

RANDOM THOUGHTS OF RALPH WINANT who served on the USS PHILADELPHIA 1938-1941. He taped these memoirs and sent them to Steve Stofko. He recalls some of the good times and the bad time enjoyed or endured on the old Philly.

Sy Massey was from Verdon, MS not LA as you indicated in your last letter. George Morrissey died, I hear. Remember the purple rage the captain flew into when Morrissey attended quarters with a tailor-made jumper with a zipper yet?

Buchinski got a job in the shipyard on Staten Island with the rest of us who were discharged prior to WWII. Buch drank a lot, got fired and went back in the Navy. He was assigned to a training center in the Chesapeake Bay called the Solomon Islands where they trained landing craft personnel. Buch, a bos'n mate and a seaman recruit took a boat across the bay to Virginia and did a little drinking. On the way back they ran aground on a sand bar so they jumped out and pushed the craft off the bar, refloated and proceeded back to the base not noticing the kid did not get back in; so bos'n and Buchinski were charged with murder. Things looked bad but their lawyer did some snooping and found out the C.O. of the base was a crook so he prevailed on the C.O. to drop the charges--so Buch went to war. After the war Buch got married to a big, big woman and they had a lot of kids. Their apartment was in the middle of Harlem. God knows whatever happened to him.

A guy named Mason attended Merchant Marine O.C.S. at Fort Trumble, New Haven, CT and got his 3rd Engineer's license. Mason was one of the guys who transferred from deck to engine after 2 years on deck. I next ran into him in England and he was a chief engineer of a liberty ship but still with a 3rd Engineer's license. A guy named Fleming went to Fort Trumble too. He wanted to be an instructor; it seemed he was married and wanted to avoid getting killed. Seems to me Chas. Koval went to Fort Trumble but maybe not; in any event about 30 ex-Philly sailors were attending when I did. Bob Fleming, a guy from Jersey City, and I were mess cooking together and I caught him swiping plates from my rack so we had a grand old fight which I think ended in a draw after about an hour.

"Dickie" Foster was one of the good guys and I can't see him living in Conn--that rebel from Kentucky. .

Whatever happened to Buck Burkholder, Stan Kazorowski, Charleston Fl/c McKnight the China Boy and Sea Gull Morrison.

I met Lt. Cdr. Crocker before he passed away when they were preparing for a reunion in Long Beach. Since I was assigned by my company to go to Iran, I missed the reunion. Met the Chief After Engine room named Rhodewalt. He was the Navy recruiter in Portland, OR. I guess he's gone now. I don't belong to the Legion or to the VFW; in fact my brother a 33-yr Navy man tipped me off to the Association. I guess he saw an article in one of the naval publications.

The story on Foushee at a time when I was in "A" Division, #2 whaleboat (a boat crew was usually on watch) and we were in a pretty bad storm. The crew was lashed to the superstructure on a short tether and a giant wave broke aboard the ship and Foushee, who was walking down the deck inspecting the various lashings, was knocked off his feet and went swishing by me out of control. I grabbed for him and hung on. After the wave subsided he got up and glared at me and proceeded with the inspection. So if he lives to be 100, it's my fault.

Do you remember my stint in the brig for whistling? I could imitate a bos'n pipe pretty good and I did not really like to eat cold chow; so I piped down in the black gang quarters and all hands would troupe in to the mess deck and start eating. The Master-at-Arms was naturally upset with this sort of conduct as it indicated a

weakness in their hold on discipline. My shipmates were very sympathetic in my plight and advised me to keep my stomach filled or I'd get sick when they fed me; so I pigged out on the bread provided along with all the water. Naturally, the bread fermented, my belly expanded from the gases generated and God was I miserable. No bedding was provided and you slept on the steel deck and the marine guards rouse you every hour and put you down and examine the cell, etc. so you never get any rest.

