



With the Colors

Sept. 28,
1945

Seaman Second Class James J. Lobbier, a son of Mr. and Mrs. John Lobbier of near Newton, send this account of the exploits of the USS Idaho, his ship:

By early morning August 27, 1945, our task group, which consisted of the Idaho, Mississippi, New Mexico, West Virginia, Colorado, and three screening destroyers, joined up with a task force, consisting of several cruisers, destroyers, tankers, repair ships, hospital ships, and smaller craft. Ahead of us some few miles were heavy units, primary among these being the Missouri, Iowa, South Dakota, and the British battleship, the Duke of York. On our flank were other units of the British fleet while steaming astern was our last fast carrier group which provided combat air patrol for the entire fleet. This mighty armada, which took six hours to sail past a given point steaming at an average speed of sixteen knots, contained only a part of that colossus, the United States fleet.

We went to general quarters at four in the morning and as the sun neared the horizon almost an hour later, the night mists thinned and dissipated before the coming dawn.

Slowly, as the shadows of night receded, the dim great, outlines of the nearby ships, which a seasoned sailor can almost feel when it's too dark to see, began to substantiate their reality. Shadows became outlines and outlines became recognizable types — There was the Wee-Vee, (West Virginia), an Independence type carrier with her small island and four stacks, a Benson destroyer with her thin raking stacks, APD's, DE's, tenders, all in their assigned stations, and as the sun climbed over the ocean's rim, up in the van, two representatives of the mighty Iowa class became distinguishable, their size alone making them unmistakable. Overhead the dawn patrol of Hellcats, Wildcats, Helldivers and Avengers was maintaining its ceaseless virgil over the armada below.

The sun was now well on its daily track across the heavens. The sky was silvery blue and white clouds like a lace fringe ringed its outer limits where sea and sky joined forces. The day was warm with cooling breezes fanning our forward movement through the water, and the gentle windswept ocean was furrowed as though some gigantic comb has been drawn across its surface leaving a well ploughed sea in its wake.

Many miles ahead, but already discernible in this almost unlimited visibility, the haughty summit of Mount Fujiyama loomed above the lesser peaks much as a defeated warrior might stand among his fallen forces. This sight, this almost legendary symbol of the imperial empire, more than anything else, brought home to all who saw it the unassailable realization and soul-filling satisfaction that we had achieved our ultimate destination. Four years of dreaming, planning, waiting, fighting. Death and Victory. It was all there, mirrored in the faces of the men as they stood quietly but alert at their battle stations. The Navy stood into Tokyo area.

We wish there was space to tell you the complete story of the Idaho's activities during the war years, so that you would know all that led up to this day of victory. However we will mention some of the highlights; for even though many on board have not been attached to the ship for the entire war we all like to associate ourselves with the Idaho and her splendid record.

Do you remember the posters in front of the post office that used to say. 'Join the Navy and see the World?' Though not many of us joined for that reason, we have done just that, Iceland, Panama, Alaska, Hawaii, Australia, Philippines, and Japan; those are the far off places the ship has visited. Of course, we have been many other less pleasant places, too — Attu, Kiska, Gilbert Islands, Marshall Islands, Kavieng on New Ireland, Saipan, Guam, Palau, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. Wherever the Pacific war was active, the Idaho was active too.

When war was declared in 1941 we left the waters around Iceland where we had been on patrol protecting our shipping and steamed at full speed for the States. We wanted to be there if the enemy tried to start something around our shores. Most of 1942 and the early part of 1943 was spent in training exercises, strengthening our anti-aircraft protection, and as a final line of defense in event the Japanese did break through. By March we were ready and anxious for action—but where? The morning of April 6 answered that question. We took on supplies and as box after box came aboard we read 'fleece line jackets', 'wool mittens,' 'heavy under-wear.' The Aleutians! That night the captain announced to all hands that we were underway to take back the North American land the Japanese had stolen from us. You already know about the Attu and Kiska operations. It is interesting to recall that the Idaho was one of the first U. S. battleships to operate in the Bering sea. It was here that the Japs 'sank' us for the first time.

