

USS Corry

April 22, 2008

Mr Dennis Burke  
USS Corry Historian  
11137 Williamsport Pike  
Green Castle, PA 17225

Dear Dennis:

I am sending along a recollection of what it was like at the beginning of the Corry.

As a Plank Owner, I'm probably only one of the few still around who was there.

Hope it is of interest to you.

Regards from a Shipmate,

Carlo Fugazzi  
908 Pear Road  
Dix Hills, NY 11746

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### IN THE BEGINNING

By Carlo Fugazzi RT 3/C USS Corry Plank Owner

(A Personal Memory)

In 1946 after finishing Radio Technician and Loran school at Bellsvue RMS school in Washington D.C., I was told to report to the USS Corry new construction in Orange, Texas -- wherever that was.

My train from Washington took me to New Orleans around midnight. I took transportation across town to another railroad to take the train to Orange.

The only passenger car was the last car of the train. This car must have been salvaged from a post Civil War western movie. There was no glass in the windows, gas lighting, and a vendor had built himself a stand in the rear of the car where he sold coffee and other sundry. The toilet was off the rear door.

This was a milk train which often slowed down to allow a railroad man to lean out from the train and to scoop up a milk can with his hook, while another man dropped off an empty milk can.

We arrived in Orange the next morning. During the train trip I wondered what had happened to my sea bag. I had checked in at Washington Station two train rides ago. When I got off the train I saw my sea bag on the platform.

A car awaited me at the station house to take me to the US Naval Station at Orange, Texas under the command of a Chief Bosan Mate.

The base consisted of barracks where sailors came from across the country to form the crews while their ship was being built. Life at the base was very informal and where meals were served family style. We were required to show up in the morning for the Raising of the Colors and in the afternoon for mail call. The rest of the time we were on our own. The Navy organized work details to keep the sailors busy and out of mischief. As a Petty Officer I was not involved. However, one day I was assigned to a road building project. A truck showed up, a few sailors were assigned to me and we drove to a huge pile of sea shells which we loaded on the truck. The driver knew where to go and we drove to the end of the road where we unloaded sea shells to build a better roadbed in case it rained -- it never rained in Orange.

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The base was located in a desert and the sun was extremely hot in the daytime, but at sunset it got very cold. One night I went to Beaumont for a concert and took my coat.

I was one of the last technicians to arrive at Orange. The other technicians had acquired a Model Ford to drive to the ship yard and, for ten dollars, I became part owner. The Orange sheriff didn't mind us driving around without license plates, but he objected that the car didn't have any doors. So, we went to the junk yard and requisitioned two doors over the fence. We didn't have an ignition key so we removed the distributor when we parked.

If we knew that a company representative for the radio or electronic equipment was on board, we went to meet him and learned about the equipment.

The ship was commissioned and we sailed down the Sabine River to the Gulf and on to Galveston. We were on GQ and I was a talker on a repair party. When we reached the Gulf I got seasick. I fell asleep or passed out, and when I woke up all was still and I walked ashore and kissed the ground. This was the last time I got sick.

I learned that the aft crew quarters did not have speakers to hear music from our radio shack turntables. I and another technician roamed the ship yard until we found a speaker amplifier and cable, and later we installed them.

After we were finished with dry dock, painting our hull and undergoing demagnization, we sailed to Guantanamo for shakedown.

When we weren't at sea our crew went ashore for school in our speciality. Guantanamo had its special beer, Matuey, the one eye Indian with twelve percent alcohol. After a few bottles sailors who hadn't had a drink for some months, felt the effect.

The Corry was at anchor in the harbor and we went ashore in a motor whale boat. The base shore patrol collected the passed out sailors and took them to the pier where the motor whale boats docked. They were laid out on their stomach with their blouse collars turned up so that the motor whale crews could read the ship names on the collar and haul the sailor to the motor whale boat.

At sea, inspectors from Guantanamo came on board to check out the ship equipment and crew effectiveness. If they spotted a person that was important to the effectiveness of the department, they hung a card marked "dead" and from then he couldn't participate in the exercise. I died a few times some days.

Radio operators who copied "FOX" morse code on typewriters slammed the typewriter carriage to its end to avoid missing a letter. Soon the typewriter stops were damaged or broken. I became typewriter repair technician and learned how to remove the stops, and got our machine shop to make replacement stops.

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With the war over, President Truman was concerned that the world would think we were disarming and we were no longer a military force. So, he arranged for a mock invasion of the island of Culebra off Puerto Rico, and invited many foreign military observers to witness the invasion. Our sister ship carried the reporters and photographers. The Corry carried the military observers.

We were still in sight of the San Juan Harbor when we lost all power because we had lost water in our boilers. I tried with our battery operated radio to call the Harbor, but it was before starting time. Eventually, I was heard by a radio ham in Puerto Rico who called the base, and requested they send out a tug to give us steam. Before they arrived our crew had pumped water into the boiler by then and we got underway. The problem was said to be a backup pump that had never been installed. By the time we arrived at Culebra, the invasion was over and the Marines were back on their troop ship. The Navy launched another landing for the benefit of the observers. Some time later my sister mailed me an article depicting the invasion. The article never mentioned that the foreign observers had not seen the invasion.

By this time many sailors had enough points to get discharged. I decided to stay on the Corry instead of coming back to the States on a troop ship.

We came back to Charleston, and I checked regularly to see if my transfer papers had been prepared. Finally, I told the OD I was going ashore to the Naval Station. My papers were prepared.

By bus, boat and train, I was sent to Norfolk -- and from there to Lido Beach on Long Island for discharge.

My Navy career was over. I had not yet reached my Twentieth year birthday.

The career of the Corry was just getting underway.