

Mr. Charles L. McCarty
2638 Cedar View Court
Clearwater, Florida 33761-3709

727/804-4227

dd537@mindspring.com

May 4, 2004

Dr. & Mrs. Jack Haberstroh
15625 Avenida Alcachofa, # H
San Diego, CA 92128

Dear Dr. Haberstroh,

One of my shipmates from WWII recently informed me about the books that you have written and wanted me to send you a few of my experiences while on board USS The Sullivans (DD537) to possibly be included in SWABBY III.

I am not an English major, so feel free to make any changes that you see fit to be included in your book.

USS The Sullivans (DD537) was already out in the Pacific when I was fortunate to be assigned to her.

I entered the navy when I was "sweet seventeen", went through boot camp and on to torpedoman's school. After torpedoman's school I was sent by troop ship to an island in the Pacific that was called Manus. A few Japanese soldiers were still scattered around the island. I was stationed there four or five days awaiting assignment to the fleet when I went to a movie that was being shown by the CB's that were stationed there. The movie was called "The Fighting Sullivans". I told a couple of my friends that that is the ship I would like to be on. The next day, I was shipped to USS HECTOR (AR7), an ammunition repair ship. As luck would have it, I was transferred to The Sullivans without ever having slept on AR7. What are the chances of something like that ever happening?

When I first went on board, I was assigned to "mess cook detail". Don't laugh, that really isn't that bad of duty. Once you were done with the meal you had a lot of free time for yourself until it was time for the next meal. Also you had a lot to eat.

After mess cooking, I finally got assigned to the torpedo gang. Had a general quarter station on the fantail twenty millimeters. The worst thing about that was the #5 five-inch gun seemed to be firing over your head an awful lot. The gun crew was supposed to ring a bell so you could take cover. Half the time they were so busy shooting at "kamikazes" they forgot. We got all the concussion. I guess we all survived. I would imagine that most of us have some hearing loss today.

The medical department on The Sullivans was a busy organization. Three men made up the group, medical officer Dr. Morton E. Bassan and Corpsmen Horace May who has a school named after him in his hometown, and William "Doc" McCrae, who came to us from the Marine Corp as an aide man in earlier island campaigns. Although we never suffered the horrendous casualties that some ships had, we had the luck of the Irish on our side. The medical department was always busy taking care of the health and welfare of our three hundred and some personnel. In June of '44 we picked up 31 Japanese and Korean seamen from a costal maru our fly boys had sunk. Our medical team patched up a lot of them. I remember the doctor telling us one of them wanted the 50-cal. slug taken out of him for a souvenir. In October '44 we rescued 118 men from the Houston. Three we picked up were dead. We buried them. Our team again worked on the many wounded. We buried another fellow who succumbed to wounds. March of '45, Halsey Powell was struck in the fantail by a kamikazi. We put the whale boat in the water and Dr. Bassan and "Doc" McCrae went over to help with the casualties. They only got about 50 feet away from our ship and turned back and hooked up to the falls again. In their haste to aid the Halsey Powell they forgot to put the drain plugs in the boat. Had to hoist the boat clear of the water to drain it, and then put it back down. We were still under air attack and shot down one plane while the whale boat was enroute to the Halsey Powell. After giving a helping hand to the Halsey Powell we were ordered to escort the much crippled ship back to Ulithi. She could only make five knots and the Japanese planes were still trying to finish her off. We held off the planes for two more days and the Combat Air Patrol (CAP) under our fighter direction, splashed two Bettys. May '45 off Okinawa, the Bunker Hill took a kamikazi. The fires on and under the flight deck were unreal. We closed in on the carrier to help, and picked up 166 men. Again our team was busy with wounds and burns. We, the crew of The Sullivans, knew that if our ship was ever hit our medical team would take care of us. Over the next fifty years two men have approached me while I was wearing my Sullivans bnall cap and thanked me for saving their lives. One from the Houston and one from the Bunker Hill. I told them each that it was the ship and her crew who saved them and not me alone, but I'm sure they knew that. It sure made me proud of my ship and shipmates.

All the action wasn't caused by the enemy. In July '44, while striking Guam, we were called to action stations. Found a leak in the out board after bulkhead. It took some time fixing that and cleaning up. It may have been caused by the reverberation from underwater explosions from fantail depth charges. In September '44 off Palau we were covering the invasion action again. Fire in the galley. The bakers were mixing dough for bread when the flour dust in the air reached explosive proportions. It blew the circuit breaker off the bulkhead and started some small fires. No casualties. In mid September we returned from air strikes on Manila and Central Philippines to Garapan Harbor, Saipan. We went alongside the battleship Massachusetts to take on ammo and provisions. The harbor waves took us into the side of the Massachusetts and damaged our hull and superstructure. Looked like a stateside repair job, but the powers that be sent us to Ulithi and the tender Dixie for repairs. A storm hit the atoll while we were in a nest of cans along side the Dixie. We broke away from the tender and the cans. We struggled to get up steam and collided with the Uhlmann. That gave us enough time to buildup

steam and head for the open ocean. On they way out we rescued four men from the Stockham's gig before it sank. Destroyers are always busy.

