



1-6

(i) Sociable city of Dairen - S. Manchuria.

The menfolks still sported a long braided queue down their backs while the Manchurian women waddled around in awkward looking shoes. Their feet were bound tight with texturized tape fabric when they were just babies. It had been in vogue for centuries. It was fashionable to be bound, and for those who left their feet unbound were considered from a mediocre class family. The ships of the U.S. Asiatic fleet were disbanding after a week of battle maneuvers and target practice. The flagship HURON which I was on, dropped its anchor off the coast of South Manchuria near the seaport of Dairen (Lu-ta). The city of Dairen was under Japanese control. In 1923, the seaport was quite a thriving terminal for the Manchurian transcontinental railway. The population was over one million, composed mostly of Manchus, Chinese, Koreans, Japanese and Russians. The people were aggressive and dedicated to their civil government. They ^{were} proud of their beautiful tree-line streets, their efficient city transportation and its efficient public utilities. There were not many busses in 1923, but the efficiently manned tramways ran down the main business center to the train depot and then circled around to return uptown like the cars did on "Market St." in San Francisco.

Shady trees still green with large leaves in late August brought fond memories of the state of Oregon and Washington, the evergreen country of the great Northwest. I was touring the town, transferring from rickshaws to horse-drawn buggies, called Russian "Droshky". They were light and open, four-wheeled carriages. The driver sat high in front with a commanding view. The rear passenger seats were shining white-cushioned seats. It brought back sweet memories of our childhood days of 1911-12 in Portland Oregon. The craze in private transportation amongst the more affluent society was 4-wheeled buggies with fringes on top. Sometimes I would get off riding the Droshky and took to 'legging' it in the commercial area. Most of the shops and stores were elegantly displayed with superabundance of merchandise. It had a touch of modern Japanese "Know-how". They kept the sidewalks and streets very clean, always ready to sweep and washdown each business night. Large signs and posters were advertised in Japanese, Chinese and Pidgin-English. Their English ads brought a little laughter to the foreigner: passing a mediocre massage-salon - "Will rub up and down till you fall to nice dreams"; passing a corner apothecary - "Clap today, gone tomorrow - try the nice herbs"; passing a Geisha tea-parlor - "Have delicious teas and girls for sale". Notwithstanding the 'fanciful' english - - in the famous "Yoshiwara" districts where the Japanese geisha girls reign supreme, there were large elaborate tea pavilions with colorful and attractive entrance halls. The legend says when the Japanese military took over as potentate of Southmanchuria, the sensuous Gen. Satoh under his command would tolerate only the graceful of the gracest 'geishas' in his area. None was too good for his officers and men. Japanese from the most affluent society in Dairen came for a nights entertainment. They were dressed in the finest of garb - silk and satin gowns with large obis of colorful designs. Beautiful Japanese women escorted by the affluent business man - wearing the native wooden shoes. Like native Japan - the ladies carrying colorful silk-ivory fans - gracefully kow-towing deeply to the senior-age folks with the greatest of respect. Their deep-seated traditions and customs kept the foreign society aloof from this sphere of relationship.

The large settlement of 'White' Russians remained away in their own exclusive coterie. The tall russian 'bourgeois' whirling his ivory-carved cane majestically escorting his blonde 'russky' girl gracefully alit from a sleek black russian 'droshky' with two shining black steeds. Uniformed door-men came out from fashionable 'Cossack' lounge to escort the handsome couple to the door. It was twilight and the colorful neon lights were switched on for the evening customers. Inside, the russian combo' was filling the air with tunes from Mos-kva. Already, the majestically set tables in the orchestral area were fully occupied, and the russian belly dancers had received their cue to enter the arena. The russian pom-pom drums and girls with their noisy castanets were beating away. Meanwhile, the gay crowd were busy lifting their right elbows, and tightly clenching and waving their sparkling glass of rich wine and champagne. A form of toasting was at hand. Chinese generally use the term 'Kam-bay'; the 'Yanks' as ^{were} called used 'bottoms-up'; but why didn't the Russians use their own term of 'Ka-watz'? They repeatedly toasted the Skandinavian term of 'Skoyal', skoal! These former Russian citizens escaped across the Russian border during the revolution as refugees, only to find solace and comfort in Manchuria's Harbin, Kalgan, Charhar, Dairen and Chinese seaports to the south.

