

War Era Story Project 2012

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The Battle of the Marianas

From my hometown in Dover, Ohio, Tuscarawas County, a 20-year old, I boarded a bus to the Cleveland Union Terminal where I climbed into a passenger car towed by a locomotive to Great Lakes, Illinois for training, then on to San Diego, California where I was assigned to the *U.S.S. Pavo*, a supply ship commanded by Roswell E King. I was the baker. I baked bread day and night. I baked the pies.

Steaming across the Pacific at twelve knots, we helped to liberate the Philippines and then pushed on to Saipan. We were hit twice. The first time was by a Japanese torpedo. The explosion knocked me out of the top bunk where I was sleeping. I thought we were going to sink, but the skipper made it to Pearl Harbor for repairs then took us back to the fighting. The second time we were hit was when we got too close to a sister ship.

During the conflict, many messages were intercepted. One said that the Japanese leaders told their people that we had to kill our parents to enlist in the service, and that they should commit suicide rather than to be captured. The next evening, Japanese women, some with children, climbed the jagged cliffs and started throwing themselves down into the ocean.

From the ship's deck, I could see them falling from a ledge onto the hard coral reef below. The next morning when I came up from the galley and looked out at the ocean, it was filled with Japanese women dressed in black. It hurt. But with orders to push on down to the equator with a load of torpedoes, we left them, and the Marianas.

When the war ended, I celebrated by throwing all the pie pans in the ocean. One of the officers, a seasoned sailor from Arkansas, came by the kitchen and when he didn't see any pies, said, "Can't you read the menu?" And I said, "Yes, Sir." Then he said "Well, where are the pies?" I said, "Well, Sir, I'd be glad to make some pies if I had some pie pans! We sailed for home. I mustered out at Great Lakes, Illinois on April 18, 1946.