

Sanderson, Dr. Roy's Naval Diary

This diary, now in the possession of Dr. Sanderson's granddaughter, Laurie Green, was transcribed by Bob Grigg, who also spent time on Guam while doing his tour of duty in the USN. The notations made within brackets were made by him to enable the modern landlubber to better understand the doctor's observations. Little did he suspect that the six year old boy whose tonsils and adenoids he removed in 1939 would someday cross paths with him and derive happiness from his diary.

Detached from the U.S.N.H. [US Naval Hospital] Portsmouth, New Hampshire. 13 Aug. 1945, 4 days proceed, 7 days at leave, 4 days travelling time. [There are 15 days between his leaving the Portsmouth hospital and the day he officially reports to his next assignment. Seven of these days are officially designated as leave time. (You accrue 30 days per year.)]

Left Hartford, Conn. 25 Aug. 1945 at 1515 [3:15 PM], arrived in N.Y. [at] 1800 [6:00 PM]. Met Fred, went to the N.Y. Athletic Club, where we imbibed and ate, listened to good music and dancing. Left N.Y. at 2339 [11:30 PM], N.Y.C. for Chicago.

Arrived at 1800 [6:00 PM] 20 Aug. 45. Left Chicago at 2030 [8:30 PM] on the "Overland Limited", passed through Illinois, Iowa, Utah. Stopped at Ogden 2 ½ hours, then through the Great Salt Lake, Nevada, then California. Arrived in Oakland, Cal. At 0830 [8:30 AM] 29 Aug. 45. [Then] by ferry to San Francisco. Arrived at 0900 [9:00 AM] [and] reported to U.S. Federal Court Building Annex for processing.

Assigned to [Hotel] Plaza; not a bad hotel; very nice accommodations. Met my shipmate Lt. Dargo, a Hungarian from Long Island, N.Y., a member of the N.Y. Athletic Club. A chap that has seen a lot of action; a very fine chap.

Reported to the district medical officer at 1400 [2:00 PM] 29 Aug. 45, then Dargo and I proceeded to punish a pint of liquor; naturally it was consumed – no pain, no strain.

I had dinner at the coffee shop, which was not up to navy chow.

Went to bed early; Dargo had a date and came in very, very late. He has always been single, but thinks he had better be serious before he loses any more hair.

30 Aug. 45 Reported at 1000 [10:00 AM] to collect my pay account, then hopped a bus for Treasure Island. Called on Capt. Herman, he was delighted to see me and insisted on my dining with them. On the bus I met a doctor from Sherman, Conn., which is between Danbury and New Milford.

[Treasure Island] was the sight of the world's fair; a huge artificially made island. [Capt. Herman] showed me around the hospital; not much like Portsmouth Naval, I can assure you. I ate dinner with all the gold braid of the navy. [Gold braid meaning Captains, Commodores and Admirals.] Just a table for Captains; sat to the right of Capt. Herman. All the Captains were very nice to meet, and seemed like regular fellows, and very interesting to listen to. They were all interested in where I was going and some had been there and gave me the names of several officers they had met there. One was a Capt. Simpson.

Returned to San Francisco, wrote a letter to mother, made myself ready to meet Rex Harrington at the Owl Drug Store, corner of 1st Street and Market, found him to be most congenial and a real host. We took a train for Oakland and got off at Pleasant Valley. Aunt Lena was anxiously waiting for us and very happy to see me. She looked fine except that she walked terribly stooped over. Met Rex's wife – quite a character, if you know what I mean, but apparently good at heart. Rex proceeded to rejuvenate me in addition to my own rejuvenation. His wife informed him that he had had enough, as he was too talkative. However I enjoyed it very much.

We had a swell dinner; Maxine and her daughter arrived – enjoyed them very much. Then her husband arrived and they had to leave shortly, as her mother wasn't expected to live very long. They arrived at the hospital about 10 minutes after her death. Both Rex and Aunt Lena asked me all kinds of questions about their relatives in the east.

