Chapter 7: 1955: Life Is a Bowl of Cherries

Appropriate quote.

Xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Everything came together for Jack in 1955. It was a time of heady maturation. When the year began, he was a boy in a sailor suit at Newport's Naval Officer Candidate School, barely twenty-three years old with only an "OC" shoulder patch to distinguish him from other seaman apprentices. When it ended, he was, in his mind if not the Navy's, a veteran officer with an Asian tour under his belt and gold stripes on his uniform. By Christmas of that year, his gold hat strap was beginning to tarnish, just starting to turn greenish yellow from exposure to the salty sea. The discoloration was a source of pride to this officer who had stood watch on a warship long enough to deserve a visible symbol of service. The tarnished gold proclaimed loudly, to those inclined to listen, that Ensign Jack Sellers, despite his single stripe, was no shavetail, that he had been around for a while and perhaps was due some respect, especially from those whose stripes were not as dull as his.

But in January of that year, following a fine Christmas vacation at home in Evansville, Jack was still an officer candidate seaman apprentice (OCSA), living and studying in naval barracks along with hordes of other aspiring young men. The class contained 375 officer candidates, all destined to be scattered to the winds after graduation — some to pilot training, some to ships of various kinds, some to shore duty, some to specialized schools.

U.S. Naval Schools, Newport, Rhode Island, 7 January 1955:

I've had a little difficulty with my grades this week, but it's nothing to worry about. We are studying damage control and fire control, and I haven't got the engineering background that would make such studies a cinch. Also, mathematics is not my strongest aptitude, and those two subjects — damage and fire control — are loaded with problems calling for the use of trigonometry and physics. I can see the theory behind it, but I make mistakes with the figures.

I got my uniforms from the tailor this week. The boxes they came in were addressed to "Ensign Raymond Sellers, U.S.N.R," which sounds pretty good, huh? All my uniforms fit beautifully; they should, considering the price I'm

paying. I ordered all my accessories a few days ago (a half dozen white shirts, three khaki shirts, etc., etc.). They should arrive in ten days or so. The whole bill will come to $450. Ouch!

Raymond Jackson Sellers was Jack's full name. The middle name came from his maternal grandfather, Ottoway Jackson Farmer, who did his farming around White Plains, Kentucky, about twenty miles south of Beech Grove. Jack's first name was inherited from his father, Claudius Raymond Sellers, who was called "Clauda-Shraymon" by a bevy of aunts. At Indiana University, Jack wrote a few short stories under the name of Raymond J. Sellers, but he slipped back to Jack Sellers as a young sportswriter and general assignments reporter in Evansville. In 1965, when he needed a "classy" name for the Tokyo job he then held, he adopted Jackson. Anyone who called him "Ray" did not know him well.

U.S. Naval Schools, Newport, Rhode Island, 12 January 1955:

Today I received the accessories to my uniforms. With all those uniforms in storage upstairs, just waiting for me, I can't help feeling that the end is not far away. And it's not, really. Only six more weeks of classes! Ah, that sounds good. It will be wonderful to start living like a human being again, instead of like an automaton who does the same things over and over, day after day. That's the only way the Navy can operate, I guess, but it's hard on a guy's nerves just the same.

Things are still the same here at Newport. We eat, we sleep, we study, we clean the barracks, and we march, day after day, with hardly a variation. The only difference is that there are many more OCs here now. The new class, Class XX, has 750 men in it. My class (XIX) is the smallest ever to enter OCS (375 men). I guess I can consider it some sort of honor that I was chosen to be a member of such a small class.

My grades are back to normal again this week. Last week was just a bad one, that's all. I lost my virginity by getting one tree in the last week before Christmas vacation; then, in the first week after Christmas, I got three more. I guess that just about makes me a prostitute. I'm still in the upper twenty per-cent academically, though. But when you think about it, what difference does it make? The fellow in the lower twenty percent will get bars that shine just as brightly as mine.

Poor ol' Shields! [Thomas E. Shields, Yale University, BE and ME.] He is emptying ashtrays now as I write this, because he was caught with his peacoat collar up several days ago. As usual, he is bemoaning his fate. The fellow who caught him was the student battalion commander, a very black man who looks

as if he just stepped out of the jungle. Everybody calls him "Saboo." Consequently we, the Second Battalion, are affectionately known as "Saboo's Boys." Shields, though, insists that Saboo didn't punish him for turning his collar up. He says he accidentally kicked one of Saboo's elephants. Emptying ashtrays is not the only degrading task that Shields faces this week. He also has to clean the barrack urinals. He says OCS is the only place in the world where a Yale man with two degrees has to clean urinals.

P.S. Officer Candidate School is also the only place on earth where an Indiana University man has to clean urinals.

Tom Shields, a Yale man with two degrees, but he cleaned urinals like everybody else and saw the humor in it.

U.S. Naval Schools, Newport, Rhode Island, 21 January 1955:

The end of another week! My grades were better this time than I had expected. I'm in very good shape, in fact. It looks as if I am destined to get through this place come hell or high water.

We have started an interesting phase in Operations. Over on Coasters Harbor Island is a building that contains what is called a B-Z trainer. It is a monstrous room that contains sixteen booths that are designed like the bridges of 2,200-ton destroyers. Installed in each booth is all the equipment that is needed to control a ship. In front of the booths is a large screen upon which are projected the little shapes that represent the sixteen ships. The ships are grouped into four divisions of four ships each. Each booth is provided with a "Captain," a "Helmsman" and a "Junior Officer of the Deck." We plot our courses and speeds and direct our assigned ship into the various formations ordered by the OTC (Officer in Tactical Command), who talks to us by radio. It's great fun. It's like playing with an elaborate model train outfit. The screen can actually simulate torpedo and aircraft attacks.

U.S. Naval Schools, Newport, Rhode Island, 28 January 1955:

I've been busy all week studying for quarterlies and those damned daily quizzes. It's practically impossible for me to do badly enough in the remaining four weeks to flunk out. I'm safe. Of course, I'm counting the days until graduation. I have a calendar on my locker door, and I mark off a day every morning. At present I'm only living for the weekends, and for the day I get those little gold bars.

U.S. Naval Schools, Newport, Rhode Island, 12 February 1955:

This will be a long letter. Right now I'm standing a midwatch (from midnight to 4 a.m.) in a lonely barracks filled with more than a hundred blissful sleepers. Ah, to be one of them right this minute! But alas, it's only 1 a.m. and I've got another three hours before I'll be relieved. I suppose I hate standing watch more than any other thing at this school. You can't read, you can't smoke, and you are not supposed to write letters. Occasionally I do all three, but mostly I'm pretty careful. It's not likely that the OOD will be prowling around at this time of morning. Most likely he's sleeping in a warm bed at the Battalion Office. Sleeping is what every human being should be doing right now.

This is probably the last watch I'll have to stand before graduation. After that, I'll stand plenty of them, of course. But that won't be so bad. On a ship there is always something to attend to, some duty to perform. But here there is nothing to do except keep a log and make rounds every half hour. As you can imagine, it gets pretty dull. The minutes go by like hours. And the worst is that every hour that goes by is just that much lost sleep, and it can never be recovered. Last night I was in bed at 10:30 p.m., was up at 11:30 p.m., and now I won't be back in bed again until 4 a.m., when I'm relieved. Of course, I'll still have to get up with everyone else at 6 a.m. Happily, though, today is Saturday, and that means that I'll be able to hit the sack after liberty commences about noon. If it were any other day I would have to wait until 10:30 p.m. before going to bed.

Oh well, it won't hurt me to lose a little sleep. Tom Shields isn't quite so complacent about it, though. He says he lost his sleep on the Navy's time, and when he gets his commission, he is going to get it back on the Navy's time. He probably will, too.

I'm in debt about $500 now. That's about average, it seems, although some fellows didn't buy as many uniforms as I did. I'll be able to pay off all my debts upon graduation. I will receive a gift of $300 from Uncle Sam to be used for the purchase of uniforms. My enlisted pay record will be closed out at the same time, and that will probably net me fifty dollars. Also, I have requested a two-month "Dead Horse," which is an advance in pay and which is one of the privileges of rank. Deducting income tax, the "Dead Horse" should be around $380. That should allow me to pay off all my debts (including that $30 dentist bill in Evansville) and still have enough left for expenses for the next month. I'm not certain whether officers get paid every two weeks or every month. But at any rate the "Dead Horse" will be repaid by deductions spread over a period of six months. Of course, no interest is charged.

Well, it looks like writing this letter is doing some good. I just looked at my watch and forty-five minutes have elapsed since I wrote "Dear Folks." I'll keep on writing, and maybe the time will keep on flying. This pen is not much good,

and yet it should be. I borrowed it from Garland Homes, a wealthy young tobacco buyer from North Carolina. He's just a kid but he's married and just recently became a father. He showed me a picture of his wife and child. Both are cute, but what was really interesting about the picture was that it showed Garland's big, fat, black "mammy." I thought mammies went out with the Civil War.

Well, it's two o'clock now. Only two more hours to go. Less than that, maybe. Naval custom demands that a relief come about ten minutes early.

Orders are really pouring in for Class XIX. All the fellows in my section, except those going into the flight program, will separate in March and probably will never see each other again. It's a big Navy and a big world. Jack Park is going into the National Security Agency in Washington, D.C. That's a fine deal for him since he will get married immediately after graduation and doesn't want to go to sea and leave a loving wife with a wet handkerchief on the dock.

Another guy who got a good deal is John Fitch. He was ordered to report to San Francisco (where his "wife and one and a half children are," as he puts it), and from there he will go to Pearl Harbor for active duty aboard a submarine rescue vessel. John has volunteered for submarines. He will take his family to Hawaii with him. Most of the others are going to various schools, such as Secret Weapons, Explosive Ordnance, Communications School, Gunnery, Mine-sweeping, Supply, etc. And, as I said before, a number of them will become jet pilots.

One of the Roving Patrol just came in to shoot the bull for a while. He will try to round up some coffee for me. He can get it at the Battalion Office but it's so blasted cold outside that the stuff will probably freeze before he gets it to me. Boy, will I be glad to hit the sack! It's 2:30 a.m. now.

It rained most of the day today. Of course, everybody got a little damp and uncomfortable because we had to march to classes just the same. Tom Shields said he sure was glad he wasn't in the Army where they made you march in the rain.

We played a joke on Shields the other day. He was what we call "Queen for the Day." That is, he was in charge of our section; he was supposed to march us to class and sound off when the instructor asked for the initial report. Everything went fine for Shields until Bill Wollenburg, Shield's arch (but friend-ly) enemy, got the bright idea of standing fast when Shields gave the command "Forward March." Wollenburg spread the word and that evening, when we *were mustering for chow, everything was ready, everybody had been informed. Shields lined us up, gave us a "Right Face," and then bellowed "Forward March." Nobody moved a muscle. I doubt if anyone even blinked. In his cus-tomary manner, Shields lowered his head and began waddling down the street*

before he realized no one was following him. He was dumbfounded for a moment, then realized it was a joke. He just grinned, put his hands together in a praying manner, sort of squatted, and said, "Aw, come on, fellows — forward march."

The relationship between Tom Shields and Bill Wallenburg is a strange one. Each probably likes the other better than anyone else in the section. And yet they are <u>at</u> each other constantly. When we return to the barracks after our morning classes, and Shields' bunk has been tossed on the floor by the inspecting officer because it was improperly made, Wallenburg will go into hysterics of laughter, and vice versa if it happens to Bill. And it's like that all the time. If Wallenburg goes home for the weekend (he lives in Connecticut), Shields will sleep in Wallenburg's bed, so as not to mess up his own. And so it goes, on and on. Their actions toward each other are so outrageous that you know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that they are devoted friends.