(2)

The Earthquake alert of 1923.

An alarming news broadcast from Japan was received in the ship's wireless room. On Sept 1 1923, the USS Huron, flagship of the Asiatic fleet was anchored in the harbor off the port city of Dairen, south Manchuria. The Japanese wireless stations JCS, JOR and JOU were sending out urgent calls to their naval squadrons and their commercial ships at sea to return immediately to Japan or the nearest port to assist in a national emergency. "Yokohama and Tokyo and suburban cities and towns jarred by a major earthquake with entire towns afire and many thousands feared dead" was the gist of the disastrous news. The dots and dashes emitted from Tokyo were in the Japanese Kana code. Unfortunately, the USS Huron's only radio operator who was an expert in receiving Kana was ashore on liberty. For us who remained aboard, we were able to detect the immediate urgency of the broadcast when a CQ CQ came through the the 600 meter band reporting the heavy damage and fire caused by the earthquake. These later communiques were transmitted in English from a foreign ship operator who was able to intercept and translate the nature of its emergency in the Morse code. It was also intercepted by radio amateurs on the hamband. In response to the emergency call, all the ships of all nationalities in the vicinity of Japan changed their course 180 degrees and with all boilers steaming full blast headed towards Yokohama, Tokyo, Kobe, Nagoya and Osaka. The ether in and around Japan was all agog with dots and dashes. Interceptions of flash messages from American President lines ships and code messages from Canadian Steamship liners indicated they also had received the call for help in a national emergency. They all turned back and headed in a ships race to help out.

It wasn't long that urgent communiques from the U.S. government and the defense department were broadcast across the high-powered (500KW) transmitters of NSS/NPG/NPM NPO/NPN in a chain relay to all ships and stations of the Pacific and Asiatic fleet. The American Admiral aboard the USS Huron was designated the senior foreign naval officer afloat. He was to proceed full steam to arrive in Yokohama bay as soon as possible with food and provisions of blankets, tents and all the medical aid that could be fostered. Seven destroyers of the US Naval 38th division were abruptly interrupted in their maneuvers and target practice to speed at 35 knots to Japan to render all the human aid possible. The navy's great supply ship the USS Blackhawk was ordered to load up at Chefoo, Shantung province with millions of dollar in emergency supplies for immediate dispatch to the flaming cities of Japan.

Here on board the flagship Huron, the news was flashed to everyone aboard to prepare all hands to unflinchingly support this great mission of mercy, and to make great sacrifices of food, blankets and provisions necessary to sustain human life. We loaded up with bituminous coal in the big holds to overflowing even unto the compartments of our sleeping quarters into the hammock bins. Canned goods and frozen meats were stored to the fullest capacity. Straw mats and reed baskets were a part of the supplies.

In Darien, our shore patrol was heavily augmented by additional men carrying bull horns up and down the area announcing the recall of all navy men to return to their ships immediately. Their shore liberty was abruptly terminated. It didn't take very long to muster them. The call for aid was being answered. We all were dedicated to this great mission of mercy. The ships crew of 75 men in the engineroom, usually called the "Black gang" consisted of the chief engineer and his assistants; such as enginemen, machinist-mates, firemen-stokers who fed coal to the hot burners. To keep 18 boilers steamed up at full blast required an additional 25 stokers. The order from the chief of staff was to keep the 18,000 ton armored-cruiser running at top speed of 20 knots. A call for volunteers from all branches of the ships crew was issued through the loud speaker system. The shifts would be on a basis of 4hrs on and 4 hours off until arrival in Yokohama bay. A great response came from those who were off-duty hours volunteered. Men from the wireless gang; hospital apprentices, strikers for yeoman and storekeepers; seamen and coxswains from the deck gang; all answered the call for needed coal shovelers and fire-stokers. It was a dirty and dusty job below decks. The temperature in the boiler room was 102-107 degrees fahrenheit. Non-firemen not acclimated to the intense heat would pass out from exhaustion. However, we all volunteered to help stoke the fires and man the shovels in the engineroom. we prayed for strength and endurance.