I stayed overnight [and] had a swell night's rest, came back in town with Rex.
31 Aug. 45 At 0630 [6:30 AM] walked up to the hotel, then proceeded to report in at the Federal Building. At 0900 [9:00 AM] received my transportation card marked # 10, meaning destination Guam. A red card attached to my registration paper said "urgent", so I suppose I am slated to leave soon. I have to report 1 Sept. 45 at 0900 unless called before. Will now write some letters and report this afternoon for my transportation pay.

{A good Scotch story: Andrew & Alex & I ran afoul of me aunt.} [This is to jog his memory later about the joke. I know a lot of jokes, but this one eludes me.]

1 Sept. 45 Received my transportation check. Walked about town – stopped at the Elks Club, a 14-story bldg.. Very nice – a beautiful swimming pool and everything a man would desire. Met Rex at the store. He took me to the Old Grotto for dinner. Not much to look at, but excellent food.

2 Sept. 45 Rex drove me all about San Francisco and all points of interest, a very fine trip.

3 Sept. 45 Rex drove me all about Oakland and surrounding hills. Had a wonderful view of all the Bay Area – really marvelous.

4 Sept. 45 Reported in to return Thurs. Went down to the swimming pool and then to the Paramount Theatre – saw "The Pride of the Marines". Returned early.

5 Sept. 45 Wrote letters and cards, took another swim, went down to meet Rex and as usual had a very pleasant time.

6 Sept. 45 Reported in and was informed to report back at 1500 [3:00 PM] for detachment, so must be headed out. Usually takes about 48 hrs.. Looks like I would be sailing out Saturday. Will write more letters today, get all loose ends picked up and be ready on the mark.

7 Sept. 45 Finished packing part of my gear and took it down to pier #56 between 1300 & 1400 [1:00 PM & 2:00 PM]. Wrote mother a letter, then went down to meet Rex and stayed there overnight.

8 Sept. 45 Returned to San [Francisco] this morning, met a Lt. by the name of Richard Long, a member of the New York Athletic Club, originally from Ohio, a very nice chap. Reported to Annex to receive detachment orders. [I am] to report to pier #38 1300, 11 Sept. 45. Apparently no kidding this time unless orders get snafued [a military acronym meaning situation normal –

all f---ed up], but doubt that. Just called Rex and asked him if he could endure me for another two days. He said “Yup”, so will meet him at 1630 [4:30 PM].

9 Sept. 45 Rex drove me over to Hamilton Field about 30 miles from Oakland, saw some very large 4-motor army transports. The entire field was immense; it also was terribly hot, but cool as soon as we returned to Oakland.

10 Sept. 45 Returned to San [Francisco], did some shopping and all loose ends together. Went to the movie “Eddie Rickenbacker” – very good. Had my dinner, then called up mother, wrote letters while waiting for call, had a nice visit with all three at home. Mailed my letter and went to bed.

11 Sept. 45 Had breakfast, then proceeded to get my gear squared away, wrote several short letters, went up to pick up my mail – 4 letters, 1 to arrive. I grabbed my gear and headed for pier 38 with two other officers, went aboard at 1300 on an APA [a military passenger ship], the USS *American Legion*, about an 18,000 ton ship – good sized. She moved out at 1600; it was cold and foggy. Met my shipmate Commander Engleman, a Dr. who has been in the navy for 14 years. We have a very nice cabin, all conveniences. Retired early.

12 Sept. 45 Ship rides well. Had an abandon ship drill. [This is to familiarize yourself as to the location of your assigned lifeboat.] The weather is cold and foggy. Wrote a letter to Mother, laid around and read. Set our watches back one hour at 1900 [7:00 PM]. Went to a movie in the evening; “The Thin Man”, very good.

13 Sept. 45 A beautiful day, very clear; the ship rides like a baby carriage. Nice and warm. Another abandon ship drill. Saw “Brewster’s Millions” this evening – very good. [It is good! Stars Jack Benny – he has to spend every last cent of one million dollars in exactly one year in order to inherit several million dollars more.] Moon and stars out, and a gorgeous night out.