The Roving Patrol returned with the news that there was plenty of coffee but nothing to put it in. Oh, well. It's 3:20 a.m. now, so I should be relieved in about a half hour. I certainly hope so anyway. I'm getting tired standing on my feet. Thank God this is Saturday.

I'm going to quit now. I've got to make one more inspection of the barracks before "Sonnafa" Fitch (my relief) gets here.

U.S. Naval Schools, Newport, Rhode Island, 18 February 1955:

It appears I am headed for duty aboard a destroyer. Eighteen men out of the 375 in my battalion, including me, were called to a meeting yesterday. It seems that Rear Admiral Arleigh Burke, who is ComDesLant (Commander of

26 January 1955

From: Chief of Naval Personnel

To: ENS Raymond J. Sellers, USNR
Naval Schools Command
Newport, Rhode Island

[Upon successful completion of your Officer Candidate indoctrination on 4 March 1955] you will report to the Commanding Officer, Naval Schools Command, Naval Station, Newport, R.I., for temporary duty under instruction for a period of about eight weeks in the Communications Officers Short Course, pending further assignment to duty by the Chief of Naval Personnel.

Destroyers Atlantic), wants to talk to us tomorrow. Fifteen of the eighteen men are going to communications school. Three are going directly from here to destroyers. I consider it an honor to have been selected, since the quota of officers going to destroyers is very small nowadays. So, while the rest of my section (and the rest of the battalion) is standing inspection tomorrow, I and seventeen other fellows will be sipping coffee with a rear admiral. The admiral's flag ship is in Melville now, so we will have to take a bus over there. It's about ten miles from here, I think.

Early on a chilly March morning, Jack dropped from an upper bunk in the barracks, bare feet slapping the cold varnished floor for the last time. He shaved carefully, and pulled on his sailor suit and peacoat, also for the last time. He marched in formation to breakfast, still a seaman apprentice. He ate from a compartmentalized metal tray onto which assorted foods had been slopped. Then he trotted back to the barracks, donned his officer's dress uniform and marched in formation once again, bound for anointment, still a seaman apprentice but no longer looking like one.

As King Company of Class XIX, U.S. Naval Officer Candidate School, marched to the assembly hall, a wise-ass seaman at the side of the road shouted the rhetorical question asked by Frederick March in a recent movie. The veteran actor was portraying the wise old admiral in "The Bridges of Toko Ri." As brave Navy flyers were launched into battle from an aircraft carrier's flight deck, the admiral mused: *"Where do we get such men?"* This question, shouted from the sidelines on this brisk March morning, was mockingly aimed at solemn young men who would be commissioned officers within an hour. Grins broke out in the marching ranks, prideful grins that were waiting to break out anyway.

After being sworn in as an ensign, United States Naval Reserve, Jack went straight back to the barracks, accepting salutes along the way, including a snappy one from Chief Boatswain's Mate Norman W. Maudsley, King Company's gruff CPO, and perhaps even one from that taunting seaman. *Here, dammit, is where we get such men!* He gathered everything he owned into a duffel bag and, right away, checked into a single room at the station's Bachelor Officers Quarters, where he dined that evening at a linen-covered table, with courses served by stewards. He would stay there for two months, a student in a communications program for junior Navy officers. He would enjoy his first bittersweet love affair, with a warm, soft Newport waitress named Holly.

In his haste to join the catered world of Navy officers at the BOQ, he made one brief stop at a footbridge over a portion of the bay. He removed a ring from his finger and threw it into the wind-ruffled metallic waters. The ring, with its

fake diamond, became an evil symbol for Jack within twenty-four hours after he bought it. On his first day in New York City, back in October, he paid five dollars to a sidewalk huckster who convinced him, in so many clever words and gestures, that this valuable ring was stolen and must be disposed of quickly, that Jack was getting a very good deal. The next day, after a night of greedy enjoyment of his ill-gotten jewelry, Jack discovered that the ring could be purchased for $3.95 in any drug store. He was mortified. Lordy, was he a hick from the hinderlands! Good thing the guy wasn't selling the Brooklyn Bridge.

So the ring became a symbol of personal embarrassments that Jack wished to shed as he became an officer and a gentleman. He wore the ring through Officer Candidate School, as a sort of penitence, a scarlet letter that only he could see, then tossed it away forever as he crossed the bridge to a new life.

U.S. Naval Schools, Newport, Rhode Island, 13 March 1955:

Well, I found a typewriter to use, so it won't be as much trouble to write long letters now. Every communications officer has to know how to type and so a room is provided for all the student officers here to practice in. I don't need the practice, but I will take advantage of the typewriters.

Some of my courses are interesting and some of them are not. But all of them are important, I guess, so perhaps I had better learn something while I can, instead of waiting until I'm in the fleet. It won't be too long before I'll be in the fleet, thank goodness. I'm tired of going to school. I want to see the world, etc., etc. And anyway, Newport is not the most exciting place. There's nothing much to do, and besides, it's loaded with all those lowly officer candidates.

Fifteen female officer candidates showed up the other day, and they've been saluting us all over the place. At times it seems a little ridiculous, but they are expected to act just like male OCs and salute every officer who comes within hailing distance. I think they get a kick out of it, though. We return their salutes with a smile and a pleasant "Good morning," "Good afternoon" or "Good evening," and that gives us a chance to catch their eyes for a moment or two. Some of them are right cute. But it's still strange to see girls salute.

I've been enjoying myself. I put in my thirty-five to forty hours a week, of course, but the rest of the hours are mine. I can come and go as I please. If a couple of us decide that we want a midnight hamburger, we just pile into a car and go get it (careful to observe, of course, whether or not the marine at the gate gives us a snappy enough salute as we sail by). In other words, life is generally a bowl of cherries, and although I don't expect a life of complete comfort in the next two years or so, I do expect that the whole will be satisfying and worthy of remembering. I hope to see a lot and do a lot, and I have that won-

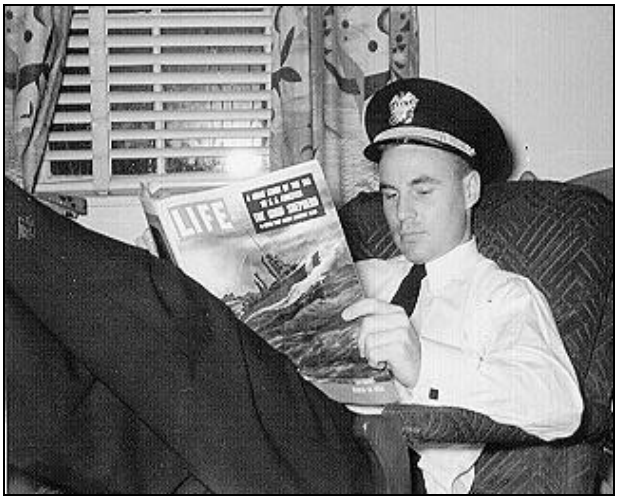
derful little commission from the President of the United States to help me see things and do things in a manner in which I'm not accustomed.

U.S. Naval Schools, Newport, Rhode Island, 16 March 1955:

I ate dinner out tonight. I was so tired and sleepy after classes today that I hit the sack immediately and couldn't see getting up for dinner. The meals at the Officers Mess are so cheap that it doesn't matter if you miss a meal occasionally. I am paying less than forty dollars a month for three meals a day, seven days a week. Since the Navy gives me $47.88 a month for food, I'm actually making money on the deal.

Entertainment is quite cheap on the naval base. There's a movie at the Family Theater every night, and it costs only ten cents. I saw "The Caine Mutiny" again last Saturday. The Officers Club sells drinks for about two-thirds of the normal price, and once a week, on Wednesdays, the club sponsors what is called a "Happy Hour," during which all drinks, from the most expensive scotch to the cheapest wine, are twenty-five cents each. Illogically, a "Happy Hour" lasts three hours, from 1600 to 1900.

I bought an expensive camera the other day. It's a very good one — an Argus 3 — and cost me almost fifty dollars. It would have cost almost seventy on the outside. It's just what I need to keep track of the places I will visit and the people I will meet. I couldn't understand, for a while, why I was getting such a kick out of just owning that camera, until it suddenly dawned upon me that it is the first expensive and yet non-essential thing (besides my phonograph) that I have ever bought brand-new.



Ensign Jack Sellers in Bachelor Officers Quarters in Newport, Rhode Island. He seldom slept there. He had better accommodations, provided by a young waitress.

In his "Dear Folks" letters from Newport during the spring of 1955, Jack wrote nothing at all, not a word, about Holly, the young woman with whom he lived for two months while attending a school for prospective communications officers. His reticence stemmed from the fact that Holly was married to a sailor on duty in the Mediterranean and was the mother of a baby girl. Actually Holly was just a girl herself, no older than Jack, maybe younger, certainly more mature, working as a waitress and living in a small apartment that had been carved out of one of those ubiquitous old Newport

mansions, summer homes for the rich in the days when the rich could afford them, dwellings now for the hoi polloi.

This liaison, an adulterous affair with a married mother, was not a matter that Jack Sellers could discuss with Mother and Dad. Nevertheless, Jack basked in the reflected glory of that early triumph. He saw admiration in the eyes of the young officers who gathered in front of the Bachelor Officers Quarters every morning. Waiting for the bus that would take them to classes, they watched, with the envy of celibates, as Smiling Jack, clad in a uniform no more dashing than their own, emerged from a taxicab that had whisked him from warm delights to chilly duty, just in time to board the bus and nod good morning to the lonely souls who had slept at the BOQ. The jealous officers had quickly noted, to Jack's smug satisfaction, that this newly minted ensign seldom spent a night in his assigned room, never studied and often dozed in class. The dozing was assumed to be the consequence of exhaustion, the kind that leaves a silly smile on your face.

Jack received Holly's favors and the President's appointment to officer rank at virtually the same time. The commission, a long-awaited invitation to seagoing adventures, was the crowning glory of Jack's year. But his first full-fledged affair also claimed a prominent place in the scenario he had scripted for himself. One of his heroes, remember, was Ernest Hemingway, who loved many women and, less wisely, married a few. In the couple of months that Jack and

12 April 1955

From: Chief of Naval Personnel

To: ENS Raymond J. Sellers, USNR
Naval Schools Command
Newport, Rhode Island

Subj: Change of duty

Upon completion of your course of instruction and when directed by your commanding officer, you will regard yourself detached from temporary duty under instruction with Naval Schools Command, Naval Station, Newport, Rhode Island, and from such other duty as may have been assigned you; will proceed to San Francisco, California, and report to the Commandant, Twelfth Naval District, for transportation to the port in which the USS Colahan (DD658) may be, and upon arrival report to the commanding officer of that vessel for duty.

Holly were together, they pretended to be in bittersweet love, Holly with more ardor than Jack, who was busy gazing at his horizons, preoccupied with his immediate future.

"*My fair creature of an hour.*" That was how Jack, with equal measures of pretension and insensitivity, referred to Holly in a gift inscription, quoting from Shelley, blindly embracing sentiments that suggested the end of their affair. It was his fuzzy notion of romance in this clearly tentative relationship, and he was surprised, stupidly innocent, when Holly, wounded by this otherwise attractive oaf, reacted with anger. "You bastard," she said. Even Jack was smart enough to see his tactical error, but he never became skillful at romancing the young women who dropped into his eager-enough hands from time to time.

Still, they danced and dined in Newport nightspots, toured The Breakers mansion, bicycled in quaint streets and, every night, shared a bed at Holly's apartment. Some nights Jack would wait for her at the apartment, falling asleep on the couch, and she would rush straight home from the restaurant, slightly breathless, to kiss him awake. Holly's cool, soft lips, fresh from the sharp bay winds outside, lifted him from boyish sleep . . . ellipsis or fadeout, depending on the medium of your mind's eye.