Remember when we first went to Pearl Harbor? Rumors were ripe and no one knew how long we were going to stay and we had some pretty good liberty in Honolulu. In fact we had a grand fight in a bar on Hotel Street all because Buchinski, Morrissey, Morrison, Cinnamin, etc. got into an argument as to who came from the best town. Well, the owner had a Honolulu police sergeant who had us all stacked up like cord wood by the time the Shore Patrol got there. The S.P. officer was from the Savannah and we all told him what a great ship the Savannah was so he put us all in the paddy wagon and had us returned to the train station for the trip back to the IEA landing.

Sy Massey and I put in for special liberty a few times and would go out to Waikiki Beach and loll around looking for girls from the mainland off the tour boats. The highlight was the day Dorothy Lamour joined us on the beach that was until her mother showed up and gave her hell for associating with sailors and we had deluded ourselves that we looked like rich playboys.

Speaking of Rich. Remember Watertender l/c Willie Rich when the Philly was hot to get the "E". Freshwater was rationed and the MAA would dole out a couple of inches of water for each of us. One day the PA system requested the Master-at-Arms to report to the quarter deck so he hot-footed it without locking the faucet. Rich was the first in line and I was second, with all the rest of the black gang behind all naked. I might add Rich turned the water on and proceeded to rinse everything out that he had with fresh water running all over the place. So I said to Willie to give us a break. He snarled and said you S.O.B. I'll finish when I'm ready so it started with blood all over the place--all of it Willie's. The guys finally broke it up and I was rinsing off the blood with salt water when I felt a hand on my shoulder and wham Willie knocked me flat. Well, we went at it again. I got him into the toilet trough and would have drowned him if they hadn't pulled me off him one more time. After all the excitement some said I hit a petty officer. I'll tell you I had visions of Portsmouth (Federal Prison) and I did not get much sleep that night and I had a stiff neck but was too proud to show it. As I was the victor and the hero of the red stripe gang. About 10:00 a.m. the next morning I was cleaning my spot in the bilges when someone called down and said they were paging me to lay down to the log room. Oh, boy, when I got there Lt. Duval looking stern but busy said "Winant wait for me in the oil king shack". A half hour passed and I'm sweating profusely and Duval came in, closes the door, turned to me, shook my hand and said, "Congratulations, boy, you did a fine job". Two weeks later I made Fireman 2nd Class. So much for clean living, hard work and study to get ahead.

Prior to leaving Pearl Harbor in 1941, Cruiser Div. 8 painted the ships black, liberty was cancelled and rumor was rampant that we were scheduled for overhaul at Mare Island. We were all looking forward to the bars and the girls on Georgia St. but we had manuevers prior to that and we settled down to running in circles with lots of General Quarters. As we approached the Golden Gate tensions were high but it turned warm and kept getting warmer so it looked even to the guys in the black gang we were heading for Panama. So I started the rumor that we were going to attack Martinique which at that time was under the control of the Vichy French or Fascist. We would need prize crews to man the Aircraft Carrier ~~Berne~~ and a couple of destroyers after we captured the island. This information was available in the newspapers so guys were vulnerable that the French planned to attack the Canal. In

