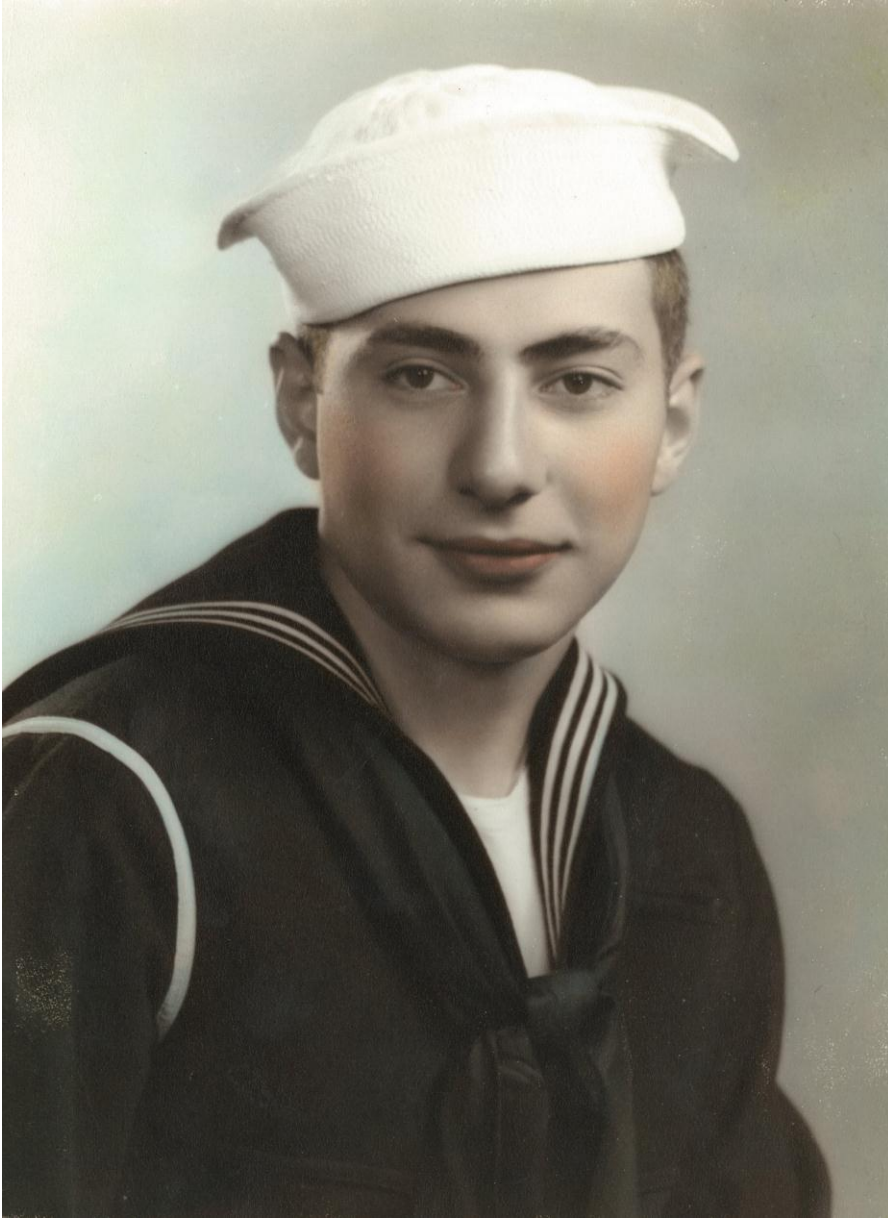


Nazar Hajinian: the War Years
1943-1945





USS Sullivan's Destroyer- Nazar's home for two years.

THE ship's hull reverberates with the sound of large explosions. A seventeen-year-old leaves his radar post and rushes to the open deck of the destroyer. Before him lies a scene never witnessed by human eyes, and hopefully, will never be witnessed again. Over four hundred United States Navy ships begin the bombardment of the Japanese Island of Iwo Jima. The deafening sound of the big gun battleships cause this young sailor to cover his ears as his wide open eyes take it all in. The Navy Destroyer he is on fires their five-inch guns which rattle through the ship's hull. Planes from the armada of aircraft carriers fly at eye level as they rush to drop their bombs on the Japanese stronghold. You could almost reach out and touch their wings.

Billowing black smoke from the guns becomes mingled with the grey smoke-stacked exhaust as the blue sky air is filled with the pungent smell of sulfur. One canon blast is

followed by another. The island is being pummeled to soften and destroy any resistance that the Japanese would have against the soon landing marines.



The bombing of Iwo Jima, prior to the invasion. Over 5 thousand US marines and servicemen would die fighting to take the island over thirty days. The vast majority were sacrificed on the beaches within the first few hours.

Besides me, in the darkened surroundings, sits a bald, grey-haired man with slumped shoulders, large eyeglasses and a tear in the corner of his eye. Early transient dementia has begun to steal his present, it already has his future. For this shining moment, the disease is crushed. Like a hidden keepsake, the past now belonged to him. We were not on a ship. There we sat in the cold movie theater surrounded by what the late, famous Marquette University Basketball coach, Al Maquire, would call, “the Q-tips”-- the white haired senior citizens. About 20 of them. We were watching the movie, “The Flag of our Fathers”. This moving Clint Eastwood movie revisited the attacking, death

and destruction of one of the bloodiest battles in the Pacific during World War II. Immortalized by the raising of the American flag on Iwo Jima by five uncommon Marines. Some of the “Q-Tips” have oxygen tanks, some were with their wives, some, sadly, were alone.

The bombing becomes even more intense. How could that even be possible? The screen is now full of rapid explosions of huge canons firing missiles. Smoke trails crisscrossed the sky. I blinked to clear imaginary smoke from my eyes. It is a visual, one hundred fourth of July celebrations. This is no celebration. This is death from the gates of hell. There is no escape as even your closed eyes could not shut out the surround sounds’ violent explosions. For that moment, we were all there.



The grey haired man sitting next to me began to bring out a Kleenex. His tears became too much for his stubby, wrinkly fingers. His eyes were wide, he is there. Only this time, with the option to leave the battle.

The man next to me was only seventeen years old when he signed up. Just like the sailor in the full screen movie before him, he stood on the deck of the USS Sullivan Navy Destroyer, as he watched bomb filled skies before him, some 60 years ago. At that time he stood erect and had a thick mop of black hair. As a teenager, still in high school, he joined the Navy, looking for adventure and hoping not to be drafted into the Marines.

