BUCCANEER

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A Publication of the USS ESSEX CV/CVA/CVS-9/LHD-2 Association

80th Anniversary of VJ Day

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

We have redesigned the *Buccaneer* to provide you with as much information, news, humor and coming events as possible.

This is your newsletter, so please forward us feedback as to articles and material you would like to see.

We will try to keep all future issues to a maximum of 12 pages. This will keep our mailing and printing expenses to a minimum.

We will use a tight format leaving no voids on pages to eliminate wasted space.

All members who use computers receive their *Buccaneer* as a *PDF Document*, VIA E-Mail from Tom Ferelli. This way you will receive your copy quickly and can print it in color. Those with no e-mail will still get a paper copy mailed IF YOU ARE ON OUR MAILING

LIST. Contact Tom Ferelli to be placed on the list.

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Renewal Form is on back Cover
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BUCCANEER DEADLINE DATES

November 8 for the December issue

March 8 for the April issue

FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR

A submission by a member led to the idea to publish a special tribute to those who served aboard the Essex in the days leading up to and culminating in VJ Day on September 2, 1945, ending the war in the Pacific.

A review of the roster shows that we still have four members who served from 1943 to 1946. A plan was made to contact these members to solicit their recollections of this historic time period aboard the Essex.

Their inputs and those of their survivors are included on the following pages. I hope you will enjoy this edition as much as I enjoyed assembling it.

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Here are some of Jack McHughes' recollections of his time in service and on the Essex:

I decided to join the Navy with two of #iends, one was James Smith. After talking it over, we knew we were going to be drafted so we might as well join the service we wanted to join. My parents were not too happy about it, but they knew I would have to go one way or another. Dad signed to allow me to enlist since I wasn't of age yet. I was the first son to go, as my older brother John was married and had a newborn (Larry McHughes). John was not drafted until the end of the war. When he was drafted, he was sent to the Philippines to operate a dozer. John buried an kinds of equipment and supplies in the Philippines. (John was also a guard at a prisoner of war camp.)

My buddies and I were sent to basic training at Great Lakes. James Smith was sent to a battleship, and I was assigned to the USS Essex. James and I corresponded during the war.

I was then sent to Norfolk, Virginia, to the Essex. The ship was brand spanking New – so new, in fact, that for the first two or three weeks I was tasked with carrying a fire extinguisher around and accompanying a welder tasked with finishing parts of the ship.

I remember having Christmas dinner on the hangar deck of the brand-new ship in 1942, and being the only person in my compartment for a few days. After "shakedown," the Essex and its crew traveled to Trinidad, then Indianapolis. Some friends and I decided to take liberty and go up to see Washington D.C. When we arrived, a snowstorm ensued so we decided to head back to the ship so we would not be late to report. When we aITived back, we had to stand out and wait for the small ferry boat. It was the coldest I've ever been.

The Essex was then sent to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. I was a part of the Repair Party. Any sort of repair, I was involved with it. And that's about everything on the flight deck

Anything that happens, you're involved in it. If a plane crashed or landed and broke something, you had to get him out of the way for the next one. It was your job. The ship would head out aom base for one to three weeks, and then return to take on supplies.

After the Philippines, we never returned to port. Any and all resupplying and refueling was
done at sea. I never got seasick despite the fact that you'd just barely stand up on the flight deck, it would be so leaning.

During battles, there was Kamikaze, and there was strafing, and torpedoing, just everything like that. By my station on the flight deck, there was a mount of 20millimeter guns. They had a little hole that ran from side to side, and when you thought they were strafing you, you'd kind of hide there under the deck.

One time when the Essex was under alert, and everyone was supposed to be manning their battle stations, I was across the flight deck, sitting on the edge, talking to two buddies. Something kept telling me to go back where I was supposed to be. And the third time it said th@, I just said, "Well, I'm gonna go." I got up, started and got about halfway across the flight deck to where I was supposed to be. And I heard something. I looked up. And a Zero just fired some rounds, and they hit just about ten feet behind me on the flight deck. I started running and jumped under the deal. . .that little hole. About a second later, he (the Kamikaze) hit the deck. He hit right where I was a sitting, and where they were. It killed both my buddies, and two or three of the black guys that operated the machine guns, the 20's. It then knocked a barrel off the wall, and hit my good buddy down on the hangar deck. It was a 40mm gun barrel. They had it on the wall cuz the barrels would warp after they shot so much because, you know, they really

did throw out the lead.

They'd have to change barrels every so often. When that came off the wall, it hit him and his helmet, and just bent it all to pieces.. .that killed him. Killed ol' Freddy and Sammy Bosch and the two or three black guys. We and the black guys had a heck of a time. I'd be over there a lot of times I shouldn't have been, shooting the bull with them. They were about half crazy. We were too. They'd be sitting there and say, "There comes one!" and they'd jump up (on the 20mm gun) and just start firing away ! About the third time we did that, the officer said: "If you guys keep doing that there, I'm gonna file charges on you!" So, we never did do that
arlymore .

