

*Charles M. Paty, Jr.*  
*Oral History Transcript*  
*USS NORTH CAROLINA Battleship Memorial*

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**Potential Discussion Questions and Activities**

The following discussion questions and activities are provided as a courtesy. Please feel free to use the oral history transcript in any way which makes the transcript meaningful to students and fits into the required curriculum. If you find a successful way to use the curriculum, please share it with the Battleship's Curator so that she may share it with other educators.

**FOR DISCUSSION:**

1. Paty enlisted before finishing high school. Discuss this decision from the viewpoint of his parents and Paty himself. Does the attitude of his parents change? If so, why? (pages 1 and 2)
2. Explain what Paty meant when he said that he did not want to fight the Japanese on the banks of the Catawba River. Do you know where the Catawba River is located? (page 2)
3. How does Paty feel about facing death? Why does he choose to risk facing death? (pages 2, 12 and 15)
4. The Navy chose to shorten the length of the training period and to pass people who could not swim. Why did they choose these courses of action? Do you agree with their decision? (pages 3 and 4)
5. Why do you think that problems developed such as when the sailors stood around for hours and then lost their beds? (page 4)
6. How do you think Paty must have felt when he could not call his parents when the train stopped in Charlotte? Why did the Navy make the decision not to allow anyone off the train? (page 5)
7. Paty could not believe his good fortune in being assigned to the NORTH CAROLINA. Why do you think that this assignment meant so much to him? (page 5)
8. Paty was assigned to a quiet, dark space for his first battlestation. How would you feel about his assignment? Have you ever felt like falling asleep when you were not supposed to do so? Have you ever heard strange noises or familiar noises and imagined what was happening when you could not see outside? (pages 7, 8 and 9)
9. Paty said that the Japanese merchant marine ship "showed guts." What did he mean? What were the merchant ship's alternatives? (page 12)
10. When Paty returned home, he said that he felt that he was in a "time warp." He later referred to returning to the war as returning to the "real world." Can you explain his feelings? Have you ever felt this way? (pages 12 and 13)
11. The "friendly fire" accident occurred when a nearby destroyer was firing on a Japanese plane. As the plane descended, the NORTH CAROLINA came into the line of fire. Discuss the issue of "friendly fire." (page 13 and 14)
12. Why do you think that Paty did not think "harrassing" the Japanese sailor was appropriate? (pages 16 and 17)
13. Do you think it was appropriate for the sailors to take the bicycles that belonged to the Japanese sailors? Do you think that it was appropriate to take home "souvenirs?" (pages 16, 17 and 18)

## POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

1. Role play the situations covered in the discussion questions such as whether or not Paty should enlist before finishing high school or whether or not to harrass the Japanese sailor.
2. Write a skit about one of the situations found in the transcript or make up one of your own.
3. Research the special collections of your county library to see if your newspaper published an "extra" edition when Pearl Harbor was attacked. How did your paper report the beginning of World War II?
4. Learn how to tell military time. The military services tell time based on the 24 hours that comprise one day. Other countries also use this method to tell time. Find out which countries utilize this method. Why do you think that the military uses it?

1:00am	=	0100 (zero one hundred hours)
2:00am	=	0200 (zero two hundred hours)
3:00am	=	0300 (zero three hundred hours)
4:00am	=	0400 (zero four hundred hours)
5:00am	=	0500 (zero five hundred hours)
6:00am	=	0600 (zero six hundred hours)
7:00am	=	0700 (zero seven hundred hours)
8:00am	=	0800 (zero eight hundred hours)
9:00am	=	0900 (zero nine hundred hours)
10:00am	=	1000 (ten hundred hours)
11:00am	=	1100 (eleven hundred hours)
12:00pm	=	1200 (twelve hundred hours)
1:00pm	=	1300 (thirteen hundred hours)
2:00pm	=	1400 (fourteen hundred hours)
3:00pm	=	1500 (fifteen hundred hours)
4:00pm	=	1600 (sixteen hundred hours)
5:00pm	=	1700 (seventeen hundred hours)
6:00pm	=	1800 (eighteen hundred hours)
7:00pm	=	1900 (nineteen hundred hours)
8:00pm	=	2000 (twenty hundred hours)
9:00pm	=	2100 (twenty-one hundred hours)
10:00pm	=	2200 (twenty-two hundred hours)
11:00pm	=	2300 (twenty-three hundred hours)
Midnight	=	2400 (twenty-four hundred hours)

5. Paty enlisted four days after the Pearl Harbor attack. Research your newspapers of December 1941 to see if your county encountered a similar response among the young men who could enlist.
6. Use maps to trace the places that Paty journeyed from Charlotte to the Battleship's homecoming in Boston Harbor.
7. Invite a Naval recruiter to discuss current recruitment, training and opportunities. Ask him how the military has changed since World War II, especially the opportunities for minorities and women.
8. Develop a list of terms that you do not understand and ask someone from the Navy Recruiting Office to explain them.
9. Find someone who lived during World War II and interview them on tape cassette about their life during the war.

**Oral History**  
**Mr. Charles M. Paty, Jr.**  
**Radioman 2/C - USS NORTH CAROLINA BB55**

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I think a good place to begin this would be my enlistment and how I arrived aboard the USS NORTH CAROLINA.

In December 1941 I was just under 17 1/2 years old. I was attending high school, in the eleventh grade, in Charlotte, North Carolina, where I was born and raised.

My father was employed as a parts and service manager for a truck dealer, and we lived in a small, but comfortable bungalow on the east side of town. I was an only child, so I was used to providing my own entertainment and had an interest in nautical affairs and particularly naval history.

On Sunday, December the 7th, we were following the usual routine. After lunch, mom and dad had gone back to their bedroom to take a nap. I started listening to music on the radio. I believe it was the New York Philharmonic. At around 2:00pm, the program was interrupted to announce that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor Naval Base in Hawaii. I was stunned. At first I didn't believe that it was true. I listened for a few more minutes as more bulletins came in indicating that it was a very large raid and serious damage had been done.

After probably five minutes or so, I raced back to the bedroom and woke mom and dad and told them the news. They immediately got up and came to the living room to hear the news.

As the hours went by, more news came in indicating we had suffered a real setback and that it was a total surprise.

By this time, I was reaching a high state of excitement and so was dad. Dick Boward, our next door neighbor, later stated that I raced out into the front yard and was in a very high state. I told him that I was going to join up right away. After returning to the house, I began to discuss this with my parents. Obviously, they were against it and gave me all the logical reasons for not joining. I was in no mood to listen to logic.