“Nazar Hajinian,” his name was called by the South Milwaukee principal.

On that day, repeated across the high schools across the small towns of America, the boys were gone. Enlisted in the armed services at the beckon call of his country, he never expected to find himself in one of the most crucial battles of the Pacific in World War II. Now the full effect of what he had experienced then as a teenager, came to light as seen through his now eighty one year old eyes. As I watched the movie, I kept one eye on him as if to protect his reaction. Tears welled up inside of me. I felt proud. You see, he is my dad.

Slowly we walked out of the theatre. Not one of the twenty people said anything. They looked emotionally drained. Most had red, moistened eyes. Once outside, in the February cold, a tall man approached me. Humbly he asked if this man shuffling to the car was at the battle. I looked up into his weather worn face and said, “yes, he was.”

He asked if he could shake his hand. And after three calls to my goal oriented, walking to the car, dad, he turned around to see this big marine. This man shook dad’s hand and thanked him for his effort. A fellow Milwaukeean, this

guy had his own story. After I shook his hand and thanked him for his service, I awkwardly noticed that three of his fingers were short or missing. At 15 he convinced the recruiting officers that he was 18. By the age of 16 he was fighting on the beaches all over the Pacific. He was on the actual beaches of Iwo Jima.



With tears in his eyes, he told me about his good friend who was supposed to take the famous picture of the flag raising on Mount Suribachi.

Dad, straining his neck, looked up and slowly raised his hand. Their clasping hands told a story of solidarity. Sixty years later in a parking lot. Later dad would tell me that the Marines went through hell. They took the casualties. They lost their eyes, legs, and in some cases, their equilibrium on life.

As a young kid, I would ask my dad about his war times while I swayed back and forth in his navy hammock which was tied to the old apple tree in our back yard. He never said much about the war years except that it was long ago.

Jumping out of the hammock, I picked up my bat and ball and found a game of baseball in the alley.

Forty-eight years later, now, he opened up as we drove in the car. On the ship, his fleet found themselves in the worst typhoon ever to hit the US Navy. Winds were recorded at 185 miles an hour and waves were 90 feet. It was called Typhoon Cobra and it hit the massive Navy armada unexpectedly in December of 1944. His ship was traveling with five other destroyers. Two including his, were full of oil when the storms full force hit. The oil weighed them down and they endured the storm. The other three were not as lucky. The massive waves split the two destroyers in half and one would completely turtle. These are ships that are longer then a football field and displace 2100 tons! Survivors were scooped up in daring rescue attempts. Imagine 90 foot waves and bobbing sailors being tossed about. Anyone on deck of a ship could easily been blown overboard.

The USS Spence absorbs so much punishment, two 90 foot waves lift it up and without a middle wave, it breaks in half. The fabled destroyer USS Monaghan implodes on itself, taking 90% of its crew to the ocean bottom. The USS Hull turns turtle and the sailors inside scratch their way down and then to the surface of the before it sinks to the bottom. And aboard the aircraft carrier USS Monterey, a young and future president, Gerald Ford dons a gas mask and leads a rescue team into an exploding hanger deck in the storm. A massive fire threatens to blow the ship up. The enormous ship is badly listing to one side. Gerald Ford and twenty sailors put out the fire saving the ship from destruction.

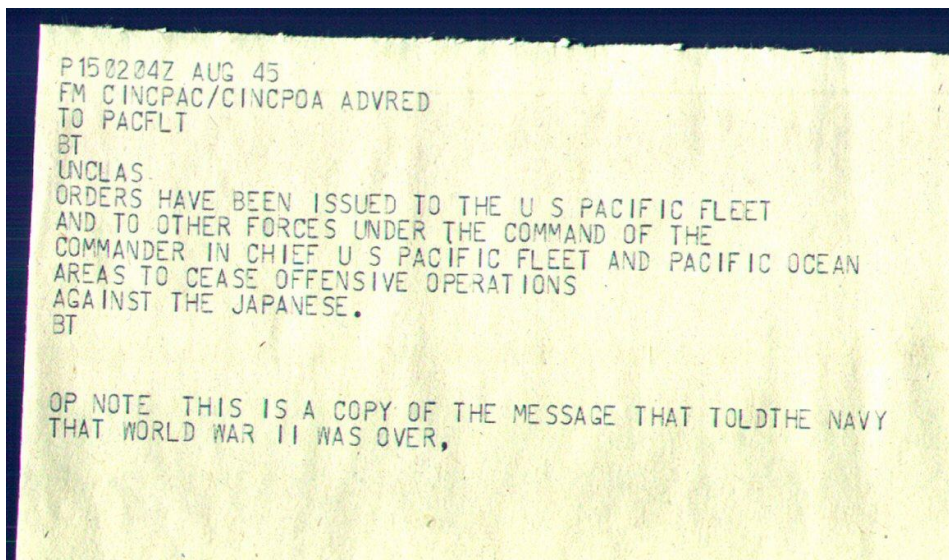
In this storm over one hundred and forty five planes were lost. Despite heroic attempts, there was a loss of over 800 sailors

Dad continued to open up on stories. He said he didn't like the food and only ate candy bars. "For two years?" I asked. He nodded, "yup". He also said that one day he climbed up into the "crows nest" at the top of the radar system/flag pole area and fell asleep. They did a head count and one sailor was missing. Figuring he fell overboard, they sounded some emergency horn that woke him up. He came down and was later demoted from first class to second class radar-man. Later he was reprimanded for peeing overboard while on deck. He was 18 at the time.

Nazar was a radar man, hunting for subs, Japanese planes, torpedoes and other ships. He sat before a small round television-like screen and watched for blips. Day in and day out. He was the first line of defense in sighting the enemy. The USS Sullivan was used for "Picket duty". That meant the ship was 5-10 miles ahead of the main fleet to see if there was trouble ahead. I would call them the guinea pigs. They were meant to be sacrificed to save a battle ship or an aircraft carrier. In many cases, dad would tell me that the Japanese Komikazi planes would fly over the deck of his ship and go after an aircraft carrier. He could see the faces on the Japanese pilots. He told the story of picking up Japanese sailors from a sub that was hit. He was given a gun and told to guard these prisoners who were roughly treated and thrown into the front hull of the ship with the ropes and anchors. One of them had an American Readers Digest on him. Dad said his gun wasn't loaded, but they yelled and acted tough to these skinny and scared teenage

Japanese. Mom said that dad secretly had compassion on them, they were just kids. Like him.