(3)

Batten-down the hatches - anchors aweigh.

With all hands present and accounted for, the famous USS Huron, a four-stacker of World-war-I vintage with all 18 boilers at full blast and the high-powered (30KW) radio arc transmitter pounding at high speed; finally aweighed anchors. Never in the history of the ships legend had its engine power ever reached its top peak as on this mission of mercy to a beleaguered nation. As we pulled out of the Yellow Sea port - the ships compass duly read 40 degrees a hard west into a heavy wind and churning sea. Reports received by radio and weather stations read gale warnings over 40 knots from a south-westerly direction - and possibly reaching typhoon intensity in 24 hours. Came the blast from the ships loudspeaker: "Prepare for the worst! Tighten all hatches, secure all ports, roll up all tarps fore-n-aft, and shore-up all the coal on the decks". We were in for a rough voyage. The ships turbines restlessly driving thousands of horsepower on to the propellers. A heavily loaded armored-cruiser with 4-smoke stacks with steel-netted conning towers and 8 armored parapets of 8 inch guns would have been able to ride through the storm. The "EYES" of the Typhoon was located at a point 150 miles S.S.E off the coast of southern Honoshu islands, traveling at a slow speed westerly at 15 MPH. Storms of this nature were known to suddenly change its course. We were ready for the worse. There were no coffee-breaks or rest periods. Those found loafing were immediately asked to shuttle black coal across the deck to coal apertures and shoots to the hot engine room. The storm was blowing the loose coal dust - and soon the entire ship was blackened. The white-skinned sailors took on a dark-pigmented color. The white hammocks usually stowed in their respective lofts were layered with coal dust. Never did the HURON (which was called the South Dakota) ever emit such a trail of dark black smoke from its four stacks. Every so often, the engine room was given the order to use their blowers, which would cause the smokestacks to emit the black soot that was accumulated in the exhaust system. It was the size of snow flakes only turned dark and float in the atmosphere and sticking to your skin, like a spotted leopard.

It wasn't but a few hours at sea, the medics carrying portable oxygen equipment and bottles of ammonia, ^{erg} followed by a corps of stretcher bearers. They ventured into the hot engine room to resuscitate the victims of heat-stroke. The red hot furnace was opened for periodic stoking, and with the furnace door wide open - - the heat from the red burning coals shot out as from a gun turret, knocking out the stokers at hourly intervals. On time off from radio watches, I volunteered to shovel coal from our compartment-blackened section to coal shoots below. It was hard enough for us who were not inured to hard work. We sweated during the sultry weather under cloudy skies. The loss of salt from our bodies often caused the exhaustion, which tended to make one vomit and suffer dizzy spells. We were given teaspoonful of salt in fresh water from the scuttlebutt. Those who suffered seriously were made to lie down with the head low and his clothing loosened. What a relief it was for the overheated stoker to emerge into the fresh cool air! Instant resuscitation!

Way across the ocean to San Francisco, our busy staff of wireless operators was rapidly burning up the air with their dot-dash method of sending news to both navy and commercial communication companies, namely, Mackay Radio station KFS. The SF navy station was NPG. Like the ships engine room, the carbon arc chamber of the highpower wireless transmitter was running continuously hot. It was seldom shut down during this emergency, and only shortly for a period of long distance reception. The insulation of the very high frequency coils was thin coat of rubber. Just before the operator ignited the arc chamber with pink alcohol, he would always check to see if the big antenna switches were thrown to the right and also check to see if there were any of the ships mascots, Pago, the southsea monkey or the 3 yr old cat, Pinky was not snoozing on the warm insulated coils, which was just inside of a large port-hole. Over anxiousness to get the emergency dispatches to the States, the operator forgot to look and check - The highpower switches was thrown to the right and the alcohol was added to the chamber to create the high arc voltages and the high frequencies, when a big animal-sounding whoosh - the only sight noticeable was a frightened hairy monkey leaping through the open porthole into the stormy sea. The first tragedy of our errand of mercy.