Dad suggested that we drive downtown and see if any "extras" were out yet that could give us more information. As we were proceeding through town on 5th street, dad ran a red light at the corner of 5th and North Tryon. A policeman on the corner gave him the whistle and wrote a ticket. Dad was really flustered by this time. He did not even see the light. His mind was 5,000 miles away.

We did get our extra. Newsboys were standing on several corners downtown yelling "Extra! Extra! Read all about it, war begins." I believe it was the *Charlotte Observer* we bought. Big banner headlines told of the attack.

When we arrived back home, I again opened the conversation about joining. I had been working on dad while we went downtown. I knew the Navy would take 17 year olds with parental approval. I wanted to go up Monday morning when the recruiting office opened and enlist. Mom and dad continued to say "No" and gave me a long list of reasons why.

The discussion continued on into the evening hours, but my case was getting stronger as news continued to come in. It was more bad news. Every bulletin seemed to bring news of more losses and indications of more Japanese aggression taking place in other locations in the Pacific. By this

time I was arguing that I didn't want to fight the Japanese on the bank of the Catawba River. It did sound possible that they would invade this country. Mother finally gave in and consented, but she said she was convinced I would not be able to pass the physical. She said I was too small and that they probably wouldn't take 17 year olds now that war had started.

I don't remember dad ever saying anything but from that point on we only talked in terms of my going. He did say that he thought I should finish high school before I enlisted.

That night I lay in the bed thinking of what I was about to do. Was I crazy? Leaving this comfortable home and family situation to go into a totally unknown situation that could cost my life. I don't remember whether I slept or not.

At dawn, we were up and dad was going to work as usual, but today he was going to drop me at the post office downtown. There I was to locate the Navy Recruiting Office and find out what I had to do to enlist.

I think I was at the recruiting office by about 7:30am, and to my surprise, there was a long line with maybe 100 guys in it. Up until this point I was wondering if I was going to be the only one who was that fired up about this attack.

The line had all types in it. There were young and old, well dressed and not so well dressed. As I recall, the Navy recruiters culled out some who were reserves or who had previous service and took them into another room. They then pulled out the 17 year olds because they would require parental approval. All of this speeded up the process somewhat, but there were only two or three sailors in the recruiting office. They passed out multitudes of forms and told us to start filling them out.

Finally, my name was called. My heart was pounding. My legs were weak. This is it.

The sailor interviewed me with a few questions, but mainly he wanted to know if my parents approved. I said yes. He wanted to know if they were present and I said no. He said that they were too busy to be wasting time with someone who really did not have their parents' approval. Either way I had to get them to sign a form before they would continue with the enlistment procedure. The recruiter also weighed me and said that I was underweight just a little bit, but if I ate a bunch of bananas and got my approval signed, I would probably pass.

I left somewhat disappointed, but with form in hand and headed home on the bus.

I wanted to get their signatures and go back that afternoon, but I still had to eat my bananas and dad would not be home until about 1830 or 1900.

The next morning we were up early and dad again dropped me off at the post office. I stuffed myself with bananas as we drove to town. This morning there was an even longer line to enlist. I was taken in ahead of the others and presented my papers. They weighed me and said okay. They said go home and wait for a notice in the mail that would tell me when to report.

Again I left with mixed emotions. More waiting and for how long.

I believe it was the next day or the day after that I received a notice to report to the post office, prepared to leave for Raleigh, North Carolina, and swearing in.

The recruiting personnel indicated that there would be nine weeks of recruit training and then a week's leave before being assigned to a ship or station.

So on the morning of 11 December, I said good-bye to mother at the house, thinking I would see her again in two months. Dad dropped me off at the post office with my little bag of specified belongings which consisted of toothbrush, comb, one change of underwear and that was all. Little did we know that it would be two years and seven months before I would see them again.

A draft of us took a bus to Raleigh, the capital of the state, and were sworn in. We then proceeded on to the Norfolk Navy Training Station. There we were assigned to training platoons and commenced our basic training. We were immediately informed that training was being cut from eight to six weeks. In a week or so, it was cut to four weeks. Recruits were coming in by the thousands every day and they (the Navy) had to make room.

My father, who had been in World War I, had told me that the biggest problem I would probably have would be the physical requirements of military service because of my size. At that time I weighed 105 pounds and was five feet two inches tall.

I therefore made a determination that I would make a supreme effort to exceed or at least meet the minimum of these requirements. As the weeks went by, I was tested to the limits of this resolve.

I remember one thing in particular that was most difficult. About every day, we did exercises with rifles on the drill field. There exercises were mostly standing in position and doing twists and bends with the rifle held over your head or out in front at arms length. The chief in charge of our platoon, Chief Lewis, would stop us at a point where we had the rifle out in front at arms length. He would order us to hold that position. We were required to hold it until someone gave way and dropped his arms. I was determined it would not be me. We held for what seemed eternity. My arms were aching and I kept looking out of the corner of my eyes for someone else to drop so I could. In all instances I was able to hold and not be the first to drop.

Several incidents made me realize that size did not necessarily make a difference in your ability to stand pain and punishment or to do specific jobs.

One day the platoon was lined up for shots. We were to start a series that would go on for one or more each day for several days. While standing in line I witnessed two men, who were larger and more muscular than I, fall over in a faint at the sight of the needle being inserted in their arms.

Another incident was the day we went for our swimming test. Up until the war started, everyone in the Navy was supposed to know how to swim. We gathered at an indoor pool and were told to jump in and swim from one end to the other. They didn't care what stroke you used. I had spent several years of my childhood on a river near Charlotte and did know how to swim. I was amazed at how many of those men could not swim or petered out before they reached the end of the pool. I was passed and a number were told to report back for swimming lessons. In another week or so they were passing you whether you could swim or not.

As a put down I was called "Kid" or "Junior" on numerous occasions, but I did not let this impair my desire to do a job for the Navy.

Finally one day we received word that we were shipping out and to pack our gear and fall in outside of our barracks by a certain time. We laboriously packed all our possessions in our sea bags and rolled that up in our hammocks. We were told that trucks would arrive to take us to the train

station for departure. During that time new recruits had already moved into our old barracks. So, after some hours of standing in the cold, we were told that we would not be leaving until the next day. We then marched across the facility to an empty building that contained no beds, but did have hammock hooks. We unrolled and unpacked and swung our hammocks for the first time. There was a lot of joking and horseplay as we went through the process. Most everyone hung them pretty loose so that they were easy to get into.

