

# THE COAST GUARD EXPERIENCES & ADVENTURES OF SEAMAN 1<sup>ST</sup> CLASS JACK DREW DURING WORLD WAR II



**1942**



**2010**



**By:**

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**Edited By:**

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## Service Sequence:

Nov 1942      Enlisted Tampa Florida.

1942            Curtis Bay, Maryland for Coast Guard boot camp.

1942            Fort McHenry Maryland.

1943            Ft. Lauderdale Florida for coastal defense duty.

1943            San Juan Puerto Rico

1943            Coast Guard Cutter *Crawford*

1943            Naval Air Station St. Lucia British West Indies

1944-45        3<sup>rd</sup> Naval District, New York City.

1945            Ellis Island New York to guard German prisoners of war.

1945            Boston, Mass. Constitution Wharf

1945            WSC711

1945-46        Quonset Pt. Rhode Island

1946            Boston, Mass. Constitution Wharf

1946            Cockspur Island. Georgia for discharge.

# PREFACE

It has truly been an honor and a joy to assist Jack in the editing and compiling of his Coast Guard experiences during World War II. I first learned of Jack's existence through a fellow retired Coast Guardsman that worked in the same building as I. What was amazing was that I had been walking past Jack several times each week before I learned that he too had shared the Coast Guard experience. As I have come to know Jack, I have learned that his Coast Guard experiences conveyed herein are only a small sample of what he actually encountered during his wartime experience. As I have completed each story that Jack has given to me, he would ask "Do you need me to write anything else?" Of course the answer was most certainly yes and he would cheerfully type out another encounter for me to add to the book.

Jack is one of the last of a great generation of World War II veterans that is fading away into history as each day passes. While our WWII veterans are precious, Jack is even more unique in that he is a Coast Guard veteran of WWII. Being the nation's smallest military service branch, Coast Guard WWII veterans are extremely rare to encounter and I consider myself very fortunate to have found him.

Jack has been a resident of Pensacola Florida for many years and is an upstanding member of the community. Even though he is at an age where his contemporaries are retired and enjoying their senior years; Jack prefers to continue to work. He has been providing security services for the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners for several years and is highly regarded for his work. He is a valued member of our community and hopefully will be with us for several years to come.

W. J. HAYDEN

CWO3(COMM), USCG Retired.

## **In the beginning. November 1942:**

I joined the Coast Guard in November 1942. There were fifty of us that were sworn in on November 12, 1942. After we were officially in the service, the Chief gave us our first liberty. He told us that the train we were to take to boot camp would not leave Tampa, Florida until midnight. He further said that we should be back at Union Station by 2300 or as he said 11:00 PM for you boots. He told us to stay out of trouble and to be on time. I had said my goodbyes to my Mother Sister and my Brother who had joined the Army Air Corps and was awaiting orders to report for duty. I didn't want to go back home and go through all of the goodbyes again so I went to the Franklin Theater and sat through the same movie about three times. I walked to the station and when I got there; my brother and his girlfriend were waiting for me. We sat and talked until they called us to board the train. I'm not sure why but the Chief had given me all of the files and orders and told me that I was in charge. We arrived in Baltimore about noon the following day and it was snowing. We still had on summer clothes and no coats. We jumped aboard some trucks and were driven to Curtis Bay where we mustered in front of the CO's office to be welcomed into the Coast Guard. We stood in the rain and snow for what seemed hours (really about twenty minutes) when the CO came out and

told us what to expect for the next eight weeks. I gave the papers to the yeoman and we were assigned to barracks D8. Fifty of us from the south and fifty on the top deck (upstairs) from Pennsylvania. That night I think the Civil War broke out again. It was snowing and "lights out" was called and for the first time we heard taps played. I think we all had tears in our eyes that night. We knew that we were in the service now. The next day we were told that there were no uniforms for us and all they gave us was pea coats and a haircut. We then went to the drill field. The question was asked if any of us had any ROTC training. I raised my hand and said that I had two years of ROTC in high school. The Bos'n mate asked me if I could teach the company how to march and I said yes. Thereupon, I was designated to be a drill instructor and received a first class patch (rank) which was a little smaller than the official rating badge that the Bos'n was wearing. We managed to wear out our shoes marching and our clothes started to stink when we finally received our uniforms. That was a happy day. I was now a "hot shot" with the patch on my uniform but I still had to attend all of the training lectures. On the drill field, I instructed every company on how to drill. The last day of boot camp, we had to pass in review and I was proud of how well the

group marched past the reviewing stand. The Coast Guard band played and I think we all had chills running up and down our spines. I'll never forget that day. I was asked to stay on at Curtis Bay and would be made a petty officer third class and have my

### **Fort McHenry Maryland. 1943**

I had just finished work and was getting ready for liberty when two Shore Patrolmen walked into the barracks calling my name. I answered and asked what they wanted? They told me to put on my dress blues and come with them. I asked what for and they said the Captain wanted to see me. The SP's then advised me that I could get dressed and walk with them or they would carry me to the Captain. It was up to me as to how I would arrive to see the Captain. Needless to say, we walked to the CO's office. The CO held the rank of Commander and he told me to enter his office. I walked in and leaned on his desk and said "You wanted to see me?" He turned a few shades of purple and then red and told me to "get off of his desk and to stand at attention and to address him with a salute along with my name and rank. After I complied with the formalities, he told me to have a seat. He smiled and asked me

own room and head in the barracks. However, I didn't join the Coast Guard to spend the war teaching at Curtis Bay so I thanked the Bos'n and we received our first liberty and shipped out the next day.

when was the last time that I had written a letter to my mother? I said that I think while I was in boot camp whereupon he said that your mother has written to the Commandant of the Coast Guard in Washington wanting to know where her little boy was. She said that she had not heard from me and was worried that I might be hurt or something. The CO then told the SP's to take me back to the barracks and remain with me while I wrote a letter to my mother and not to seal it but rather bring it back to him when I was done. In my letter I asked my mother, Why did you write to the Commandant? etc. When we returned the letter to my CO, he read it and gave it back to me and said "seal it and come with me." We walked out the gate and about two blocks to a mail box where he watched me place it in the box. He then smiled at me and said "Jack Drew, I never want to see you again." And he turned and walked back to the base.