The Kamikaze who hit the Essex flew in real high, coming out of nowhere. But the two kamikazes that hit the USS Enterprise flew in low, close to the ocean. The "Zeros" prize was to hit a carrier, to cause an explosion that would ignite fuel, bombs, and aircraft. The USS Franklin had, a massive fire break out due to a Kamikaze attack, killing around 1,500 men.

The Essex traveled with a formation in the following order: Twelve destroyers in a square; four across the front, four across the back, four on each side; inside three carriers: two big carriers and an carrier escort; lastly a battleship and a cruiser would be on the inside as well. I believe the Essex carried 91 aircraft when we first entered combat in 1943. This included 36 fighters, 36 dive-bombers, and 19 torpedo bombers. By the end of the war, the typical air group on the Essex had grown to 102 aircraft, with 36 fighters, 36 fighter- bombers, 15 dive-bombers, and 15 torpedo bombers.

Submarines and floating bombs were a constant worry. Once, after taking the Philippines, Essex and many other ships were resupplying in a lagoon. There was a large net at the opening to the lagoon that the allies would open and close when a ship came in. The goal was to keep out enemy submarines. An oil tanker was sitting on the water about a half mile from the Essex. A two-man enemy sub snuck in, and while the tanker was refueling, the enemy torpedoed the tanker. It was a fire about like daylight." Small allied ships sprang into action. Oh man! All those little destroyers and cruisers, they had depth charges on them. And man! Talk about, rocking and rolling, we rocked and rolled." I'm not sure if they got the Japanese submarine, but don't know how anyone could live through that.

We had been in battle 89 continuous days, "no sleep. It just. . .you might even sleep standing up. And everybody was about to go crazy on the ship...89 days, day and

night. . .that's when we got close to Japan. As many ships as were out there, I couldn't figure out where in the world they were getting all their airplanes. After the war, I've seen in some of their stuff, that they still had a thousand planes." We found out about the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as soon as they happened. And we learned of the Japanese surrender as soon as it happened. There was a "Hurrah!" across the ship, and then we were back to work.

After the war ended, the Essex returned to port in Seattle, Washington. I was put on a train, sent to South Base in Norman, OK, and was discharged from the Navy.

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Caroline Reed, daughter of Keith Deaver, writes of her father: He joined the Navy right out of high school in June 1941. He was in aircraft mechanic school in Jacksonville, Florida on December 7, 1941. He spent a year on the carrier and interestingly enough, his brother-in-law was on the same ship. After returning from the South Pacific, he went through Navy Flight School. He went on to have a 35-year career as a mechanic and then pilot with Northwest Airlines (now Delta). He loved his career. My mom was a Navy WAVE (link trainer) and that's how they met. (We joked that Mom taught Dad how to fly.) They married as soon as the war ended and had a beautiful marriage of over 60 years before she passed away in 2009. 1 am #4 of their 5 kids

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Corinne Lamour, son of William J. Donovan (Aboard 1943-45) wrote, "This is one story my Dad shared with us seven kids about his service on the USS Essex CV-9. He served as a barrier operator with Air Group 9 from 1 Sept 1942 to 8 March 1945 as a second-class Aviation Boatswain's Mate, arresting gear. He participated in nine major invasions in both the Philippine Sea battles and a number of strikes on the Japanese home islands.

The story he told was about how he and his bunk mates made a still below decks. There were snap inspections that occurred and, on this one occasion the officers showed up to handle this broken rule. The officers found the still. took only the "hooch" they had made and left the still for hrture harvests. A glorious wartime fun fact. My Dad saw horrors I cannot imagine although I have done some research about the Essex.

My Dad passed away many years ago and he remains always my hero. Thank you

for letting me share this story."

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Tim Bourgeois, associate member, wrote the following about his grandfather, Andr6 F. Bourgeois, Signalman Third Class. "Rural Vermont is a vast contrast to the south Pacific Ocean, but for my grandfather, that is the starting point of his jourbey with the U.S. Navy during WWII. "Pop," as we referTed to him, was a quiet, humble, and stoic figure in the family I grew up in. He and a brother enlisted 02 November 1942.

Upon completion of basic training and arrival at Newport News, Virginia at 1400 hours, the blue and serial-numbered bus carrying Pop to the docks stopped in front of the yet-officially named, USS Essex CV- 9, on 01 January 1943. Pop recalls that Essex looked as imagined, the restrained giant tethered to the beach from the infamous fable, Gulliver's Travels, bound to the dock by its moorings, the utility cables strung up to deck, and the dock-side crane loading equipment. Pop's group was welcomed aboard by a chaplain on deck while construction work progressed around them. They were informed that the captain would officially welcome them aboard once she was fully manned.