The next day, we were told to secure our gear and be ready to go by noon. Again we stood around for three or four hours. We then were told that we would eat evening chow and be picked up by the trucks right afterward. We finally reached the train station about 2100.

After four weeks of intense training and what seemed like dozens of shots, we boarded a train at 2200 on 9 January 1942 and headed out of Norfolk in the dark. We didn't even know whether the train was going north, south, or west. We questioned the porters and conductors on the train and could get no hint.

Saturday, 10 January, I woke up to find us passing through familiar country. We were coming into Charlotte, my home town. It was 0600. We stopped briefly at the Southern (Railroad) Station, but they would permit no one to get off. I wanted so bad to at least get to a pay phone and call mom and dad. We pulled out and headed south, arriving at Jacksonville, Florida, at 1830.

Sunday 11 January, we arrived in Miami at 0200. The weather was very cold. We got off the train and marched to a nearby restaurant for breakfast. Everybody kidded the natives about the cold weather. We were still dressed in our blues. Some even wore their peacoats. We boarded buses and headed for Key West at 0530.

After crossing the overseas highway, we arrived at Key West at noon. Approximately 400 of us mustered on the dock at Key West Naval Station. As an officer read out our names, we boarded two old four stack destroyers tied up at the dock. I boarded the USS STANSBURY (DD180) at 1500. At 1700 we were sent ashore to spend the night at the Key West Naval Air Station.

12 January we reboarded our destroyers. The STANSBURY cast off at 1415 with approximately 200 recruits on board plus their regular crew of 180. Our sea bags made an enormous pile amidships and on the fantail. We were so crowded that most of us had to stand on deck topside. The sky was overcast and after we cleared the Key West breakwater, the sea became fairly rough. Shortly, a number were violently sea sick. I became sick but did not throw up. By this time word had circulated that we were going out to meet the USS NORTH CAROLINA, and we would be transferred at sea.

I thought this was too good to be true. I had never been given the opportunity to request any ship and here I was going to one of the newest battleships in the fleet, the USS NORTH CAROLINA, named for my home state. The other destroyer was going to rendezvous with the USS WASHINGTON and transfer her 200 recruits.

We sighted the WASHINGTON at 1800 and the NORTH CAROLINA at 1815. The NORTH CAROLINA motor launches came along side and we began the transfer. This was a rough, hair-raising experience because I was carrying my sea bag which weighed about 65 pounds. The sea was running and the launch was rising and falling about 15 feet every time a wave came by. Each man would stand poised in his dress blues and peacoat and his sea bag on his shoulder. We would try to catch the launch as it rose on a wave to the level of the deck. This resulted in several bad falls into the boat and several lost sea bags. Luckily no one fell overboard.

We finally cast off and headed for the NORTH CAROLINA. On the way, one man tried to jump overboard because he was sea sick and said he didn't want to live any longer. A number were heaving over the side of the boat.

We finally boarded the NORTH CAROLINA at 1915, 60 miles off Key West. We were run through a receiving line of several desks where information was gathered on each of us. Among them was an interview that asked what type of work we would prefer on the ship. I said I would prefer in this order: printing, machinist or gunnery.

For the second time, we swung our hammocks and slept in number one mess hall. This time a boatswain came through and told us he wanted those hammocks swung so tight that they would sound like a banjo string. The getting into the hammock was no small chore since they were five feet off the deck.

After several falls, I managed to get in and slept like a log until 0300 when we were awakened by a master-at-arms beating on the bottom of our hammocks with a night stick. We had to get up and secure our hammocks and store our gear out of the way so they could use the mess hall for breakfast.

On this day I was informed that I was being assigned to the CR Division (radioman). This puzzled me since I knew nothing of electronics and had requested three other assignments as preference. Their response was "Don't ask questions 'Junior', just do as you are told." So began my stay on the USS NORTH CAROLINA as a radioman.

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The early weeks aboard were spent going to radio classes in morse code and procedures. They conducted many drills every day as we proceeded up the east coast to New York.

After visits to Norfolk, we proceeded to Casco Bay, Maine, arriving on the 16th of March 1942. Portland was the port city several miles down the bay. In order to make liberty, it required a ride in an open motor launch that lasted some 30 minutes. Since it was winter and snowing frequently, the trip was miserable. The bay was almost always choppy and spray broke over the bow soaking us as we proceeded to the landing. By the time we reached it, we were soaked and frozen and most of us were sorry we ever came.

Some of the guys had wives and girlfriends who followed them to Portland, but I knew no one. I did not make too many liberties there due to the uncomfortable boat ride and the shortage of money. I believe my first pay day on the ship was \$12.00 after some deductions for laundry or something. I did go ashore and get a formal photo taken of me in uniform and sent it to my parents. It was my first and I was quite proud that I was now a seaman second class. This was next to the bottom in the Navy. The only thing below that was apprentice seaman, which was my rate during boot camp.

Our stay in Casco Bay was, from a naval strategy standpoint, to offset the German battleship TIRPITZ. She had moved up from Germany to the Norwegian coast and was poised to emerge into the Atlantic and prey on the convoys. The thought was that if this happened, we would sail out to intercept her. There was a lot of talk and anticipation of this possibility, but of course it never took place.

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In June 1942, we left the east coast and proceeded through the Panama Canal to the Pacific and on to Hawaii after visits to California. Our passage through the canal was a most interesting sight. We entered our first lock and we only had about a foot clearance on each side. The canal company trams hooked onto our lines and kept us perfectly centered in that narrow space.

After the first set of locks, we entered Gatun Lake which is fresh water. It was the only place in the world where a ship of our size could get to fresh water. We took this time to wash her down with fresh water and do some laundering. A little known phenomenon is that the ship floated several inches lower in the fresh water because salt water has a higher buoyancy. At this time our task force Number 37 consisted of the carrier WASP, heavy cruiser QUINCY, light cruiser SAN JUAN, and destroyers STERRETT, STACK, WILSON, LANG, BUCHANAN, and FARENHOLT.

Little did we know that in 90 days the WASP and QUINCY would be sunk with heavy loss of life. I don't remember the total order of procession through the canal, but we followed the WASP.

Following this we proceeded on up the west coast to Long Beach, California. Shortly after we anchored at Long Beach, a beautiful sight came into view. Seven battleships entered in column and anchored. These were the "old" or prewar battleships. Most had been damaged on 7 December, but were now repaired.