Although memories of that wintery spring would linger for a lifetime, recollections of Holly herself, of she and Jack together, faded among the many 1955 events that Jack considered more important, more worthy of remembering. In matters of love and romance, Jack's flesh was willing, his libido was strong enough and his opportunities were plentiful, but his romantic spirit was weak — too selfish, too young, too caught-up in activities and anticipations that had little to do with the opposite sex. Call it young ambition, call it something else.

"So long," said Holly in early May, sitting upright in bed, staring straight ahead as Jack, eager to get away, feeling guilty, closed the door on that final morning in Newport, Rhode Island. He would never see her or communicate with her again. In the last moments of their affair, Holly had become coldly unhappy with this ungenerous young man who either couldn't or wouldn't make even an insincere commitment that would have pleased her while costing him nothing. The sea, a sailor's lover, was calling him. Jack did not suspect it at the time, impatient as he was to end this phase of his life and begin another as a ship's officer, but the sea, too, would fail to arouse his deepest passions, although it would, several times in the next three years, just as it was doing now, rescue him from entanglements with women who were more romantic than he.

Hotel LaSalle, San Francisco, 27 May 1955:

I'm in San Francisco now and will remain here until next Friday, when I fly off to Japan. I'm staying at the hotel whose stationary I'm using. I took care of all my Navy business this morning and now have absolutely nothing to do for a whole week. I was given a combination typhus and cholera shot this morning and have to wait a week before taking my second shot. That's why I am being detained here. I'm eager to get to my ship, but of course I can't exactly complain about having a week's paid vacation in San Francisco. Boy, what a racket! Not only am I earning my regular salary of ten dollars a day (including Saturdays and Sundays), but I'm also drawing what is called "per dium," which amounts to twelve dollars a day and is considered compensation for living in a hotel and eating at restaurants. My room has TV and a private bath. No wonder the government has such a large national debt!

Travis Air Force Base, Fairfield, California, 3 June 1955:

I'm at Travis Air Force Base. I'm waiting to catch a flight to Honolulu this evening. We will take off at 2000 (8 p.m. to you) and will arrive in Honolulu nine or ten hours later. Honolulu is approximately 2,400 miles from here, so you can see it's not exactly a short trip. There are fifty-eight passengers scheduled for my flight. I sure hope they have some sort of sleeping accommodations on that plane, because I'm dead tired and in no mood to sit up all night. I will be held over for four to fifteen hours in Honolulu and will then fly on to Tokyo via Wake Island. I will be glad to get aboard my ship! I'm tired of traveling here and there, toting baggage along with me. I want to settle down.

San Franciso was fun but it got a little tiresome after a while. I saw Talluluh Bankhead in "Dear Charles" several nights ago. She is interesting but a little corny, too. I believe she has a bit of ham in her. The plot was a dilly, and I can understand why it was a success in New York. It seems that Tallulah was an unmarried mother of three grown children sired by three different men. If you can't make a successful New York play out of that, something is terribly wrong!

I also discovered a wonderful little place away from the main drag. The place was just an ordinary tavern called "Bocce Ball" (an Italian game, I understand), but the unique thing about it was that it had operatic entertainment. Four singers, one playing an accordian and another the piano, performed pieces from various operas. The place was jammed. And there was one impressive-looking fellow with long white hair who hung around and san for free drinks. His name was McLoney and they say he used to sing for the Metropolitan Opera. He was about seventy-five years old.

In Flight from Honolulu to Wake Island, 4 June 1955:

We arrived in Honolulu at 2:30 this morning. I ate a hurried breakfast and then stumbled around for a while in a rather dark and crummy BOQ hunting for my assigned room. Mosquitoes kept me awake most of the time, but I slept a little and then got up about noon. It was terrifically hot and I was wearing my dress khakis, but there was nothing I could do about it since my baggage was still on the plane. I just walked around most of the time carrying my blouse (coat). I took a taxi into Honolulu and strolled around for a couple of hours before going back to the airport. Honolulu looks just like California. The same weather, the same palm trees and the same kind of architecture. The nights, though, are a little warmer.

I went down to the waterfront in Honolulu and was invited aboard a 100-foot sailboat that is operated by a scientific institution in Philadelphia. It had a crew of fourteen including several wives and a three-month-old baby. The captain said they worked for nothing except their room and board. The boat's purpose is to collect shells. One of the crew members is an author, and I looked through several of his books about small-boat sailing.

I'll certainly be glad to get to Japan. This traveling is killing me. I hope my ship is in Japan and not somewhere along the China coast. Another trip after this one would really finish me off.

Well, you two will be having a wedding anniversary soon. I'm sending you ten dollars and I want you to make reservations at Smitty's and eat dinner there in celebration of the momentous occasion.

We took off from Hickham Field near Honolulu at 6:20 p.m. We will arrive at Wake Island at 1 a.m. Total flight time is about eight hours and forty minutes. At Wake I'll have time for a hot meal before starting on the last leg of the trip, which will take approximately eight more hours. You hear a lot of talk about the world shrinking, but it's still a damned big place. Even when you travel at 250 miles per hour, as I'm doing now, it still takes a long time to get where you are going.

Shirley Farmer of White Plains, Kentucky, was fifteen years old in 1929 when she met and married Claudius Raymond Sellers, a nineteen-year-old farm boy who had grown up mostly in Beech Grove, a smaller town about twenty miles north. She met him as he passed through White Plains after his discharge from the Navy.

Claudius Raymond, or "Clauda-shraymon" as his mother and aunts called him, was cute, she thought. If she lied about her age, if she said she was eighteen, they could get married in Indiana, north of the wide Ohio River. So Shirley and Claude, just weeks after they met, were wed on June 14, 1929, in Boonville, a town east of Evansville, Indiana. They possessed little except each

other in the early years. They were worse than dirt poor, because they had no dirt at all, no land, no property, virtually nothing of value.

In June of 1955, when they celebrated their twenty-sixth wedding anniversary, they were comfortable in a middle-class home on Evansville's East Side. Their two children were doing well. Daughter Faye was married and pregnant. Son Jack was a naval officer.

Bachelor Officers Quarters, Yokosuka, Japan, 6 June 1955:

We arrived at Wake Island at 1 a.m., June 6, and boarded a bus that took us to a a building where a hot meal of eggs and — of all things! — Spam was served. On the way to the meal I saw on the beach some of the remains of the bloody battle that was fought during the big war. Wrecked barges and other vehicles still lie rusting there. A huge LST, the kind made in Evansville, is halfway up the beach, its stubby nose abnormally high and dry. You can also see the remains of Japanese fortifications.

We crossed the international dateline shortly before arriving at Wake, and since we crossed it almost exactly at midnight, we consequently skipped Sunday, June 5, altogether! Just before we crossed it, it was late Saturday night, and after we crossed it, it was early Monday morning. I'll get that day back, though, when I return to the States.

One unfortunate incident occurred at Wake. While I was in the restroom, one side of the zipper to my pants disengaged from the little device that zips and unzips the zipper. I couldn't get my pants zipped up, and the plane was ready to leave. Everybody was aboard except me. Consequently, I made the last leg of the trip with only a safety pin between me and indecency. After landing at Tokyo International Airport, I hurriedly changed pants before catching an outmoded bus for Yokosuka.

I must tell you about that bus ride. Since making it, I've discovered it is famous for its discomfort. One fellow here says that he heard about it even in Florida, while he was at flight training there. Anyway, the bus was an old, rattling jalopy with tiny uncomfortable seats (tiny, tiny things that only a Japanese or a midget could be comfortable in). Two ensigns, a warrant officer and a chief made the trip with me. The roads here are out of this world! You think Evansville has terrible streets? You should see Tokyo. Bump, bump, bump, bump we went for one solid hour, through the very worst (I'm sure) of Tokyo (since no part of the city could be any poorer than the part I came through). The warrant officer and chief exchanged constant comments upon the filthy living conditions of the people, and that seemed to irritate the Japanese driver because I'm sure he hit a few deep holes that he could have missed if he had tried.

But finally we got to Yokosuka and I discovered that the USS Colahan had sailed this morning, only hours before I got here. Now I don't know what will happen. I've got a nice room at the BOQ and I'm just waiting to see if they are going to fly me to her or if I must wait until she comes back.

Prices are a poor man's dream here. I ate filet mignon for lunch and paid only $1.35. It would have cost three dollars in the States, maybe more. I had to exchange all my U.S. currency for "Military Payment Certificates." The only "hard" money we use over here is pennies — the rest is paper.

Jack reported aboard the *Colahan* on June 9 in Japan's Yokosuka Harbor, where the ship was tied to a buoy a short boat ride from a landing at the huge Japanese base that the U.S. Navy grabbed after World War II. It was nighttime, and as Jack came aboard, he could not tell the bow from the stern, the forecastle from the fantail. The Ensign, which must be saluted when boarding a ship, was on the fantail, somewhere in the darkness to Jack's left or right; he knew not which. So he took his fifty-fifty chance, and saluted the Ensign-less forecastle. It was his first but not his last mistake aboard the *USS Colahan (DD-658)*.

USS Colahan, Yokosuka, Japan, 9 June 1955:

I reported aboard the Colahan last night. When I discovered my ship had come in, I asked the Transportation Office of the Fleet Activities Building to send a Jeep to the BOQ pronto, and within a half hour I was at the boat landing with all my baggage, ready to go. The Colahan (Col as in "cold," not as in "cauliflower") was moored alongside two other destroyers, the Erben and the Shields, which belong to the same division as the Colahan. All three ships were nested together at a buoy in the harbor, so I had to catch a boat to get to her.

I hadn't been at the boat landing five minutes, though, until what should appear but a boat from the Colahan herself, bringing the executive officer, Mr. Claude DeBuhr (pronounced "DeBore") ashore, and also Mr. Jack Zimmermann, the communications officer, who had come to inquire about berthing availabilities for a two-week yard period that the Colahan was just beginning. DeBuhr introduced himself when he discovered that I was headed for the ship, and Zimmermann offered to take me to the ship in the captain's gig after he concluded his business.

United States Navy Regulations, 1948 (Article 2108): "Each person in the naval service, upon coming on board a ship of the Navy, shall salute the national Ensign . . . . He shall stop on reaching the upper platform of the accommodation ladder . . . , face the national Ensign, and render the salute, after which he

shall salute the officer of the deck."

The ride to the ship, which took about fifteen minutes, was uneventful. I remembered to go aboard the gig ahead of Zimmermann (which is proper since he is a lieutenant j.g. and is senior to me), and I remembered to follow him aboard the ship. I made my first mistake a fraction of a second after stepping aboard. I couldn't see very well, since it was fairly late at night, and I saluted the forecastle instead of the Ensign at the fantail. A minor error, since I doubt if anyone even noticed (except maybe the chief petty officer who returned my salute to the quarterdeck).

Captain H.J. Brantingham seems like a nice fellow, although I've only exchanged a few words with him. I think we will get along fine. He's about what I expected in a captain.

USS Colahan, Yokosuka, Japan, 11 June 1955:

Mr. DeBuhr, the executive officer, informed me yesterday that I will serve as the assistant communications officer and the assistant CIC officer. The captain later thought it a good idea to make me the public information officer, because of my journalistic background, so the XO made me that, too. The Colahan is tied up to a pier here in Yokosuka and will remain here for about eleven more days. The boilers are being re-bricked and many of the superheater tubes are being replaced. After we get going again, we will operate in this area for a while before heading for Hong Kong on the China Coast, where we will tie up for three or four days.

I have the duty today, along with three other officers, and will not be able to go ashore tonight. I just finished my first watch and I'm happy to report that everything went off okay. I have lots to learn, though. Mr. Zimmermann was there to tell me anything I needed to know. He is my roommate and I've already squeezed from him a great deal of information.