### **Fort McHenry Maryland. 1943 Drumming out ceremony.**

We had just arrived at the fire school when the ships company was told to fall out in

dress blues. We formed two groups inside the yard next to the gate. A drummer

appeared with two officers. I don't remember their rank but the senior officer called us to attention and faced the second officer. He then read the first officer orders giving him a dishonorable discharge. He then removed all Coast Guard identification from the other officer's uniform, took his sword, broke it over his knee and threw it outside the gate into the street. The senior

officer then directed the drummer to "drum" the officer out the gate with a muffled beat. The senior officer then commanded the ships company to do an about face turning our backs on the discharged officer who slowly walked through our ranks and out the gate. That was the first and last "drumming out" that I ever witnessed while in the service.

### **San Juan Puerto Rico, 1943.**

The Navy and Coast Guard had stopped issuing dress whites before I joined the service but a buddy and I thought they were the best looking uniform the naval services had ever worn. We went to a tailor in San Juan and had him make us each a dress white uniform. We put the uniforms on and went on liberty and had a great time. No one knew what naval service we were in. White bell bottoms, jumpers with a blue collar and cuffs with the three white stripes running around the collar and cuffs. Blue Seaman stripes around the arm and blue shield looked really good. When we

checked in from liberty the SP at the gate stopped us and said what branch of the service we were in? We said the same as he was, Coast Guard and he asked where did we get that uniform issued to us. We told him we had them made. The SP called the chief who came to the gate. He was a great Chief and he thought they looked good and it brought back a lot of memories for him. He said you got away with it this time but we would not get through the gate again wearing the dress white uniform. He did not report us and I packed my uniform and sent it home.

### **Coast Guard Station San Juan Puerto Rico 1943**

While stationed in San Juan, we were watching a movie while sitting on coconut tree logs. The screen was plywood painted white and the projector was sitting on a

platform several rows back from the screen. While outside under the stars I had an attack of appendicitis and was taken to the U.S. Marine Hospital in San Juan and they

operated on me and removed my appendix. I was in the hospital for over a week. When I returned, our group had shipped out and my sea bag was still in an empty barracks. I asked the duty officer where I should bunk and he sent me to a transit barracks about two blocks outside of the base. I walked to the building and the master at arms was a Surfman that had two paddles on his hat. He was sitting at a desk on the sidewalk reading a newspaper and told me to just pick any empty bunk. When I went into the barracks I could not believe it. The place was so dirty. No one would believe just how dirty it was. There was dirty paper all over the floor. Old dirty clothes underwear, socks, undershirts. The head was filthy the floor nasty and all wet urinals were painted red for people with VD to use. Around the ceiling and the baseboard the walls were black. I went out to the master at arms and told him how dirty the place was and asked him what the black stuff on the ceiling was. He said bed bugs and if I didn't like it to go

somewhere else. I walked back to the base and went to the Commanding Officer. I told him where I had been sent and what kind of conditions the barracks were in. I told the CO that he would not sleep there and I was not going to either. He said let's go look. So we walked back to the barracks. When the Surfman saw me with an officer coming he about had a stroke. The CO inspected the barracks and could not believe what he saw. He said to me to come on back with me Drew and we will bunk you in the infirmary until we get the barracks cleaned. The next morning I returned with the skipper and he gave orders that all bunks would be broken down and put in a vat filled with kerosene built on the roof. The walls were to be washed down with fire hoses to remove the bed bugs. The floors were cleaned and walls scrubbed down, etc. I don't know what happened to the Surfman as I was assigned to the cutter *Crawford* and did not have to return to the transit barracks.

### **Coast Guard Cutter *Crawford* 1943.**

Somewhere in the south Atlantic we were on patrol when we were called to man our battle stations for a drill. I was assigned to the bow gun crew and I would set the time on the shells being fired for the gunner's mate. He would call the time he wanted me

to set and I would put the shell in the timer and crank in the time and load it in the breach. The gunner would then fire the gun. I was setting fuses at 30 seconds and the shell would explode at that time. Things were going smoothly when we had a hot

shell in the breach. The gunners mate called "hot shell" and opened the breach and I caught the shell and ran to the rail and threw it overboard. That ended the firing from the bow gun. Then the skipper called us to the bow to watch the firing of a mouse trap rocket. We had double racks on the bow but we only loaded one rocket for this exercise. When the button was pushed the rocket just started spitting out sparks and smoking. Everyone then ran for the stern. There was about a hundred pounds of powder that could go off at any second. Dumb me ran to the rack and pulled the rocket out of the rack and threw it overboard. No more mouse trap drills but we took turns firing the 20mm after that. When my turn came, I strapped myself to the gun and the loader put a new magazine in the breach. I started firing when a shell exploded in the breach about two feet from

my face. The noise was so loud that I couldn't hear a thing. The hearing came back in my right ear but never did return to my left ear. When I was being discharged, I could not pass the hearing test and the pharmacist mate said he would check me into a hospital so they could find out why I was so hard of hearing. I asked him if there was a chance that he could just enter on my medical records that everything is ok? I really wanted my discharge as I was engaged to be married and was ready to go home. I enlisted, went where I was told to go, followed orders and did the best that I could. I received the Coast Guard Good Conduct ribbon which is awarded for exemplary behavior, efficiency, and fidelity. I was discharged and returned home having served over three years, five months. I am still proud to have served in the best military service, the United States Coast Guard.