Dad would write letters to his sisters and some of the people of South Milwaukee. The ones sent to his family always had four letters written on the back, “SWAK” sealed with a kiss. I remember reading one of those letters whose wearabouts are unknown. Dad’s sole desire at the time in his words was “to kill Japanese.” And rightly so, we were at war. A brutal, brutal war. After the war, I never heard my dad utter anything derogatory about Japan or the Japanese people. He buried those stories, until now, in the car after the movie.



The movie brought back a memory which he would tell me about, “Chuck, I remember when Spike (his sister Catherine) picked me up at the train station and brought me home....(he would always choke up at this point, on the word “home”) “ I will never forget how ma came down from the porch, crying and hugged me.” More sobbing. After what seemed like an eternity due to his visible sadness, he would explain how hard it must have been for his parents to have a son gone off to war, not knowing what

he would see or whether he would return home alive or maimed. Jack Vahradian writes about that hot, sunny day in the fall of 1945. Apparently the whole neighborhood was gathered at 1311 Michigan Avenue to see another South Milwaukee war hero return. All the moms who were gathered on the porch while the teens, kids and adults mingled on the postage stamp size front lawn.

Catherine finally pulled up in the late afternoon and out stepped an emotion filled Nazar. After two long years in the bowel of a hot ship, on ragging, violent enemy seas, with the smell of gunpowder and oil, after sleepless nights filled with worry and loneliness, Nazar was home.



(Nazar with brother Garbo and the Keisheshian twins)
Tears filled the crowds eyes as mother Tamam with her big Armenian arms, and her dark purple dress with delicate white flowers sewn on, hugged her Navy uniformed son. This was more then a reunion, it was a gift from above. Taman herself had seen death and destruction in the Ottoman Empire creation of the Armenian Genocide of

1915. Thirty years earlier this atrocity robbed her of her mother, father, sisters and brothers. She finally knew she wasn't going to lose her son, named after her brother Nazar.

A feast was prepared for all who gathered. Nazar went inside and finally shed the mantle of his service. He took off his uniform for good. He was now a civilian.

Later that afternoon, around 5 pm, oldest sister Mary came in and cried as she hugged her "little brother". His father worked the second shift and arrived at 11:00 pm. Work took priority, even for a son coming home from war.

His father Haji-Sakis, hugged his son and cried in Armenian, "Amon, alchee be airtonk?" (Is he going back again into the service?)

Mother Tamam is crying and says, "Alchee be airtonk!" (He is not going back anymore.)





The Destroyer the USS Sullivan, was commissioned and set to sail in September of 1943. It was named after the five Sullivan brothers who lost their lives when the ship, the Juneau was sunk by the Japanese in 1942. After that heart wrenching loss, the Navy would not allow more then two brothers to be on the same ship.

The St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco was the setting for the mother and father of the five Sullivan brothers to address the captains and crew of the soon to depart USS Sullivan. Dad tells how he felt so sorry for the mother, to lose five boys. He also said that some good looking girl (he liked to use adjectives) came around to take pictures of the sailors and for \$5, would send those pictures to their

families. Five dollars was like a day or two wages. Dad paid and the picture never arrived home. Sixty two years later I went to the St. Francis hotel and told the manager that story. The manager smiled and showed me a kiosk with pictures from that famous dinner. I came back and gave my dad five dollars, telling him that the manager gave this to me to give to you. Dad took the five dollars and replied, “no interest?”

Dad was awarded medals but I never saw them. He would very rarely open up about what he saw. Most of the stories were comical, almost to protect us from the horrors he witnessed.

Another story which dad told multiple times involved a docking of the ship in Hawaii. Many of the sailors on shore got in line to go into some store front. Dad turned to the sailor in back of him and said, “boy, is this ice cream going to taste good!” The guy replied, “this isn’t an ice cream parlor, it’s a brothel!” Dad would laugh and laugh at his own naiveté.

My best story involves my dad’s very painful ailment, which I inherited and which has been passed down to my daughter Sarah: Kidney stones. Dad had a bad attack of kidney stones while on ship. While the ship was docked on the west coast, he was sent to the Great Lakes Navy Hospital near the Wisconsin border. While recuperating on a spring, May 8th, 1945 day, the war ended in Europe and a five-year in the planning relief party was about to explode in downtown Milwaukee. Nazar knew this and so did some other sailor in the bed next to him. “Let’s hitch hike to Milwaukee now,” my dad asked the sailor next to him. Within two hours they found themselves on 7th and

Wisconsin Avenue surrounded by mobs of happy, crying, hugging, people. It is hard for us to understand the pent up emotion at that time. A Green Bay Super bowl win, A Brewers World Series win, A Triple Crown Derby Win, The Stanley cup, you name it, if all that emotion could be combined. You get the picture.



Every family sacrificed for the war effort: they endured rationing of basic commodities from lipstick, pots and pans to gasoline and nylons, they grew food, women went to work in factories, they spent their hard earned depression dollars on war bonds, and many sent their sons and daughters to fight, with over 400,000 never to return home. The leader of the free world, the politician who championed the poor during the Great Depression, President Roosevelt had died. The ghastly horrors of the concentration camps were making the news. The United States itself was on the verge of bankruptcy, she had over 5

million boys fighting wars on two fronts and the news was not always good. Now, one war was over and this was the party. Nazar and his buddy were right in the midst of it!



Nazar's Great Lakes buddy?, Wisconsin Avenue ?

Dad told me he was kissed so many times that when he stopped at his mom and dad's house on the way back to Great Lakes, late that night and woke his mother, who never wore a dress that showed a knee, saw all the lipstick on his hat and collar and began to yell at him in Armenian, "amoteh!" "Shame on you! Hanging around with such women." She may have pulled out the Oklavu- a thin cue stick used to roll dough or spanking out of control teenagers. Most of the time it was slammed on the table to punctuate a mom's anger. Dad tried to explain that men,