I'm quite impressed with the captain and I believe I'm going to enjoy serving under him. He's a fanatic acey-deucey player and spends much of his leisure time playing the game with the supply officer, Mr. Dick Kuhlman, who graduated from the Academy. I understand that COs and supply officers are often buddies aboard small ships. Supply officers are not eligible for command at sea, so I suppose the captains feel they can let down their hair in the presence of such individuals.

With the insouciance of youth, Jack describes Captain Brantingham as a fanatic acey-duecy player and seldom mentions him again, never imagining that he might someday want to know more about his first commanding officer

aboard the *USS Colahan.* Well, that's normal enough. Youth trivalizes the present, ignores the past and looks to the future, while an old man like me ignores the present, yearns for the past and fears the future. Neither approach is the best way to conduct our short lives. We simply can't help ourselves.

Nearly forty years later, in 1993, long after Jack's present became Jackson's past, a copy of Henry Joseph Brantingham's Navy biography fell into my hands. It was forwarded by Ted Knudson of Kelso, Washington, the *Colahan*'s first supply officer, 1943-45. Ted knew I was working on a history of the destroyer, and he thought it might be helpful. The document had been sent to Ted by Paul Noel of Sonoma, California, who, like Ted, was a *Colahan* plankowner. Neither had known Brantingham, but Paul, assessing the biographical information, concluded that the *Colahan* had finally gotten "a two-fisted skipper, although it was well after World War II."

[Summary of Brantingham's career]

Claude DeBuhr: "When I joined the *Colahan* in late 1954, she was commanded by Commander Hank Brantingham, and she had just completed a yard overhaul. She was probably the filthiest naval vessel I had ever seen. Yard debris was scattered throughout the ship, and she badly needed a good washdown and a good paint job. Brantingham was a nice man and a good captain, but he was too tolerant of his officers' performances. We didn't operate well at sea, and got atrocious grades on our competitive exercises. The officers, a nice group, didn't seem to care about the ship, and they let things slide, maintaining a status quo. Although likable, they were a lethargic group. The word got around, because one day we received a visit by ComDesRon 17, Captain Glyn R. Donaho, a highly decorated World War II submarine commander, now the commodore of the destroyer squadron in which the *Colahan* served. A more vicious man I never met. This visit was made while we were underway in an exercise area off San Diego, and Donaho came aboard by highline. After an hour's look around, he and Brantingham went to the captain's cabin. Soon I was called. Upon entering the cabin, I found a shaken CO and a furious squadron commander. Donaho launched himself into fifteen minutes of verbal abuse concerning the *Colahan*'s condition. When he finally left, he promised to return in two weeks, and if he didn't see improvement, heads would roll, namely mine and Brantingham's.

"Needless to say, we were concerned. As XO, I became the taskmaster, the overseer, the whip. My job was to get the officers off top dead center, to make them do something about the situation. It was difficult and stressful, but the job got done. This was when I began demanding only excellent performances from the officers. I didn't accept laziness, excuses or procrastination from anyone. I

also had to clean my own house. During my first weeks on board, I discovered, in my stateroom, drawer after drawer full of unanswered correspondence and incomplete reports left by the previous XO [Lieutenant Commander Leo Nelson]. These I quickly took care of. I dropped them over the side. The officers, of course, didn't react very well to the new requirements, but conditions slowly improved. The *Colahan* began looking and performing better."

"High command is something you come to suddenly, with no experience," said Post Captain Jack Aubrey of the British Royal Navy. In Patrick O'Brian's "The Mauritius Command," the fourth in a fascinating series of novels about early Nineteenth Century naval warfare, Aubrey spoke of his long-awaited promotion. Soon he would command a squadron of English warships against the French in the Indian Ocean. "There are captains under you; and handling the captains of a squadron, each one of them God the Father of his own quarterdeck, is a very different matter from handling a ship's company under your own eye. You can rarely choose them and you can rarely get rid of them; and if you do not handle them right, then the squadron is inefficient, and there's the devil to pay."

Captain Glyn Donaho wore four stripes against Commander Brantingham's three, but the difference was much more than one stripe. Donaho was a very senior naval officer, just short of an admiral, someone to be reckoned with, even to fear. The *Colahan*'s captain and executive officer were "concerned" over the dressing down, as DeBuhr phrased it, and there were some mighty good reasons to be concerned. As commodore of Destroyer Squadron 17, Donaho was the boss of ComDesDiv 172. In other words, he was the boss of Brantingham's boss. Not only that, he enjoyed a huge reputation in the Navy. He was a certified hero, a powerful killer of the nation's enemies, and this was only his latest tour as a commander of commanders, not at all his first.

LTJG John C. Zimmermann, Jack's roommate until he got a cushy job as sailing instructor at the Naval Academy.

A decade earlier, in late 1944, American submarines organized themselves into wolf packs in the campaign to liberate the Philippines and bring the Japanese empire to its knees. "Hunting areas" stretched from the waters off Japan to the South China Sea, and they bore picturesque names such as "Hit Parade," "Marus' Morgue" and "Convoy College." Operating in Convoy College was Commander Donaho's pack, which consisted of the *USS Picuda*,

the *USS Redfish* and the *USS Spadefish.* In early September his pack sent two Japanese merchant ships and a destroyer to the bottom, and then, while east of Formosa on the 8th, the *Spadefish* sank four merchant ships out of a single convoy. By the time Donaho concluded his patrol, on 21 September, he had eliminated 64,456 tons of enemy shipping, the highest wolf pack score thus far in the Pacific War.

As if Captain Brantingham didn't have enough problems, the *Colahan* "kissed" a San Diego buoy in early 1955, just a few weeks after Commodore Donaho had chewed him out. A hole was punched in the destroyer's hull. How big was the hole? "Big enough," said Chief Engineer (?) Jack Kuhn. Brantingham and Kuhn found themselves at the lonely end of a long green table, facing a Board of Inquiry. Results? Kuhn wouldn't say, but he did say that Brantingham probably retired as a commander because of it. Kuhn reported aboard the *Colahan* in June 1952 and departed in early April 1955. He was relieved by Jerry Snuffin, who must have been aboard when I was, but I don't remember him.

Claude DeBuhr: "Now, an unpleasant story. One morning while the *Colahan* was getting underway from a buoy in San Diego Bay, a small yard water tanker crossed our stern as we were backing down, causing us to stop to keep from colliding with her. The tide drifted us down on the buoy, and our keel got entangled with the buoy's anchor chain. At that time, unbeknownst to us, the ship's bottom was torn, and water started leaking in. Captain Brantingham, suspecting something might be amiss, sent the damage control officer below to sound out the compartments, to see if flooding was taking place. The DCO returned and reported everything dry. The DCO was awaiting discharge in about three weeks and was not performing well. In this instance, he really did us in, because he had not inspected all compartments. Two or three hours later Brantingham noticed that the ship was sluggish and did not handle well. This time he sent the chief engineer to take the soundings and found that there was several feet of water in one of the forward magazines. We were promptly sent to the Navy yard. Ammunition was unloaded, and the ship was drydocked and repaired. A board of investigation was convened, and both the CO and the DCO received letters of reprimand, thus effectively ending Commander Brantingham's career. The DCO, whose name I fortunately don't remember, left the ship claiming that he didn't care, because the Navy wasn't his career choice. Needless to say I was appalled."

USS Colahan, Yokosuka, Japan, 13 June 1955:

Everything is okay with me. The food is good and my bed is reasonably soft, although it does have a slight list to port. I'm standing eight hours of watch every three days, while we are in port, but when we get started again, in about ten days, I can expect to stand watches probably eight hours out of every twenty-four. And in addition to standing watches, I'll have all my other work to do, so it will be no picnic after we get to sea. But I'm looking forward to it. We will operate around Yokosuka for a while and then head for Hong Kong, where I hope to buy some very cheap but very good tailor-made clothes. The materials you can get there are wonderful, so I understand: duty-free imported English fabrics. But you have to go to a reputable tailor or else you'll find yourself stuck with clothes made of excellent material but sewed together with cheap Chinese thread that will soon rot and fall apart.

I stopped this letter after writing the preceding paragraph and went up to the wardroom to watch "Julius Caesar." But since I had already seen the movie, I stayed only until after Mark Anthony's "Friends, Romans and Countrymen" speech, because I wanted to finish this letter and read some things that I must read before hitting the sack. A full-length movie is shown every night aboard the ship, both in the wardroom and in the crew's mess. That's standard throughout the fleet. I suppose the daily movie is just about the biggest event of the day when the ship is at sea and has been there for perhaps two or three weeks without ever touching the shore. I wonder what officers and sailors did in the old days when there were no movies. Some of them, no doubt, engaged in more educational pursuits such as reading, but I suppose the others, the majority, fooled away their time and their money in card games and the like. I guess it's a healthy thing to have the movies aboard. They are sort of like television, though, and you find yourself watching them whether you want to or not.

USS Colahan, Yokosuka, Japan, 17 June 1955:

I was just relieved of the Officer of the Deck watch. It's almost 9 p.m. and I'm very tired. I'm going to hit the sack pretty soon because I've got to get up at 3:30 a.m. to stand the 4-to-8 watch tomorrow morning. I'm sitting now at the desk in my stateroom listening to Burl Ives sing "The Blue-tail Fly" over the Far Eastern Network. I'm quite comfortable aboard the Colahan and thus far have not been weighed down with work. I stand eight hours of watches every three days, which is not bad at all. At sea I'll probably stand four hours out of every sixteen. That gives me twelve hours between watches to sleep, eat and perform my other duties. It's not the best of work schedules but it's not unbearable either.

My roommate Jack Zimmermann and I have eaten at the officers club here

in Yokosuka several times. It's a beautiful club, probably the best in the Far East. I've bought a number of things since I've been here, including a pair of binoculars, opera glasses and a few other things. This is a wonderful place for bargains. The opera glasses were priced at 4,400 yen, but I griped about the high price so loudly that the shopkeeper let me have them for 4,000 yen. That's about $11.10 in U.S. currency. The same thing in the States would cost at least twenty-five dollars.

USS Colahan, Yokosuka, Japan, 21 June 1955:

The Colahan moved from Berth #5 to Drydock #5 today, but nothing has changed essentially. We are still tied up to a pier in Yokosuka. Our boilers will be repaired by Thursday morning (Wednesday afternoon, your time) and we will get underway about 1400 the same day. We will go to Okinawa first, where we are scheduled to pick up some Boy Scouts. Then we will go to Formosa and drop the scouts off. After that we will go to Hong Kong where we'll stay for about five days. I hope to buy some good clothes while I'm there.

It seems that Mr. DeBuhr, the executive officer, is the unpopular one around here. Everyone likes the captain okay, but can't stand "Smiling Jack" DeBuhr. I haven't run headlong into him yet, but Jack Zimmermann and he are constantly participating in a one-sided duel. It's one-sided, of course, because DeBuhr is a lieutenant commander and Jack is only a j.g. — a major difference in rank. Yesterday DeBuhr found Jack's garrison cap in the wardroom, so he threw it in the "shit can" (which is Navy slang for trash can). But he wasn't just picking on Zimmermann alone. His angst is democratic. He does that to any officer who leaves his hat in the wardroom.

"I liked LTJG Zimmermann, but I doubt if he would believe that," confessed Claude DeBuhr more than four decades after those on-going verbal duels. "Yes, I applied a little ungentlemanly pressure, but Zimmermann did an excellent job." DeBuhr, now retired in Los Altos, California, just south of San Francisco, was sharing his memories with the author of this book. The year was 1996. Seventy-four years old, married to Gudrun after a bachelorhood that spanned his entire Navy career, DeBuhr praised several of the *Colahan*'s officers, expressing himself meticulously and eloquently in a long, hand-printed letter.

