little spark of metal on metal to set off a bomb, and that I wouldn't care to be there when it happened. After a hairy hour and a half we loaded and headed back to Natoma Bay. The time 0830 we proceeded to hoist our bombs aboard and lower into the magazines. Thankful that we were finally through with re-arming from the Mount Hood.

I was down in the magazines standing under an open circular hatch when a cloud of dust from the deck above came down on me, and as I started up the ladder to see what nut was sweeping his dirt into that open hole, I heard the explosion. Yep, you're right, it was the Mount Hood! I think the next biggest explosion

must have been Hiroshima! As I got to the flight deck, the mushroom cloud was just forming. It was 0855, Nov. 10, 1944, and where the Mount Hood had been, there was nothing! She bowled over every smallcraft within 2000 yards! Casualties amounted to 45 known dead, 327 missing and 371 injured. Of the crew of the Mount Hood, only Lt. L. A. Wallace and 17 men on the beach at the time survived.

She had been anchored in 19 fathoms of water with an estimated 3800 ton of ordnance material aboard. The largest piece of metal found measured no bigger than 17 by 10 feet. Where she blew up there was now a trench in the harbor floor 300 long, 50 feet wide, and 30 to 40 feet deep.

The Mount Hood was commissioned November 10, 1943. She blew up on her first anniversary. That was her first and only tour of duty, which lasted a total of 4 months.

How can any of us who were on that detail forget how we were just 25 minutes away from that catastrophe?

A Board convened to examine evidence relating to the disaster and was unable to ascertain the exact cause. (They didn't ask us!)

-- John Sassano

(References from Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships)

[LD--The following two additional pages on Mount Hood were inserted, unnumbered, into the Logbook between Recollections pages 6 & 7]

MOUNT HOOD

A volcanic peak in the Cascade Range of Oregon.

(AE-11; dp, 13,910; l.459'2"; b.63'; dr.28'3"; s. 16 k.; cpl. 318;
a. 1 5", 4 3", 4 40mm; cl. MOUNT HOOD; T. C2-S-AJ1)

MOUNT HOOD (AE-11) was built under Maritime Commission contract as MARCO POLO, MC hull 1356, by the North Carolina Shipbuilding Co., Wilmington, N . C.; renamed MOUNT HOOD, 10 November 1943; launched 28 November 1943; sponsored by Mrs. A. J. Reynolds; acquired by the Navy on loan-charter basis, 28 January 1944; converted by the Norfolk Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Co., Norfolk, VA., and the Navy Yard, Norfolk, VA; and commissioned 1 July 1944, Comdr. Harold A. Turner in command.

Following an abbreviated fitting out and shakedown period in the Chesapeake Bay area, ammunition ship MOUNT HOOD reported for duty to ComServFor. Atlantic Fleet, 5 August 1944. Assigned to carry her vital cargos to the Pacific, she put into Norfolk, where her holds were loaded. On 21 August, as a unit of TG 29.6, she departed for the Panama Canal, transited that system of locks and lakes on the 27th, and continued on, independently, toward what would be her ultimate destination, Manus in the Admiralty Island. Proceeding via Finschafen, New Guinea, she arrived in Seeadler Harbor, 22 September, and, as a unit under ComSoWesPac, commenced dispensing ammunition and explosives to ships preparing for the Philippine offensive.

At 0830, 10 November 1944, a party consisting of the communications officer, Lt. L. A. Wallace, and 17 men left the ship and headed for shore. At 0855, while walking on the beach, they saw a flash from the harbor, followed by two quick explosions. Scrambling into their boat, they headed back to the ship, only to turn around again shortly thereafter as "There was nothing but debris all around . . ."