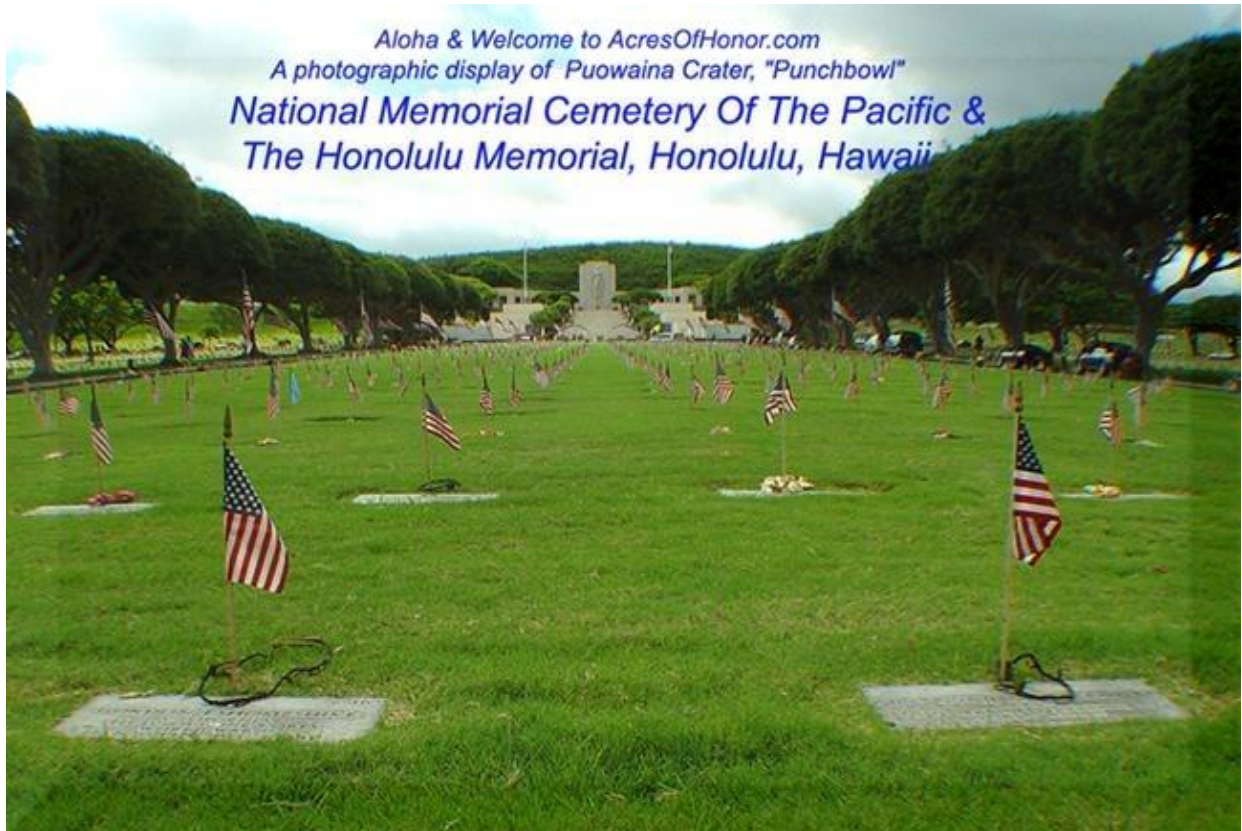
women, kids--everyone was hugging and shaking his hand and there was a reason: The war in Europe was over and He was only one of a handful of men in uniform!

Later that week he would go back to his ship which was docked in San Diego for repairs. The USS Sullivans was getting ready for the invasion of Japan. Estimates were that there would be over one million US casualties. Two atom bombs would end this war by August.

A year before he passed away dad called me and said he had in his hand leaflets which the Japanese had dropped on his ship during the battle of Iwo Jima. The leaflets basically told the Americans that they should give up. How he figured that out, I don't know, since he told me the leaflets were in Japanese. "What do you think they are worth?" he would ask. "Iwo Jima was a turning point in the war and was famous, probably five thousand dollars apiece on ebay," I would lie. "Sell them!" he would command "come over now and get them now." He set them aside for me at the house, we never found them.



We had a special time in 1987 visiting Pearl Harbor. His first trip back since 1945. We went to the Punch Bowl cemetery where the Pacific war dead are buried. Set on a high hill, a former volcano bowl, it is surrounded by fragrant ever-blossoming trees. It is one of the most serene and beautiful places on the planet. Dad explored huge wall mosaics of all the Pacific battles. “ Lu, I was in that one, we fought in that one.” Mom, always supportive, always by his side, looked on in amazement.



Gazing over the hundreds of markers, I realized that these were mere boys. Most were eighteen to twenty who answered their countries call, like my dad did sixty some years ago. I walked away from dad and let him look at the mosaics with mom. At the end of the display was a vista of the white grave markers. I could not imagine the violent deaths these young men endured. What about their moms and dads, sisters and brothers left home? Together they fought, together they rest in peace.

Unable to contain the emotions of the sacrifices of those grave markers before me, the sweet fragrance of the tree blossoms filling my nostrils, thoughts of gratefulness to God for sparing my father's life, I was at once proud and humbled. I cried.

With the coming of the internet, I looked up the USS Sullivans web site. They had reunions. I asked dad if he wanted to go to them. I would have driven him there. I even told him about one in Colorado. “We could get Uncle Garbo to come up too”. He politely declined. I wish he could have gone to the World War II monument in Washington D.C., but he was too frail by the time we got wind of it.

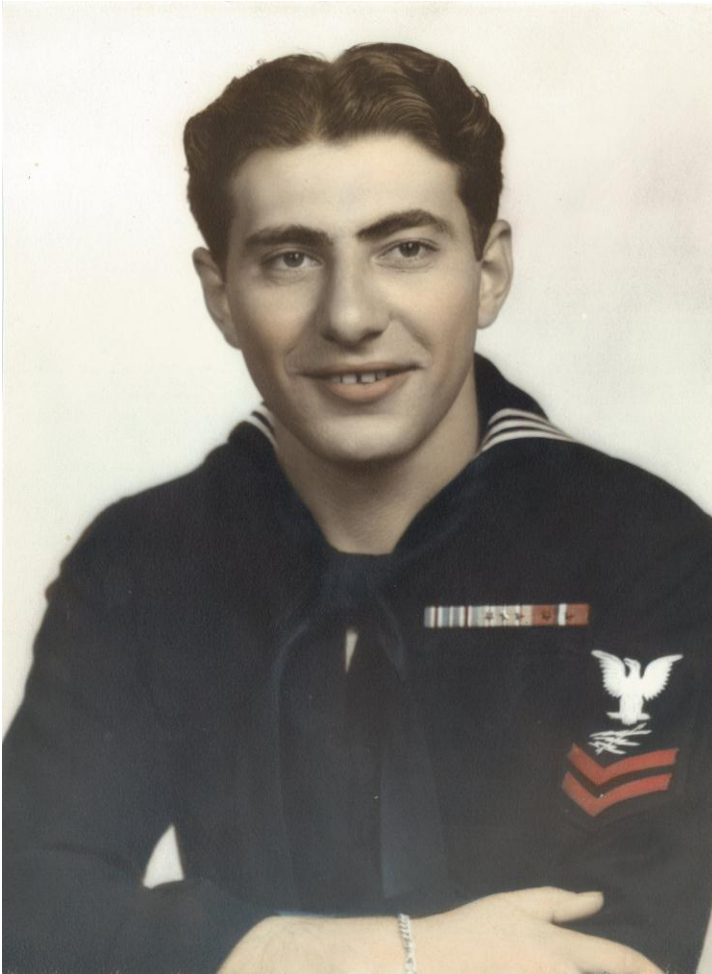
As his dementia began to occupy more and more of his awareness, I was able to take him to a veteran’s parade in Milwaukee. Some of the highlights on that cold day: he was written up in the Milwaukee Journal the next day, November 8 2008. He saw a ship being commissioned at the Milwaukee lakefront. Everyone shook the 83 year old’s hand. He had his Navy cap on. A large black, Congresswoman gave him the biggest bear hug. (“chuck, who is she, again?”); he got free hot chocolate at a restaurant Major Goolsbys. The commander of the Veterans parade lifted my dad’s drooping head and asked him: “Hey Navy- you want to ride in a jeep in the parade, or do you want to walk? If you want to walk, I don’t want you to go chicken legs on me and quit. Or do you want to sit on the corner and watch the parade.”