### **Coast Guard Cutter *Crawford* 1943.**

We were searching for a submarine between St. Lucia BWI and Granada BWI. The Captain started dropping 300 pound depth charges set to go off at 75 feet. Our flank speed was about 12 knots and the concussion from the depth charges broke every radiator away from the bulkheads, broke the light bulbs and dishes as well. I

can still hear the officer's mess cook screaming to stop, you are breaking all of my dishes. The *Crawford* had a twin 40mm bow gun and two 30 caliber WW1 Lewis guns amidships and two 50 caliber guns on the fiddle deck on the stern. The German u-boats outgunned us with their bow cannon and 20mm canons. My gun station was

amidships with a Lewis gun loaded with ammo dated 1914. The bridge was right over my head. The Captain asked me if I saw the junk coming up on my side of the ship and I said yes. He said for me to spray it which I did. The ammo was so old you could almost see the stuff coming out of the barrel and just had the range of what I was shooting at. The Captain then said, Drew it's your job to keep the Germans in their conning tower and don't let them out on

deck. I said Captain, I won't be here. He said "what did you say?" I said again "I won't be here Captain." He asked me where I would be and I said "See that little island in the distance?" I'll be between here and that island. The sub did not surface and we secured. The next day the Captain said to me "Drew, would you have gone overboard yesterday?" I looked at him and said "Captain, we'll never know."

### **Coast Guard Cutter Crawford 1943.**

We patrolled around the island of Martinique keeping the French fleet from going to sea. They had the aircraft carrier Bearn, the heavy cruiser Joan De Arc and the super destroyer Terrible which was the fastest destroyer in the world. A tanker and several smaller ships were also tied up in Fort De France. They had been there for two years and had not been able to get supplies so they had planted gardens alongside of the docks and grew their food. They had no medical supplies so the officers and enlisted men badly needed dental care, etc. While on patrol, we picked up French sailors that were deserting their ships and trying to cross the straights to our base on St. Lucia. We would pick them up floating on 55 gal. Oil drums tied together on logs or on small native boats. They would use anything that could float. One night we picked up six

French sailors and took them aboard. They thought they had died and gone to heaven. We gave them clean clothes and they took a shower. Then we took them to the galley and fed them hot dogs. It was the first meat and bread they had in a long time. We also gave them milk and coffee. The tears were running down their cheeks. It was so sad to see the grown men cry. They thanked us and gave us their uniform hats. They were blue hats with the string over a red pom-pom. They gave us their guns and anything we wanted. We took the sailors to the British who transported them to New York to serve on the Richelieu, a French battleship being overhauled in the New York shipyard. I wonder how many French sailors died trying to get to our base or picked up by our ships?

### **Coast Guard Cutter *Crawford* 1943.**

The French in Fort de France Martinique had surrendered and we were ordered to go in and accept their surrender. We were ordered to cover our guns with white canvas and to proceed into the harbor at fort De France. We thought that the French ships had no fuel left and had been giving it to the German submarines. But as we entered the harbor, they had steam and their guns were not covered but were trained on us as we entered the port which was not a good feeling. The planes from the aircraft carrier were parked on the dock. Only the metal covering was left. The fabric material was

gone. They requested a Machinist Mate to help get the carrier underway and we heard later that he had been killed on the way to Puerto Rico. The destroyer *Terrible* got underway and about sank us as she passed going so fast that she was dragging half of the bay with her as she went by. Then the *Joan de Arc* steamed out and what a beautiful ship she was. They were all heading for the shipyard in New York. It was a happy day for the French as they were now able to fight for their country and our patrols around Martinique were finally over.

### **Coast Guard Cutter *Crawford* 1943.**

We received a message that a U.S. Navy seagoing tug and two empty barges in tow were foundering about 800 miles from Puerto Rico. We were ordered to tow them back to a U.S. port. While underway a group of us were sitting on the fantail talking about the new radar unit that had just been installed on the *Crawford*. We were joking and saying "RADAR" spelled backwards spells "RADAR." When the XO heard us he about had a stroke and got upset because we were talking about radar out in the open.

He said "don't you guys ever talk about radar like this again." Don't you know that a German sub could be out there hearing you? You know radar is a very hush hush thing. We thought he was kidding but he was quite serious. We spotted the tug and barges. She had no power and the empty barges were acting like a sail pulling the tug backwards away from land. We managed to get a cable secured to the tug and started pulling her toward the nearest port which was St. Lucia BWI. The *Crawford* was built

in 1924 and our flank speed was about 12 knots, so we were having a rough time pulling the seagoing tug and two barges in a rough sea. I was working in the mess and we used to just take the garbage and dump it overboard. When I dumped that garbage, I looked down and it was floating toward the bow. I looked around at the Chief Machinist Mate and said "Chief, the garbage is floating toward the bow and he said "I know Jack." We are making about three knots backward. We towed the tug to St. Lucia BWI to the U.S. Naval Air Station and the tug was able to drop their anchor but the wind was still blowing and the lines to the barges were very taught. The old man told the officer on the tug to get a man on the back barge and to cut it loose and we would pick it up on the run. Among ourselves, we didn't think that was the right thing to do. We thought it would be better to come alongside the barge while it was secure and tie onto it but that's not the way the Captain wanted to do it. The Navy had a sailor shinny across the

lines to the back barge with an axe tied to his back and when he got to the barge, he cut her loose. The wind took control of the barge and away she went seaward. If it managed to get out into the open sea we would probably never have been able to catch it. We made a big circle and came up to the barge that was being blown by the wind down on us very fast and we didn't have the speed to get out of the way. The barge hit us just aft of our beam tearing the tops off of all of the depth charges and knocking a hole in the side of the ship down to the waterline. While we were still locked together, we secured a line to the barge and thought for a few minutes that we might have to abandon ship and get onto the barge. However, we managed to tow the barge back into the bay. When the barge hit our ship and tore the depth charges open, sparks and black power went everywhere. I thought this is it and they were going to blow but thank God that they didn't.

