

Mary Lou & Eldon Kiehler

July 6, 2001

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Dear Ruth and Jerry,

Many thanks for your letter, it was great to hear from you. We were so sorry to learn of the misfortune that has befallen Ruth, our thoughts and prayers are for you both.

I appreciated the pictures, of course I recognized Jerry Fien right away, brings back fond memories of time aboard the U.S.S. Frank E. Evans. Those were neat pictures of Ruth and yourself and the others at Old Fort Comfort, sorry we have never had the opportunity to meet her, please say "Hi" for us.

On photo #2, the fellow on the right, with the side arm, is Carl Annexstad, from St. Peter, Minnesota. We saw Carl and met Lois many years ago when we were on a trip to see Mary Lou's mother who lived in Mankato, MN. Also we have seen them at two of the Reunions of the ship since, just fine people.

You certainly have a most impressive bio, and I appreciated the opportunity to review it. It is one in which you may be very proud of your accomplishments and your generous contribution to the communities and the many associations.

It is interesting to note that you have spent so much time with Homeowners Associations. Mary Lou and I have lived most of the time in Condominiums, since our arrival in California. It has assisted since I have spent many years traveling the entire West Coast as Regional Manager for the Package Machinery Company which produced food packaging systems for many industries. This is our third one in Newport Beach, and we live in a ten story high rise, on Newport Bay, with a neat Pool and Jacuzzi, door person, security person, and a staff of eleven people, including a Resident Manager. It is really convenient to many restaurants, a theatre, the Elks Club, the beaches and Markets. We feel we are most fortunate to be able to live here and both of us have served on the Boards of the Association and for many functions. I can appreciate your contribution to the Associations whom you assisted.

Jerry, since I received your letter I have thought about the ship and the Deck Watches that we had together. You gave me the introduction to the ship and I appreciated that. Still remember some of the things that occurred when the ship was sailing out of the port of Tsingtao, China. Guess they had the 7th fleet spread all over by then.

I still remember just how cold it could be when we were standing watch on the flying bridge, WOW, with a heavy parka over a sweater we were freezing, especially on those night watches.

Remember the two runs to Korea, when the Captain had to make the run up the river and watch the tides, etc. Shot up a floating mine on one of those trips. Then the run to Shanghai, for a few days. I recall the poor people who lived on the "Bum Boats" and how they even washed their small children from the river water and snatched everything that floated by.

Still remember the targets which appeared on our Radar Scopes on the Bridge when we were underway and they normally turned out to be small fishing boats in the darkness. Also, the stars were brilliant when out at sea and we could recognize the constellations, etc.

There was a Rickshaw Race one night that started just as we were leaving the Officers Club, and it was to return to the ship. That was an exciting one and when we returned to the Wardroom for much needed coffee, I recalled that it was my 21st birthday and then I could legally have a drink.

Learned how to play Cribbage from Carl Annexstad, Dave Schreiber and Fred Atkin. A neat pass time and they were tough players with a lot of laughs.

The return to the states has a lot of memories for me as it was anything but routine. As I recall, and please help me if I have left anything out, we were to return with our squadron consisting of our 6 destroyers. Remember the deployment of the ships in two columns, 400 yards apart, and 400 yards between ships in each column. That meant that we were taking Stadtimeter (Sp ?), readings every other minute and we would advise the engine room to adjust the turns of the screws. Thought I would go blind during those watches.

Also, remember just how rough it would get at times and we were taking green water over the bridge and you could see part of the keels of the Cans in the adjacent column when the bows pitched out of the water. As I recall the spacing opened up to 600 yards between ships when the weather was that bad.

Then there was an accident during a simulated refueling operation aboard the U.S.S. Cunningham, when a cleat or fitting broke and a steel line snapped and injured an officer aboard that ship. Remember it left the squadron at flank speed for port to seek emergency assistance for the patient.

It did include a couple of days in Honolulu, which was neat for relaxing. Was able to purchase a visor hat as I had given or sold mine to Fred Atkin when he left the ship to return home earlier as his had blown off when he was in the whaleboat. Of course, we tried out all of the drinks in the Officers Club and enjoyed all the fresh vegetables and steaks that we could find.

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Then there was the experience with the LCM which was dead in the water with engine problems. Since apparently we had the most fuel aboard, the squadron commander detached our ship from the group and we were assigned to try and tow the LCM until a sea going tug could arrive. It seems that we parted the tow line a few times and were making a headway of only a few knots/hour and spent a couple of days trying to assist the ship. Finally the tug arrived and then we were off for San Francisco.

It was exciting to arrive under the Golden Gate Bridge with our long colorful red, white and blue homecoming pennant streaming, a most colorful sight against the background of the neat orange/gold bridge. I had nice memories of times there prior to shipping out.

Shortly thereafter, I received orders as my earlier regular navy commission application had been approved, and I was assigned to advance gunnery school in the East. I was ready for my senior year at college and since there was no guaranty I would be able to attend, I declined, so I went out to sea again aboard the U.S.S. Rutland, APA-192, for a magic carpet run to Japan to pick up part of the Second Marine Division and one of their Air Wings. I was a very interesting cruise, the skipper was Captain F. K. O'Brien, a great gentleman, who advised me that he was a skipper of a four stacker destroyer, WW-1 vintage, in Gibraltar. He assigned me to have my own deck watch which was very exciting. I was invited to have dinner with he and the Executive Officer along with the communications officer and we played Bridge several times and listened to many of their stories.

While aboard I was assistant first division officer. We did go to the Island of Kyushu in Japan for the assembly and loading of the Marines. . While in Japan we took a train to see the devastation caused by the second atomic bomb that fell on Nagasaki? The resulting effect was awesome...

It does get a bit crowded below decks for them as the bunks are stacked six high with little space between. Our quarters were excellent, with two portholes.

On the return we spent over a week in Honolulu, as the Captain knew everyone and it was rumor that his classmate was Admiral Bull Halsey... We returned to Norfolk, Virginia via the Panama Canal, and I was officer of the deck, while approaching and going through the first portion of the canal. The pilot had command while entering and in the canal. It was very interesting, however, raining so hard there was little to see. Our family saw it in bright sunshine years later on a liner, and as the youngsters say, "The only way to go..."

Jerry, thank you for reading my long review of our return to the states, etc. Just had to get it down or I may forget it entirely. Please let me know if you have anything to add. Also, please tell your son to please give us a call whenever he will be in our area and we would like to have him visit us.

We wish Ruth and you the Best of Everything and Much Happiness.

Mary Lou & Eldon

*Jerry - We Wish You
Both the Best -
- "Thunder Up!" -*