"Lieutenant Bob Marshall, the operations officer, was a particularly well qualified officer who was always reliable and performed well. Years later I ran into him when he commanded an LST. [Marshall rose much higher than that. As a full commander, he skippered the *USS xxxxxxxxxx*, a *Gearing*-class (?)

destroyer.] LTJG Joe Wachtel also was outstanding. He always did a topnotch job, first as gunnery officer, then as chief engineer. Likable and jovial, he was a good man to make liberty with [the ultimate Navy compliment].

DeBuhr even had some cautiously kind words for Ensign Jack Sellers, although here we must weigh his sincerity, since he was addressing his remarks, after all, to Jack's biographer, who once was Jack himself. Anyway, DeBuhr saw Jack as "a typical, seemingly carefree young officer, always smiling and pleasant, sometimes a little reluctant to perform, but willing enough."

[The Marcel Kyle letter could go here.]

Boy Scouts cross the gangway to the *Colahan* quarterdeck at Buckner Bay, Okinawa. Ensign Jack Sellers welcomes them aboard.

In the five years since her recommissioning, the *Colahan* had sailed under three captains — Felton, Brooks and Brantingham. Likewise, her day-to-day affairs had been managed by three executive officers — James Spielman, Leo Nelson and Claude DeBuhr.

Commander DeBuhr, United States Navy (Retired), was born in Saukville, Wisconsin, in December 1921, almost exactly ten years before Jack Sellers came into this world in the Kentucky village of Beech Grove. DeBuhr graduated from Wisconsin's Port Washington High School in 1938, and was enrolled as a student at the University of Wisconsin for one year before entering the Naval Academy in July 1940. He expected to graduate with the Academy class of 1944, but there was a war on, and Navy officers were needed everywhere, so his studies were accelerated. He was commissioned with the June class of 1943, after only three years at Annapolis.

Following graduation, DeBuhr reported aboard the *USS Washington (BB-56)* and served in the Gunnery Department as a junior officer on the 20-millimeter guns. A year later he was sent to Iowa for flight training, but the newly promoted lieutenant junior grade quickly "washed out," as they say in the Navy when anyone fails to satisfy the rigorous demands of such programs. He would always wear black shoes instead of the brown ones of a dashing Navy pilot.

In early 1945 DeBuhr was ordered to another battleship, the *USS Pennsylvania (BB-38)*, and he was aboard on 12 August, just days before the

Pacific War ended, when a Japanese torpedo struck the anchored ship in Okinawa's Buckner Bay. "The torpedo damned near sank us," DeBuhr said. Screws and shafts were badly damaged. The *Pennsylvania* had to be towed to Bremerton, Washington, where the young officer left her to become a sort of traveling navigator for the U.S Navy.

From March 1946 to March 1947, DeBuhr served as navigator and communications officer aboard three ships — the *USS General R.M. Blatchford (AP-156)*, the *USS Olmsted (APA-188)* and the *USS Amphion (AR-13)*. He guided the *Blatchford* from Bremerton to Nagasaki, then back to San Francisco. He charted courses for the *Olmsted* as she moved from San Francisco to Japan to the Panama Canal and on to Norfolk, Virginia. Now a full lieutenant, he performed navigation chores for the *Amphion*, a heavy repair ship with duties in Bermuda and other Caribbean places.

In March 1947 he was ordered to the School of Naval Administration, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California, for six months of training in military government. In September, upon completion of this training, he was assigned as Assistant to the Island Government Officer on the staff of the Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet. A huge South Pacific area, including the Marshalls, the Marianas (minus Guam) and the Carolines, had to be administered. He served in this capacity until July 1949 when he was sent to temporary duty under instruction at the CIC Officers School at Glenview, Illinois.

From January 1950 to January 1951, DeBuhr served as operations officer and navigator aboard the *Sumner*-class *USS DeHaven (DD-727)*. The Korean War broke out in the midst of his tour aboard the destroyer. The *DeHaven* participated prominently in the pre-invasion bombardment of Inchon, preparing the way for General Douglas MacArthur's bold assault. On 13 September she stood up a treacherous, mine-filled channel that was hemmed in by shallows and massive mud flats. The *DeHaven* anchored a scant 800 yards from Wolmi Do, an enemy-held island fortress, and fired the first salvo at concealed gun emplacements. "We were sitting ducks," DeBuhr said. Indeed, the half dozen destroyers involved here became known in Navy lore as "The Sitting Ducks at Inchon." The *DeHaven* also provided gunfire support for the successful landings the following day. For her part in this daring action, which reversed the course of the war, she was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation. Another decordation was pinned to DeBuhr's chest.

Next for Lieutenant DeBuhr came a one-year tour as executive officer of the *USS Spangler (DE-696)*. The destroyer escort was an anomaly in the Navy. She had electric-drive engines, a distinct departure from the steam engines that American sailors had learned to love and hate. But the *Spangler* tour was of short duration. In January 1952 DeBuhr commenced a four-month period of

study in the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project at Sandia Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico. In May 1952 he reported to Clarksville Base, Clarksville, Tennessee, as production control officer involved in nuclear weapons storage. He remained there until October 1954 when he was ordered to the *USS Colahan*. By then he had been promoted to lieutenant commander.

USS Colahan, Hong Kong, 29 June 1955:

The Colahan got underway from Yokosuka last Thursday [six days ago] and sailed south to rendezvous with the three other destroyers of the division [USS Erben, USS Shields and USS Twining] just northeast of Okinawa Shima ("shima" means "island"). We joined up with the division the following day and conducted CIC (Combat Information Center) and gunnery drills.

During the CIC exercise I was JOOD (Junior Officer of the Deck), which is nothing more than a glorified messenger boy. Every time we come into a port or get underway, my duty station is JOOD on the bridge. It's not a bad job, though, since I can see what is going on, and I guess it's really a fairly important job because I accept messages from the other ships over the two radios on the bridge, and I even send messages sometimes.

During the gunnery exercises, I was a safety observer in one of the five-inch mounts. My job was to see that they shot at the streamer being towed by the airplane and not at the airplane itself. Jesus, do those guns make a lot of noise! There I am, peeping through a little telescopic sight. I see the streamer for about one-quarter of a second, and Blam! — all I see are globs of fire and smoke and little pieces of cork flying through the air. Then, before I can even find that damned streamer again, Blam!

[Projectile scare]

After we finished the exercises, which took place in the East China Sea, we headed back into the Philippine Sea and steamed for Buckner Bay, Okinawa. We arrived late Sunday afternoon and remained there for about three hours, just long enough to refuel and pick up fifteen Boy Scouts who were hitching a ride with us to Formosa. The three other destroyers also took Boy Scouts aboard. At the time they came aboard the Colahan, I was Officer of the Deck. Each scout, as he stepped onto the quarterdeck, saluted the Ensign (the American Flag at the fantail) and the Officer of the Deck (me), and requested permission to come aboard, Sir! I was a little startled at first but managed to keep a straight face. Some of the other officers were watching and getting a kick out of it, as I could see out of the corner of my eye.

Jack had been aboard the Colahan for a mere three weeks and this was his very first cruise, and yet he blithely aligned himself with the grinning officers,

not the awkward Boy Scouts. It never occurred to him that the grins of the veteran officers might be aimed at him, a brand-new shavetail ensign who did not know what the hell he was doing. It is always difficult to see ourselves as others see us.

The Boy Scouts were mostly the sons of U.S. military personnel stationed in Formosa. They had left Formosa aboard the cruiser USS Rochester during the second week of June. Upon their arrival in Okinawa, they pitched their tents at Imbu Beach and stayed there for fourteen days. Transportation aboard Navy ships was arranged for them by Vice Admiral Alfred M. Pride, former Commander of the Seventh Fleet.

During the twenty-two-hour trip to Formosa, the scouts amused themselves by scampering around the gun mounts, helping the boatswain's mates with fancy ropework, and creating not a little confusion in even the pilot house. One scout was given an opportunity to steer the ship, under the careful supervision of the helmsman, and two others gave illogical commands to each other over the ship's sound-powered telephone system.

We arrived at Keelung Harbor in Formosa on Monday afternoon. Navy LCVPs were sent from the shore to pick up the scouts and their baggage. Everybody was glad to see the little brats go, but of course that's not the way I made it sound when I wrote the news story about them. (I told you I'm public information officer for this ship, didn't I?) After dumping the scouts, we steamed through the Formosa Strait between the Pescadores and the western coast of Formosa, heading straight for Hong Kong. It took us two and a half days of steady steaming to get there.

When I'm at sea, I work twelve to sixteen hours a day. Most of the time it's not very hard work, since not much happens during normal cruising periods, but occasionally the OTC (Officer in Tactical Command) decides to have a drill, and that keeps us hopping. I stand eight hours of CIC watch each day that we are underway. Stated very simply, my job is to supervise the radarmen who work the various pieces of equipment and to see that the information they collect is properly sent to the bridge, where the captain and the Officer of the Deck are directing the ship. When a radarman spots a "skunk" on his radarscope bearing 343 degrees, 9.4 miles, it is my job to gather all the information concerning this ship or boat or whatever it is, and figure out how close it will come to our ship.

We steamed into Hong Kong harbor this morning. I have the duty today and can't leave the ship, but I'll go ashore tomorrow and the day after that. Then I'll start all over again with a duty day and two more free days. We depart from Hong Kong on July 5 and will head north again. We'll operate along the China

coast for about two weeks before returning to Yokosuka.

This morning I was Officer of the Deck. It's a terrific problem keeping the merchants from coming aboard and trying to sell us things. We are moored to a buoy alongside the USS Erben in the harbor, but that doesn't stop the Chinamen since they have these tiny boats in which they go scooting around. The executive officer has given strict orders that none is to come aboard, and that suits me fine, because they would be swarming onto the deck if we let them. We've got high-pressure fire hoses hooked up in case they are needed to keep them away from the sides of the ship. The only boats that can come alongside are Navy boats, walla-wallas (water taxis) and the boats used by Mary Soo and her side-painters. Have you ever heard of Mary Soo? I believe her picture was in Look Magazine once. She has a group of girls and women who come out in boats to wash and paint the sides of U.S. and British ships. All she wants in payment is the ship's garbage, which the girls and women take home to their families. I shouldn't call it garbage since that makes it sound so very horrible. The mess cooks scrape the crew's plates into separate containers: vegetables in one, mashed potatoes in another, etc., etc. Also, Mary Soo and her girls get what is left over from the galley — food that would normally be thrown out anyway. As it works out, the girls actually take away some very wholesome food.

USS Colahan, Kaohsiung, Formosa, 6 July 1955:

Well, we got underway at Hong Kong yesterday morning. I'm writing this letter in Kaohsiung harbor (Formosa), where we will stay for a couple of hours in order to refuel and possibly take on supplies. I wasn't sorry to leave Hong Kong. There's something clean and beautiful about the sea. It clears out odors and makes things more pleasant. Oh, I enjoyed being in Hong Kong all right, but at the same time I got tired of riding those walla-wallas from the ship to the pier and from the pier to the ship. Like almost everyone else in this part of the world, I like Japan when it comes to liberty. The girls are prettier and the streets are cleaner. In Japan every merchant tries to sell you something,too, but no one hangs onto your arm the way the Chinese do in Hong Kong. Without a doubt, the Japanese are superior to any race in the Orient.

Thus opines a twenty-three-year-old junior officer who had spent one whole month in Asian waters and, until he left to join the Navy, had seldom ventured more than a hundred and ten miles from his Ohio River Valley home.

I found a couple of nice eating places in downtown Hong Kong. One of them is called The Parisian Grill. It serves American food, so maybe that's why

I like it.