Several days later we all got underway and headed north, entering San Francisco Bay on 24 June 1942 in a long column that stretched for miles. Many thousands of people lined the shore and tops of buildings to watch our entry. During the following week, we stripped the ship for combat. This entailed the removal of all nonessential wood, such as teak gangways, some of our boats, wooden chairs from the wardroom and other inflammable objects. It also involved the removal of all linoleum from the ship. Up until that time we had a very nice solid red linoleum throughout the ship with the exception of officers' country, where they had a light green. We now had a bare steel deck everywhere except the topside. The teak decks were left in place.

On 4 July 1942, a big celebration took place in San Francisco with a parade through downtown. All battleships, including ours, furnished marching units for the parade. The next day we got underway and headed for Pearl Harbor.

We entered Pearl Harbor channel at 1800 on 11 July 1942. We proceeded around the back (west) side of Ford Island, passing the capsized UTAH on our starboard side. We then passed the hulk of the ARIZONA with the flag still flying from the stern staff and then the capsized OKLAHOMA. We tied up at a pier at 1930. This was all viewed with somber interest by the crew since we were at quarters. It was our first real contact with the results of war and what it could do. It made us think about - what did the future hold for us? Would our ship end up like these? Would we be left inside?

On the bright side, Pearl Harbor was a beehive of activity. It was full of ships in fighting order. Two carriers, many cruisers and destroyers were present, but we were the only operational battleship. Did this mean that we were going to have to fight the whole Japanese battleline by ourselves? At this point we had no idea how the war was going to be fought, and that the future for battleships would be to act as anti-aircraft protectors for carriers, and that there would be little



or no actual gun fights between us and the Japanese battleships. In August of 1942, we commenced the Guadalcanal campaign.

On 24 August 1942, NORTH CAROLINA participated in its first real action of firing its guns in anger. Much has been written about this battle and our part in it. My particular part on this day was as follows.

Some months prior to this, Warrant Chief Radioman Byron Phillips had drafted some of us radio strikers to work with his new radar equipment. Phillips was the ranking officer with knowledge of radar and an old mustang. Radar at that time was a secret item and very few people knew anything about it.

Phillips was trying to work the bugs out of it and to perfect trouble free operational procedures. We considered Byron an old man because he had probably 20 or 25 years service in the Navy at that time. He had a gruff demeanor and reminded me of Winston Churchill in his manner and voice.

At that time we had recently installed fire control radar on top of the air defense directors, Sky 1, Sky 2, Sky 3 and Sky 4. These directors were the ones that controlled the 5" secondary battery and were our principal defense against air attack.

As I recall, Byron called each of us strikers in and impressed upon us the secrecy of radar. We were not to talk to anyone about what we were doing, particularly ashore. He then said that what we were about to do was most important although we might think it busy work.

At that point we were assigned watches on the radar transmitters that were installed in the base of the director mounts. This was not the unit with the scope that showed the enemy aircraft on screen, but was the power unit for the scope. I had Sky 3 and it consisted of sitting in a small cramped compartment about 6 feet square that contained only the radar transmitter which was connected to the director scope above by various cables. In August, this was also my battlestation. One of the problems that we were experiencing at that time was the maintenance of a constant voltage to the radar. A slight variation in the voltage would cause it to lose its signal or give a false signal. This was particularly so during the firing of the 5" and 16" batteries. I would sit in front of the transmitter recording on a chart the various meter readings at certain times in the hour and adjusting various knobs to control the voltage. During firing, I was constantly adjusting.

The compartment was mostly dark except for the light on the gauges. The hatches had to remain closed. Phillips said that there was to be no reading or sleeping on watch. To insure that, he would pop in suddenly and say "Let me see your chart." You had better have your chart up to date and he better not catch you reading or sleeping. I used to sit and stare at that transmitter like my life depended on it. Scared to death that Bryon would all of a sudden jerk the hatch open and find me dozing. Believe me, it was difficult to stay awake for six hours in a totally dark area with the radar transmitter making this low humming noise and emitting a fair amount of heat. It was already hot outside. I never fell asleep, but I sure felt my head falling a number of times.

At 1330 on the 24th of August 1942, general quarters was sounded in anticipation of a possible air attack. I went to my battlestation on the radar transmitter under Sky 3. Just outside my compartment was 5" gun mount number 3, which was about four feet from my bulkhead. I sat by my radar transmitter and listened to it sing and sweltered. I wore a sound powered telephone head set for communication with Sky 3, but we did not do a lot of chatter on these sets.

After about an hour or so, I think I did ask if there was anything going on. I don't remember the answer, but they probably told me to shut up. I felt that they had all the luck. They sat up there with a beautiful view of everything that was happening, and there I was in a dark cramped hole not able to see anything

Some time passed and I could hear the mounts moving and adjusting their direction. This indicated to me that they were tracking something. My imagination was running wild. By now it was 1700 and I had been in the dark for over four hours. I decided I couldn't wait any longer so I stretched my phone line and opened the hatch out onto the boat deck for a peek. The gun barrels of the 5" battery were all pointing in the same direction and were nervously tracking something. I thought "my God, if they all open fire at the same time the concussion will blow me back into my transmitter." I jumped back inside and dogged the hatch. I didn't have long to wait.

I felt the ship increase to flank speed and start violent changes in course. My heart was in my throat. At 1710, the 5" battery commenced firing, followed shortly by the 1.1" mounts and then the .50 calibre guns as the range closed on the incoming enemy aircraft. The din of gunfire was awesome and I thought that any minute I would hear an explosion of a bomb or torpedo as we received a hit. My radar transmitter was cutting up and the voltage and amperage were jumping up and down as it (the transmitter) reacted from the concussion of the gunfire. I'm sure that the scope up in the director was not performing up to expectations. I was desperately trying to adjust for this but I don't think I had much success. All the time I was thinking "what a way to die, sitting in the dark watching a bunch of dials and gauges." Firing ceased in 10 minutes. I sat for a few minutes in the quiet of the cease fire and then curiosity got the best of me. I stretched my phone wire and gently opened the hatch and felt it hit something. It was empty 5" shell cases piled up outside on deck. I shoved it on open and was met with a deck covered with piles of empty shell cases. The air was smoky and smelled of gun powder. The mounts were still tracking something so I quickly pulled my head back in expecting them to open up again. I later learned that in that 10 minutes time, the 5" guns had fired 1,000 rounds.

So ended my personal participation in the Battle of the Eastern Solomons.

During my early months on the ship, I had become friendly with several men in the signal gang. This came about because during off hours I would sit on the search light platform on stack number one and relax. This also gave me a prime view of the signal bridge and I began to learn semaphore and to read light signals. I also learned many of the flag hoists. On occasion I would actually stay on the signal bridge and read some of the light messages coming in from other ships along with one of the signalmen.