### **Naval Air Station St. Lucia BWI 1943.**

I was transferred off of the *Crawford* to the Naval Air Station at St. Lucia BWI. I hid in the bow rope locker for an hour or so until they found me and I had to go ashore. I really hated to leave the ship. They were a great bunch of people. There were twelve

of us and one officer. We had a hut at the back gate to the base. A company of Marines were camped between the Navy barracks and our hut. Since the Navy didn't like the Coast Guard or the Marines, the Navy would not send a truck for us to get to

the mess hall. We had to walk. However, we made friends with the Marines and they had a truck and would pick us up every day and take us to chow. The base was being decommissioned and a company of Seabees came in and packed everything up and shipped it to North Africa. They were the best bunch of guys you would ever want to know. All first class Petty Officers or Chiefs. All older men with a trade and they worked from sun up to dark. After chow we would go down to a Quonset hut and drink beer until the early hours and have a ball telling stories about where we lived and how much we liked our outfits. Coast Guard, Seabees and Marines. The Navy stayed away. We had a Loran station on an island across the bay on top of a small mountain under a fort built in the 1500's and was used

in the war between England and France. Along the beach there were ruins of the barracks and the English dead were buried. We could make out the graves from the top of the fort. One of us would spend 24 hours on the island. Our food was brought over by boat and we had to haul it up the ramp to the small barracks and radio room along with two generators. We had one bunk, a head and a table and chair. That was it. We had to flash a searchlight once an hour towards the base to let them know we were OK. After the Marines left and the Navy pulled out, it was left to us to protect the government property. We had a blast. St. Lucia would never be the same. They loved the Coast Guard. There was an Air Force base "Bean Field" on the other end of the island. They were good to us also.

### **U.S. Naval Air Station St. Lucia British West Indies.**

We were stationed on a Navy base at the north end of the island and the Army Air Corps had a base at the south end. They used their base to refuel their planes that were being ferried over to Europe. Our base was being used as an emergency landing facility for the Navy patrol sea planes when they were in trouble. One morning a German submarine captain pulled his submarine into a small town halfway between the two American bases

and let his crew pull liberty. They cut the only telephone line connecting our bases and filled the submarine with fresh water, fruit, rum and other supplies they needed. It was our understanding that they had a ball. Both port and starboard crews had their liberty and after a couple of hours the captain took his boat back to sea. When we got the news, planes were sent into the area to look for it but the sub was never seen again. I always admired that German

captain. He must have been one hell of a nice man to serve under and I hope he and

his crew made it home.

### **U.S. Naval Air Station St. Lucia British West Indies.**

We had secured for the day and we were just lying in the grass in front of the BOQ talking while we were waiting for chow call when I saw a large white mountain goat jumping around on the rocks on the side of the mountain. I took out a Springfield 1906 30/30 rifle and walked back to a small hill. Laying down, I put my knees up and used them to lay the rifle on. The group was laughing, saying I couldn't hit the goat which was about 250 yards up the mountain. There were no winds so I set the sight as

high as it would go. I got the goat in my sight and pulled the trigger and killed it on the first shot. I could not do that again in a hundred years. We sent two natives up the mountain and they cut down two small trees and tied the goat between them and carried it back to the cook. The cook dressed him out and the next day we built a fire on the beach and invited some of the local natives and our CO Lt. Ashbrook and had a great cook out.

### **U.S. Naval Air Station St. Lucia British West Indies.**

We had a Navy Grumman sea plane that was used for patrol. The pilot was a super nice officer and he would load the plane up with our beer and take it with him when he went on patrol. When he landed, our beer was ice cold and we would take it to our bar in a Quonset hut and us Coast Guard, Marines and Navy would have some cold beers. Unfortunately, one day the LT. loaded our beer into his plane and we waived him goodbye. He took off and

something bad happened. We heard the whine of the plane falling and he crashed and was killed. Years later, I had a good friend who was a colonel in the Army Air Corps flying B17's to Europe. When I told him about the seaplane going down with our beer, he remembered that he was flying over our island that same day and took part in the search for the plane. I guess it's a small world.

## **U.S. Naval Air Station St. Lucia British West Indies.**

After we took over the Naval Air Station, we had to keep the bay cleared of fishing traps that the natives would put out every day. We would take the rearming boat out each morning and cut the lines holding the traps. We had to do this as we were used by the Navy as an emergency landing base for seaplanes in trouble. When a PBM or a larger seaplane would fly over the base, they would land in the bay and usually cut their motors. We would take the rearming boat out to the plane and tie on a line and pull it back to the base where the Navy would repair the aircraft and fly it out on patrol again. One afternoon a PBM took the

roofs off the buildings on base as it came in so low and hit the water hard and cut the motors. When we got along side of the plane the door opened and an officer jumped in the boat crying. We asked what was going on and the MM1st. class said to take the officer back to the base as this was the second PBM that he had lost in a week. He just got up out of the pilots seat and said somebody else could land the damn thing. The MM1st. class said he grabbed the wheel and landed the plane. We took the pilot back to the base and the USAF flew him home to a hospital in the states. It was all in a day's work for us.

## **U.S. Naval Air Station St. Lucia British West Indies.**

LT Ashbrook was our CO and a hell of a nice man he was. We all felt sorry for him as he lived in an officer's house by himself. We had taken over the BOQ after everyone pulled out of the base and we had it good. Each of us had a private room and head. We hired native girls to clean the barracks for about fifty cents a day and we had the mess in our building. We had a Crosley and an International dump truck that the Navy had left us. If the LT wanted to go to town, he would ride in the cab of the truck but we thought he should have his own car. So we went into the bush and found two cars left

by the Navy. One was a 1940 Ford station wagon with wooden body. The body had been eaten by termites and a 1936 Plymouth 4-door sedan that looked to be in good condition. We had a Puerto Rican that used to own a body shop in San Juan and he said he would get the car running and repainted, which he did. The inside was like new, all original mohair and the seats looked like new after they were cleaned. We painted some mickey-mouse numbers on the car and made a U.S. Navy tag and I drove the car up to the Mr. Ashbrook's house. He didn't know about the car and he

about fainted when he saw it. He said that I was to be his official driver and I would drive him to town when he wanted to go. We all

felt good that we did something for LT Ashbrook. He now had his own wheels.