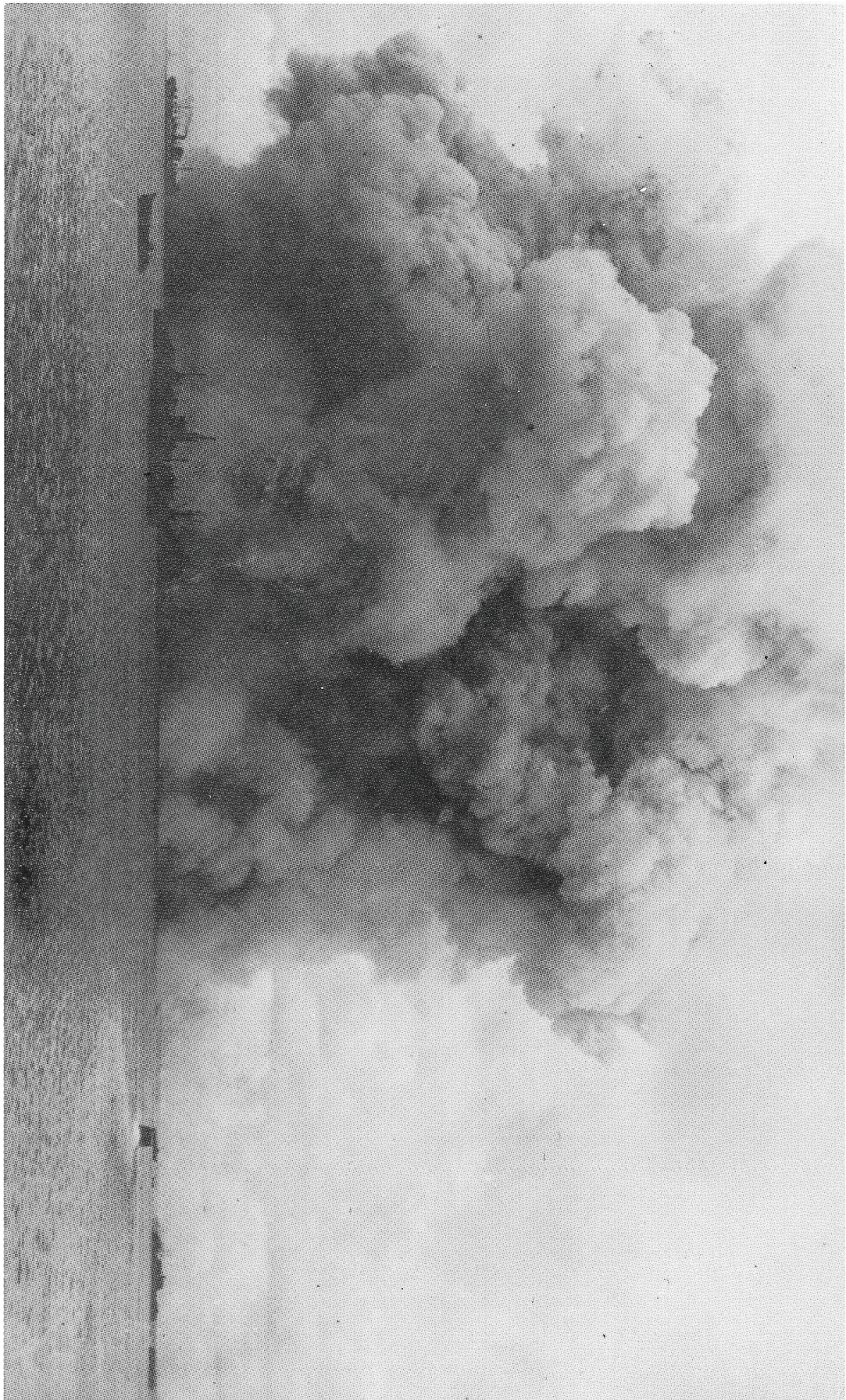
MOUNT HOOD, anchored in about 19 fathoms of water, with an estimated 3,800 tons of ordnance material on board, had exploded.

The initial explosion caused flame and smoke to shoot up from amidships to more than masthead height. Within seconds, the bulk of her cargo was set off with a more intense explosion. Mushrooming smoke rose to 7,000 feet, obscuring the ship and the surrounding area for a radius of approximately 500 yards. MOUNT HOOD'S former position was shown by a trench in the ocean floor 300 feet long, 50 feet wide, and 30 to 40 feet deep. The largest pieces of metal found measured no bigger than 16 by 10 feet.