On the 15th of September 1942, reveille sounded at 0345 and this was followed by dawn general quarters at 0530. After lunch I went up on the signal bridge to do one of my frequent visits to that area. At about 1215, GQ (general quarters, which means man your battle stations) sounded. A Japanese four engine patrol plane had been sighted. The carrier WASP sent out their combat air patrol (CAP) to intercept it. At about 1450 the WASP was noted smoking. There was a small wisp of smoke drifting astern, but this was increasing rapidly.

Her distance from us was probably about eight to ten miles. At this time she made a port turn and headed for us. As she came about, it could be seen that she had a bad list to starboard. Smoke was pouring from beneath the flight deck. I had a signal bridge long glass and was looking at her most of the time. I could see that the fire was all below decks consuming most of the hanger deck.

I could see a few men on flight deck high on the port side forward. As she came around to a course parallel to us, I could see planes along the side at different places. At 1453 there was a big red

flash and the ship was covered with smoke. Distance prevented us from hearing the explosion, but it must have been a magazine or gasoline. The smoke mushroomed up to several thousand feet. About then I saw a destroyer on our port side calling by light. I yelled to a signalman and pointed this out. A second later electrician McDonald yelled "torpedo wake." Everyone ran to the starboard side to avoid the blast. I didn't know what side it was on, so I just stood there. I took one step backward away from the shield and it hit. The ship jumped. You could feel 35,000 tons jumping several feet in the air. I never had any idea that there would be such an explosion from a torpedo. The torpedo hit on our port side opposite turret two at frame 65. The ship rose and dropped and I found myself on my back. I looked up in time to catch the shower of water that came down. When I got up, smoke was everywhere. The smoke smelled like fuel oil. By then we were in a hard turn to starboard and the ship was heeling to port. We had increased our speed to 25 knots. We were running at 15(knots) when hit. I snapped out of it about then and decided it was time I manned my battlestation, so I made a dash for a down ladder and ran into a real traffic jam. I finally got there and sat down with my heart pounding, wondering if one torpedo would sink us or just what would happen. I also wondered what had happened to the old WASP. Our 16 " magazines were flooded to prevent explosion. The forward head and the wing compartments along 2nd division were flooded with oil and water. The 1st and 2nd, E, and CR division living compartments were filled with smoke. Some oil and water got into the 1st and 2nd division areas. We lost 5 men. One was trapped in the forward head and was believed to have been knocked out by the explosion and drowned when the compartment flooded. Three men were killed by the explosion. They were taking soundings in a wing compartment right over the spot where the torpedo hit. One man was blown overboard and not recovered.

The torpedo hit at 1455. At 1505 the WASP was still burning fiercely. At 1520 we were doing 23 knots and had corrected our list by counter flooding. Men worked all night getting oil and water out of some of the compartments. My sleeping compartment at that time was on the third deck, just abaft of turret two on the starboard side. We did not sleep too well that first night, thinking that if the bulkhead forward of us gave way, we could be flooded. We did 18 knots all night with 2 destroyers, the DALE and the ANDERSON escorting us. We had been detached from the task force and sent to Tongatabu.

The WASP ultimately sank leaving one carrier and no battleships still operating in the combat zone of the Pacific.

The amazing thing about this whole episode was how little it seemed to effect our capabilities. We didn't sink. In fact we were still able to make 23 knots, and with the exception of turret one, all of our other facilities were more or less in working order.

Upon our return to Pearl Harbor for the repair of the torpedo damage, we received a surprise reception from most of the ships in the harbor. Many of the crews were topside at quarters and several had their bands playing. We tied up under the hammerhead crane and prepared to enter drydock number one.

Word passed that an "all hands" working party would be put over the side as soon as the dock was pumped dry. Some of the old hands groaned and said that it meant we were going to scrape the bottom. As soon as the dock was dry, all enlisted men except chiefs and first class petty officers were down in the bottom of the drydock. When I reached the bottom, it was an awesome sight. There was more of her below the waterline than above. She had been brought down on probably a hundred huge wood blocks that stood four feet square. This left a space under the bottom of four feet in which to stand or stoop and try to scrape off the barnacles and other crud that was there.

The deck force was assigned to the sides of the ship and the radiomen and others were assigned to the bottom, the worst place of all, right about midship. We had an expanse of bottom that was about 100 feet wide and had to work in a bent over position. It was back breaking work, but the thing that really got us was the fact that word had passed that we had to wear white hats.

Following our repairs, we sortied to start the campaign against the Gilbert Islands. We underwent several air attacks, sustained no damage. On 8 December 1943 we participated in what I would describe as an unusual island bombardment. The island was a small speck on the map, Nauru. It was very lightly defended and contained a phosphate operation. Six modern battleships, the WASHINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA, INDIANA, MASSACHUSETTS, SOUTH DAKOTA and ALABAMA let fly at 0700 with a 54 gun 16" salvo that smothered the island in explosions. The opening salvo was from about 30,000 yards and we continued to fire as we closed range until 0740, at which time we ceased fire and proceeded to join up with our carriers who were standing off some miles.

I was always puzzled by the significance of this action because of the small strategic importance of this island relative to the many other targets of opportunity that seemed to be available. My thought was that this was more of an exercise to determine how well the new and fast battleships could function together as a team. It seemed we did pretty well at the expense of the Nauru Islanders.

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The next event of importance was our attack on Kwajalein Islands. At 0935 on 29 January 1944, we were designated a special bombardment unit consisting of the NORTH CAROLINA and the destroyers LANG and STERRETT. We approached the island in daylight. While doing this we sighted a Japanese "Betty" at 1635 and opened fire with our 5" guns. We had been at general quarters since early morning and my GQ station at that time was in radio one as supervisor of radio one. When the enemy plane was sighted, word was passed down from the bridge to call for help from our combat air patrol.

My heart jumped. We had never had to do this from main radio. Voice transmissions had always been done from the bridge. I don't know why this wasn't done that way, but it was no time for discussions. I grabbed the microphone and gave the call sign for the combat air patrol and told them we were under attack by enemy aircraft and needed help. At 1715 four fighters of fighting squadron six from the INTREPID arrived overhead, but by that time we were no longer in danger. We did feel a little better with them close by.