Dad said he would rather sit on the corner and watch.

The commander saluted dad, turned and left, just as the flashy Navy band marched by loudly playing “Anchors Away”.

Nazar Hajinian, Radar man Second class,
Straightened his curved back,
Lifted his Navy hat covered head

And saluted.



Nazar Hajinian Radar man Second Class

Awarded:

Victory Medal

Asiatic Pacific Area Campaign Medal 8 stars

American Area Campaign Medal

Philippine Liberation Ribbon 2 stars

Veterans reminisce at parade

Milwaukee honors aging heroes and young ones just back from wars

By JAN UEBELHERR

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Nazar Hajinian stood in the cold and damp Saturday morning, waiting for Milwaukee's 45th annual Veterans Day parade to begin. Hunched over a bit at age 83, he wore a thick wool hat under a bright white sailor's cap, his son Chuck at his side.

All around Nazar Hajinian were reminders of wars gone by — Civil War re-enactors

carrying cell phones, Vietnam War vets, soldiers who had served in Iraq.

Hajinian looked back more than 60 years to World War II, and his days on the USS *Sullivans* in the Pacific.



Hajinian

"I was a radar man," he said. "We were in all the battles in the Pacific. Iwo Jima. . . . We picked up Navy pilots that were shot down."

Hajinian attended the commissioning ceremony of the ship he served on, named for the five Sullivan brothers who died together on a ship. He met the parents of the Sullivan boys. But Hajinian paused in the middle of that story, his voice breaking.

"I shook their hand. I cried like I'm crying now," he said. "Five sons . . ."

At the curb nearby stood Susan Sonnheim. "First female to receive a Purple Heart in the history of the Wisconsin National Guard," she said. "I was hit by a bomb in 2003, in Baghdad. The bomb was seven feet from me."

Blinded in the left eye, she spent two years at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. She's had reconstructive surgery on her left ear, shrapnel removed from her left eye and six facial reconstructive surgeries.

"Those are the major surgeries," said Sonnheim, a nurse at the Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

"I'm just proud to be here. I'm proud to be honored by these people," she said.

Her thoughts on this Veter-



MARYJO WALICKI / MWALICKI@JOURNALSENTINEL.COM

Ben Roszak, who landed at Normandy Beach, waves from a truck Saturday during the annual Veterans Day Parade in Milwaukee. Those who attended the parade honored heroes from wars past and present.

ans Day, with a new president ready to take over: "He's got a chance to do what we want done. I don't think we should abruptly stop the war. We're in there to do something. We should finish it."

A few feet away from Sonnheim, Elisha Swanson Hyke, 14, stood with about 30 classmates from Linda Wamboldt's eighth-grade class at West Milwaukee Intermediate School.

She and her classmates all came with signs bearing photos and flags. Hyke carried a sign with a black-and-white photo of three young men: Robert, William, Ken.

"This is people from my family, back in the past. They were all in the Army, and they died many years past," she said.

The parade made its way to the War Memorial, past clusters of spectators with signs: "God Bless You;" "Thank You for Defending Our Freedom."

There were applause and tears, bagpipes and barking dogs. Shots were fired in salute, and kids scrambled into the street to pick up spent shells. Afterward, wreaths were laid at the reflecting pool at the War Memorial. Taps was played.

Earlier, more than 8,000 guests gathered at Veterans Park for the commissioning of the Navy combat ship USS *Freedom*, described as a cutting-edge vessel used for coastal patrols. Built in Wisconsin by Marinette Marine, the ship bears a reminder of Army Sgt. 1st Class Paul Smith, the first Medal of

Honor recipient from the Iraq war. Smith was killed during a firefight in Baghdad.

His wife, Birgit Smith, donated a St. Christopher's medal worn by her husband. The medal and the couple's wedding rings are part of the ship's mast.

Hajinian wanted to see the big new ship, so he and his son stopped there.

"It just looked so beautiful, with all the flags on it," Chuck Hajinian said.

"I think he was more impressed seeing all the Navy people around. Every time he'd see a guy with a white hat, he'd go up and say, 'I was on the *Sullivans*.'"

► **Veterans Day:** A list of upcoming events. **7B**

Below is the history of his ship, including the battles he fought in. When radar is mentioned, dad was there.

The first *The Sullivans* (DD-537) was laid down as *Putnam* on 10 October 1942 at San Francisco, Calif., by the Bethlehem Steel Co.; renamed *The Sullivans* on 6 February 1943; launched on 4 April 1943; sponsored by Mrs. Thomas F. Sullivan, the mother of the five Sullivan brothers; and commissioned on 30 September 1943, Comdr. Kenneth M. Gentry in command.

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Following shakedown, *The Sullivans* got underway with *Dortch* (DD-670) and *Gatling* (DD-671) on 23 December and arrived at Pearl Harbor five days later. During training operations in Hawaiian waters, the ship was assigned to Destroyer Squadron (DesRon) 52. On 16 January 1944, she steamed out of Pearl Harbor with Task Group (TG) 58.2, bound for the Marshall

Islands. En route to Kwajalein Atoll, the group was joined by Battleship Division (BatDiv) 9. Two days later, as the American warships neared their target, picket destroyers were sent ahead to protect the main force from the enemy.