On September 3rd, the heavy seas became violent - churned up a strong typhoon traveling northward from the southeast tip of beleaguered Japan. Tokyo and Yokohama was being wracked up by a severe earthquake of over 7.0 on the Richter scale.

The sleek-looking armored cruiser HURON, the flagship of the senior naval officer of the Asiatic fleet, was truly exhibiting its seaworthiness and stamina far beyond the call of duty. Against a formidable storm, the mighty cruiser rose to the occasion. The powerful engines having released every important cubic foot of steam power into each and every piston caused the undaunted cruiser to shudder and ~~shimmy~~ at the powerful onslaught of towering waves. Manufacturer's maximum speed capacity on smooth seas was 22 knots, but today, the HURON broke its own record by bravely maintaining a speed of 25 knots in a swollen sea. The ship writhed and tossed; sometimes it dove like a jack-rabbit into a high crest which brought the towering seas over the wing of the bridge deck. From abaft, simultaneously the ship's stern would lift high above the waterline, causing the gigantic power relayed to the propellers to spin freely above water. It emulated the 4-stacked destroyers of the 45th division in heavy seas. But the tonnage was minimal (1800 tons) compared to the HURON'S 20,000 gross tonnage.

The typhoon-bred antics of the HURON shook and tossed the wooden yard-arms and the fragile cage-like antennas. Thirty kilowatts of high frequency current was being transmitted into the ship's antenna each time the wireless operator depressed the morse-like handkey. Urgent communications had to be established with both land and sea stations in this, a humane call in time of national disaster.

Looking up at a loosened guy wire which broke from the wooden yard-arm, I saw gigantic high voltage sparks grounding to a metal guy, which would have been fatal if touched by human hands. With each lurch and pounding of the ship brought on a flash of electric charges leaping across the live cage antenna to the loosened guy a 100ft above deck. A moment before I was able to reach the ship's radio center, the wooden arm was on fire. The ship's power antenna would very well unloosen itself from the insulated fastenings to the spar and the ship's towering mast. Having wended my way through the winding ship's passageways, it seemed like it took an hour before I reached radio center.

The wireless operator on duty was 'Mac', the oldest sailor (in time served in the Asiatics) of the radio gang. He was pounding the brass both energetically and very professionally, trying to reach the west coast of the USA. I found him squatted on a swivel chair with both of his long legs crossed under his buttocks. It did not deter his efforts to exercise his proficiency as a radio operator. With tight cushioned ear phones strapped to his head and confined to a narrow receiving booth, he failed to hear my warning.

"The radio yard-arm's on fire!" He kept pounding away. I ran quickly to the arc room to pull the main switch to the transmitter where the relays were activated. The powerful motor generators ceased to operate and the arc chamber deactivated and the alcohol valve turned off. Mac mustered up the entire radio gang. He was aware of what happened after he had been deprived of key control. "All hands report to the boat deck, the radio yard-arm is afire", he bellowed to his aides. Yes, it was now a roaring fire, a 100ft up on the mast. The fat bo'suns mate ran to the iron cleats and began lowering the flaming mast pieces to the deck below. "Is the radio antenna deactivated? I don't want to risk myself on a high-voltage wire, ya' know," the mate called out. "Yeah, I decommissioned the radio room, lower it away", I replied and gestured. The gale was blowing a storm near 60 miles an hour. I had admired 'ole Mac', who had the situation well under control. He ordered his strikers to fetch an emergency antenna from the store room.

It was to have been a tremendous task to have to replace a high antenna during a whirling gale and violent seas, which washed over the bridge deck. The hustling work crew bared their bodies down to their 'skivvies'. They were reluctantly getting a briny sea bath. Commander-in-chief of the Asiatic fleet, Admiral Anderson was temporarily deprived of communication facilities, and the HURON was weathering a typhoon at sea. Blow me down, I thought wildly. What would all the contacting ships and naval stations on land think? All of a sudden they lost all radio contact with the Admiral and his flagship. They could dream up any unforeseen incident that might befall the USS HURON in storm areas.

Down below at radio center, with all the powerful receiving speakers turned on, I could hear numerous stations calling us: "A67 A67, you are ZAN ZAN, what seems to be wrong?" We already had been out of radio control for 60 minutes. We just couldn't answer.