The concussion and metal fragments, hurled from the ship, also caused casualties and damage to ships and small craft within 2,000 yards. Casualties mounted to 45 known dead, 327 missing and 371 injured, including the crew of MOUNT HOOD, of which only those ashore survived. The damage to other vessels required more than 100,000 man-hours to repair, while 22 small boats and landing craft were sunk, destroyed, or damaged beyond repair.

A board convened to examine evidence relating to the disaster was unable to ascertain the exact cause.

MOUNT HOOD (AE-11), after only a little over 4 months service, was struck from the Naval Register 11 December 1944.



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to the

UNITED STATES SHIP NATOMA BAY

AND HER ATTACHED SQUADRONS participating in the following operations:

VC 63, Marshall Island Operation, Jan 29-Mar. 8, 1944

VC 63, Western New Guinea Operations, Apr 22 to May 5

VC 81, Leyte Operation, Oct. 17 to 30, 1944

VC 81, Luzon Operation, Dec. 13 to 17, 1944

VC 81, Luzon Operation, Jan. 4 to 18, 1945

VC 81, Iwo Jima Operation, Feb. 16 to Mar. 8, 1945

VC 9, Okinawa Gunto Operation, Mar 25 to June 24, 1945

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces in the air, ashore, and afloat. Striking aggressively at her targets in the face of frequent and sustained hostile air attacks, the USS NATOMA BAY caused extremely heavy losses to the enemy in warships, aircraft, merchant shipping, and shore installations destroyed or severely damaged. As a Flagship of Task Unit 77.4.2 in the historic Battle for Leyte Gulf, the NATOMA BAY fought her guns gallantly against enemy dive bombers and suicide planes, at the same time, sending out her own aircraft to strafe and bomb Japanese Fleet units. During the Mindoro assault, she aided in covering the invasion successfully despite active hostile airfields surrounding the Sulu Sea. Although crashed by a Japanese Kamikaze while participating in a heavy assault on Miyako Jima on June 7, she sent out 55 sorties from her damaged flight deck. Her illustrious record of achievement, made possible by her own combat readiness and the courageous fighting spirit of her officers and men, reflects the highest credit upon the NATOMA BAY and the United States Naval Service."

For the President,

John L. Sullivan

Secretary of the Navy

DID YOU KNOW THAT-

The Natoma Bay was the most decorated ship in World War II? Having earned a total of 10 Stars, 8 Battle Stars, a Presidential Unit Citation, and. the Philippine Liberation Ribbon.

The Natoma Bay took part in more operations than any other ship in WW II? 13 not including the Battle for Leyte Gulf.

The Natoma Bay logged more nautical miles during her Navy service than any other CVE?

The Natoma Bay flew more sorties from her flight deck than any other CVE?

The Natoma Bay wore out 3 admirals, 4 captains, 3 squadrons (and all of ships company)?

The Natoma Bay took part in the greatest sea battle of all time, with the 3d, 5th, and 7th U.S. Fleets against 3 Japanese fleets on October 24-25, 1944. (Battle for Leyte Gulf - sometimes called the Second Battle of the Philippine Sea.)?

The Natoma Bay was reported sunk 3 times by Tokyo Rose?

The Natoma Bay completely wore out her flight deck and had it replaced in July of 1945 just prior to the end of the war? (Who said we weren't going to Japan?)

The Natoma Bay was underway so long that toward the end of the war we had worn off most of our camouflage paint and was literally rusting away.

The Natoma Bay was the most uncomfortable ship in the whole U.S. Navy? (That I'll bet you did know.)

- John Sassano, Historian

PS. The USS Texas was runner-up having seen duty first in the North Atlantic theater, then the landings in North Africa, then the invasion of Normandy on D-Day and later in the war she served with us in the 5th Fleet at Iwo Jima and Okinawa working on the west side of both islands. She fell 2 Battle Stars short of our record.