any event one morning prior to arriving in Panama I was passing the log room and CDR Crocker was posting a couple of lists on the bulletin board - one in black type and one in red - both headed prize crew. Oh, man, did I fall for it. I immediately requested that my name be added to the list. Never did find out if I had been set up but as you know we just kept on sailing north to Hamilton, Bermuda. We rendezvoused with the navy rescue ship where our diving gear was transferred and then to NY where we laid at anchor off Staten Island for a few days. No liberty. Of course, my old man worked in lower Manhattan at the time and I saw him going to work on the Staten Island Ferry while we were at quarters. I had not been home in 3½ years. We then proceeded to the Brooklyn Navy Yard and as I was a Machinist Mate 2/c, I was in charge of a crew assigned to clean the screens while they pulled us into one of the grading docks and pumped out half of the water. In the meantime my gang had drawn the necessary equipment from the yard tool room and we waited hours for them to complete the pumping. The guys were restless and tired and so I told them to get lost but stay available and stay out of the engine room figuring if we went down there they would put us to work. Well, coffee is a powerful narcotic and the guys had to have their fix so they soon started paging for the cleaning crew. I was sound asleep in a bunk in the 6th Division. When I finally woke up, the dock was dry, my crew was hard at work and I was in disgrace and a prisoner at large. At this time I had just 20 days to do on my hitch and they were dangling submarine school, PT boats and other good berths. After a few days I put in a request for special liberty and Commander Zirola approved it and I dashed over to Staten Island and let the folks know I was home. I then got a job at the Bethlehem Steel Ship Yard. All the guys I knew who were getting out, got jobs at the yard and when I got out it was one continuous party I knew all the girls in town and as the draft was in force, the neighborhood group were all in service. This may have led to a quick return to the service for most of the group as they all got in trouble by missing work and by reporting for work drunk. "Sea Gull" Morrison was one of the guys working in the shipyard and I fixed him up with a girl named Lizzy Morrison (just a coincidence, I guess). It was love at first sight but as time wore on, partying got old and some of the guys felt guilty what with the draft and Pearl Harbor, they started drifting back to the service; most to the Navy, but a couple to the Army.

"Sea Gull" had a Boiler Maker rating so he went back as chief and subsequently was assigned to an APA which eventually found its way to the South Pacific. I understand that on several occasions the non-watch standees were ordered to hit the beach with the marines and, according to the story I got, "Sea Gull" was advancing through a coconut grove (and a Jap sniper hidden in a tree) got blasted out by a marine. The Jap landed on top of Morrison and left him unhinged and when he got back to the States he got leave to go home to Vineland, NJ. Seems his mother had died about three months earlier. Upon returning to the ship, he was notified that his brother had been killed in San Francisco. (Doug was a merchant marine engineer and had been killed in San Francisco for his money.) His sister contracted polio about this same time and he requested emergency leave to bury his brother and to see that his sister was taken care of. The Red Cross reported to his C.O. that the situation did not warrant emergency leave in as much as he had just finished his leave. So "Sea Gull" spent the next few years in a Naval Hospital for treatment of a breakdown. I have since lost track of him.

About the time of the Philly shakedown (1938), I can't remember before or after, I hitch hiked a ride to New York. A guy in a Chrysler convertible picked me up. He was a pretty friendly guy and as we talked but it didn't occur to me at first that he knew a lot about the Philly. He wanted to know what the crew thought of Capt. James and Ens. Scott, etc. It turned out he was Capt. James brother-in-law and Ens. Scott had dated his daughter. He owned the Jersey City Giants baseball team and had a major interest in the NY Giants. His name was Gamble. He felt bad because I was all shook up and embarrassed. He stopped at a restaurant in Bordentown, I think and we had steaks about 4 inches thick. The bill came to \$50 (and at the

time I was making \$36 a month) needless to say, I didn't offer to pick up the tab.

Navy Day or Armed Forces Day (1939) we anchored off Monterey, Calif. and we were invited to enjoy the accommodations at Fort Ord. At the time they still had horse cavalry; and since a lot of the swabbies were right off the farm, we were invited to go riding. The soldiers were very helpful and away we went. There was one tree on the parade ground and the horses headed straight for that tree and all hands were knocked off their mounts. After that we had a lot of beer and found out the soldiers were not a bad bunch after all.