~~SEPTEMBER 1923, 60 SECONDS TO NOON (FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS)~~

~~It was approximately 60 seconds before noon on Saturday, September 1, 1923, came the greatest shock of a gigantic earthquake which destroyed the densely populated areas of Tokyo, Yokohama, Yokosuka and Odawara. The tremor of great magnitude had hardly left a building undamaged. The noonday shock was followed by a long chain of after-shocks and potent seismic waves which destroyed great portions of the city of Kamakura. The serious after shocks caused gigantic conflagrations which broke out in many areas. The underground water pipes were ruined by the tremor, made it impossible to check the spread of the conflagration. Many thousands of refugees took to the underground shopping centers, only to lose their lives when the flames swept through from three sides. The combined losses from earthquake and fire was estimated at 140,000 human lives and 100,000 injured and wounded. There were 40,000 people missing. Many could not be identified. The loss in property was from 4 to 5 billion yen.~~

The good ship USS HURON arrived in Tokyo bay after a technical delay of ten hours or more. Rumors had it that the Koreans who had been reluctant subordinates to the Japanese rulers were fomenting riots and enhancing the conflagration. In the Tokyo-Yokohama area, there lived over 100,000 Koreans and 44,000 Chinese. The prevailing rumors caused the central authorities to exact martial law and hold all foreign and alien personnel for investigation. Many innocent people fell under the popular fury caused by the unverified reports. The US NAVY was a bit flabbergasted by the continued reluctance of the port authorities to permit American vessels to enter Tokyo bay for aiding in rescue operations. The HURON had amply loaded at CHEFOO large supplies of meats and food provisions for the needy refugees. The Stewart, a 4-stacker destroyer, was despatched at top speed to Yokohama to report conditions in advance, only to be denied entrance to Tokyo bay. The USS BORIE was quickly dispatched to Nagasaki to pick up medical supplies for the thousands of wounded. The USS RIZAL, another 4-stacker, was kept on the alert at Dairen, and acted as an important radio relay communication ship for C-in-C Asiatic. The gigantic US Navy supply ship USS BLACKHAWK was quickly dispatched to the port of Tsingtao for immediate supplies. The remaining destroyers of the 38th division accompanied by (COMDESRONS) the commander of destroyer squadrons Asiatic was also despatched to aid the needy in Yokohama city. Destroyer divisions forty-three and forty-five were in Chinwangtao under preparations for an immediate emergency call.

After the entrance delay, the HURON proceeded to anchor a few thousand yards off from the breakwater that disappeared under the surface during the first and subsequent shocks. We arrived to experience a long chain of after-shocks. It caused mini-tidal actions in the bay. Many of those structures on the hill-side of Yokohama that were weakened structurally by the original shocks finally came tumbling down and crashed on to the rocky coastline. It was quite visible from the deck of the anchored ships. Then came across the P.A. system of the Admiral's directives. "Hear Ye, all those personnel aboard having two woolen blankets, prepare to donate one for humanitarian need ashore. Also to tighten your belts. All fresh meats and vegetables are to be distributed to the needy to prevent starvation. You will subsist on canned and frozen foods until further notice." Obviously, there were no dissidents. For several weeks diet, it was 'beef skin and cream' and 'pork and beans' with black coffee.

A select volunteer group was chosen to lead a search party ashore. The report was the modern facilities of the US Naval hospital on the hillside had burnt to the ground. It was indeed an unpleasant task. The stench from burning bodies penetrated the whole area. With the aid of some of the fortunate survivors of the hospital, we were lucky to have been able to identify some charred bodies by identifying rings, watches and personal jewelry. The charred corpses were officially tagged. Then came the kerosene gang to finish off the open-door cremation. The remaining ashes stored in lead boxes which were labelled and sent back to the States over both American and Canadian liners. Our search patrol was equipped with a white face mask. Death, besides its sting, carried a penetrating stench of burnt and unburnt corpses of over 140,000 victims. I crossed a burnt-out bridge and from a steel strut was suspended a partial burnt out body of a female. She was just barely hanging by the support of a few strands of her hair. To the left or the right, no matter which direction one turned, were the sad plight of thousands of refugees begging for food or medical attention. Death to some was the easiest way out.