Imagine, if you can, a spotless Englishman striding down crowded Chinese streets, brushing off little children and wrinkling his stuck-up British nose at the odor of Asian life. Well, that's the way I felt sometimes in Hong Kong. I couldn't help it, and I don't believe many Westerners can. There are too many poor people, and they worry hell out of you trying to get a stinking ten cents in Hong Kong money, which is about one and a half cents in U.S. currency. After a while, you just ignore them. There are simply too many of them. Hong Kong has grown from a city of 500,000 people to one of well over 2,500,000, most of them refugees from Red China. As a result, standards of living have dropped.

The sea was nice and quiet for our trip from Hong Kong to Kaohsiung. As we came into the Formosan harbor, we all smelled the odor that seems to pervade the entire Orient: a faint fishy smell. One of our chiefs said he wished to hell he was back in "God's Country," which means Japan, not the United States.

In describing the horrid conditions of Hong Kong in 1955, our young hero could have described his first and only trip to a Chinese brothel, where a dozen girls, the oldest no more than thirteen, the youngest just a little child, were lined up for his pleasure. To his credit, he was appalled and never forgot it, and never told his parents about it. Also to his credit, although less so, he selected the oldest, the thirteen-year-old. Even more to his credit, he was not insistent when the girl showed reluctance. He thanked her, wished her luck and walked away, voicing no complaints to the brothel keeper. There are times when Jackson almost approves of Jack.

USS Colahan, Underway, 10 July 1955:

The Colahan and Shields left Kaohsiung, Formosa, several days ago and steamed northeast toward Japan. Yesterday we rendezvoused with the USS Boxer, an aircraft carrier, about a hundred miles south of Tokyo Bay. We took on fuel, provisions and mail from the Boxer, and I got two of your letters — one dated 30 June and the other 5 July. We are steaming southwest now, toward Okinawa, where the Colahan, Shields and Boxer will hold various exercises.

Yes, I am getting your letters okay. You must remember, though, that while I'm at sea it is rather difficult to either receive a letter or mail one. That's why you will occasionally get two or more of my letters at the same time.

We received some new movies from the Boxer, but I won't be able to see them since I'm presently stuck with the 4-to-8 watch in CIC. That means I stand watches from 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. and from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., and the movie usually starts in the wardroom at 6 p.m. C'est la vie.

8 Warships at Pearl Harbor

2,000 Men Aboard Destroyers

Eight destroyers of Destroyer Squadron 17 arrived at Pearl Harbor before dawn today.

More than 2,000 men are aboard the eight ships returning from a tour of duty in Western Pacific Waters. Many of them will have liberty until the squadron leaves for the Mainland Monday.

Captain Madison Hall of Coronado, California, commands the squadron as well as division 171.

His division includes the Gregory, commanded by Commander J. P. Riza; Porterfield, by Commander E. E. Roberts; Marshall, by Commander N. V. Bird, and Halsey Powell, by Commander H. L. Vaughan.

Division 172, commanded by Captain K. E. Meneke, consists of the Twining, skippered by Commander G. W. Miller; Erben, by Commander W. A. Keefe; Shields, by Commander A. F. Hollinsworth, and Colahan, by Commander H. J. Brantingham.

The squadron was here in March of this year and split into two divisions to head westward.

Both divisions visited Japan, the Philippine Islands, Formosa, Okinawa and Hong Kong.

Highlight of the cruise was a goodwill visit to Bangkok, Thailand, where crews were guests of the Thai Navy.

U.S.S. Twining

U.S.S. Shields

U.S.S. Erben

U.S.S. Colahan

U.S.S. Marshall

U.S.S. Porterfield

U.S.S. Gregory

U.S.S. Halsey Powell

The Saturday Star-Bulletin

★★★★★ HONOLULU, T. H., SATURDAY, AUGUST 27, 1955—60 PAGES

Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Vol. 44, No. 205 — AIRPLANE DELIVERY ON ISLANDS OTHER THAN OAHU 15¢ — PRICE ON OAHU 10¢

Today's Baseball

National League

Phillies Defeat Cardinals 8-2

PHILADELPHIA, Aug. 27 (AP)—A three run homer by Stan Lopata and a solo four bagger by Granny Hamner plus clutch pitching by the veteran Murry Dickson gave the Philadelphia Phillies an 8-2 victory over the St. Louis Cardinals this afternoon at Connie Mack stadium. The Phillies took the four game series three games to one.

St. Louis .006 020 000—2 9 2
Philadelphia .004 013 00x—8 12 1

Arroyo, Wright (6), Mackinson (8) and Sarni; Dickson and Lopata, L—Arroyo.

Home runs—St. Louis, Arroyo. Philadelphia, Lopata, Hamner.

Chicago Cubs Win Over Pirates

PITTSBURGH, Aug. 27 (AP)—Catcher Walker Cooper blasted a tie-breaking home run over the left field scoreboard in the ninth inning this afternoon to give the Chicago Cubs a 4-3 victory over the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Chicago .000 002 101—4 9 1
Pittsburgh 300 000 000—3 5 2

Davis, Jeffcoat (7), Pollett (8) and Chiti, Cooper (7); Burkont and Shepard, W-Pollett.

Home run — Chicago, Cooper.

Brooklyn Snaps Losing Streak

BROOKLYN, Aug. 27 (AP)—Sandy Koufax, 19-year-old Brooklyn bonus rookie, checked Cincinnati with two hits today and fanned 16 for a season's high in the National League in leading the Dodgers to a 7-0 victory.

The win snapped a three-game Brooklyn losing streak.

Carl Furillo and Jackie Robinson each hit two-run homers for the Dodgers.

Cincinnati .000 000 000—0 2 1
Brooklyn .300 110 20x—7 9 0

Fowler, Staley (5), Pocheman (6), Minarcin (7) and Burgess; Koufax and Campanella. Loser—Fowler. Home runs—Brooklyn, Furillo, Robinson.

Giants Fall To Fourth Place

NEW YORK, Aug. 27 (AP)—Danny O'Connell's 11th inning homer, his second of the game, gave Milwaukee's Braves a 5-4 victory over New York and sent the Giants down to fourth place. Philadelphia advanced to third by beating St. Louis.

Milwaukee 103 000 000 01—5 8 1
New York 000 200 110 00—4 9 1

Nichols, Burdette (8), Vargas (11), Johnson (11), and Crandall; Antonelli, Wilhelm (8), McCall (8), Grissom (11) and Katt, Wismer—Burdette. Loser—McCall.

Home run — Milwaukee, O'Connell (2), New York, Hofman.

American League

Indians Defeat Yankees 7-6

CLEVELAND, Aug. 27 (AP)—Bobby Avila's three-run homer and pinch hitter Bob Lemon's sacrifice fly in the eighth inning brought the Cleveland Indians from behind today for a 7-6 victory over the New York Yankees, pulling the Tribe into a first place tie with New York.

New York .320 010 000—6 10 1
Cleveland .002 200 04x—7 10 0

Larsen, Kucks (4), Grim (8) and Berra; Score, Santiago (2), Mossi (6), Feller (7), Narleski (9) and Naragon, Hegan (8). Foiles (9), Winner — Feller. Loser — Grim.

Home runs — New York, Skowron, Larsen. Cleveland, Avila.

Williams's Homer Gives Boston Win

DETROIT, Aug. 27 (AP)—Ted Williams hit a grand-slam home run with two out in the ninth inning to erase a 3-0 deficit and give the Boston Red Sox a dramatic 4-3 victory over the Detroit Tigers today.

Boston ..... 000 000 004—4 10 0
Detroit ..... 102 000 000—3 2 0

Bauman, Hurd (7), Kinder (9) and White; Lary, Aber (9), Coleman (8) and House, Wilmer—Hurd. Loser—Aber.

Home runs — Boston, Williams. Detroit, Tuttle.

Chisox Wallop Senators 11-1

CHICAGO, Aug. 27 (AP)—The Chicago White Sox snapped a three-game losing streak today by walloping Washington 11-1, behind the eight-hit pitching of lefty Jack Harshman.

Washington 000 000 100— 1 8 0
Chicago 000 603 12x— 12 1

Pascual, Shea (4), Abernathy (7), Kline (8) and Fitzgerald; Harshman and LoLar. Loser—Pascual.

Home run—Chicago, Minoso.

(Only games scheduled.)

Weather Report

Honolulu and vicinity: Partly cloudy this afternoon, tonight and Sunday. Light showers tonight. Trades sections, with a few drifting to makai sections. Moderate to fresh gusty trades. Last 24 hours, Honolulu Airport, high 82, low 70. Rainfall, a trace.

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COMICS

Daily comics on Page 7 of big color comic section.

2 Are Killed In Indiana Refinery Blast

WHITING, Ind., Aug. 27 (AP)—A terrific blast shattered a 90-story high octane gasoline cracking tower today and spread flames which threatened the city of Whiting.

Whiting authorities asked Governor George Craig of Indiana for National Guard help as gasoline from the blazing Standard Oil Company of Indiana refinery area seeped into sewer mains and flowed westward into the community of 16,000.

Fire Captain Joseph Kasper said the Whiting mayor declared a state of emergency, and ordered all of the city's policemen and firemen to duty.

OUT OF CONTROL

Kasper said that some houses close to the plant had caught fire, and the blaze was "out of control."

West to southwest winds tended to help keep the fire from spreading.

The blast which blew up the world's largest hydroformer—an installation for making low grade gasolines into high octane gasoline—caused deaths of two persons, injuries to at least 17, and did "several millions of dollars" in damage.

Raging fire in the plant was fought by some 1,000 firemen who sought to save 20 to 99 tanks, each reported containing one million gallons of gasoline or oil.

Members of the Whiting post of the American Legion stood guard over blast damaged homes and stores under a pall of billowing oily black smoke which rose miles into the air.

At least 50 houses close to the plant were badly damaged. Three collapsed completely.

FELT 20 MILES

Windows were shattered in Crown Point, 20 miles away.

The smoke plume was clearly visible from Chicago, 16 miles northwest of the blast scene.

The big "cracker" installation, capable of producing 50,000 barrels of 100-octane gasoline a day, had more than twice the capacity of the ordinary catalytic cracker.

The dead were three-year-old Richard Plewniak, killed when a piece of shed shot through a house, and Walter Rhea, 63, a foreman at the refinery, who died of a heart attack.

The front page of Honolulu's *Saturday Star-Bulletin*, August 27, 1955, carried a banner headline: "8 Warships at Pearl Harbor." The headline deck: "2,000 Men Aboard Destroyers." All eight ships, including the *USS Colahan*, were pictured. The eight destroyers, each with a complement of 250 men, constituted Destroyer Squadron 17, consisting of two divisions. Division 171 included the *USS Gregory*, the *USS Porterfield*, the *USS Marshall* and the *USS Halsey Powell*. Division 172, commanded by Captain K.E. Meneke, included the *USS Twining*, the *USS Erben*, the *USS Shields* and the *USS Colahan*.

Jack tended to sprinkle his prose with French phrases, an affectation that began at Indiana University, where, much to the amazement of his friends, this Kentucky native with a Southern accent made straight A's in two years of college French. He never learned to speak French fluently, but he could read it moderately well. He always believed that his foreign language studies had solidified his knowledge of English grammar. It was a reasonable extrapolation and most likely correct.

I'm getting quite a deep suntan. The days have been hot and the sun is always shining. The seas have been quite calm ever since I got aboard, so I don't know whether I'm open to seasickness or not. Being on this ship, underway, is rather pleasant. It's like being at the top of a large tree when a moderate wind is blowing.

Ensign Jack Sellers in his early days aboard the *USS Colahan (DD658)*.