On 24 January, TG 58.2 arrived at the dawn launching point for air strikes against Roi. For two days, *The Sullivans* screened *Essex* (CV-9), *Intrepid* (CV-11), and *Cabot* (CVL-22) as they launched nearly continuous aerial raids. Thereafter, the destroyer continued her operations to the north and northwest of Roi and Namur Islands in the Kwajalein group until 4 February, when TG 58.2 retired to Majuro to refuel and replenish. Underway at high noon on the 12th, *The Sullivans* screened the sortie of TG 58.2, outward bound for Truk. The same carriers whose planes had blasted Roi and Namur steamed in the van—*Essex*, *Intrepid*, and *Cabot*—now headed for the Japanese fortress-base in the Central Pacific. From the time the group arrived at its launching point on 16 February, the carriers launched what seemed to be nearly continuous air strikes against Truk. “No enemy opposition of any kind was encountered,” wrote *The Sullivans’* commander, “indicating that the initial attacks came as a complete surprise.” While the enemy may have been slow to react at the outset, they soon struck back—torpedoing *Intrepid* at 0010 on the 17th. The carrier slowed to 20 knots and lost steering control. *The Sullivans*, *Owen* (DD-536), and *Stembel* (DD-644) stood by the stricken carrier and escorted her to Majuro for repairs.

Reaching Majuro on 21 February, the destroyer soon sailed on to Hawaii, arriving at Pearl Harbor on 4 March for drydocking and upkeep. Underway again on the 22d, *The Sullivans* covered the sortie of TG’s 58.2, 58.9, and 50.15 from Majuro, bound for the Palaus, Yap, and Woleai Islands. On the evening of the 29th, while the American warships were approaching the target area, enemy aircraft attacked them but were driven off by the antiaircraft fire from the ships.

The next day, *The Sullivans* screened the carriers during air strikes and that evening helped to beat off a Japanese air attack. After returning to Majuro for replenishment, the warship screened TG 58.2 during air strikes on Hollandia,

Tanahmerah, Wakde, and Aitape to support amphibious operations on New Guinea. Late in April, *The Sullivans* participated in support of air strikes on the Japanese base at Truk.

On the 29th during one of these raids, the Japanese retaliated with a low-level air attack. American radar picked up four Japanese planes 16 miles away, coming in fast at altitudes varying from 10 to 500 feet. When the planes came within range, *The Sullivans* opened up with one 40-millimeter twin mount and all five 5-inch guns. Two aircraft splashed into the sea due to the firing of the American ships, and one crossing ahead of *The Sullivans* was taken under fire and crashed in flames off her port beam.

The Sullivans arrived off the northwest coast of Ponape on the afternoon of 1 May and provided cover for the battleships led by *Iowa* (BB-61) which bombarded the island. From the disengaged side of the screen, *The Sullivans* fired 18 rounds from extreme range at Tumu Point. She then noted three beached Japanese landing barges and shifted her fire to them. However, she received the general cease-fire order shortly thereafter. During the task unit's retirement, *The Sullivans* refueled from *Yorktown* (CV-10) and arrived at Majuro on 4 May. Ten days later, TG 58.2 sortied again—bound for Marcus and Wake Islands. Launching the first raid at 0800 on the 19th, the American carriers kept up nearly continuous air strikes with no enemy interruptions for three days.

En route back to Majuro, *The Sullivans* and her sister destroyers conducted a thorough but unsuccessful search for a suspected submarine. On 6 June, *The Sullivans* got underway again, bound for Saipan, Tinian, and Guam to screen carriers in conducting air strikes. On occasion while in the screen, *The Sullivans'* radar picked up enemy "snoopers" around the periphery of the formation—and before dawn at 0315 on the 12th, TG 58.2 shot down one in flames. The second day's strikes against Saipan took place on the 13th to support the American landings there.

Assigned to the duty of communication-linking station between task forces, *The Sullivans* remained within visual sighting distance of both TG's 58.1 and 58.2 during the day. That day, she picked up 31 Japanese merchant seamen after their ship had been sunk offshore and transferred these prisoners to flagship *Indianapolis* (CA-35).

On the 19th, during the first day of the Battle of the Philippine Sea, Japanese aircraft attacked the task group. *The Sullivans* picked up a plane visually at a range of less than five miles. "Judies," diving from 23,000 feet, pressed home their attacks. One, taken under fire by *The Sullivans*, took tracer fire from the ship's 20- and 40-millimeter batteries and, moments later, crashed just short of the horizon. American air attacks against Pagan Island, made without enemy retaliation, topped off the Saipan-Tinian-Guam strikes; and *The Sullivans* proceeded with TG 58.2 to Eniwetok for upkeep.

Underway on 30 June, *The Sullivans* resumed work in the screen of carriers launching air strikes to support operations against Saipan and Tinian. During this action, *The Sullivans* served as fighter-direction ship for TU 58.2.4. On Independence Day, *The Sullivans* joined Bombardment Unit One (TU 58.2.4) to conduct a shore bombardment of airfields, shore batteries, and other installations on the west coast of Iwo Jima. The heavy ships in the group opened fire at 1500, and smoke and dust soon obscured targets along the western shore of the island, making spotting difficult.

The Sullivans, second ship in a column of destroyers, opened fire at 1548 on planes parked on the southern airstrip. After three ranging salvos, the ship commenced hitting twin-engined "Bettys" parked in revetments along the strip. Five planes blew up, and eight other planes were probably damaged by shrapnel and burning gasoline. Minutes later, an enemy ship resembling an LST came under *The Sullivans* gunfire and caught fire astern. While *Miller* (DD-535) closed to complete the destruction of the enemy vessel, *The Sullivans* and the remainder of the bombardment unit retired and rejoined TG 58.2. From 7 to 22 July, TG 58.2 operated south and west of the Marianas, conducting daily air strikes on Guam and Rota Islands before returning to Garapan Anchorage, Saipan, to allow the carriers to

replenish bombs. Underway at dawn on the 23d, *The Sullivans* accompanied the task group as it sped towards the Palaus for air strikes on the 26th and 27th. She joined TG 58.4 for temporary duty on 30 July and continued air strikes until the 6th of August, when she joined TG 58.7, the heavy bombardment group, and operated with TP 34 until 11 August, when the group returned to Eniwetok for replenishment.