His first week aboard, Pop recalled with great detail reveille, boatswain whistles, bugle calls, and the various tasks he was assigned to. Pop quips, New sailors learned to scrape, mop, and paint. Surprise battle conditions became routine, as construction neared completion. One day in spring of '43 , call to general quarters at daybreak, "battle stations for the crew!" All non-crew personnel to leave the ship

During this morning the ship's engines trembled louder and the tug boats came about to tow Essex into the channel. Once out to sea the escort vessels departed Essex and she turned into the southerly wind to facilitate landings of the aircraft. Essex had her first trial run several days later and Pop recalls that it was an overall success. Although not disclosed, the ship's speed was said to be impressive and one of the escort commanders quipped, "Hey, wait for me!" This day was followed by several weeks at sea before returning to the Chesapeake Bay as other ship-board preparations were made.

Essex steamed south, equipped and supplied, in May 1943 . Passing through the Panama Canal was quite memorable for Pop. He recalls the U.S. Ar~~my~~ band on the shore exchanging a performance and salutes with the ship-board band performing

Stars and Stripes Forever. Essex arrived in Pearl Harbor days later. It was now, on shore in Hawaii, that Pop and other sailors learned to swim! Soon after departing Hawaii, Essex experienced her first air raid against the enemy. During a later battle Pop was on the signal bridge when the kamikaze struck and had to take cover as debris rained upon them.

Among his numerous recollections of the battles and life on-board he even details his Shellback initiation upon Essex crossing the Equator the first time. His Domain of Neptunus Rex certificate is cherished. Pop also recounts surviving Halsey's Typhoon and the instructions given the day the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. August 1945 saw Pop achieve Signalman Third Class.

Pop imparts the voyage home with a tribute to those lost at Midway, a pod of whales encountered heading south, and the tugs guiding them to the dock in Seattle, Washington Pop traveled home via train through Canada as the American trains were still occupied with other war-time needs. Pop was discharged and home in Vermont late December 1945. In the 1990's, Pop and another veteran were interviewed by the hometown radio station when word got out that they were both on Essex during WWII, yet had never met during their tour.

Pop passed away at age 98 in late 2022. During the interview for the museum archives Pop was asked if he thought he was a hero. He softly replied, "No .. .no, I'm not a hero. The real heroes are resting at the bottom of the Pacific."

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Kathie Compeau, daughter of W. Douglas Howland who is now 100 years old and lives at the Samaritan Keep Home in Watertown, New York, submitted the following:
Doug joined the U.S. Navy as a senior in high school after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. He was allowed to graduate with his class (Watertown High School, class *of* 1942) even though he was not able to attend the graduation.

He was sent to Jacksonville FL. to learn morse code which he used as a member of the Bombing 9 squadron on the Essex. He later used morse code when he worked for the New York Central Railroad when he was a student at St. Lawrence University, thanks to the GI Bill, and later when he had a receiver at his house in Watertown. Doug taught his daughters how to use morse code for their first names and they still can!
The Essex went through the Panama Canal twice, on the way to the Pacific Ocean

and after the war ended. On the first trip over the canal there was a ceremony when they crossed the equator.

On the Essex, Doug slept in a hammock which he thought was comfortable. Everyone liked *The Watertown Daily Times* which was delivered to Dad while he was on the Essex.
As a part of Bombing 9, Doug flew in the second seat of an SBD and later on another plane when the SBD was replaced. The pilot would tell Doug when to push a button to drop a bomb. There were pilots from Watertown, NY.

Doug doesn't remember if the Essex was ever hit by a bomb, but his daughters remember him telling them about it when they were younger.

Doug really liked getting "leave." Mostly he spent his leaves in Hawaii or the west coast of the United States. One day Doug discovered parked next to the Essex, was another U.S. Navy vessel, The Cabot, with his future brother-inlaw, Joe Marten. Doug and Joe had known each other since they were kids at the YMCA in Watertown.

Doug remembers his ship picking up Japanese who were in the ocean. The Japanese were picked up and treated very nicely by the Essex crew.

Doug[t]s Dad was in the marines during the war also, His Dad landed at Tarawa and swam or waded to shore. When his Dad was safe, he told someone who was from the Essex to tell Doug that he had made it.

Doug and his wife attended a reunion for the Essex. Mom was amazed at the size of the Essex. Doug remembers wrestling on the Essex also at St. Lawrence and at Watertown Hjgh.