A strained simile, that. He wrote it, not I, but I can understand it. As a boy, Jack had clung to high tree limbs and felt the natural force of the wind sweeping through leafy branches. The limbs moved gently beneath him. Today his ship sailed on the ocean surface a mile above solid earth, and was rocked by aquatic swells. It is a sizable mental jump from ships at sea to tree limbs in Kentucky, but Jack could make that jump and so can I.

I also got a letter from Gene Tisserand [Jack's oldest friend]. He's still in Korea, but he writes he spent a week in Japan where he discovered the feminine charms the island has to offer. (Don't tell Mrs. Tisserand that.) Such a thing is far from unusual, though. Everybody likes the girls of Nippon. They make a man feel important.

The remarks in that last paragraph, and similar allusions in other letters in this series, are about as close as our hero will ever come to telling his parents that the juices had risen beyond boyhood fantasies and masturbation. Hasn't it always been so in letters to mothers? And you, dear licentious reader, can expect little more from Jack. You must rely on my fading but less reticent memories of the sexual heyday of this barefoot boy with cheeks of tan.

USS Colahan, Underway, East China Sea, 19 July 1955:

Sorry I haven't written more often in the last two weeks. We've been at sea

continuously since we left Hong Kong on 5 July. We refueled about a hundred miles south of Tokyo Bay and then steamed toward Okinawa, where my division of destroyers was supposed to join up with Task Force 77 somewhere around the 12th of July. As it turned out, however, we didn't join up with the task force until 15 July, since Typhoon Clara, a mean ol' dame with winds of 120 knots, was heading toward Okinawa, too. So we headed east, along with the USS Boxer, and ran away from the big storm. The only signs we saw of the typhoon were fairly heavy seas, which made life aboard this tin can far from pleasant.

After joining the task force, we got very busy in CIC, where I spend eight hours a day while at sea. It's a big job keeping the bridge informed and recommending courses and speeds when there are twenty-five or more ships all around you. But we made out all right. Incidentally, I'm a qualified CIC watch officer now and will be standing watches by myself in Combat, meaning that no other officer will be looking over my shoulder. But there are some pretty sharp men working in there, so it really doesn't matter whether or not I know what I'm doing.

USS Colahan, Underway, East China Sea, 23 July 1955:

We've been steaming in circles in the East China Sea for two weeks now. We are attached to Task Force 77. We should be detached within two or three days; at least I hope so. This steaming around for weeks at a time, with nothing to see but water, is for fishes. When we are detached, we'll head directly for Yokosuka, where we are scheduled for a two-week dry dock period — ah, lovely! — after which we'll conduct independent ship exercises south of Japan for a few days. Then, after that, we'll all lift our heads in a howl of delight as we turn this bucket eastward toward the U.S.A.

The first thing I'm going to do when we hit San Diego is buy a quart of milk. All they have out here is recombined powdered milk, and of course the Japanese don't have any milk at all.

USS Colahan, Yokosuka, Japan, 29 July 1955:

Don't complain to me if you haven't received any of my letters lately. It's not my fault. I write you as often as I ever have. We are at sea, and we don't have a corner mail box handy. I wrote some letters while at sea but they didn't get off the ship until one week after I had written them. And then, when they did get off, they stayed for several more days aboard a tanker or cargo ship before reaching a place from which they could be flown out.

Well, we are back in Yokosuka now. We got here three days ago and will remain here until August 6 when we go to sea again for a week or more. We'll head back toward San Diego around the 18th of August, arriving there on

September 4. Work is really piling up on me now, but I'm not killing myself and I don't intend to.

We knew that, Jack. The author smiles.

USS Colahan, Yokosuka, Japan, 4 August 1955:

Several days ago I found a letter that I had written to you. It was mixed up with some other papers on my desk. I sent it off immediately, but it had already lain around for four or five days, so I guess there will be a period, a fairly long period, in which you won't receive any letters from me. I'm sorry but I just forgot to mail it.

Aha! This letter, which Jack had misplaced in the clutter on his desk, was the one dated July 29, the one postmarked August 3 by the *Colahan* Post Office. It was the letter in which Jack took pains to declare it wasn't his fault that Navy mail was slow. Again the author smiles.

The Colahan is now high and dry in drydock, where it will remain until August 12. I'm glad to be in Yokosuka. It beats being at sea for four weeks in a row. Three cruisers pulled in here from the States today. The town will probably be jumping with sailors tonight. The cabarets will be filled to capacity, just as the sailors will be filled with Nippon Beer, a product that tastes as close to American beer as you can find over here. Girls and male barkers will line the streets, calling to the sailors. From the cabarets will come the strains of Yokosuka's most popular song: "I'm a Lonesome Polecat." Japanese women, perhaps with babies strapped to their backs, will shout "Shoe shine, please" to the passing Americans. Japanese men on street corners will grab sailors' arms and say, "You want good girl?" or "Want see sex show?" or "Want see dirty movie?" And many, many sailors will shell out one, two or three thousand yen for various sexual offerings.

But not our hero, who, in letters to his "Dear Folks," presents himself as a mere observer of crass and licentious doings.

USS Colahan, Yokosuka, Japan, 19 August 1955:

It is very early in the morning of the day we start for San Diego. We will get underway at 7 a.m. and I thought I'd better write now, before going to bed for a few hours, to make sure you get a letter from me while I'm crossing the Pacific. I won't receive any letters from you until we hit Pearl Harbor late next week.

I'll get no leave during September because the other officers (almost all of

whom outrank me) want to go on leave themselves. Perhaps I'll get some time off around Christmas, but I doubt it. I'll be glad to get back to the United States for a while.

USS Colahan, Underway, Western Pacific, 22 August 1955:

We are three days out of Yokosuka now. We'll arrive in Pearl Harbor near the end of the week, and spend a couple of days bumming around Honolulu before steaming for San Diego. I'll have the duty one day while we are there, which means I can't leave the ship, but I'll go ashore at least one night.

I want you to send me some things. First, I want two of my books — "The End of the Affair" and "Bonjour Tristess" — which should be around the house somewhere. Please wrap them carefully so they won't get banged around in the mails. Second, I want you to send me that stack of manuscripts that contain all my short stories. I believe it's out in the garage. Don't forget now!

[Jack's appreciation of Graham Greene]

USS Colahan, Underway, Western Pacific, 24 August 1955:

We arrived at Midway Island this morning after six days at sea. It was nice to get out and walk around. There wasn't much to do really, because the island is a rather small one and has only a limited number of Navy facilities, but I did manage to go swimming in the clear cool water of the lagoon and lie for a while on the beach that's as white as this paper.

We had to swim in the lagoon because of the danger of sharks in the waters off the other beaches. While I was there, I took some close-up pictures of one of Midway's famous Gooney Birds. Because of their ugliness and comical appearance, they are probably the most photographed of all the bird species. The one I saw was relatively tame and I managed to get up real close to him. Gooney Birds are wonderfully graceful in the air, but that's certainly not true on the ground. When they walk, they wobble and sidle and jump, all at the same time. When they come in for a landing, they glide for a while very close to the ground, still quite graceful, and then suddenly stick out both legs and hit the ground straddle-legged. Their momentum keeps them going, however, and they fly ass over appetite, with wings flapping haphazardly, until finally coming to a compete stop.

USS Colahan, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, 28 August 1955:

We arrived at Pearl Harbor early yesterday morning. I went into Honolulu for a while. It was good to taste fresh milk again. Since we arrived, everyone has drank his weight in milk.

At sea, we have a four-section watch schedule going in CIC now, so I have considerably more time to myself. I average about six hours a day in Combat and maybe four hours a day at other tasks. Of course, things are pretty easy when we are in port.

Mr. Zimmermann, the communications officer, left the ship here at Honolulu for his annual leave. He is flying back to the States. Since he is gone, I will assume his responsibilities as communications officer.

USS Colahan, Underway, Eastern Pacific, 1 September 1955:

To tell you the truth, I'm writing this while on watch in Combat because I'm a little bored and I need something to pass the time. These watches seem like hunks out of my life. I detest them. Most of the time I don't do anything except sit and watch the clock tick for four hours. Sometimes I bring a book with me. When I do that, I usually try to make it a paper-covered book so I can rip out a few pages at a time. In that way I can read the book without attracting too much attention, because the ripped-out pages don't look like a book at all. Last night, though, on the midwatch, I brought in the book Buddy [U.S. Army Warrant Officer Roy Farmer] loaned me, "John Brown's Body," and I got through a good portion of it before being relieved. But I can't do too much reading on watch for several reasons. One, I'm not supposed to; and two, if I goof off too much, then the two radarmen who work with me will begin to goof off too. Then we might run aground or something. I like going to places like Hong Kong and Japan, but I'm afraid I'm not suited for military life. I shouldn't complain, though, because compared to the life of an enlisted man, my life is pretty soft, even if I do work more hours than the average white hat. My compensations are good food, comfortable quarters and the complete absence of dirty work. I could be much worse off.

Our hero was a lazy and smug jerk. I, Jackson, am appalled by Jack's lack of conscientiousness. His rationalizations cannot save him from my harsh assessment. I often do not recognize myself in him. He had a job to do, and his job involved the safety of both the ship and the nearly three hundred human beings aboard. Not only that, but he was supposed to set an example for the radarmen working for him. As for the *Colahan* is concerned, he got away with it. Like the ship herself, Jack was lucky. The enlisted men, however, surely drew an inappropriate lesson from him. He let them down.

We left Pearl Harbor on Monday morning and only a few hours ago passed the point of no return. Now we are certain to get to San Diego, no matter if the whole damned engineering plant breaks down. If the engines stop now, the

Navy would have to tow us to San Diego and not back to Pearl.

We are a thousand miles from the States. If we maintain our speed of sixteen knots, we'll get into port on the morning of September 4. I'm looking forward to some American entertainment. Yokosuka is fine but all it has is liquor and girls, and although it's rather hard to tire of either, it is nice to be able to do something different occasionally, like go to a play or a concert, or perhaps take in the races at Del Mar, which is something that I'm eager to do now that I own a powerful set of binoculars.

Like a number of other American boys in Japan, I had a girl for most of the time I was there. I have her picture in my billfold and I'm expecting a letter from her shortly after we arrive in San Diego. Her name is Momoko and her father is a retired Japanese naval officer. She has had two years of business college and can speak English and Spanish. She is a lovely, slim girl, and I enjoyed dating her. When I go back to the Far East next year, I'll be seeing her again. On the last night I was in Yokosuka, we went to an Italian restaurant which was quite expensive. I was a little short of money so she loaned me a thousand yen. When I got to Pearl Harbor, I mailed it back to her.

Now for God's sake don't try to make anything out of my dating a Japanese girl. After writing to you about her, it occurred to me that you might besiege me with pleas not to get serious about a Japanese butterfly, and as you should know by now, if you know me at all, such a reaction on your part would only make me beet red with anger. It's a fact that you know less about your son than you think you do (although not less than most parents). I've already had a number of girls whom you've never even heard of, and I suspect I'll have many more. Don't worry, though. When I meet the one I want to marry, you'll be the second to know (she'll be the first).

Jesus Christ, what an unfailing jerk! Maybe he was having a bad day and was taking it out on his mother. Or maybe he was feeling guilty and therefore defensive. Either way, he was a jerk.

The Colahan will go to Monterey, California, for a week during October. That will give me a chance to visit San Francisco again. I want to go there because it will provide the scenes for a large portion of a novel I've been planning. I might even finish the book. Don't laugh!

Too late, Jack. Your artistic pretensions, long extinct, always make me laugh. But our Mother probably didn't laugh. She always believed us to be more talented than we actually were. As it turned out, Jack and Jackson together would write well more than a million published words, for newspapers and

magazines, but neither would produce a book, unless you count these privately published histories of the *USS Colahan.*

Except for the trip to Monterey, we'll be operating out of San Diego most of the time we are in the States. We will return to the Far East next spring. It should be pretty nice for a while after we get into port. We will remain tied up at a dock or moored to a buoy for a full month before going to sea again, and I'll be able to hit the beach two out of every three nights.