THE DAY THE BATTLESHIP VEST VIRGINIA (BB 48) WAS
"CAPTURED" BY THE NATOMA BAY

It was in early January 1945. We were on our way to Lingayen Gulf and Luzon in the Philippines. We were in these waters a month earlier while participating in the invasion of Mindoro. In our first trip through these treacherous waters, we found out it was really the hot corner of the Pacific for suicide planes. So it was very comforting this trip to have the company of some capital ships including the WeVa, which was steaming alongside us, a thousand yards off our port beam. During these days we stayed constantly at GQ because of the constant threat of Jap planes which could be launched from the many air fields in the surrounding area. In most cases they were upon us with only a moments notice. This particular day, a crafty Jap decided to make a run on a target in our formation. His path led him right between us and the WeVa. He maintained a flight path about deck high down a parallel path from bow to stern between the our two ships. The West Virginia wisely held her fire as we were right opposite her and would have caught most of it. Our boys, however, decided to open upon the Jap and the entire port side batteries of 20mm. and 40mm. started firing the second the Jap was about even with the bow of the WeVa. Their fire followed the entire flight path of the plane from bow to stern. As an eyewitness, I would say 80% of our shells hit the WeVa full on. 10% hit the water and bounced into the WeVa, the other 10% hit the water and bounced over. But fortunately one lethal round caught the Jap and he splashed just astern of the two ships. Immediately on splashdown, the following signal was received from WeVa "Natoma Bay cease firing. We surrender." Had we received as many hits from the WeVa as we pumped into her, we would have promptly been send to the bottom of the Mindanao Sea.

John.

ANOTHER MOUNT HOOD NOTE
(from John Keenan)

I am John Keenan and I served aboard the Big NB. as a MoMM2c. I just received Scuttlebutt and read with interest the account of the Mt. Hood. It so happens that I was an eye witness to the incident. I was on the Hangar deck that morning about 0800, and in a few minutes I walked out onto the forward sponson portside. About the time you said the Mt. Hood blew up, I was looking in that direction and saw the Mt. Hood come right out of the water, then she came down and a big black cloud covered it and a lot of small landing craft nearby. I knew right then what had happened as I knew about your working party and what went on over there. I turned to go inside the hangar deck to give the alarm, but when I turned I found myself in the center of the hangar deck. I was told later that I never walked inside, I was carried across the deck by the blast from the Mt. Hood. They also said that if the door had not been open onto the sponson I would have been crushed against it. I hope this little story on my part will help you in the history of the Big NB. Later I was told that a DE or DD that was alongside the Mt. Hood had the whole topside cleaned off and there was a large loss of life and injured, plus a lot of the landing craft were lost.

* * *

I would like to tell you another story. This is about the fire on the hangar deck. We were in a harbor when your work party had some bombs loaded on the after hangar deck. Someone working on a plane dropped some gas on an exposed light and we had a fire. I was in my shop near the fantail and ran out and started to set up a fire crew. We got a foam hopper and a 2-1/2" line set up. I was lead man on the nozzle and when the water started coming through, there was no one there to back me up. I knew I would not be able to hold the line so threw myself down. The sprinklers were turned on and some one turned off my line. By this time the hangar deck was flooding so I broke open the scuppers to get rid of the water in a hurry. For this I caught hell, but they realized this was the right thing to do, so it turned out all right.

See you at the Reunion. - John Keenan.