Howard Handleman of I. N. S. was on board as a correspondent during

the operations and wrote a chapter about the Idaho and its effectiveness in his book, 'Bridge to Victory.'

This operation established the undeniable value of heavy caliber battleship guns in an amphibious operation. We readied ourselves for what was to come next. The Gilberts in November 1943 and the Marshalls in January and February 1944. On our way to Makin in the Gilberts we crossed the equator but had to forego the festivities. There was work to do.

After the Marshalls we headed for the South Pacific and put in at Efate in the New Hebrides where we had time for swimming, base ball, cokes, and beer. We mingled with honest-to-goodness natives and from them bought coconuts, bananas, shells, and grass skirts. In March we went north to New Ireland to bombard Kavieng while the Marines landed on Emirau Island. This operation successfully completed the U. S. encirclement and isolation of the Japanese in the Bismark Archipelago.

April brought verification of the scuttlebutt rampant on the ship. We were to go to Australia for a week. There is nothing quite like Sidney; the Australians were wonderful to us. We wondered if the Aussies whom we had seen in the States were being treated as well.

Saipan, Guam, Palau followed in rapid succession. Each was a strenuous operation. The Idaho needed an overhaul and we were all anxious for leave. October 22 found us in Bremerton Navy Yard after an 18 day crossing from Manus Isle. It was swell to be in the States over Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Our holiday over, we left the west coast, steaming at full speed for Iwo Jima. Again our heavy bombardment paved the way for a Marine landing. We stood by delivering call fire until the island was secured and had the satisfaction of seeing the now famous flag raising on Mt. Suribachi. Without rest we re-armed, took on supplies and fuel and turned toward Okinawa in order to support the Easter morning landing. Working with the Shore Fire Control parties day and night we bombarded Japanese strong points while protecting ourselves from their determined air attacks. During a four week period 87 general alarms sent all hands to their battle stations. At the height of one attack a bomb laden Kamikaze splashed close aboard our port side. This was the fifth and last plane to be shot down by our AA gunners during a wild four minutes. At the end of the Okinawa campaign we set sail for the Philippines.

We were in San Pedro harbor at Leyte, watching a movie on the quarter deck and enjoying the pleasant tropical evening which is so different from the sultry oppressive days in that latitude when news came of the Japanese surrender. Search-lights which usually played in the sky in an orderly fashion began sweeping every which way, hundreds of them. We wondered what was going on when almost simultaneous from countless throats the cry arose. 'The War Is Over.' We jumped up; it was hard to believe. Shouting started and increased in tempo. The speakers blared. 'Now the E division man the searchlights', 'Now the band lay up to the starboard side of the quarterdeck with instruments, on the double!'

There we were! Whistles blowing, siren shrieking, searchlights, stabbing the darkness while multicolored flares skyrocketed from the bridge. The band was playing, 'Happy Days are Here Again,' 'California, Here I Come,' and 'The Sidewalks of New York.' Such was our celebration. We had come through eight operations and thirteen bombardments. Since the first days of Attu we had fired almost 13 million pounds of projectiles at the Japs, believed to be an all time high in the history of Naval Warfare.

This is the story and record of the Idaho. We were especially conscious and proud of its worth as we entered Sagami Wan, the approach to Tokyo bay.

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Captain Kent L. Wattleworth, who has been stationed on Guam during recent months, while evacuating wounded from battle areas, has just returned from a flight to Japan, where he has been evacuating American prisoners of war. He said some of the prisoners were beaten up pretty badly, while others were in fair shape.

While there, the officers made a tour of Tokyo, under the guidance of a Japanese business man who is a graduate of Columbia university. He reported that about eighty per cent of the city had been bombed and burned out, but some buildings, such as the emperor's palace, some department stores, and temples were still intact. The Japanese treated the party courteously. However, the medical officers went armed.

Dr. Kent has acquired battle stars for evacuating wounded during combat on Okinawa, and areas in the Philippine islands. He will return to Japan for a few weeks, and thinks he may be in the states before the New Years.

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Miss Lucille Andrews and Mrs. Bertha Raef of 545 South Schuyler avenue, Kankakee, spent the week end in Junction City, Kansas visiting the latter's son, Private Severn "Bud," Raef, who is stationed at Fort Riley.