### **U.S. Naval Air Station St. Lucia British West Indies.**

In our crew we had a Machinist Mate 2<sup>nd</sup> Class who purchased a 1934 Ford 4-door convertible. It was like new and he took the running lights from a Navy liberty boat that had been on our landing ramp for years and mounted them on the fenders of his Ford. We used the car to go on liberty. The Governor of the island had a party for the Americans on the island but only invited officers from our base and the Army Air Corps. We had a few beers and decided that we would crash the party. We got into the Ford and drove to the Governor's mansion where he had two British guards at

the drive with the big hats. We went passed them like a bolt of lightning and drove across the yard to the table that they were using as a bar. We all got out and mixed ourselves a drink, said hello to the governor and all the American and British officers and climbed back into the Ford. We then drove across the yard making several turns and out the gate laughing like hell. The guards didn't know what was going on and just stood there as we drove out. The next day not one word was said. We actually got away with it.

### **U.S. Naval Air Station St. Lucia British West Indies.**

Keeping the grass down on the base after it was secured was quite a job. We would let the farmers allow their cattle, sheep and horses anything that could eat grass onto the base. One farmer had a mean bull that he would let onto the base. The bull would try to run us down in our little Crosley. He would also chase us if we were walking near him. I asked the cook if we could eat

the bull and he said yes he could get some nice cuts of meat out of him. So we took up a collection from our group and had \$80 U.S. The farmer had never had \$80 in his life. I went to him and asked him if he would sell me his bull. He said no but when I flashed the \$80 in front of him he changed his mind. I had the cook with me and we had the truck with a line attached to the

bumper and over a limb of a tree. When the farmer took the money and I said it's a deal, he said it was my bull. I pulled out my .45 pistol and shot the damn bull right between the eyes. The farmer went crazy and all of the natives went wild. We tied the line to

the bulls feet, backed the truck up and the cook butchered him right there. The natives loved it as they got all of the scraps. The farmer cried and we had fresh meat again. Even LT Ashbrook was happy eating a bull steak.

### **U.S. Naval Air Station St. Lucia British West Indies.**

We had native laborers that worked on the base cutting grass and doing odd jobs. Each night they would be transported to town in a Navy truck. The first time the Coast Guard took over guard duty from the Navy, I made the truck stop and we searched the truck and the workers. In our search we learned that they had dress blues under their clothes and everything they

could steal and hide. We even found tools, nails and a full case of cigarettes. Wired under the truck was lumber, paint, etc. I made them dump the stuff and a bunch of unhappy workers left the base that night. We stopped the truck each night from then on and never found any more Navy supplies.

### **U.S. Naval Air Station St. Lucia British West Indies.**

The only liberty we had was in the town of Castries which was about eight miles over a very rough road. After the base was closed and there were only the twelve of us left, the bars didn't cater to us as when there were a lot of the Navy and Marines pulling liberty. Consequently, they raised the prices for their food and drinks so we decided to rent a house on the outskirts of the town and furnished it with furniture from the base. Tables, chairs, beds, lamps, fans, dishes and GI silverware and a radio. We stocked

it with food and booze and had our own nice USO where we could go and relax and not get ripped off. The bars and restaurants didn't care for this and we received a call that there was an inspection group on the way to the Navy Air Station to inventory the base for all of the equipment that the Seabees left behind. We borrowed a jeep from the Air Corps and used our dump truck and loaded everything that we had taken from the base and returned it. We later learned that the threat of inspection was not

true. We found out that a bar owner had made it all up so we would close the house. The cook got loaded and was driving the borrowed jeep on the way back to the base. He hit a big hole in the road and then a bridge railing and turned the jeep upside down in a small river. Cookie was not hurt and we turned the jeep over and it was all bent to hell but still ran. We got it back to

the base and our Puerto Rican body man who had rebuilt the Plymouth started repairing the jeep that the Air Corps wanted back. We needed some olive paint for the jeep and I got a GI from the air base to bring us a gallon of paint so we could finish the repairs. We were able to return the jeep to the air corps and they never suspected that we had wrecked it.

### **U.S. Naval Air Station St. Lucia British West Indies**

Our unit became the guard force for the base and we manned the two gates and had to conduct patrols. Our guard building was a little 4 ft. X 4 ft. shack with a little seat and a crank phone. When it rained, we got soaked. When the base was closed, a company of Seabees moved in and dismantled the base and they were a great group of men. All 1<sup>st</sup> class tradesmen and they worked from sun-up until dark. Then they would go to our bar and drink beer until late at night. They liked us and we became

good friends so one day I asked the Chief if he could build us a better guard house. About a week later, their truck pulled up to the main gate and three Seabees unloaded lumber, screens, etc. and built us a 10 ft. X 10 ft. house with screens and a door with shutters that we could close when it rained. It was a super nice guard house. They painted it grey and mounted a flood light on top and we had it made. I have had nothing but good things to say about the Seabees ever since.

### **U.S. Naval Air Station St. Lucia British West Indies 1943.**

After the base was decommissioned and the Navy and Marines had departed, we didn't eat very well. We had canned meat, powdered eggs and powdered potatoes, etc. We had borrowed a jeep from the Air Corps which we were enjoying driving as it

was better than the Crosley that the Navy had left for us to drive. One morning a Navy ship came in and docked to load the equipment the Seabees had packed. The ship had just left the states and consequently had a good stock of fresh

vegetables and meat aboard. We asked the first class cook if we could trade him something for some fresh food and he saw the jeep and said he would trade us some food for the jeep so we made the deal. We got the fresh food and took off. The Navy cook had gotten the jeep onboard the ship and was securing it when the ships officers

came back from liberty and saw the Air Corps jeep onboard. They didn't go for it at all and were quite unhappy and made the cook unload the jeep. So we did quite well that day: We got the food and we were able to keep the jeep, and the ship sailed I believe with a very unhappy third class cook aboard.