At 1830 we came within sight of the atoll and sighted two ships at anchor within the lagoon. We opened fire at 20,000 yards with fighting squadron six offering to spot for us. The first salvo was short, the next hit the tanker. This being a thin skinned tanker, our 16" armor piercing projectiles passed right through without exploding. We started getting return fire from the other merchantman. We shifted targets to it. This was a most uneven dual with the merchantmen firing at us with probably a 3" or 4" single deck gun and us returning fire with 16" guns. This showed a lot of guts. The merchantman now got underway and was attempting to make for the open sea. By this time we were scoring repeated hits and were now using high explosive ammo. The merchantman was now burning fiercely, so we shifted our 16" guns to the island and continued to pound the merchantman with our 5" guns. He was continuing to fire at us and going down by the bow, so he beached her in the lagoon. The tanker had already capsized.

Around 1900 our CAP (combat air patrol) left us and we continued with six more firing runs at the island, securing at 0700 on 30 January 1944. During the next few days we carried out more bombardment missions in company with other battleships and experienced several air attacks.

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In July 1944, we learned that we were headed back to the states for a major overhaul. The ship had always experienced severe vibrations at high speeds and this was going to be an effort, among other things, to resolve this problem.

We arrived at the Straits of Juan De Fuca at 0500 on the 31st of July 1944. It was a beautiful sight to see the land of the United States again. It had been two years since we left San Francisco to participate in the war.

A great deal had happened and we felt we were an experienced crew that knew what they were doing. It was announced that half the crew would get 30 day leaves and the other half when they came back. I was in the first half and I was so excited I was beside myself. It was almost unbelievable. I had been gone so long, I had survived numerous attempts to sink us or kill us, yet here I was.

We had previously been asked about where we were going and what method of transportation would be used. At Restoration Point, several hundred of us boarded a small steamer which carried us to the Seattle docks while the ship continued on to Bremerton Navy Yard. This saved us a full day getting started on our leave.

When we arrived at the dock, buses and trucks were waiting to take us to the trains, bus station, and airport. I had chosen air because I didn't want to lose any unnecessary time traveling. At the airport I purchased my ticket and boarded a DC3 for Charlotte, North Carolina. Actually, I don't remember it being such a bad flight. There were 5 or 6 others from the ship on the same flight, so we had a pretty good time harassing the stewardesses and telling the other passengers war stories.

I arrived in Charlotte at 0400. I had been gone two years and eight months. It was like some kind of time warp where I was going back to my childhood, but no one or thing was the same. Rationing was on for most everything. Most of my childhood and school friends were gone. The boys in service and the girls off to college. It turned out to be a strange leave. The days were hum drum and the nights I spent telling my mother and dad about the war. Thirty days later, I caught my DC3 back to Seattle.

The ship was now in drydock and was being swarmed on by yard workmen who were making a host of modifications and additions to the ship. On 30 September 1944, we departed from Bremerton Navy Yard.

After a few days at Long Beach, California, we headed back to Pearl Harbor and the real world.

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On 7 November 1944, we were headed west for another operation when we ran into a typhoon and for the next three days we experienced the most terrifying seas. Being a radioman, I was able to overhear most of the voice transmissions that were being made by the various ships. The destroyers were having a particularly bad time because most had run low on fuel, and we had started refueling them at the time the storm started to kick up. We therefore had to discontinue fueling. They, being so light, were pounded and rolled and several went down with heavy loss of life. Even the big ships were having a bad time. Waves were breaking over the carrier decks and wrecking aircraft parked there. We had damage to our 20mm and 40mm guns mounted on the

main deck. It was almost impossible to get out on deck. We had to reduce speed and fell out of the formation due to some danger to number 3 condenser. The WASHINGTON had also dropped 25 miles behind the task force. On the 11th the sea calmed and we started fueling some of the destroyers. We then proceeded on to our planned air attacks on the Philippines.

On the 6th of April 1945, we were operating off Okinawa in company with a number of aircraft carriers who were launching strikes against the island. At 1225 we commenced firing at a "Judy" which was shot down 2,000 yards off our port bow and forward of the carrier CABOT. At 1320 we commenced firing at a "Zeke" which was shot down 3,000 yards off our starboard quarters. At 1304 we commenced firing at another "Zeke" which went down 2,000 yards dead ahead of the NORTH CAROLINA and close aboard the CABOT.

The action was hot and heavy and enemy planes were flying all around and through the task force. In recent years a lot has been said about "friendly fire." At 1305 we took a 5" antiaircraft projectile in the base of Sky 2, about two feet below the director.

At this time my battlestation was in Batt Two, which is high up the foremast or the main tower. This is a secondary steering position in the event the bridge gets knocked out during action. It was manned by several officers plus six or eight enlisted men. I was manning a radio position there and was on the circuit that provide voice communications between the ships of the task force.

We had been firing for the last several minutes when all of a sudden I heard this loud bang and a large black cloud of smoke enveloped the tower. Instantly I heard what sounded like someone throwing a hand full of marbles against the tower. I was sitting inside, but I saw one guy fall over. I looked out on the platform outside and everybody was looking down. I ran out to see, thinking we had been hit by a bomb. Down on deck men were lying everywhere, on the signal bridge, around the 40mm gun mount and director and in several other locations. Blood was running across the deck. I then saw the hole in the director base and it was obvious we had been hit by a five inch from one of our own ships.

I went back inside and found that our wounded man was our pharmacist mate. He had been struck in the shoulder by flying shell fragments, the marbles I heard, and was not seriously wounded. I looked around on deck and noticed dozens of small pieces of steel with jagged edges. I reached down to pick one up and found it to be too hot to handle. It was a miracle that more were not wounded in those close quarters where we were packed almost shoulder to shoulder.

The net result was three men killed and 40 wounded. Three radiomen and eight signalmen were wounded. These signal and radio people were all men I knew because they were in the communications gang.

On the 15th of August 1945, the following message was received:

RADIO WASHINGTON PASS TO BRITISH ADMIRALTY LONDON FOR ACTION STOP  
RADIO SAN FRANCISCO PASS TO PRESS ASSOCIATIONS PLUS REUTERS STOP  
COMMANDER IN CHIEF PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS [CINCPOA] COMMUNIQUE NUMBER  
467 RELEASED AS OF 0200 GCT 15 AUGUST 1945 AS FOLLOWS STOP PARAGRAPH  
ONE STOP ORDERS HAVE BEEN ISSUED TO THE US PACIFIC FLEET AND TO OTHER  
FORCES UNDER THE COMMAND OF THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF US PACIFIC FLEET  
AND PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS TO CEASE OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS AGAINST THE  
JAPANESE.

Strikes then in the air were canceled and recalled. The Captain addressed the ship's company by public address system, following which the Chaplain delivered a prayer of thanksgiving that the war appeared to be near an end.

At 1212 all ships broke battle flags and personal flags, the latter for the first time since the commencement of hostilities.