14 Sept. 45 Nothing unusual today. Attended the movies – forgot the name of it.

15 Sept. 45 Four days out, everything normal. Saw “The Guardsman”, about Louis XVI – very good. A small land bird of some type came aboard today.

16 Sept. 45 Sunday divine worship, otherwise no change. Saw the movie “Texas Star”, very good.

17 Sept. 45 General Quarters alarm, so had to bat[ten] down the portholes. [Clamp a lid over them to prevent light from escaping.] Observation planes flying about, gunnery practice on 20mm, 40 & 90mm. You sure know something is doing, but the old ship didn’t even quiver. Mailed a lot of letters this morning. We should be coming into port before long. I spoke too soon; they just let off a barrage that really made the old ship shiver. Arrived in port at 1400 [2:00 PM] on the dot. No liberty tonight. [They were not allowed off the ship.]

18 Sept. 45 Went ashore with Dr. Cherault and Dr. Thomas, saw some of Pearl Harbor City, then went out to Honolulu, had a swell time, saw a lot, stopped at the Elks Club – not bad, but restricted to members only, so didn’t stop. Arrived aboard about 2045 [8:45 PM].

19 Sept. 45 Nothing unusual, just laid around and read. Took on 50 more officers today; we are now eating with the ship’s officers – very nice. Served very much better. [Ship’s officers had waiters; they had a special rate called Stewards Mates.]

20 Sept. 45 Left Pearl Harbor at 0700, so are on our way once more. Set our time pieces back ½ hour at 1900. Saw quite a few ships today headed for Pearl; one large battle wagon [battleship], a destroyer and a flat top [aircraft carrier], transport and a tanker. One of the passenger seamen fell about twenty feet and broke his neck.

21 Sept. 45 Had a funeral and burial at sea at 1500 [3:00 PM]. Very impressive & short ceremony. A beautiful sunset, but it gets dark very quick after the sun goes down.

22 Sept. 45 A very fine day, still plodding along at 15 ½ knots an hour. Set watches back 1 hour at 1900. Sunset gorgeous tonight. Learned tonight that there was a big bottleneck of officers at Pearl; about 5,000 waiting transportation to the U.S. for other assignments. Thank God I didn't get stuck in it.

23 Sept. 45 Attended divine worship on boat deck aft. Very well attended. A colored boy sang a solo and one of the officers acted as song leader. It was very hot in the sun, but quite worth attending in spite of the heat. We sang three very familiar songs. There was a movie, but did not attend. During the night we will cross the International Date Line at the 180th meridian, and will lose one day. (Monday)

25 Sept. 45 Still moving on not much different except getting hotter by degrees. Saw a movie, but don't remember the name. The navy is made up of young studs, old fuddies and Lt. Commanders. Saw the movie tonight "The Girl in the Case" – not bad. We have seen quite a few birds about lately, so must be near some of the islands. Hot and muggy.

26 Sept., Wed. Very muggy this morning; had quite a heavy shower, then the sun came out – terribly hot. Still nothing but water to look at. Saw the picture "San Francisco in 1900" with Jane Withers – not too bad.

27 Sept. Thurs. Looks like it would be a rainy day. I hope so, as it will be much more comfortable. [We] should have passed Wake Island during the night or early this morning. We should have three days more at the most before reaching Guam, then expect I will have to go to work.

28 Sept. Set our time pieces back one hour this evening. Another ship has been trailing us off from our port side, aft. Nothing else of importance developed.

29 Sept. The other ship was about mid port this AM, but gradually crept ahead. It was a new APA, according to the dope we are to arrive in Guam between 1400 – 1600 30 Sept. Saw two ships well out on the horizon, starboard side, moving east. Expect this will be our last night aboard ship until I get headed back east, and that won't come any too soon to suit me.

30 Sept. Sighted Tinian [Island, it is about 97 miles north of Guam.] off port side about 1000 [10:00 AM], anchored in the harbor of Apra at 1600. No one allowed to go ashore.