### **U.S. Naval Air Station St. Lucia British West Indies**

I was given my orders to return to the States to report to the Coast Guard 3<sup>rd</sup> Naval District headquarters, 42 Broadway, New York City. I was the only one to receive orders to another station. I was told to use any available transportation. I got a ride to the Army Air Corps base on the north end of the island and checked in with the operations officer. I asked if they had a plane going back to the States and he said "see that plane on the far side of the airport?" He said it was an Air Corps PBY and there was a major who was flying the plane but they had burned out an engine and were waiting for a new one to be flown in by Pan American in a day or so. He said to go over and ask the major if I could bum a ride home with him. I walked over to the plane and the crew was sleeping under the wing. I saw that the major was awake and I saluted him. I told him that I had been in the tropics for 18 months and was on orders to

report back to the States and wanted to know if I could hitch a ride back with him? He said sure thing sailor. It may be a few days and you can help put this thing back together and to just throw my sea bag in the ship. That night we were given bunks in one of the barracks and got to eat in the mess hall. At about six o'clock a flight of B26 bombers landed. They were on their way to Africa and needed to fuel the planes, eat and spend the night. The next morning they would fly off to Brazil for their last stop before crossing the Atlantic. The crew were all wearing flight suits with 45's in their shoulder holsters. After mess they headed for the officer's club and the whole bunch got as drunk as possible and they still came back to the barracks singing and laughing and having a wild time. Some hit the sack and told the others to do likewise and do it now or they would shoot out the lights...which they did! It was a wild night.

Early in the morning they took off. We looked around the barracks and there were clothes, shaving kits and even a 45 laying on the floor. Pan American flew in and they had the PBY's motor. The major borrowed a truck and hauled it to the plane. We tied a rope to the motor, threw it over a fork in a tree and tied the other end to the bumper of the truck and hung the engine. We pushed the PBY up to the engine and a mechanic lined up the engine with the bolts on the planes motor mounts. Bolted it down and then he hooked up the controls, fuel line, etc. and by noon had the cover put back in plane. The major was a happy man and got in the plane and started it up and fire shot out of the cover about 15 or 20 feet. We all knew the plane was going to explode. The major shut it down and we waited for the metal to cool and the mechanic removed the cover to discover he had left his oil can on one of the cylinder heads and it had caught on fire. He replaced the cover and we loaded the plane for the trip home. We

### **August 1944.**

After returning to the states, I was on a 30 day leave and I was home in Tampa Florida and was enjoying being back with my Mother and my sister. Her husband was a sniper working for General Patton in Europe. I was driving up to the house and saw a western union boy coming out of the house and get onto his bike and ride away.

had 12 sea bags as well as mine, and a bed the major was taking back. I don't know how many cases of liquor. The next morning we all climbed aboard, taxied to the runway, and used up every foot to get the plane in the air. When we left the end of the runway, we almost dropped in the water. While flying back we received a message that there was a sick GI who was stationed on a small island off the coast of Cuba. We were asked to pick him up and fly him back to the US. We landed and the man was brought out in a small boat and we pulled him in the plane through the gun blister. He was in a stretcher so we tied him up to the overhead. Now 13 of us and a heavy load. It took the major about 5 miles running wide open to get the plane to break suction and to get the plane in the air. We landed in Fort Lauderdale. We were all good friends by now. The major shook our hands and wished us well. I got a ride to the bus station and went home to Tampa for a month leave before reporting to New York.

My sister came out of the house with a telegraph in her hand. Mom worked and was not at home and my sister was afraid to open the wire and handed it to me. I opened it and it was from the War Dept. It said that my brother who was with the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force and piloted B24's out of Italy was missing in action over Germany. This ended

the good time I was having on leave and I had to tell my Mother when she got home that night. It was the hardest thing I ever had to do. We all cried and we did not hear anything from George for 15 months. Then I received a letter from a prison camp in Germany. He had been able to bail out of his bomber at 800 feet. His parachute had just opened when he hit the ground breaking both ankles and his back. He landed in the middle of an SS camp. The Germans put him in a Catholic hospital and treated his injuries. When he could walk, he was put into a Stalag near Berlin. They were then placed on a death march to the south. Hitler had ordered all allied prisoners to be gassed but General Patton saved them. I was back in New York working at

headquarters when I got a call from my brother who had just arrived at Camp Killmac in New Jersey across the river. The Chief told me to take off and go see him. I took the train to the camp and got in the base. When I saw my brother, we hugged for ten minutes. He was so thin. He weighed about 160 lbs. When his plane went down and now he was down to about 110 lbs. All of the POW's that were there that day were about the same weight. We had lunch in the officer's mess hall which was being run by German POW's who all had new uniforms and there was not one skinny one serving the food to the Americans that had made it. I was given another 15 day leave and went home with my brother to a great party back home.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Naval District, New York City 1944.**

We received a call to put on our work clothes and muster in front of the building. We thought we were going to clean the front of headquarters. Two trucks pulled up and we were told to get on and we were taken to the docks along Riverside Drive and let out next to a freighter. We were told that the longshoremen had called a strike and we were going to unload the ship that was docked where we stood. I saw Army trucks pulling in and some Marines. Some boarded the ship with us and others boarded the

ships docked next to the one we were to unload. We boarded the ship and I went down into the hold. A pallet was dropped down to us and three Army GI's and I started loading 100 pound bags of sugar. We worked several days until the Government made a deal with Lucky Luciano to manage the docks and the longshoremen returned after unloading 100 pound bags all day. Nobody had to rock us to sleep at night and I didn't pull liberty for a

few days. It was hard work but New York

got their food thanks to the Armed Services.

### **New York City 1944.**

Pavlock and I were on our way to check the Coast Guard clothing locker on Maiden Lane when a Navy Captain passed us. We saluted and I did a double take. He was black, about 30 years old and wearing a dress Navy officer's uniform with four stripes, a star with a dozen ribbons on his coat. He had the hat with scrambled eggs also. I told Pavlock he was not a captain and I was going back and escort him to our intelligence office at 42 Broadway. Pavlock said to leave it alone, that I would end up in the brig. I went back to the captain, saluted and asked him to follow us to our headquarters. He said alright and marched back to 42 Broadway. When we entered, the petty officer on watch was sitting with his chair leaning back, gun on the desk reading the newspaper. When he saw us coming in with a Navy captain he about had a stroke. He said to me "Drew you are going to Portsmouth Navy prison and break rocks for life." I asked him to call the 7<sup>th</sup> floor which was the intelligence office and tell them I'm bringing this man up. When we got off the elevator, a LT was waiting and took me in the next room and asked me if I had lost my mind. I said no, that the man