Since noon, five Japanese planes were shot down by our CAP (combat air patrol) when they aggressively approached our task group. Admiral Halsey issued a dispatch that any Japanese planes approaching the disposition were to be shot down, "Not vindictively, but in a friendly fashion."

The mood aboard ship was strange. Many of us couldn't believe that it was over and that we had survived. We had been talking the last several weeks about the forthcoming invasion of Japan. It was believed that it would be a hard fought landing and would be resisted to the last Japanese.

Many lives would be lost on both sides. That evening I'm sure that there were many individual prayers said, including mine.

On the 19th of August 1945, we were steaming about 200 miles east of Tokyo Bay, awaiting peace developments. Word was passed that volunteers would be accepted for a landing force and prize crews for captured Japanese ships. I turned in my name. We were advised that some of the Japanese ships would be taken back to the states by the prize crews. We were issued a field pack, rifle, ammunition and belt.

The next day at 0703, we went alongside the GARRARD (APA84) to transfer our (the NORTH CAROLINA's) Marine Detachment who were going to occupation duty in Japan.

At 0723 the RUNELS (APD85) came alongside and embarked three nucleus crews for possible duty operating Japanese prizes. My group was one of them. The RUNELS was a small ship, being somewhat smaller than a destroyer. When we all got aboard, things were pretty crowded. Living compartments were extremely crowded, but we later found that their chow was good. At 0918 the OZARK (LSV2) came alongside and embarked the beach party component. At 0928 the BASS (APD24) came alongside and embarked group "C" of base maintenance party.

On the 20th of August 1945, I reported to the RUNELS radio shack for watch duty and was assigned the 12 to 4 (shift). It was sure strange working in a small radio shack like the RUNELS but it was interesting to see how a small ship operated.

The next day I received typhus shots which were the worst shots I had ever had. The fluid stung like acid and my arm was very sore for 24 hours. I also ran a fever and was sick on my stomach.

On the 27th of August 1945, we sighted one of the Japanese Islands at 1135 and Mount Fujiyama at 1545. We dropped anchor at 1830 about 2,000 yards off the beach in Sagami Wan (Bay). A factory and town were clearly visible, but no signs of life. Fuji was very beautiful in the late afternoon with the sun setting behind it. The harbor was full of Allied ships.

The next morning, two British marines were rescued off the beach by a picket boat. They had been captured in Hong Kong and had been prisoners near here. They escaped the previous afternoon and made their way down to the beach.

One was completely naked and the other was wearing only shorts, but both seemed in good health. I spent most of the day watching the Japanese ashore. The Japanese civilians were beginning to come out and gaze at us.

On the 29th of August 1945, the Japanese were flying white flags from a number of different points around the bay. They were probably military installations. In the morning, a Japanese submarine stood in escorted in by a U.S. destroyer escort.

At dawn the following morning we got underway and stood into Tokyo Bay. We passed many forts with white flags flying, any of which could have played hell with our little transport. Many small villages and industrial plants were passed before we finally dropped anchor off the large Yokosuka Naval Base. We disembarked into landing craft at 1015 and started circling. We received word to hit the beach and touched down about noon. A Marine combat unit was the first to go in. They landed just a few minutes ahead of us and deployed along the beach. After landing we gathered our detachment and started slowly to advance inland. So far there had been no sign of life. It was very strange to see all these buildings and ships totally deserted. About 1500 we marched across an open area that appeared to be a drill ground to our new home, Barracks Number 42. We spent the rest of the afternoon and half the night scrubbing the place down. Our first meal at noon was fish and crackers. The evening meal consisted of K rations. Barracks Number 42 was right next to a large steep hill honey combed with tunnels. This hill was the ammunition dump for the navy yard. Upon investigation we found the hill contained gun powder, projectiles, radio gear, and tons of supplies. About 1800 an officer came with three Japanese: a private, an NCO (noncommissioned officer) and an officer. The NCO was the interpreter. The officer was a LT (lieutenant). I think they were Imperial Marines. There were still a few Japanese on the base, but they were mostly interpreters.

When we landed we were instructed not to load our rifles unless we received orders to do so. It was the feeling that there was a possibility of fanatical Japanese who might open fire on us. We (the Navy) had not been handling rifles and live ammunition since our boot camp days. Later that evening when we were finally getting ready to bed down in our barracks, one of the guys on the first floor decided he wanted to load his rifle. In doing so he fired off a round that went straight up through the ceiling and on through the second floor, passing between several of our crew who were standing talking.

On the first of September 1945, we were granted yard liberty, so we took a good look at the yard. We saw at least 50 midget submarines in various stages of construction. Destruction in the yard was massive. Many ships were sunk at the docks. Large cranes were turned over. Most buildings were heavily damaged. There were a few buildings untouched, like the barracks we lived in and the telephone exchange. The telephone exchange was a large two story building about 50 by 150 feet and sat facing the parade ground. During our tour of the yard, several of us walked over to the exchange and noted that there were about a dozen bicycles parked out front in racks. Everybody decided that they would be great for continuing the tour. As we walked up to the front of the building we noted a sentry standing just inside the doorway. He didn't appear to have a rifle, but you could tell that he was standing guard. A couple of our guys said something about going up and harassing him. I got nervous about this and was concerned that it could get out of hand.

I saw no point in hurting any Japanese now. When we walked inside the front entry, the Japanese made no move to stop us but looked terrified. He continued to stand at attention. We then heard some other Japanese chatter upstairs, so up we went. At the top of the stairs we entered a long room with a very long switchboard running down one side. It must have had 25 or 30 positions, but to our surprise, about four were occupied by four enlisted Japanese sailors. They were



continuing to maintain telephone service for the yard, which we thought was really weird. A couple were talking on the phone when we came in and stopped abruptly. After a brief moment of silence, one said in very bad English "you want to talk to girl?" I think we all said yes and we passed the phone around. We heard a few words in Japanese and alot of giggling. We learned that the girls on the other end were civilian switchboard operators in Tokyo. We then decided to look around the building. Offices were left like the people just walked out at quitting time. Papers, pencils, and other normal office supplies and equipment were left in perfect order. Photos were on the walls undisturbed. We found a large storeroom full of new and packaged products such as telephones, headsets, and telegraph communications. We helped ourselves. I picked up a new phone and telegraph key to bring back. Some of the guys brought out arms full, but I knew we couldn't carry all this stuff back aboard.

As we left the building, some of our guys got on the bicycles and rode them back to our barracks, leaving the Japanese with no transportation.

