

MY SERVICE WITH THE 45TH INFANTRY DIVISION
FROM OCT. 11, 1950 TO AUG 1952 AT CAMP POLK,
LOUISIANA, HOKKAIDO, JAPAN AND IN THE
KOREAN WAR
(BY ALVIN E BOESE)

2. WE SAIL FOR JAPAN

When we arrive in New Orleans we go directly from the train to the dock. After waiting for some time we board a large troopship, the William Weigel. We will have approximately 4500 troops on board. The rest of the division will board smaller ships while some have already gone on ahead to Japan to prepare the area where we will be staying.

Later, sometime after dark, we pull away from the dock and sail down the Mississippi River and into the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea. I get lucky and get assigned to a large compartment on the main deck at the stern of the ship. The other compartments are all below deck. We will be sleeping on canvass cots with metal frames that are three high. I go out on deck early the next morning and it is a beautiful sunny day. The ocean is a real pretty blue color and we occasionally see a porpoise or some flying fish darting out from the side of the ship. I luck out and do not get assigned any duty for the voyage. Several of the guys draw K.P. duty.

We have been at sea a couple of days when we anchor for a short while off the entrance to the Panama Canal. It is very hot here. Then we enter the Canal and are pulled along through the many locks by small tractor like vehicles. We eventually reach the other end of the Canal at the city of Balboa. Here they let half of the troops off at a time to roam around for a couple of hours. I get to go with the second group. We were told by some of the first group that there is cold beer at the PX but it is so crowded you have to furnish your own container. We located some gallon cans at the mess hall for our containers. Well, we were thirsty. At the PX we handed our cans with the exact amount of money in it to the person in front of us who passed it on to the bar. When it came back it was full of beer. It really tasted great. The Salvation Army was serving coffee and doughnuts but were not getting many takers. We had some sandwiches with our beer from the PX. After our two hours we boarded the ship and later sailed for San Francisco.

We arrived in San Francisco a few days later where we pick up some more troops who stayed at Camp Polk awhile after we left. No one was allowed to go ashore but some did try to by going down the tie down ropes. They were all caught and returned to the ship. We sailed the next morning for Japan. The whole voyage would take about thirty days.

We are well out to sea now and are discovering how bad the food is on this ship, and it isn't going to get any better. We have to stand in line for an hour at a time sometimes and after we get our food we have to stand up at long tables to eat. The eggs we get for breakfast taste like they are several years old. For lunch, after standing in a long line, we get an apple or an orange and once in awhile a piece of cake too. The food is so bad that I do not even go to the mess hall if I can get some candy bars from the PX after standing in another long line. I sometimes have one of the guys on K.P. hand me out a piece of fresh bread and butter out the port hole. It really does hurt and makes you angry when you look through the port hole along the promenade deck and see how the officers eat their meals. They have regular tables that seat five or six people with white table cloths and white napkins, with two choices of meat, a big bowl of fruit on the table and real plates and silverware. Kind of hard to take. I realize that the officers should have more privileges than the enlisted men do, but it is blown way out of proportion as you will see as this story goes on. Sometimes we have a movie at night on the promenade deck. This is the narrow main deck along the side of the ship with a deck above to cover it but is open on one end and the outside. It is always real crowded and pretty cold except when we are north of Hawaii. The officers have theirs in the dining room.

The weather is fairly good most of the time and we spend a lot of time sitting out on deck in the sun and writing letters to mail in Japan. There was a joke going around that there was a mail buoy half way across the Pacific. We also played a lot of pinochle. There were a couple of guys who had a casino type crap table cover that they had laid out on a hatch cover and were getting a lot of players including myself till I found out that they had a five dollar limit and I quit \$40 ahead. They were making a small fortune. One day some wise guy cut one of the life rafts loose and it went over the side of the ship into the ocean. They had to stop the ship, lower a lifeboat and retrieve it. The ships captain was pretty upset. They never did find out who did it.

When we are a few days out of Japan we run into a typhoon. I had heard a lot about them but never thought I would be in one, especially when I was on a ship. The wind was blowing hard and the waves were huge. They looked like small mountains with valleys in between. We had to stay inside a lot because the waves would, break over the bow almost to the bridge and wash over the decks. As big as our ship was it didn't seem like it was big enough in this kind of a storm. The bow would go way down and then the stern would come out of the water with the propeller spinning in the air and shaking the whole ship, especially in the stern area where I stayed. Several of the guys got real seasick. Some of them had to go right by my bunk, which was a bottom bunk, on their way to the latrine (bathroom) to throw up and a few didn't make it very far past my bunk. We spent most of our time playing pinochle and never did get sick.

For photo gallery, [click here](#).