Oct. 1st Raining hard and a lot of it. Officers were allowed to go ashore, also some of the crew. We went ashore in a landing boat in pouring rain, visited the fleet officer's Club and returned to ship. [Landing craft were open, rectangular, motorized flat-bottomed boats having a bow that was hinged so as to drop down, allowing the passengers to disembark. When coming back to the mother ship, rope ladders were suspended from the deck down near the water's edge. You had to climb up. (not the easiest thing to do after an evening of partying on shore!)] Some had a beautiful package on [they were drunk] and the water was very rough, so much so that it was

difficult to get onto the ladder. On my return I was notified that the ship had received a dispatch ordering me ashore at 1400 [2:00 PM] the following day.

Oct. 2nd Still raining, no let-up. Commander Engleman also received a dispatch to go ashore. We both went together; there was a truck there to meet him, so I went with him to his location and a jeep from 103 came there to pick me up. I arrived here about 1600 and was shown my quarters and met all the Drs. within. My arrival apparently called for a celebration, consequently I didn't get to sleep until after 0200 [2:00 AM], although I sacked in at 2300 [11:00 PM].

Oct. 3rd Was given my surgical assignment, then ordered a jeep and proceeded to find Ernest Williams at 314th wing bombing command at North Field. [This was later renamed Anderson Air Force Base.] A rather rough ride for the most of it, and a little too fast for comfort. Finally found Ernest; he was very much surprised, he showed me all about the field and we had a grand visit together, then returned to [the] 103.

Oct. 4th Received about twenty-three letters this morning from the family at home; they sure were welcome.

Oct. 5th Sent a cablegram to mother today. Heavy rain and wind today, nearly blew me out of bed during the night.

*Intervening dates up to:

Oct. 14th Nothing unusual except that Dr. Creevy was unable to go aboard ship Oct. 6th due to the storm.

Oct. 7th Dr. Creevy finally got away about 2100 [9:00 PM].

Oct. 14th Went on OOD duty. [OOD means Officer Of the Deck, a naval term for the officer in charge of a specific area, whether it be the quarterdeck of a ship, or in Dr. Sanderson's case, most likely overseeing admissions or other administrative duties at the hospital.]

Oct. 15th Casualties from Okinawa began to pour in at night by plane.

Oct. 17th Dr. Eagan from Gloucester, Mass. and I went for a ride down to Telefofo Harbor in a jeep. We saw the remains of a large Jap ship that had been put out of commission. The natives said that it was loaded with geisha girls. [That ship was still there on the beach in 1956; I have a picture of it. Telefofo is on the southeastern quadrant of Guam.]

We saw considerable cultivating taking place; large coconut groves, Jap prisoners at work, large caves used by the Japs, considerable number of tanks out of commission and a two-man submarine. All in all a very interesting trip. Our route took us directly across the [landing] strips of Harmon air field, where there were a lot of planes of various types. [This air field evolved into the navy's air field, as opposed from Anderson, the air force's base some twenty-odd miles to the northeast. The home port for the Japanese miniature submarines was located on the island of Chichi Shima, in a group of islands called the Kazan Rhetto, north of the Marianas Is.]

Oct. 18th A Jap was brought in, shot up, that refused to surrender to the natives. An operation was performed, but he didn't make the grade. One more good Jap, because he is dead.

Oct. 20 Had the OOD duty again – not too bad, but will be damn glad when I never have it again. A quiet duty – no excitement.

Oct. 21 Ernest Williams called on me today. We had our pictures taken together, helped with an emergency operation this morning, otherwise a quiet day.

Oct. 22nd Admiral Sutton, with his staff, arrived this morning on an inspection tour. He was at Portsmouth Naval Hospital just a short time before I was detached. He made a very short visit, and it was pouring buckets of rain.

Oct. 23 Nothing unusual, about the same routine.

Oct. 24 During the afternoon, took a ride down to Agana to look about. Although a good many buildings had been torn down and cleaned up, there were a lot that still remained all shattered to pieces.

Oct. 25 Nothing unusual happened.

26 Oct. Had the OOD duty today and during the afternoon had to go up to Base Hospital 18 on a urological consultation on a burned case.