December 1944 off southern Luzon we weathered a full typhoon. Monsterous waves, high enough to hide the carriers in the troughs. 115 mile winds. Three ships rolled over and sank. I'll never forget their names; Hull, Spence and Monaghan. One light carrier had its flight deck peeled back and one can lost its #1 five inch mount. Spent a whole day looking for survivors. Not many picked up. Must have lost seven or eight hundred men that day. I always worried about storms after that. We had been refueling when the storm hit us and managed to take about 75% of fuel before breaking away. That, and the great job the Captain and the bridge team did conning the ship kept us from becoming a casualty.

October 13, 1944, while conducting air strikes on Formosa the cruiser Canberra was torpedoed. We were ordered to escort the Houston to Task Group 38.3 to replace the Canberra and then join a group of DDs and the CVL Cabot to escort the Canberra to Ulithi. The Canberra was being towed by a tug doing four knots. The Japanese continued to attack the main task group. The Houston was torpedoed and the cruiser Boston took her under tow and joined our "Convoy of Cripples". We were within easy striking distance of the land based planes on Formosa and they sure took advantage of that. We were under constant air attack. The Houston was torpedoed again. That's when we picked up all those men. The Captain told us that TG 38.2 and TG 38.3 were just over the horizon watching us. He told us we were being used as bait to draw out the Jap fleet. We had three more days of anxiety fighting off Jap planes and watching for the Jap fleet. We got the "Cripples" out of harms way. Our Captain Cmdr. Ralph J. Baum was awarded his first Silver Star for the action and help given to the Houston by his ship and crew.

In April 1945 while screening the carriers during the invasion of Okinawa we were tasked to take some correspondents into Okinawa harbor. We took them aboard by high line from one of the capital ships. We were pretty good at that because of a lot of practice of returning pilots we rescued to carriers or battleships. We didn't dunk them in the water at all. Transferred them ashore and spent the night in the harbor under a smoke screen because of air attacks. Not a pleasant night. Japanese planes dropped bombs any place in the smoke. We couldn't shoot back, couldn't see the planes. Some of the auxiliary ships were hit. We were all glad to get out of there the next morning.

April, May and June of '45 were deadly for ships and sailors. The kamaikaze suicide planes scored more and more hits the closer we got to Japan. Those of us on the "Sully" were sure there was a higher power looking over us. Even when assigned to picket ship duty we would return to the main group unscathed and the ships that relieved us were clobbered. Many near misses and close encounters but we were spared. June 20th we were ordered back to the States via Eniwetok and Pearl for refit and upgrading for air defenses for the invasion of Japan. The war ended before our refit was complete. I'm forever grateful to Harry Truman for using the atom bombs. I was in San Francisco on

August 15, the day the war with Japan was declared over. What a glorious time that was had by thousands of people that were downtown to celebrate. I had just returned from a thirty day leave. The ship did not go back overseas and it was put in "mothballs" in San Diego. The Sullivan was a famous ship and she was taken out of "mothballs" for the Korean conflict.

I stayed in service four more years after WWII was over. I was stationed at Port Columbus Naval Air Station, Columbus, Ohio. as a full time reservist. My duties were at the recreation hall. Most of the time I traveled all over the US playing baseball, basketball and softball representing Port Columbus Naval Air Station. In 1949 we were runners up in the world softball championship. I was picked as the first baseman on the All Stars.

I then got married and started my own insurance agency representing Motorists Mutual Insurance Companies. Retired when I was fifty three years old and moved to Clearwater Beach, Florida.


In 1959 I started the USS The Sullivan (DD537) Association. I started out with eight names that I had in a book when I left the "Sully". Today we have over 750 names on our roster. After I started sending out letters, I ran across a Chief Yeoman and his close friend a Chief Fire controller and they asked if I needed some help. My answer was a very strong "YES". About 20/25 years ago the Association members voted us in as FOUNDERS. I was proud to be recognized as such.

One of the main things about "our" ship is that it is the only ship named after multiple people. The five Sullivan brothers of Waterloo, Iowa. They all lost their lives on the cruiser Juneau off the coast of Guadalcanal.

Our ship's motto is: WE STICK TOGETHER This is the same motto that the five brothers had when they grew up. Our crews still stick together after 61 years have gone by.

There was a new USS The Sullivan (DDG68) commissioned in 1995. She is now assigned to the home port at Mayport, Florida. Their motto is also WE STICK TOGETHER. Hence the name change of our Association. USS The Sullivan DD537/DDG68 Association.

Respectfully submitted,


Charles L. McCarty

cc/Gerard Lehner

*Berry -
See if this is what you
wanted. Let me know
before I send it on.
Mac*