At another time we were on Mare Island for overhaul and I managed to get 10 days leave where we had spent a pleasant few days in Portland, OR and had met a lot of girls. The guys were hot to trot so about 6 of us decided to hitch hike to Portland. Upon starting out we stopped in a bar on Georgia St. and the bar maid said that she was from Astoria and she knew lots of girls. We started out and you can't believe we got a ride to NAPA, CA. all 7 of us. The next ride was a truck loaded with grapes and that consumed lots of miles but the truck had gone to the coast and not to the interior where most of the traffic was. It was getting dark and we got to worrying about violating the Mann Act--that's crossing the state line with a woman for immoral purposes. So we took up a collection and sent her back to Vallejo, CA. We walked most of the night and then got a ride from a guy who had been drinking and he was going to Crescent City. During the drive he fell asleep on a winding road - that's Highway 101- paralleling the Pacific and as I was the only one awake in the back seat, I noticed the guy had fallen asleep; so I reached across the front seat grabbed the steering wheel and woke the driver who stopped the car. He took a leak and a drink of whiskey, ran us and down the road for 100 yards and said "Boy, that won't happen again", and away we went. The speedometer only went to 110 mph and he had it over that and soon after that we got a ride straight to Portland, OR. I checked into the Milner Hotel, the other guys checked into the YMCA, but I knew they couldn't get the girls into the Y and I had a 3 room suite. Needless to say all the parties ended at the Milner. One night about 2:30 a.m. someone pounded on our door and lots of shouting about a fire, so I stirred and started to check it out when I noticed a glow by one of the beds. Seems "Sea Gull" had fallen asleep with a cigarette which landed in his socks. I grabbed his socks and threw them into the sink and turned on the water thus dousing the fire. The smoke was carried out the transom and into the hall. In any event the hotel emptied and I went back to sleep and the rest of the guys never woke up. Guests were standing in their underwear and blankets in the street for about an hour or so.

Then there was a trip to Johnson Islands (I think this is where we crossed the equator) where most of the crew became shellbacks. This is when you cross the equator for the first time. The Royal Court couldn't have been cast better if MGM had done the job and, of course, I was on watch in the engine room and by the time I got relieved everybody was a shellback so I believe they all had a crack at me. It was a lot of fun.

I subsequently got revenge about 1½ years later when I was the only shellback on the liberty ship with a crew of 50 and gun crew of 22. The sad part was the fat steward almost died of fright because we had indicated what happens in the transition from pollywog to shellback. Boy they sure came out of the wood work in war-time. I guess you get tired of listening to these sea stories.

After the Caribbean maneuvers in 1939 the Fleet was supposed to go to NY to the World's Fair but at the last minute, the Pacific fleet was diverted back. As the Philly hadn't officially joined the fleet, we went on to NY with tug boats and auxiliaries greeting us. The girls were out in droves and did our best to make up for the lack of volume that us "sailors".

Rucker, the Engineer of the Captain's gig, got leave so we took turns manning the gig. One morning the Captain went ashore about 9:30. I believe there was a yacht club at 94th St., where we landed him (at that time we were anchored in the Hudson River (SVS comment)). He told the Coxswain to wait for him and if he wasn't back by 11 o'clock, he was to return to the ship. He would get back somehow. The Coxswain and the bow hook decided to have a few beers so I got stuck watching the boat. I was sitting on the bollard just as they show on the recruiting posters when some dude saunters up and wanted to know if Capt. James was aboard. I said no, he is probably uptown getting drunk. I told him we were to return to the ship by 11 o'clock if he did not show. We said he was a friend of Capt. James. Was it OK if he went out to the ship with us. I said he would have to ask the Coxswain. Pretty soon the guys return, feeling no pain, and agreed to take the dude to the ship. As we neared the ship the OD observed our passenger and he went nuts. The bos'n mate was piping, side boys and all hands milling around the top of the gangway. It seems the dude was the Secretary of War, Henry Simpson. Well, we survived that one and I heard the Captain and Henry had a good laugh at our expense.

No. 2 Whaleboat was a real good boat, referring to the crew. We got to go ashore when no one else did. Lansing, Seaman 1/c, and I believe a seaman 2/c named Waschek and myself made up the crew. The fog in Long Beach Harbor was real bad and a lot of liberty launches would get lost and many times we were ordered to assist other ships. Lansing was a very meticulous sailor and kept a book on the compass bearings on all the ships wherever we anchored and also the bearings from ship to ship. We had quite a reputation in addition we got to take the Master-at-Arms ashore with guys getting kicked out. He would take them uptown and buy a suit or something and say good-bye -- we got to drink a few beers. One such trip we were in San Pedro waiting for the Master-at-Arms to return when this very handsome guy appeared with a couple good looking chicks came down on the dock and asked if we could take them to a yacht anchored out in a stream. We said we would when the Master-at-Arms returned. Seems the guy was Errol Flynn and it was his yacht. He invited us to return as he indicated that the party was just starting. He has own boat crew which shuttled back and forth, and man were we hot to trot. Unfortunately, all the liberty launches went to Long Beach and by the time we grabbed red cars and transferred four times and got back to San Pedro, the yacht was gone and with it my chance to be discovered by Hollywood.