27 Oct. Attended a cocktail party at the club given in honor of seven of the Drs. going back to the States. As a result, it was rather a noisy place about the quarters for the biggest share of the night.

28 Oct. 31 Oct. Not too much to write about except I went to a good baseball game on the afternoon of 31 Oct.

1 Nov. The seven Drs. leaving were flying around today to get their reservations and orders all set.

2 Nov. The seven left early this morning and a very happy bunch, I can assure you.

3 Nov. Nothing unusual, as I remember.

4 Nov. Dr. Dirthing took me on a general sight-seeing tour of the island in Dr. Hand's jeep, we sure covered all of it that was possible in an afternoon.

5 Nov. Just a plain day of work, that's all – usual routine.

6 Nov. No change, except they gave Capt Carter a cocktail party.

7 Nov. No change.

8 Nov. No change,

9 Nov. Went through the general procedure of being admitted to SOQ as a pt, but was allowed to remain at my quarters, not required to perform any more duties. [I don't have a clue as to what he said here.]

10 Nov. Went to a softball game. Three teams played very good on the whole.

11 Nov. Ernest Williams came down in a jeep and took me down to Camp Baxter, 393 CBMU to have dinner with John Negri. [The CB in CBMU probably stands for "Construction Battalion".] We sat around a while before eating. Guzzled up some beer and talked in general. Met all the fellows in the tent. Quite a few [were] from Conn. We ate, then went out and took quite a lot of pictures, all of which I hope came out good. Ernest had to be back at 3:30, so we had to leave at 2:30. It sure was a very enjoyable afternoon. [John Negri, his brother Mike, and their father, all were stone masons in Winsted. They built the tower atop Haystack Mtn. in Norfolk, for one.]

12 Nov. Started to sort of get some of my things together just in case my survey goes through in a hurry.

13 Nov. Was told this morning that my survey was signed and sent to ComMarianas [Commander of the Marianas Islands military operations] by special dispatch – well, that was something.

14 Nov. Went down to Tulon Bay swimming. It really was quite a nice place, there were a lot swimming. The water was very clear, the wind blew in one direction and there was a very strong current in the opposite direction. The water made my arms smart terribly – so much that it really caused pain. It was hard to stand, as the current was so strong, and the water so buoyant that you had to swim or float most of the time.

In the coconut grove there were fireplaces to cook whatever one brought with them. It really was a beautiful place, and were it on any of the shores of U.S.A., it sure would be a money-making operation.

On returning, I went to the club and learned there at 1800 [6:00 PM] that my orders were in to leave at 0700 the next morning to go aboard the USS Haven [This was a hospital ship.] Had already planned to go to a boxing match at the Arena Bowl, so took them in [and] got back about 2200 [10:00 PM], started to get busy packing a little more to do than I thought. Wrote mother & Ruby each a short note and got in my sack at 0400. Was called at 0630, so hopped to it.

15 Nov. To report at SOQ for transportation to the ship. There were two busses, 8 officers and over three hundred Pts. from 103. Well we all arrived on scheduled time. As we came aboard, we stepped into an elevator and were taken to SOQ on “A” deck. Most of the day was spent in getting organized. The ship was air conditioned, and it sure was some relief. I am in a compartment with eight-sack upper and lower tiers. I am in an upper. The other officers are all army, marine and air corps, and a very good bunch. We get along swell. Went to the movies tonight.

16 Nov. At 1330 [1:30 PM] we lifted anchor and are now on our way back to the States; well that’s really something. The ship rides quite well – has a nice pitch, but not roll as yet. [He means that the ship is heading into an oncoming sea, which makes her bow go up and down as she goes through the waves. This is a much easier ride than if the seas were coming from either port or starboard, causing the ship to roll. This is the motion most likely to produce seasickness. This region of the Western Pacific is under the influence of the northeast trade winds, and as the ship leaves Guam for the U.S., she will be on a northeast heading, hence the oncoming seas.]

17 Nov. Smooth sailing, everything going nicely. Very hot on deck, but cool in quarters. Went down to see the dermatologist – the same old story.