A "HANGING BOMB"

Your historian has had a story to tell for quite a while, but kept it suppressed until we could find the pilot involved to substantiate certain details. Well, it all came to light at the recent Newport Reunion. One of the hairiest moments aboard the flight deck happened one day off Iwo Jima when a pilot radioed in that he had a 500-pound bomb hung up in the bomb bay and couldn't release it or couldn't even close the bomb bay doors. After many tries to jettison the bomb without success, he was given clearance to land after the necessary time needed to clear the flight deck and prepare certain personnel and get together certain equipment. After a pass or two over the flight deck I noticed the bomb wedged between the bomb bay doors. It was decided that was the best way to land as it would probably stay that way when he caught the arresting wire on the flight deck. Of course, this being a TBM, there were three men aboard. After all personnel except those needed were evacuated, he was given the okay to land. Again the Natoma Bay's luck held out. The bomb stayed in place and the plane was immediately taxied to the forward end of the flight deck. There the ordnance crew had a makeshift litter ready to catch the bomb as the bomb bay doors were opened manually. The arming wire had held its place in the fuse, so there was no chance of the bomb actually being armed. However, we did not know that beforehand. It seems that the forward starboard shackle was faulty and when the pilot released that that shackle; only the front end released. That left the bomb hanging nose down for the remainder of the flight back to the ship. Had the arming wire pulled free the wind velocity would have turned the fuse vanes to an armed position and had the bomb torn loose on touch down and skidded across the flight deck, any object it touched would have set off a disaster worse than the kamikaze that hit us. We gave the bomb the deep six, fuse and all. The lucky and sweating pilot was John Marek of VC 81.

- John.

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NAVAL SURGEON OPERATES WHILE SHIP IS TOSSED BY
TROPIC TYPHOON

(Stockton Record -- Saturday, Dec. 2, 1944)

Pearl Harbor, Nov. 30 (Delayed)(INS) - As the battle for the liberation of the Philippines opened a typhoon struck the United States fleet units. The heavy, apparently immovable battleships were knocked back on their heels by the seas, the destroyers were tossed around and the escort carriers, the baby flattops, pitched like bucking broncos.

On one of these escort carriers, the USS Natoma Bay, a ship destined to play a gallant and victorious role in the great battle against the Japanese fleet a week later, a man developed a stomach ache.

Among a great many others who did not appreciate the writhing, twisting, rolling and pitching of the carrier, this man - Leo J. Pagni, aviation ordnanceman third class (Cicero, Ill.) seemed to be sicker than the other sick people and he was distinguished from them by the fact that he wanted to live, while the others apparently did not.

Surgeon Acts

The medical officer of the Natoma Bay, LtComdr. Quay A. McCune(MC) USNR (Warren, Pa.), diagnosed Pagni's illness as acute appendicitis, and under the lights in the stark white room, Dr. McCune began operating.

Each wave crashing into the ship sounded as though a torpedo or a bomb had exploded beside her. The ship would quiver, stop, go ahead again, get hit again, quiver and stop. The ship groaned, complained, twisting from side to side.

Sometimes, when the ship was high on the crest of an immense seas, Dr. McCune thought that he would float up off the deck as the Ship dropped, apparently With no support, into the next trough.

Appendix Removed

Outside, at noon, it was almost dark. Rain in horizontal sheets, lashed the ship and was blown like a curtain of gray dust whirling along the pitching flight deck.

Waves coming in solid would wash away the dust rain. Moving about in the ship was a hazardous process.

Operating in the dead still heat under the lamps of the galloping room was also hazardous, but it could not be postponed - as was evident as the just-rupturing appendix was at last brought up and done away with.

Alone of the ship's company, Pagni then slept peacefully, strapped in his bunk to keep him from being heaved completely out of it. By the time he was fully conscious again the sea and wind were quiet, serene, the day lovely.

The battle for the Philippines went ahead on schedule and Dr. McCune had banished a doubt, for he knew that he could operate successfully as long as the ship did not remain standing on her fantail, or capsize entirely.

(We wrote Dr. McCune about this item and he replied with the following comments):

At the time we had an excellent detail of medical corpsmen and flight surgeons. Without all this help the results might not have been so satisfactory. Also we had an exceptionally good patient in Pagni.

Incidentally, the whole ship's crew was a part of this operation in some manner. Capt. Morehouse offered to turn the ship into the wind but we declined the offer. But I was grateful for all the help.