Guantanamo Bay was always good for a laugh. We used to play soft ball on the salt flats with enough area to accommodate about 25 teams. We used to get big tubs with ice and bottled beer. In the playing field you placed your bottle in the mud cracks, the only shade available. When a home run was hit we sometimes could run it down so we had to run hard. The mud on top could take quite a load except if you stomped real hard. In any event I'm keeping my eye on the fields who are retrieving the ball, out of the corner of my eye I saw 3rd base except it's the Chief's hat and wham I shoved it down in the mud. I had no trouble getting a transfer out of the fireroom to "A" division and I attribute that act of God to my good fortune or vice versa. We some

We sometimes went swimming in the bay with a marine sharp shooter overlooking the scene. One guy was fishing off the stern and caught a shark that when we hauled it up on deck it was two blocked on the aviation deck with its tail in the hanger hatch. When one of the guys slit the shark open, out flopped 16 baby sharks each 18 inches long. Needless to say, swimming was cancelled for the day.

The boat crews used to enjoy the trip to Caminiera, a Cuban town about 8 miles up Asula (sp ?) River. At least we got a chance to ogle the girls and occasionally smuggle a bottle of rum back. The girls from Caminiera would sneak down to Guantanamo and shout to us from the brush, "Hey, sailor, blank, blank, blank, dos peso".

This brush ringed the baseball fields, but don't know if any of the guys took advantage of Cuban hospitality; but woe be the guy who missed his time at bat.

The Philly crew was all agog when we took Pres. Roosevelt fishing. He had his own barge and crew. He had a real fancy swivel chair especially designed for deep sea fishing except when they put the barge in the water, they couldn't get it started. If I remember correctly, a guy named Jett was the engineer of the barge. I noticed his name listed on the roster of the association. In any event Roosevelt went fishing in the whaleboat, the launches were manned with armed marines as body guards. My mother saved a picture that was published in the front page of the DAILY NEWS showing Roosevelt walking down the deck. Of course, he walked on parallel bars erected around the main deck. I was in the foreground of that picture picking crabs off my leg--mom never knew. On the return trip to the States we received an SOS from a Dutch ship. Seems one of their engineers has been scalded and had a water glass blow up in his face. We rendezvoused with the Dutchman around midnight sending a medical team aboard. The Philly manned all the guns which were kept trained on the merchant men (guess we thought it was one of Hitler's tricks). We landed Roosevelt at Charleston and had a few good liberties.

Have to go back to the first weeks on the Philly. All the talk about good times centered around the KEG and dives in the downtown Philadelphia - at 10th and Arch. My first night in the KEG I had just arrived about 9:00 p.m. when two girls started to fight and succeeded in tearing clothes off each other. The gallant young man that I am, I put my pea coat around one of them and she immediately feel in love with me but then maybe the one stripe on my wrist, the girls of Philadelphia were always on the look out for cherry boys out of boot camp. The evening ended in disaster for Murry and myself as none of the flea bag hotels would allow her in. Seems her reputation had preceded her. The other great spot was Marconi Plaza, the first stop by trolley from the Navy Yard. Marconi Plaza had another name which I won't mention here. It was here the jail-bait of Philadelphia hung out with lots of shrubbery and poor lighting. Many a sailor fell in love with this setting. It was this training area that produced the groups known as "seabag". It wasn't uncommon to sail to another port only to find a dozen or so girls from the last port which made it quite convenient--didn't have to break in a new girlfriend. For the most part the girl could tend bar, work as a waitress and make more than the swabbie who was probably making \$36.00 a month after two years if he was lucky. I know a couple of guys who spent 4 years as Fireman 3/c at \$36.00 a month. In those days you could ship over but I understand no more.