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Victory over Japan Day (also known as **V-J Day**, **Victory in the Pacific Day**, or **V-P DayU)** is the day on which Imperial Japan surrendered in World War II, in effect bringing the war to an end. The term has been applied to both of the days on which the initial announcement of Japan's surrender was made – 15 August 1945, in Japan, and because of time zone differences, 14 August 1945 (when it was announced in the United States and the rest of the Americas and Eastern Pacific Islands) – as well as to 2 September 1945, when the surrender document was signed, officially ending World War II.

15 August is the official V-J Day for the United Kingdom, while the official US commemoration is 2 September.L2J The name, V-J Day, had been selected by the Allies after they named V-E Day for the victory in Europe.

On 2 September 1945, formal surrender occurred aboard the battleship USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. In Japan, August 15 usually is known as the "memorial day for the end of the war" (@ gla **e: H** , *Shirsen-kinenbi);* the official name for the day, however, is "the day for mourning of war

dead and praying for peace" (戦没者を追悼し平和を祈念する日, *Senbotsusha o tsuitōshi* heiwa o *kirrensuru* /zi). This official name was adopted in 1982 by an ordinance issued by the Japanese government.

Surrender

Events before V-J Day

On 6 August and 9 August, 1945, the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively. On 9 August, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. The Japanese government on August 10 communicated its intention to surrender under the terms of the Potsdam Declaration.

The news of the Japanese offer began early celebrations around the world. Allied soldiers in London danced in a conga line on Regent Street. Americans and Frenchmen in Paris paraded on the Champs-£lys6es singing "D*on*[l]*t Feylce Me In"* . American soldiers in occupied Berlin shouted "It's over in the Pacific", and hoped that they would now not be transferred there to fight the Japanese. Germans stated that the Japanese were wise enough–unlike themselves–to give up in a hopeless situation, and were grateful that the atomic bomb was not ready in time to be used against them. Moscow newspapers briefly reported on the atomic bombings with no commentary of any kind. While "Russians and foreigners alike could hardly talk about anything else", the Soviet government refused to make any statements on the bombs' implication for politics or science.

In Chongqing, Chinese fired firecrackers and "almost buried [Americans] in gratitude". In Manila, residents sang " *God Bless* america". On Okinawa, six men were killed and dozens were wounded as American soldiers "took every weapon within reach and started firing into the sky" to celebrate; ships sounded general quarters and fired anti-aircraft guns as their crews believed that a *kamikaze* attack was occurring. On Tinian island, B-29 crews preparing for their next mission over Japan were told that it was cancelled, but that they could not celebrate because it might be rescheduled.

Japan's acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration

A little after noon Japan Standard Time on 15 August 1945, Emperor Hirohito's announcement of Japan's acceptance of the terms of the Potsdam Declaration was broadcast to the Japanese people over the radio. Earlier the same day, the Japanese government had broadcast an announcement over Radio Tokyo that "acceptance of the Potsdam Proclamation [would be] coming soon", and had advised the Allies of the surrender by sending a cable to U.S. President Harry Truman via the Swiss diplomatic mission in Washington, D.C. A nationwide broadcast by Truman was aired at seven o'clock p.m. (daylight time in Washington, D.C,) on Tuesday, 14 August, announcing the communication and that the formal event was scheduled for September 2. In his announcement of Japan's surrender on 14 August, Truman said that "the proclamation of V-J Day must wait upon the formal signing of the surrender terms by Japan".

Since the European Axis powers had surrendered three months earlier (V-E Day), V-J Day was the effective end of World War II, although a peace treaty between Japan and most of the Allies was not signed until 1952, and between Japan and the Soviet Union until 1956. In Australia, the name *Y-P Day* (Victory in the Pacific) was used from the outset. The *Canberra Times* of 14 August 1945, refers to V-P Day celebrations, and a public holiday for V-P Day was gazetted by the government in that year according to the Australian War Memorial.

Public celebrations

After news of the Japanese acceptance and before Truman's announcement, civilians began celebrating "as if joy had been rationed and saved up for the three years, eight months and seven days since Sunday, Dec. 7, 1941" (the day of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor), L@ magazine reported. In Washington, D.C, a crowd attempted to break into the White House grounds as they shouted "We want Harry !"

The largest crowd in the history of New York City's Times Square gathered to celebrate. W The victory itself was announced by a headline on the "zipper" news ticker at One Times Square, which read "OFFICIAL TRUMAN ANNOUNCES JAPANESE SURRENDER " in the Garment District, workers threw out cloth scraps and ticker tape, leaving a pile five inches deep on the streets. The news of the war's end sparked a "coast-to-coast frenzy of [servicemen] kissing . . . everyone in skirts that happened along," with *Life* publishing photographs of such kisses in Washington, Kansas City, Los Angeles, and Miami.

Ceremony aboard USS *Missouri*

The formal signing of the Japanese Instrument of Surrender took place on board the battleship USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945, and at that time Truman declared September 2 to be the official V-J Day.

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