Early in September, as the Navy prepared to take the Palaus, *The Sullivans* supported neutralizing air strikes against Japanese air bases in the Philippines. At dawn on the 7th, she began radar picket duty for TG 38.2 and continued the task through the strikes of the 9th and 10th. From 1800 on 12 September, the ships noted an increase in air activity—observing many bogies that merely orbited the formations as snoopers. The carriers conducted further raids on the central Philippines on the 13th and 14th and then shifted course to the north to subject Manila to air attacks commencing on the 21st.

Three days later, American planes again hit the central Philippines. Returning to Tanapag Harbor, Saipan, at dawn on the 28th, *The Sullivans* went alongside *Massachusetts* (BB-59) for ammunition, provisions, and routine upkeep. However, the cross-swells in the anchorage swept *The Sullivans* hard against the battleship's steel hide, damaging the destroyer's hull and superstructure.

Following brief antisubmarine patrol duty, she proceeded to Ulithi on 1 October. While undergoing tender repairs alongside *Dixie*, *The Sullivans* formed part of a nest of destroyers blown away from the tender during a heavy storm that lashed the anchorage. *The Sullivans* drifted free downwind and got up steam "in a hurry." However, she collided with *Uhlmann* (DD-687). Many small boats were being tossed about, and *The Sullivans* rescued four men from *Stockham's* (DD-683's) gig before it disappeared beneath the waves. As the storm abated on the 4th, the warship returned to Ulithi to complete the abbreviated tender overhaul alongside *Dixie*.

At 1615 on 6 October, *The Sullivans* sortied with the carriers and protected them during raids against targets on Formosa and

the Ryukyus. On the evening of the 12th, as the planes returned to the carriers, radar spotted the first of many Japanese aircraft coming down from the north. For the next six hours, approximately 50 to 60 Japanese aircraft subjected the American task force to continuous air attacks. Nearly 45 minutes after sunset, *The Sullivans* sighted a "Betty" coming in low on the starboard side, and took it under fire. During the next 15 minutes, the formation to which *The Sullivans* was attached shot down three planes; between 1856 and 1954, the destroyer herself took five planes under fire. Varying speed between 18 and 29 knots, the formation undertook eight emergency maneuvers. Again and again, timely turns and the great volume of gunfire thrown up by the ships repulsed the enemy air attacks. The second phase of the attack began at 2105 on the 12th and continued through 0235 on the 13th. The Japanese increased the use of "window" to jam American radar transmissions while their flares lit up the evening with ghostly light. The formation made smoke whenever enemy flare-dropping planes approached, creating an eerie haze effect which helped baffle the enemy pilots. Meanwhile, *The Sullivans* and the other ships in formation executed 38 simultaneous turn movements at speeds between 22 and 25 knots as their guns kept up a steady fire to repel the attackers.

The next day, the carriers again launched successful strikes on Formosa. During the ensuing night retirement, the formation again came under attack by Japanese torpedo-carrying "Betties" which struck home this time and damaged *Canberra* (CA-70). *The Sullivans* then helped to protect the damaged cruiser. On the 14th, "Betty" torpedo bombers scored against *Houston* (CL-81). *The Sullivans* soon joined the screen which guarded the two battle-battered cruisers as they retired toward Ulithi.

Things progressed well until the 16th, when the Japanese mounted a heavy air attack to attempt to finish off the "cripples." *Houston* reeled under the impact of a second hit astern, and *The Sullivans* opened fire on the "Frances" which had made the attack and splashed the Japanese plane. *The Sullivans* and *Stephen Potter* (DD-538) then took a second "Frances" under fire and knocked it down off the bow of *Santa Fe* (CL-60).

The Sullivans rescued 118 *Houston* men and kept them on board until the 18th, when she transferred them to *Boston* (CA-69). While the damaged cruisers were making their way to Ulithi, a Japanese surface force attempted to close the formation before TF 38 intervened to drive them back. *The Sullivans* transferred salvage gear to *Houston* and helped with the ship's many wounded. For his part in directing the destroyer's rescue and salvage attempts, Comdr. Ralph J. Baum received his first Silver Star.

On 20 October, *The Sullivans* joined TG 38.2 for scheduled air strikes on the central Philippines in support of the Leyte landings. At dawn of the 24th, reconnaissance located a Japanese surface force south of Mindoro, and the American carriers launched air strikes all day against the enemy warships. That morning, a Japanese air attack developed, and *The Sullivans* downed an "Oscar" fighter plane.

By 25 October, enemy forces were sighted coming down from the north; TF 34, including *The Sullivans*, was formed and headed north, following the carrier groups in TF 38. At dawn on the 25th, the carriers launched air strikes to harass the Japanese surface units, now some 60 miles north. At 1100, TF 34 reversed course, topped-off the destroyers with fuel, and formed fast striking group TG 34.5, with *Iowa* (BB-61), *New Jersey* (BB-62), three light cruisers, *The Sullivans*, and seven other destroyers.

The American force missed the Japanese by three hours, but ran across a straggler and reported sinking an *Atago*-class cruiser. Japanese records fail to confirm the claim. After sweeping south along the coast of Samar hunting for enemy "cripples," *The Sullivans* and other units of TG 34.5 reported back to TG 38.2. The destroyer then remained in the Philippine area, screening the fast carriers and standing by on plane guard duties, through mid-November. At dusk on the 19th, during one of the many air attacks fought off by *The Sullivans*, the destroyer damaged a "Betty" by gunfire and watched it disappear over the horizon, smoking but stubbornly remaining airborne.

Six days later, she had better luck when her guns set a Japanese plane afire and splashed it into the sea. Two days later,

her task group returned to Ulithi. The destroyer undertook training exercises from 8 to 11 December before rejoining TG 38.2 to screen its warships during air strikes on Manila and southern Luzon beginning on 14 December.

On the 17th, running low on fuel, *The Sullivans* commenced refueling but, with the weather worsening minute by minute, she broke off the operation. Typhoon "Viper" swept through the Fleet, with the wind clocked at an estimated 115 knots on the morning of 18 December. Three destroyers were sunk and several ships damaged by the winds and waves. *The Sullivans*, her "lucky shamrock" painted on her funnel, emerged from the typhoon undamaged and, on the 20th began searching for men lost overboard from other ships. The lingering bad weather resulted in cancellation of air strikes, and *The Sullivans* retired to Ulithi on Christmas Eve.