was not a Navy Captain. He told me to have a seat and took the Captain to another room. About an hour later, he came out and asked me to come in and the Captain was decommissioned right there. They took a razor and cut everything that was U.S. Navy, buttons, star Ribbons from his uniform leaving round holes with the white lining showing. They also removed the Navy insignia from his hat. About that time two Merchant Marine SP's walked in and they were about 6 ft 3 and about 250 lbs. They took both arms and lifted the "ex" Captain up off the floor when he asked if he could ask me something. They put him down and he said to me "How did you know I was not a Navy Captain?" I said you just out-ranked yourself. Had you been an Ensign or a LTJG I would have never thought about it. You are too young to hold the rank of Captain. He said "Do you know how much fun I was having wearing this uniform?" I said no and he said "You sure messed up a good thing." He was a cook in the Merchant Marine. I don't know what ever happened to him after he was escorted out of the building.

## **New York City, July 1944.**

I went on liberty alone and ended up in Greenwich Village and went in a bar that was in the basement of a building. The place was jumping and there were no seats at the bar. There were three Army officers sitting in a booth and saw me looking for a seat and asked me to join them. I said I'm enlisted and they said being in the Coast Guard was good enough for them. They were from the 101<sup>st</sup> and 82nd Army paratroopers. They were just back from France. All had been wounded and stationed at St. Albans hospital. They were high and giving a waiter by the name of Sally a hard time. They said this is what we almost got killed for. The more they drank, the madder they got when one Captain pulled a gun out from under his jacket and said he was going to shoot Sally and told Sally to get against the wall. People were screaming and running for the door. I asked the Captain to put the gun away and I hit the stairs to the street. When I got outside, the Captain and his two friends were right

beside me and asked me where I was heading when the Captain saw a cat next to a garbage can. He shot the cat about six times and the cat fell over dead. I hit the street running and went into a White Tower hamburgers and fast food and took a seat and thought I was safe from the wild men when they ran in and were so happy to see me. We got some coffee and a sandwich and while they were eating I went outside and hailed a cab and told the driver to take these officers as far away as my money that I gave him would take them. I told the driver to tell them you know where there were some women that liked to have a little fun. I went back and told them the same story. The last time I saw of the three Army officers, they were laughing and hollering good bye to me as the cab took them away. I walked back to 42 Broadway laughing and thought about what they went through in France on D-day. I guess they earned a wild night on the town.

## **May 8, 1945 VE Day.**

On VE day I was returning from Tampa where I had been on leave. We were on the Atlantic Coast Line train called the "Silver Meter" somewhere in North Carolina when the conductor came through the train

announcing that the war in Europe had ended. He said the train was going to side rail in the next town so we could all get out and celebrate. He also said that there was a package store about a block from where

we were going to stop. We could save money by buying our drinks by the bottle. We had a ball. The town people were out dancing and hugging everyone. The

engineer blew the whistle and we all returned to the train and celebrated all the way to New York.

### **New York City, July 28, 1945.**

It was a rainy and foggy Saturday morning. We received a phone call that we were to get in uniform armed and be in front of headquarters where we would be transported to 34<sup>th</sup> St. where a bomber had flown into the Empire State building. We were to secure the area. The plane was a B-25 Billy Mitchell bomber flown by Lt. Col. William F. Smith, a 27 year old West Point graduate. He was a combat veteran of two years overseas with over a thousand hours of flying time. When we arrived we could see fire and smoke and pieces of motor, glass and metal falling into the street. There were units from the Army next to our group and we all locked hands and formed a line around the building keeping people from going too close. A woman came up and grabbed my arm and said to let her through

and I asked "what for lady?" She said there was a hat sale going on in a shop in the building right where the junk was falling. I told her there were people just killed in the building and to get lost. She was not going to cross our line. The firemen told us that they thought about 14 people were killed. We also had a Coast Guard hero that day. A hospital apprentice mate ran into a drug store and grabbed as much medical supplies as he could carry and climbed the 79 floors and gave first aid. He also got a young girl out of the elevator that fell 84 floors into the basement with a car falling on top of the car she was in. He gave her morphine and pulled her out through a small opening saving her life. His name was Donald Maloney. We were relieved by the NYPD and returned to duty.

### **New York, August 15, 1945, VJ Day.**

We were told to get into uniform and muster in the lobby. The Chief said they were waiting for an important message and we were going to have to work the street.

While we were waiting, one or two of us would slip out and go to a bar across the street and get a drink or two. Everyone knew that something big was about to

happen. When the Chief came down to give us our orders, we were about plastered. He took one look at us and said we were a mess and could not go on duty to place our gun belts and arm bands on the desk and hit the street on liberty and have a great time. What a great Chief he was. Most of us took a subway down to Times Square. When we got up to the street we could not believe the people that had gathered. There were thousands and thousands of people. They were breaking the windows out of the liquor stores and just passing the bottles out to the crowd. Women everywhere were kissing and hugging every serviceman in the square. Singing, conga lines, dancing, laughing, crying, men were shaking our hands and patting us on the back and sharing their bottle with us. I woke up in the Brooklyn Navy yard laying on a bench. No hat, no scarf and a big head ache. I told the SP's at the gate that I don't know how I got in there and they laughed and said go get cleaned

### **Aboard WSC-711, 1945**

We had just finished our patrol off the New England coast and were moored at Quonset Point Naval air station. The Captain went home on leave leaving the Chief Bos'n in charge. This particular Bos'n had never been to sea and he knew nothing about a

up. My uniform was covered with lipstick. I took the subway back to Boling Green Station and back to the barracks, took a shower, put on a clean uniform and back to Times Square I went. The party or celebration lasted three days. Our days at 42 Broadway were numbered and we were shipped to a firing range in Sea Gurk NJ for a week. Then to Ellis Island where the Coast Guard was holding Fritz Kuhn the German Bund leader in the United States and German submarine sailors. The barracks were nice, the food good but the duty was bad. The Germans still had no love for us and they would spit down on us from the second floor when we mustered to go on duty. They would also cuss at us in German. The space where we mustered was about 15 feet wide. The bay was on one side and buildings on the other. After we shipped the prisoners back to Germany, we secured Ellis Island and I was transferred to Boston Mass. Assigned to the WSC711.