Sincerely,

Quay

ULITHI

All aboard will remember the night in Ulithi Atoll, when the Randolph was hit by a kamikaze that flew over our ship while we were at anchor alongside the Randolph. Both ships were attending movies at the time. We were holding our movie on the hangar deck, appropriately called "One Dangerous Night". Here is the information that I have from a Japanese writer.

Our fleet had been sighted by Japanese subs, and messages sent to their high command. They put together a strike force of some 30 to 40 twin-engine bombers to fly to Ulithi. After they were airborne for some 30 minutes, they received another message that the first message was incorrect and turned back toward their base. Before landing, they received a third message that confirmed the first message, that we were in Ulithi. The strike turned again and headed for the fleet anchorage and were advised to maintain radio silence for the rest of the flight. Some of the planes developed engine trouble and had to return to base. The others flew on. They got caught in rain squalls and bad weather, became lost and flew for a long period thus thinking that they were totally lost. When they broke out of the clouds the leader spotted an island that he recognized, and got back on course.

By providence, luck, or the hand of God, we at Ulithi would benefit from the misread messages and rain squalls that slowed the flight and caused the planes to run out of gas. According to the author, most of the flight went into the ocean about 10 to 20 miles from their goal. There would have been some real fireworks had they made it.

- Al Alcorn

SUICIDE HIT AT MIAYKO JIMA

(SAKISHIMA GROUP)

I was on gun #17 (20 mm.) on the starboard quarter that morning of 7 June 1945. We were at condition Baker (a partial GQ when only certain guns are manned). When I arrived at my gun, I found that it was still covered and locked into position. This should not have been. A short time later (only a few minutes) we heard machine gun fire overhead. At first we thought it was one of our own planes checking the guns in short bursts.

Suddenly we realized that we were under attack by a kamikaze, strafing on his way in until crashing the flight deck forward. No shots were fired by our gunners.

GQ sounded and I rushed across to 20 mm. #20 on the port quarter. Battle stations were being manned and damage control crews were working on the fire forward. I had just strapped myself into my gun, when Broderick, #18 gunner, looked up and saw another plane diving at us. He was coming directly toward our gun tubs. Broderick said, "Al, is that one of our planes?" I knew at once that it was not and looked for our battery officer to give the word to fire. He was still strapping on his earphones, having just arrived from below. No word came, and as far as I know, no one saw the plane except Broderick and me.

I started firing at once since there was no time to wait for orders. Broderick opened fire and then #14 and #16 opened up. We scored hits and had the plane smoking. It turned left heading forward and at that time came close to 4 of our planes that just came out of a cloud. They, of course, could not fire. The kamikaze continued smoking and in a shallow glide headed for another carrier off our port bow (Sargent Bay). They fired at the plane and, whether our hits or theirs caused the damage, it splashed down without hitting anyone.

Lieut. Smith, our gunnery officer, called me to the bridge. He asked why I had fired without orders, since no one gave the order, I told him of Broderick's first sighting of the plane, and with no one to give the order, I took it upon myself to begin

firing. He gave us high compliments and stated that taking such responsibility probably saved the ship from further damage and possible sinking.

- Al Alcorn

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SOME MORE "DID YOU KNOWS?"

That Natoma Bay was the first CVE to enter Japanese mandated waters (January 1944)?

That Natoma Bay was the only U. S. ship to see the entire operations of the Philippines - Iwo Jima - Okinawa campaigns from pre-bombardment to all secure?

That Natoma Bay was the only CVE to be hit by a suicide plane and not leave the war zone?

That Natoma Bay men received every possible decoration the U. S. Navy awards - including the Navy Cross, the Presidential Unit Citation, Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medals, Purple Hearts, Bronze Stars, and Navy Commendations?

That during her tours of duty in the Pacific Natoma Bay served in all three fleets - Third Fleet, Fifth Fleet, and Seventh Fleet.

That Natoma Bay is classified as an Historic Ship, and thanks to our Logbook, detailed and personal recollections and pictures will forever be on file in the Operational Archives of the Navy Department in Washington, D. C.?

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[Editor's Note: Pages 12 and 16 of the Recollections section were blank in the logbook and are not included here. LD]