After a brief run to Manus and back, escorting *Iowa*, *The Sullivans* sortied from Ulithi on 30 December to screen TG 38.2's air strikes on Formosa in support of the American landings on Luzon. Heavy seas forced a three-day postponement of a high-speed thrust toward the target originally planned for the night of 6 January 1945. During the evening of the 9th, the task force passed through the Bashi Channel and entered the South China Sea. Three days later, carrier planes from TG 38.2 swept over Saigon and Camranh Bay, Indochina, hammering at whatever enemy merchantmen they found.

Soon after the conclusion of the air strikes, a bombardment group, TG 34.5, was formed to go after possible "cripples" and dispatch them by surface gunfire. Accordingly, two battleships, two heavy cruisers, three light cruisers, and 15 destroyers raced into Camranh Bay but found it devoid of Japanese shipping. Throughout the day, however, carrier pilots had better luck and enjoyed a veritable "field day" with coastal marus. During subsequent air strikes on Hainan Island, Hong Kong, and Formosa, *The Sullivans* served on radar picket duty 10 miles ahead of the task group. A brief respite for upkeep at Ulithi in late January preceded the ship's deployment with TG 58.2, covering the carriers as they launched devastating air strikes

against the Japanese homeland itself, hitting Tokyo and other targets on Honshu on 16 and 17 February.

From the 18th through the 21st, American carrier-based air power struck at Japanese positions contesting the landings on Iwo Jima. More strikes were scheduled for Tokyo four days later, but bad weather forced their cancellation. Retiring from the area, TF 58 fueled and commenced a high-speed run at Okinawa at noon on 28 February. Later that day, *The Sullivans* sighted and destroyed a drifting mine. At dawn on 1 March, Hellcats, Avengers, Dauntlesses, and Helldivers pounded Japanese positions on Okinawa. The ships of the task force encountered no enemy opposition from sea or sky and soon retired towards Ulithi. *The Sullivans* sortied 12 days later, bound for Kyushu and southern Honshu to support the invasion of Okinawa. Once again screening for TG 58.2, *The Sullivans* stood by as the carriers launched air strikes on 14 March.

On 20 March, *The Sullivans* fueled from *Enterprise* (CV-6) at 1152, clearing the carrier's side five minutes later when a *kamikaze* alert sent the ships scurrying. At 1439, *The Sullivans* commenced maneuvering to go alongside *Enterprise* again—this time to pick up a part for her FD radar antenna. Soon, however, another enemy air attack scattered the ships. As a line had not yet been thrown across to the carrier, *The Sullivans* bent on speed and cleared her as other ships in the task group opened fire on the attackers. A Japanese plane plunged through the anti-aircraft fire and crashed into *Halsey Powell* (DD-686) astern as that destroyer was fueling alongside *Hancock* (CV-19). The stricken destroyer lost steering control and started to veer across the big carrier's bow, and only rapid and radical maneuvering on *Hancock's* part averted a collision.

The Sullivans soon closed *Halsey Powell* to render emergency assistance. She slowed to a stop 11 minutes later and lowered her motor whaleboat to transfer her medical officer and a pharmacist's mate to *Halsey Powell*, when another *kamikaze* came out of the skies, apparently bent on crashing into *The Sullivans*. At 1610, the destroyer's radar picked up the "Zeke" on its approach; and, as soon as the motor whaler was clear of the water, *The Sullivans* leapt ahead with all engines thrusting at

flank speed. Bringing right full rudder, *The Sullivans* maneuvered radically while her 20- and 40-millimeter guns sent streams of shells at the "Zeke," which passed 100 feet over the masthead and escaped. Meanwhile, *Halsey Powell* managed to achieve a steady course at five knots; and, with *The Sullivans*, she retired toward Ulithi. However, their troubles were not yet over. At 1046 on the following day, 21 March, *The Sullivans* picked up a plane, closing from 15 miles. Visually identified as a twin-engined "Frances," the aircraft was taken under fire at 10,000 yards by *The Sullivans'* 5-inch battery. *Halsey Powell* joined in too; and, within a few moments, the "Frances" crashed into the sea about 3,000 yards abeam of *The Sullivans*. At 1250, a combat air patrol (CAP) Hellcat from *Yorktown*, under direction by *Halsey Powell*, splashed another "Frances." At 1320, a CAP Hellcat from *Intrepid*, directed by *The Sullivans*, downed a "Nick" or "Dinah."

On 25 March, *The Sullivans* and *Halsey Powell* arrived at Ulithi, the former for upkeep prior to training exercises and the latter for battle repairs. The warship next rendezvoused with TF 58 off Okinawa and guarded the carriers supporting the landings on the island. While operating on radar picket duty on the 15th, the ship came under enemy air attack, but downed one plane and emerged unscathed. She continued conducting radar picket patrols for the task group, ranging some 12 to 25 miles out from the main body of the force. On the afternoon of 29 April, she commenced fueling from *Bunker Hill*, but a kamikaze alert interrupted the replenishment, forcing *The Sullivans* to break away from the carrier's side. During the ensuing action, *Hazelwood* (DD-531) and *Haggard* (DD-555) were both crashed by suiciders but survived. Kamikazes continued to plague the ships of TG 58.3 as they supported the troops fighting ashore on Okinawa. Everything from landing craft to battleships proved fair game for those Japanese pilots determined to die for their emperor.

On the morning of 11 May, a kamikaze crashed into *Bunker Hill*. *The Sullivans* promptly closed the carrier to render assistance and picked up 166 men forced over the side by the fires that at one point ravaged the ship. After transferring them to ships in TG 50.8 and replenishing her fuel bunkers, she helped

to screen TG 58.3 during air strikes on Kyushu. In a morning air attack three days later, the gallant old warrior *Enterprise* was hit by a kamikaze. Four enemy planes were shot down in the melee—one by *The Sullivans* in what proved to be her last combat action during World War II. *The Sullivans* anchored at San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf, on 1 June for recreation and upkeep. She departed Leyte on the 20th, bound, via Eniwetok and Pearl Harbor, for the west coast. The destroyer arrived at Mare Island, Calif., on 9 July and, two days later, commenced her overhaul. She thus missed the final fleet activity that rang down the curtain on the last act of the war. Worn down by a series of blows delivered by American sea power and stunned by the destructive power of two atomic bombs, Japan capitulated on 15 August, ending the war. Meanwhile, since the return of peace greatly reduced the Navy's need for warships, *The Sullivans* was decommissioned at San Diego on 10 January 1946—soon after her overhaul was completed—and she was placed in the Pacific Reserve Fleet.