It had been raining most of the day. By this time we had run out of crackers and fruit and were now down to some stew beef. The supply situation was still bad and they would not let us eat any of the Japanese food because of sanitary reasons, yet there was plenty of canned Japanese food around.

About 1500 we got word to leave immediately. We packed our gear and waited around for a couple of hours and then they said we would wait until the 2nd of September. During the evening some men from the BATAAN and MONTEREY found a Ford passenger car and rode it around the navy yard for quite some time.

The next day we left Barracks Number 42 at 0800 and moved out of the navy yard to the edge of the city of Yokasuka. We were assembled at Headquarters Naval Activities Barracks "A." Admiral Nimitz was here during the day and there were Japanese all around the place: captains, commanders, ensigns, and some enlisted men.

On the 3rd of September we spent most of the day rigging up a galley and had our first hot chow at supper. Earlier in the day I decided I wanted to explore some more. Another guy (name I don't remember) and I left the barracks and started to walk. We covered most of the yard and found a building that appeared undisturbed. We went in and found what was obviously an officer's office. We went through his desk and found some personal things. I found and took a small beautiful pair of binoculars and a helmet. We returned to barracks without further plunder. Many of our men were finding all kinds of things like flags, samurai swords, officers belts and pistols, medals, etc. All of this loot was being stashed in our barracks with the idea that we were going to be able to take them back to the ship and home eventually.

On the 5th of September 1945, we were told to prepare to leave at 1400. During the morning we packed our gear. Mr. Modle, our commanding officer and a lieutenant, I believe, announced that he had drawn sufficient Japanese rifles for each of us to have as a souvenir. At 1300 we boarded army trucks and headed out through town to the fleet landing. We rode all over the place looking for it. Everytime we passed a good looking Japanese girl we yelled and whistled, scaring them half to death. We arrived at the fleet landing and met up with our other two nucleus crews from the NORTH CAROLINA. We left the dock and arrived at the ship at 1530 and what a welcome sight she was. On the way to the ship we passed the IJS(Imperial Japanese Ship) NAGATO anchored in the bay. She had been damaged by air attacks but was still afloat.

When we arrived aboard the NORTH CAROLINA, they sprayed and deloused us and our equipment. I received a shower, shave and haircut. Now I felt like a new human being. I don't remember having a bath while I was in Japan.

At 1500 on the 8th of September we got underway from Tokyo Bay. As the sun set in the west we watched Mount Fuji disappear in the distance. For the first time on board since the war started, we had movies on the fantail and no darken ship topside. All ships in the force were running with many lights visible. This was very strange since for over three years, we had operated with absolutely no light visible topside, not even a cigarette.

Our return to the United States was a contrast to what we had been used to for almost four years. All of a sudden it was peacetime. We returned to Pearl Harbor, transferring a number of the crew who were to be discharged on the west coast. We picked up hundreds of passengers who were going with us back to the states. We then got underway for the Panama Canal arriving on 8 October 1945. This time our passage through the canal was a little different from the previous one.

The locks were now lined with hundreds of people, civilians and military alike, cheering us and throwing us fruit. The crew was jubilant and started throwing our white hats back to the people. Most of these people were Americans who lived in the canal zone.

We passed out of the canal and proceeded to Boston, our stateside destination. Upon entering Boston Harbor, we were again surprised by the reception that we received. Hundreds of small boats were out to meet us in the outer harbor, plus ferries, tour boats and other craft. The Boston fireboat was out and led us in putting up a huge plume of water. The docks and shores were lined with thousands of people. Bands were playing and it was a fitting end.

This has not been an effort to recite every detail of my career in the Navy and aboard the USS NORTH CAROLINA. I have tried to tell about incidents and actions as they applied to me personally. I have used some notes from the diary I kept during the war and official records to verify dates only.

## Related Photos

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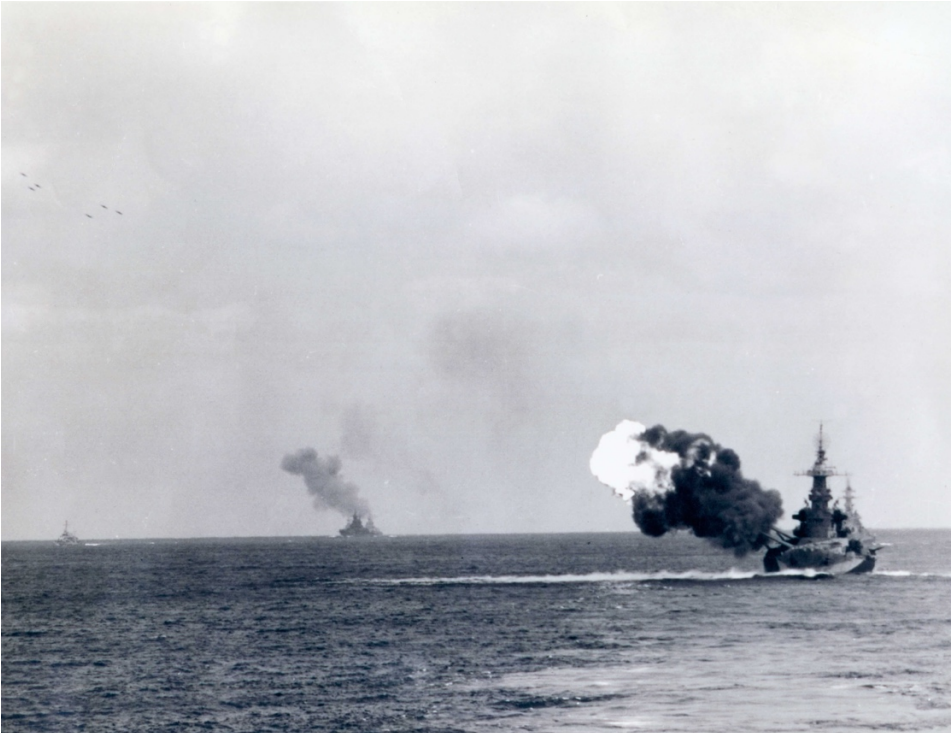
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Black and white photograph of Charles Paty in chambray shirt. Radioman 3/c rate. (March 1942)

More photos in the online archives:

[https://battleshipnc.pastperfectonline.com/photo?utf8=%E2%9C%93&search\\_criteria=paty&searchButton=Search](https://battleshipnc.pastperfectonline.com/photo?utf8=%E2%9C%93&search_criteria=paty&searchButton=Search)



BB-55 during bombardment of Okinawa (projectiles seen in air)



BB-55 in Puget Sound