The outside world had realized the magnitude of the catastrophe and wholeheartedly gave instant response and sympathy to a stunned Japan. The ship's personnel besides donating their fresh provisions, had already surrendered half of their woolen blankets. The US Asiatic fleet formally presented \$5 million dollars in supplies, while the American Red Cross made a similar contribution, besides quantities of medical supplies. The foreign ships in the Japanese harbors offered their kind services by taking care of refugees and supplying first aid to many sufferers. The great sympathy manifested by the United States in this hour of suffering and the superb service rendered by the American Ambassador Cyrus Woods, are the wonderful memories that no Japanese would likely to ever forget. Even to this very day, discounting the man-made tragedy of the atomic disaster at Hiroshima, it's seemingly unbelievable that in so brief a space of time without warning that a densely populated city of Japan could be swept out of existence in 60 seconds.

We were informed while on a search and rescue mission that day of after-shocks, multitudes of refugees had sought temporary haven under the roof of a gigantic cement warehouse, when there was an instant tremor causing the building to collapse killing thousands of people.

The cities in the area had hardly cooled off before reconstruction plans were already instigated by the mayor of Tokyo. The Reconstruction board hired an American, Dr. Chas. Beard, formerly a New York city municipal researcher to make a general survey of the city. Private persons were also anxious to rebuild their homes and businesses as speedily as possible. It wasn't long that the banks had weathered the financial crisis after nine months, and the progress was near phenomenal. Schools and Parks, homes and businesses began rapidly to emerge from the ashes of Sept. 1st 1923.

The American ships, both commercial and US shipping board vessels plus an armada of warships from the U.S. Asiatic fleet had gracefully remained until they themselves were suffering near depletion of fuel oil and supplies. The huge Japanese harbor hosted the greatest number of vessels of all flags at any one time. It was a symbol of international hope and sympathy for a devastated nation. The multitudes of ships of various sizes and nationalities were so closely anchored that one could almost traverse the length of the bay by foot from ship to ship. One glorious scene still imbedded in the deep inner sanctum of my memoirs was the greatest display of electrical brilliance when the thousands of magnificent ships switched on their warm and friendly lights to illuminate the grandest floating city of "HOPE". It was a symbol and expression of deep heart-felt sympathy to a sister nation from the other nations on the globe.

The HURON, a great ship of mercy, was weighing it's mud-clogged anchor in the cool of the evening. She saved many lives and gracefully fed many mouths. The ones on the beach stood silently with tearful eyes and thankful hearts. The survivors of stout heart will remain to rebuild a greater metropolis of the future. The HURON's stalwarts stood emotionally at 'attention' as the graceful cruiser turned a 180 degrees. They departed with heavy-hearts and deep condolence to their loved ones. As the ship smoothly faced the high Yokohama hills towards the bay entrance, and the door to the open seas, there was pervading the silence at an auspicious time - the music of "Auld lang syne". Oh! What a beautiful evening, with the NIPPON sun setting in the western hills as a "SAYONARA" to my shipmates of the HURON. The "ORIENTAL SUN" will be rising brighter for NIPPON, in the rosier days ahead.

The Commander-in-chief Admiral Anderson was proudly acclaimed for the heroic services rendered by the American Navy. The HURON had other errands to complete. The ship was way behind schedule. Much had to be done to get caught up. The ships crew was ready to clean and scrub the dirty ship. Decks needed 'holy-stoning' and the gun and armor needed polishing.

As the ship picked up speed through the mouth of the bay, we passed numbers of harbor revetments and military redans, which seemed to have been constructed as underwater fortifications.

The HURON on smooth seas, charted a course to the "Pearl of the Orient", Shanghai China. I was originally assigned to a radio receiving center for Navalradio Shanghai.

'For these many a years, I've never found out. Was this playful shipmate ribbing me? He said to me while eyeing floaters in the bay. "Dead women float up, dead men float down".

USS Huron. 1923.

Henry J. Roy. Radioman