18 Nov. Attended divine services; they had a very nice choir and the chaplain gave a very nice sermon. Take a sun bath each day. Went to the movies.

Nov. 19 Smooth sailing. We are taking the northern circular route; the weather begins to be a little cooler already, really quite noticeable.

20 Nov. Still smooth sailing. We are up about the 40th meridian. Were issued some wind breakers today, as the weather is gradually getting cooler, but nice. Movie not so hot, left before it was over.

21 Nov. Wednesday, still good sailing, saw a large school of porpoises off starboard. We will cross the International Date Line tonight, so will lose [actually, he will gain one day] a day. Tomorrow will be Wednesday also. We have to set our time pieces ahead two hours already, and will likely change again tomorrow.

We have a sailor aboard with his Guamanian wife and two small boys. He was taken a Jap prisoner two days after Pearl Harbor. The little tykes are cute. The albatross showed up yesterday and are now following us along. There were two yesterday, but six today. Began to be foggy with rain. Ship beginning to roll a bit now, just a nice roll.

2nd Wednesday Whitika was awakened about 0300 with water filling his sack, so until that was partially taken care of, no one slept. It has been foggy and rainy all day and very cold on the port side with a heavy wind. A small aircraft carrier passed us today going in the opposite direction. Roll of ship slightly on the increase.

22 Nov. Thanksgiving Day. Had a very nice dinner, but not like home. However, they did the best they could to make everyone happy, weather still foggy and rainy. Very cold and swells beginning to increase, otherwise nothing unusual.

23 Nov. Weather very bad out. Foggy with rain and increasing roll of ship, some additional cases of seasickness. The old ship is sure beginning to show us a few tricks. Swells are getting larger.

24 Nov. We were all awakened about 0300 with dishes crashing, chairs banging around and one in particular slid right into our quarters, out again, and back again. On the second trip it sure was moving. The diet kitchen is just off from our quarters, and how the ship rolled, it really was something to make you think; from then on, no one could sleep, but laugh and giggle at the things that went on. At morning chow the numbers were few, but how things flew around; trays, eating implements, went all directions, but we finally got something to eat, one had to hang on to tray or he didn't have one. Well, that has been going on all day, and most everyone has sacked in, hanging on. One of the corpsmen slid the whole length of the galley and finished up with a bunch of dishes and trays on top of him that was just off from our quarters. He sure was a sight. Quite a few additional seasickness cases on the list, but those that go down to mess just laugh and giggle at all the things that go on. One fat army nurse ate her chow and just as she finished—whoops, and she filled her tray all over herself and sprayed two officers next to her. That sure was a sight. Not much sleep tonight, read and hung on until daybreak.

25 Nov. Attended divine services in spite of all the rolling of ship, although at that time the rolls were not quite so heavy, but at chow time there were plenty of them on hand. It's still rainy, foggy and a heavy wind with pretty rough water. Still just sacking in and holding on. No one is allowed out sick since Friday. Sacked in, set our time pieces ahead 1 hour more tonight. Read and hung on, as usual.

26 Nov. We were awakened again at 0500 with some real heavy rolls again, causing things to break loose that were lashed down. Blue sky in places in the sky, looks like it might clear off before too long. Turned out to be a nice day, but the water or something still keeps the ship still a-rolling, although we were allowed to go outside, but necessary to hang on at the right time.

27 Nov. Water a little more calm, but ship still rolling a bit, sky partly clear, but in general sort of gray, heavy clouds. We are supposed to dock about 1300 tomorrow. Everybody is in good spirits. Our shipmate has finally gotten on his feet and is making up for lost time.

28 Nov. It became very cloudy during the night, also a heavy fog, which slowed the ship down considerably. All reports have it that we will be late anchoring, as it is very foggy out right now. About 1500 [3:00 PM] sighted several ships on their way out, also an island – getting near mainland, except it won't be long before we see the Golden Gate Bridge.

It has been sighted – everybody able to [do so] sure were on hand to get a good look at it. After we had gone under it, the sky in the west cleared a little and we could see golden clouds. We are finally anchored and to stay aboard over night. To be taken off at 7:30 AM.