Boston was another good port. I made the scene one night in the dives of Scully Square. Unfortunately, liberty was up at midnight and I met the most beautiful girl who understood the psychology of a sailor. She put up enough "hard to get" to wet my interest.

We had a few drinks and she finally agreed to go to a hotel. Unbeknownst to me she slipped me a mickey and I was really out of it as we got into the cab. We rode and rode and finally pulled up in front of a hotel. The cab fare was \$15.00 plus tip and we checked in. The next thing I knew the birds were chirping, the sun was shining and I was AWOL. I dashed out of the hotel to find out I was still in Scully Square two doors from the bar. I jumped into a cab only to discover that I had no money. I got out of the cab and hitched a ride with a milk truck and he delivered me to Commonwealth Pier just as they were rigging the gangway out. I dashed ^{on} just as it cleared the deck. The OD was busy with some paper work and everybody else was occupied so I scooted down the hatch, changed to my dungarees and ran into Blaczyk the Log Room Yeoman. He said he couldn't find my liberty card. I said, "Oh, I lost it." So I finished my cruise with two liberty cards.

One of our early ports was Trujillio, Santa Domingo. The country is Spanish speaking and as I had taken Spanish in high school and had a vocabulary of about 85 words, I went shopping. Among other things I purchased were some postcards which required a three-centavo stamp. The guy in the store seemed to be charging too much so I got angry and with my Spanish and with the clerk's pidgeon English, I eventually talked him from $3\frac{1}{2}$ centavos to 5 centavos. I didn't realize what I had done until I left the store. So much for espanol esp.....

Another port with great potential was Port-O-Spain, Trinidad. It seemed the sugar planters could not count on the blacks imported from Africa so they brought in Hindus from India. The Hindus had that oriental drive to succeed and most, if not all, the whore houses were owned by Hindus. A bunch of us were enjoying their hospitality of one of these houses lolling around, drinking rum and dancing with the girls, but they were all "dogs". The madam was a beautiful Hindu dressed in her traditional sari. Man I had to have that. After much talk and pleading she agreed that I could sample her charms. Before we could consummate our great love, a first class band master came in and locked his radar on to my princess. He was wealthier and smoother than I and he had her in bed before I could protest. My life was ruined my day lost; that was until about 2 weeks later when the musician came down with the clap and a few days later with syphyllis. How can you hate a guy who went to so much trouble to save a shipmate?

Hamilton, Bermuda in 1941 was a sleepy little town. There were few tourists because of the war and they were no longer flocking to that bit of paradise. Anyway I got shore patrol and kept to my post as any good blue jacket is wonted to do until I noted that the other shore patrol were sneaking around and doing a bit of boozing. So my partner and I went into the liveliest joint and removed our leggings and arm bands and joined in the fun. Because the proprietor knew us a people of authority, the drinks were on the house and we had a ball. Girls, Girls, Girls! After about 4 hours we got back in gear and walked out of the bar to be met by the Shore Patrol Officer who congratulated us for being the only team doing our duty.

Was it in Hamilton that a lieutenant from the Philly, acting as Shore Patrol Officer, was nudged off the dock by surging sailors returning to their ships? As I remember he wasn't well liked but can't remember his name.

Things haven't been too bad since 1941--after the shipyard it was the Merchant Marine where I succeeded in obtaining a chief engineer's license, both steam and diesel. I knocked around and enjoyed myself for the most part. I worked as a line-man for a power company, a printer for the Diamond Match Co.; owned an apple orchard a hay and feed store; had various jobs as buyer or purchasing agent for several aero space firms and ship building facilities and, finally, prior to retirement a couple of large engineering and construction firms which saw me working in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Alaska, Greece, and other locations throughout the world. I am now residing in the great Mojave Desert about 35 miles from Palm Springs, CA.