The USS Shields, one of the ships in my division, has been flying a skull-and-crossbones flag on various occasions ever since the division arrived in the Far East. The captain of the Shields and her other officers have a great deal of fun with that flag. They think it makes their ship look dashing and cocky. Well, while we were in Pearl Harbor, the Shields' "Jolly Roger" flag mysteriously disappeared. And you know what? It turned up aboard the USS Colahan. I wonder how that happened. Right now the Shields doesn't know where it is, but this coming Saturday, during a scheduled flag-hoist drill with the Shields, the Colahan will hoist the "Jolly Roger" and watch the Shields have duck fits.

USS Colahan, Underway, Eastern Pacific, 4 September 1955:

It's Sunday morning and I am on watch in CIC. The squadron is only sixty miles off the coast of Southern California and should be tied up at the Navy Pier in San Diego by 11 o'clock. Being so near home, everybody is a little restless. Most of the fellows have been out of the States for seven months. They yearn for their wives and families and sweethearts who will be meeting them on the dock in a few hours. Mr. Terence Sutherland, who graduated from the Naval Academy a year ago, has a little daughter he has never seen. A number of enlisted men are in the same boat. I suppose I'm the calmest person on board. I've never been to San Diego and have no one waiting for me, but I'll be glad to get there just the same.

Right now, since there's not very much to do, I'm listening to a hillbilly radio program on a headset. Between the moans and croons of Carl Smith and Hank Snow, I'm trying to finish the antisubmarine warfare assignment in the "Officer's General Information Course" that I'm taking. I have to finish the damned thing before I can go on liberty today, so you see I'm really not much better off than the white hats after all. I can be restricted to the ship for not doing my work just as they can. But needless to say, I intend to finish that assignment mighty quick. I'm not hot for staying aboard this bucket when everyone else has departed for more pleasurable atmospheres. So, with the screechy strains of "I've forgot more than you'll ever know about her" resounding in my ears, I'll close for now.

Jack lost many things in the process of becoming Jackson, and gained a few, I believe, but he never lost an appreciation of down-to-earth country lyrics, nor have I. While transcribing this letter from paper to computer file, I was listening to *KZLA* country music in my workshop in Lake Forest, California. I paused to admire a nicely crafted refrain: "You really had me going, baby, and now I'm gone."

USS Colahan, San Diego, California, 20 September 1955:

It's nice to be back in the States and even nicer to be able to renew my acquaintance with American customs. The only place I found in the whole of the Orient where I could get a good malt was the Parisian Grill in Hong Kong, and I was only there for five days. The prices here, though, are ungodly high. I got a haircut and a shampoo at the U.S. Grant Hotel yesterday and it cost me three dollars. I was shocked by the realization that I was truly home and could no longer afford to play the role of a white gentleman among the yellow hoards of Asia.

Like Jack, the *Los Angeles Times* has had occasion to whine about U.S. Grant Hotel prices. In the late Eighties, when I was supervising the installation of cost-saving communications equipment in the San Diego newsroom, I paid thirty-seven dollars for a steak dinner at the hotel's Grant Grill. Bean-counters at the *Times* did not appreciate the extravagance and only grudgingly reimbursed me.

USS Colahan, San Diego, California, 28 September 1955:

I bought a 1950 Plymouth several days ago. I'll probably be paying for it for the rest of my life, but I just didn't see how I could get along without a car in this spread-out city of San Diego. I'm going to drive it to Indiana in December. My car should save me about a hundred dollars in travel money, because, if I didn't drive to Indiana, I would most certainly have to fly. As a matter of fact, I doubt if I could manage to come at all if I didn't have a car. If I flew to Indiana, spent two weeks in Evansville, and then flew back, it would cost me at least two hundred dollars, counting spending money while I was there. Of course, I could buy a roundtrip airplane ticket on the easy-payment plan, but if I must make payments on anything, I'd rather make them on a car. At any rate, I will be home for Christmas.

Please send me my overcoat. It gets chilly at night during the winters here, I am told. Also, I believe I have a blue sweater around there someplace, and I'd like to have that, too. I haven't got a sweater to my name, and this is good

sweater country.

I've been invited to a venison dinner tomorrow night at the home of some friends who live about forty-five miles out of San Diego, near a little place called Pine Valley, in the mountains. I've never eaten venison. It should be fun, not to mention cheap, which is of prime interest to me right now.

I've spent several other cheap nights in the last week or so at the apartment of a girl who has taken pity on a broke ensign in a strange city. She and her two roommates have a large apartment suitably furnished with little except a television set.

Dick Kullmann, our supply officer, who, like most of us, had a girl in Japan, got a letter from his girl-san warning him to stay away from "those round-eyes."

USS Colahan, San Diego, California, 15 October 1955:

I'm going to CIC school tomorrow. I will be detached from the Colahan for temporary additional duty under instruction at the U.S. Naval Training Center here in San Diego. My address will remain the same, though, since I won't be gone long enough to bother with changing it. The school will last for four weeks and during that time I will be living ashore at a BOQ. It's a pretty good deal, because I'll be free from Friday afternoons until Monday mornings.

I'm fine and healthy. My car is still running nicely and I have hopes that it will continue to do so. It's giving me a great deal of pleasure. I'm going to drive down to Mexico soon and take in the bull fights or the dog races. There is a Navy parking lot here in which I can park for a maximum of forty-eight hours. When we go to sea, I'll have to make other arrangements. Friends have said that I can park it in their driveway, which is wonderful and generous of them, since that would keep my car off the streets while I'm away.

Jack never saw a bull fight or a dog race, although he occasionally dived into the fleshpots of Tiajuana, pursuing an education that Jackson would not have denied him. But Jack was not impressed with Mexico, having been spoiled by the nighttime pleasures of Japan.

Ten of the sixteen officers aboard are married and have wives and families here in San Diego. They are the Navy's "brown baggers." They leave the ship immediately after liberty commences, carrying their little bags, leaving the bachelors aboard to eat dinner by themselves.

The other night I hitched a ride ashore in the captain's gig, along with the executive officer, Lieutenant Commander DeBuhr. The coxswain was a little pimply faced fellow named Johnson. When we arrived at the landing, the bow

hook jumped out and secured the bow to the dock, but Johnson, instead of getting out, reached out and grabbed hold of the dock, in an attempt to keep the stern in. The executive officer, being senior to me, got out first. As he did so, he pushed the gig away from the dock. Johnson attempted to keep the gig in close by hanging onto the dock, but the boat's stern continued to drift away, and Johnson was left in the ridiculous position of not being able to go either forward or backward. We just stood there, the executive officer on the dock and I still in the gig, not speaking, just waiting for the inevitable. For a second or two, Johnson hung parallel to the water, with his hands on the dock and his feet on the edge of the boat. Then, splash! In he went. I bet that was a cold ride back to the ship. The water here in the harbor is frigid this time of year.

Fleet Sonar School, San Diego, California, 25 October 1955:

Well, I'm in my second week of school now. I'm living ashore at the BOQ, Fleet Sonar School, San Diego. I'm sharing a room with another ensign who is also off a destroyer. It's nice to get off the ship for a while. There are no watches to stand here and I'm free during the weekends. This pleasant arrangement will continue until the middle of next month, when I'm scheduled to return to the Colahan. The Colahan won't be going to sea, though, until the last of November, and then not for more than a week because of the Christmas vacation that begins December 10.

I got the sweater and overcoat okay. Thanks for sending them. I'm wearing the sweater right now. It's not always as warm in this BOQ as I would like it to be. The winters are pretty mild here and so I guess no one is really prepared for a cold spell. It's not exactly cold now, judged by Midwestern standards, but it's not exactly warm either.

I've been reading a lot and will be reading much more in the next week or so. I'm short of money right now and it's a whole week before payday. It costs me a lot more to eat here on dry land. I will get four dollars a day for every day I spend ashore, but I can't collect it until I report back to the ship. That's stupid, isn't it? They realize it costs more to live ashore, so they give me extra money, but they won't actually hand it over until I no longer need it.

Fleet Sonar School, San Diego, California, 5 November 1955:

I haven't been doing too much of interest lately. I'm still living at the BOQ and going to school five days a week. It's been pleasant enough and I sort of hate to see it end. I'll have to report back to the ship next Friday. I've been entertaining myself with books and movies mostly, with an occasional night out on the town. San Diego is loaded with movie theaters and most of the big pictures get here pretty early. Last night I saw "The Desperate Hours" with

Humphrey Bogart and Frederick March — a terrific story adapted from the book and play by Joseph Hayes, a graduate of Indiana University. Hayes is only about twenty-eight years old and seems to be well on his way to a successful writing career.

Tomorrow is Sunday and I think I'll drive to La Jolla (pronounced La-ho-yah). It's only a few miles north of San Diego. I understand it's a pretty little place and I also want to take a look at the La Jolla Country Club, which is fairly well known around here. I haven't got my golf clubs, although I have asked Faye to send them C.O.D. She hasn't sent them yet, though, and I guess it has slipped her mind. I'm going to have to write her again about them. I'm also trying to get her to send my typewriter. If she hasn't already sent them to me when you go to Texas, Mother, try to take care of it for me, will you? I'm getting an itch to play some golf and I miss my typewriter desperately.

I've been learning a lot at CIC school. I should be a much better CIC watch officer when I go back aboard the Colahan. I won't be as likely to recommend courses that would put us on a collision course with some other vessel.

I just finished "Marjorie Morningstar," Herman Wouk's latest, and thought it very good. Wouk is undoubtedly one of the best American contemporary writers. I have read that he was offered $700,000 for the movie rights to this novel — and turned it down! He is holding our for a million. I'm now reading a biography of Charles Dickens and a novel by Graham Greene. (I have not yet got out of the habit of reading several books at the same time; it's a stupid practice, I know, but I'm always starting a new book before I finish the ones I've already started.) I think I admire Greene above all the current English novelists. His writings always inspire me to attempt something myself. Perhaps that's because his style is so deceptively simple, and because I sympathize with his outlook on life.

January 1996 letter from MM3rd Ken Dillard of Arlington, TX:

I remember in 1955 on the USS Colahan when we were at sea in the Philippines during the summer. As you know, we had to ration water often because it took a lot of water for the boilers when had to operate at high speeds with the carriers. After playing chase for the day, the captain or OOD announced over the P.A. system that anyone that needed a shower should report to the fantail very soon, because we were heading for a rain cloud. In a short while there were about fifty jaybirds with soap and washrags taking advantage of this shower from heaven. It was nice to get away from the rinse, turn off water, soap down and wash off rule. That was a sight for Playgirl magazine! I was one of the naked jaybirds from the after engine room.

Relating to water rationing again: We were allowed one shower a day. This included the cooks. Well, we knew a certain cook took several a day, and at night, too. Once when he got all soaped down, one of the guys gave a signal to the after engine room to turn off all water to the showers pronto. Another guy drained what little water there was from the sink faucets. When the soapy cook tried to turn back on the water, there was none. Several well-chosen curse words came from the cook, and he demanded that we turn the water on again. We told him we had to keep it off to work on a pump. The poor cook had to rinse off with salt water. This was during the hot summer time. I think he got the hint.

Claude DeBuhr: "We were assigned the job of sinking an old World War II LST with a combination of gunfire (20mm, 40mm and five-inch projectiles) and a single live torpedo shot. We did okay with the gunfire, but not the torpedo. The target was dead in the water, a straight shot, but we missed. The chief torpedoman, who had never before fired a live, loaded torpedo, had tears in his eyes as we tried to analyze the miss."