Private Raef and his buddies, Private Raymond Benault, Private Ambrose Hackley and Private John Wellwood, returned home with them on a ten day furlough.

Private Raef, a former resident of Sainte Marie, is a grand-son of Zina Curtright. Another grand-son, Sergeant Maurice Raef, stationed in

Naples, Italy, expects to return to the States soon.

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Staff Sergeant and Mrs. Ralph W. Elston and son Ralph Jr. have gone to Indianapolis for a short visit before the former enters college. He was recently discharged after fifty months in the Army as an airplane engine mechanic.

He served with the Army Air Force in Northern France and the Rhineland and has the Good Conduct medal, American Deense and European, African, Middle Eastern ribbons with two bronze battle stars, one service stripe and four overseas service bars. He went overseas in August, 1943, returning two years later.

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Staff Sergeant George A. Clark left Sunday for Atlanta, Georgia, after a twenty-three day furlough with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Luther Clark of near Yale, and friends at Evansville, Champaign, Chicago and Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He is in the paymaster's office at the Southeastern headquarters.

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Corporal Paul Yaw has been discharged. He has the Asiatic-Pacific theatre ribbon with three bronze battle stars for the Bismarck archipelago, Luzon and Southern Philippines campaigns. He was overseas three years. Before entering the service he was a farmer, working for Howard Clark near Gila.

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Private First Class Gordon W. Stanley has received a discharge from the Army at Letterman General hospital, San Francisco, California, and is now at home. His arm was injured in an accident on Attu island in the Aleutians in 1944, but he has largely recovered.

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Private First Class Delmar L. Salyers has received a discharge from Percy Jones general hospital at Battle Creek, Michigan. He has the EAME ribbon with two bronze battle stars, the Purple Heart medal and the Combat Infantryman's badge.

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Technical Sergeant Virgil Bliss received a discharge from the Army at Hot Springs, Arkansas, Friday, and he and Mrs. Bliss are at Newton for a week or two. He was two years in the Aleutians before being returned to the United States.

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Staff Sergeant Gerald A. Fear, a machine gunner, has been discharged after overseas service. He has the Air medal with one bronze Oak Leaf cluster, the Good Conduct medal, and the EAME theatre ribbon with one silver battle star, and the American Defense ribbon.

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Gunner's Mate Second Class Orla Brooks Houser is home with a discharge after three years' service, most of it in the Australia-New Guinea area on destroyers and motor torpedo boats. Recently he has been at the Torpedo Boat base at Norfolk, Virginia.

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Corporal Kenneth W. Mielke has received a discharge after service in England, France and Germany as a mechanic. He has the EAME theatre ribbon with one silver and two bronze battle stars, and three overseas stripes.

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Corporal Louis C. Meislahn, a half-track driver, has been discharged. He saw service in North Africa, Sicily, and France and has the EAME theatre ribbon with four bronze battle stars, the Good Conduct medal and three overseas stripes.

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Corporal Leroy E. Dickey has been discharged after eighteen months overseas. He has a Meritorious Unit citation, the EAME theatre ribbon with three bronze battle stars and one bronze arrowhead. He was a truck driver.

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Staff Sergeant Roy N. Woods of Newton is enroute to the states under the Army redeployment plan. He served as a powerman with Fifth Air Force Fighter Command headquarters in New Guinea and Okinawa.

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Staff Sergeant Lowell "Dad" Wade of Greenup has been discharged after four years in the Army. He was six months overseas with the Fifth division of the Third army.

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Private First Class Loren Waymoth of Fort Benning, Georgia, is spending a fifteen day furlough with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Emery Waymoth of Wheeler.

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Private Leonard Beavers is spending a fifteen day furlough from Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Grover Beavers of near West Liberty.

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Private First Class Herndon Dhom, who has been overseas, is expected back in the United States in a few days.

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John Batman of Centralia, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Delbert E. Batman of Newton, was discharged last week at Tyler, Texas, and is now at home.

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Corporal Noah Woods has received a discharge after four years service in the Army and is now at home.