ship as he had been assigned to an office somewhere ashore and had just transferred to the 711. That afternoon a very strong weather system was blowing across the bay and the dock master came down and told us we had to move the ship or the ship would

be pounded to pieces against the dock. The Bos'n went wacko and said he didn't know how to even start the ship much less back her out. Our 1<sup>st</sup> Class Machinist Mate said he would take over and told me to untie the bow line. When I went out on deck the wind was blowing so hard I could not untie any of the lines. I came back in the bridge and let him know we had a problem getting the lines loose. I was given an axe and told to cut the lines and that I could not get back onboard and would be on my own until they could get back. I was to tell the skipper what had happened when he returned. I cut the bowline and then the stern line and finally the spring line and away she went. I walked down the dock to the dock master's office and asked where I could stay as I had no clothes except what I had on. I only had on a pair of dress blue pants, an undershirt, a brown fur-lined weather jacket and no hat. The dock master was a super nice officer. He took me to a Quonset hut that was not being used and said it was mine to use. Clean bunks, a shower, towels, soap etc. He also said that someone would get me to the mess hall for chow. That evening a Navy sailor picked me up in a jeep and we went to chow. We got in line and when I got to the door there were two Marine SPs that

asked me where I thought I was going? I said I was hungry and was going to eat. The said "not dressed like that you're not." I told them what had happened and I had no other clothes. They said "proper uniform or no food." One of the cooks walked out of the mess hall and said to follow him. We went around to the back of the mess hall to the kitchen entrance and he said to take off my coat and have a seat. He asked me what I wanted to eat? He cooked me a steak and everything to go with it and said I was to just come to the back door as long as I was on base and they would see that I had a good meal. I think the Marines were having SOS while I was eating a T-bone steak. I had it made and a couple of days later I was sitting on the end of the dock fishing when I felt someone touch my head and say "Drew, where is our ship?" I told the CO what had happened and he said was I alright and I told him how nice the dock master was and the cooks at the mess hall. I also told him about the super Quonset hut and he was welcome to bunk there if he would like. He said he would go to the officer's quarters and that he would find out where the 711 was and let me know. The 1<sup>st</sup> class MM brought the ship back in and back on patrol we went.

## **15 February, 1946 Patrol off of Martha's Vinyard Mass.**

We had run into an ice storm coming out of the west with a wind blowing around 60 knots and seas running 40-50 feet. The Captain was on the bridge with a Machinist Mate handling the throttles and I was on the wheel. Heavy ice had formed topside making us top heavy. The bow had ice buildup the size of a car. The radio antennas had 8 inches of ice around them. All hatches to the deck were frozen shut and covered with ice. We were unable to get outside to the deck. The ship was very hard to steer and going into the wind the bow would go under to the bridge and knock us sideways. Then we would roll over so far that the outside screw would come out of the water and shake the ship violently. We were hit by a huge wave and we rolled 47degrees. Water came in the stack and I was standing on the bulkhead looking down through the porthole into green water. The skipper was hanging from his chair as was the Machinist Mate. Books, papers and everything not secured was being tossed around the bridge. The skipper looked at me and said let's go for shore and gave me a new heading for Newport R.I. We arrived in the late afternoon and everything was shut down. The storm had gotten worse and we could not find a dock open to tie up to. We finally found a wood dock with enough frontage to tie up but we could not come

alongside as the wind would blow us back into the harbor. The skipper asked me to go to the bow, hold onto the jack pole and he said he would run the ship into the dock. When she stopped I was to drop down onto the dock and he would back out and come alongside and throw me a heaving line so I could pull the mooring lines out and secure them to a cleat. I was wearing my blue dress pants (wool), a tee shirt and brown fur lined jacket with leather gloves. The ship came alongside the dock and heaving lines were thrown but they were blown back into the water and then they would freeze. You could see the ice formed on the lines as they came through the air. My gloves froze and I could not hold the line. The crew kept throwing the lines and they were blown back into the water. My hands had turned black and I had no use of them any longer. After about forty minutes, I was able to get a heaving line with my arms secured to a mooring line. I ran it down the dock to pull the mooring line out far enough to be able to secure it to a cleat. I was able to wrap the line around my body and as the ship was being blown back into the harbor I had enough slack to run to a cleat. After wrapping the mooring line around the cleat several times, the crew secured the mooring line to the cleat amidships giving the skipper a forward spring line and he was able to

bring the ship up to the dock and secure the stern and bow lines. I was unable to get back onboard. Several of my shipmates picked me up and carried me back aboard the ship. I was lowered down to the galley where the Chief Pharmacist's mate put my hands into a bucket of ice water. Both hands were burning like they were on fire. He asked me what I would like to have and I asked for a shot of whiskey. The Skipper said ok and the Chief held the glass for me to drink. The Chief advised the skipper that I had severe burns on both hands and would have to be taken to a hospital. A radio call was sent out for an ambulance. When it arrived, I was carried to the fence and lifted over to the ambulance crew who transported me to the Naval hospital in Newport Rhode Island. When I arrived, I was taken to the emergency room where a doctor told the nurse to get me ready for

surgery. I asked him what kind of surgery and he said he was going to remove my fingers and part of the hands. I said No Sir!, I won't let you do this and he said I could not tell him what to do as he was a doctor and a Commander. I told him I didn't care if he was an Admiral. . . He was not going to cut my fingers off. They were mine and if the fingers fell off, he could clean up what was left. The nurse put my hands back into the bucket of ice water and I was put in a ward where they gradually warmed the water until my hands thawed. Most of the skin on my hands peeled off and they were covered with medicine and bandaged. I was discharged from the hospital and walked down to the docks where I talked the captain of a fishing boat to take me to Quonset Point Naval Air Station where the 711 was moored. I was given a royal welcome back.