

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

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U.S.S. RELIEF (AH1)

CONFIDENTIAL

WAR DIARY OF THE

U.S.S. RELIEF

SEPTEMBER, 1945

Task Group Organization: Commander Service Force Pacific Fleet.
Administrative Command: Commander Service Squadron, TWO.
Operational Control: Commander Seventh Fleet.

1 September Underway enroute Subic Bay, Luzon, Philippine Islands to Guam, Marianas Islands in accordance with orders Port Director Subic Bay, dated 28 August 1945. Steaming independently and using full hospital ship procedure. 0236 changed destination to Okinawa, Shima in accordance with ComMarianas despatch #311201 of August 1945.

Position: 0800 Lat. 19° 06.5' N Long. 132° 26' E
1200 19° 44.4' N 132° 36' E
2000 21° 02' N 131° 52.5' E

2 September 1030 This morning the Japanese surrender ceremonies were held aboard the U.S.S. MISSOURI in Tokyo Bay and broadcast throughout the world.

Position: 0800 Lat. 23° 13.5' N Long. 130° 46' E
1200 23° 55' N 130° 22' E
2000 25° 11' N 129° 38' E

3 September 0630 Sighted Okinawa bearing 310°(T) distance 20 miles and made approach to enter Buckner Bay. Passed #1 entrance buoy at 0751 and anchored in vicinity of berth B-96 in 18 fathoms of water.

4 September 1751 underway in accordance with Commander Seventh Fleet despatch #011530 of September 1945 for Dairen, Manchuria in company with Destroyer Escorts 581 and 686 to evacuate recovered allied military personnel. Destroyer Escorts took their position 2500 yards ahead and 500 yards on either bow to search ahead and destroy any floating mines sighted. The East China Sea and yellow Sea were reported to have numerous floating mines directly on our route.

Position: 2000 Lat. 26° 03' N Long. 127° 45.5' E

5 September
Position: 0800 Lat. 26° 56' N Long. 125° 38' E
1200 27° 35' N 124° 55' E
2000 29° 07' N 124° 08' E

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U.S.S. RELIEF (AHL)

CONFIDENTIAL (WAR DIARY CONT.)

6 September

Sighted a Chinese Sampam swamped with two persons on board. U.S.S. McNULTY picked up survivors and transferred them by means of a modified breeches buoy to us. The survivors were Chinese, one woman and a man were suffering from exposure and abrasions. Typhoon had passed through area 5 days before and had blown them out from the China coast.

Position:	0800	Lat.	31° 30.5' N	Long.	123° 09' E
	1200		32° 11' N		122° 52' E
	2000		33° 29' N		122° 34' E

7 September

Ten floating mines were sighted and seven were exploded by gunfire from the escorts and three were sunk. 1530 the U.S.S. McNULTY came alongside to transfer a crew member injured by shrapnel from mine. Patient received aboard, but died from wounds of the head. KENDALL, M. R., #321 60 99 BMLc., USN. Sighted Tunghaiwei Peak, Shantung peninsula bearing 274.5°(T), distance 53 miles. Sighted Shantung Promontory bearing 312°(T) distance 40 miles at 1830 and passed it abeam at 2130. During the night searchlights were used by all ships to illuminate along our track to aid in search for mines.

Position:	0800	Lat.	35° 39' N	Long.	123° 36' E
	1200		36° 10' N		123° 53.5 E
	2000		37° 12' N		123° 02' E

8 September

Made landfall on Daisanzan To bearing 325°(T) distance 23 miles at daybreak. 0719 passed Daisanzan To light abeam to starboard distance 0.8 mile and entered Dairen Ko. Passed Kohuku Shi light abeam to port distance 1 mile and arrived off breakwater to await orders from Senior Officer Present Afloat aboard the U.S.S. CUNNINGHAM. Tugs or pilot were promised by the Russians but failed to put in an appearance so we entered the harbor and moored starboard side to pier E-2 unassisted at 0850.

9-10 September

Awaiting arrival of recovered Allied Military Personnel being transported by rail from Japanese prison camp at Mukden, Manchuria. Provisions were made for all ships present to assist in evacuation. No shore leave or liberty was granted but Officers, were invited ashore on observation tours through the city. U.S.S. LOUISVILLE arrived on the 10th. and duties of Senior Officer Present Afloat were transferred to it. Administrative Senior Officer Present Afloat was retained on board the U.S.S. CUNNINGHAM DD-572.

U.S.S. RELIEF (AHL)

CONFIDENTIAL (WAR DIARY CONT.)

11 September

Allied Personnel finally arrived by train from Mukden after much delay enroute and commenced coming on board at 2050. At 0230 all passengers and their baggage were on board. 753 Ex-Prisoners-of-war and one war correspondent were taken aboard. Included in the group were 15 Allied Missionaries, 3 civilian men, and one woman. Appended to this Diary is a brief account of the people evacuated by the RELIEF from Dairen.

12 September

0607 underway from alongside pier unassisted in accordance with Commander Task Group 71.4 despatch #110317 of September 1945. Enroute Dairen, Manchuria to Okinawa Shima in company with Escorts 581 and 686, on station as before. 0734 passed Daisanzan To light abeam to port distance 2.2 miles and set course 141°(T)(G). 1132 sighted Shantung Promontory bearing 205°(T) distance 45 miles.

Position:	0800	Lat.	38° 46.5' N	Long	121° 48' E
	1200		38° 10' N		122° 31' E
	2000		37° 06' N		124° 05.5' E

13 September

Sighted only one floating mine today, 1350 sighted Kakyo To bearing 150°(T) distance 8 miles and passed island abeam to port distance 3 miles at 1448.

Position:	0800	Lat.	35° 14' N	Long.	125° 09' E
	1200		34° 33.5' N		124° 59.5' E
	2000		33° 06' N		125° 19.5' E

14 September

Two mines sighted and destroyed today.

Position:	0800	Lat.	30° 40.5' N	Long.	125° 43' E
	1200		29° 54' N		129° 23' E
	2000		28° 22' N		124° 44' E

15 September

0630 made landfall on Kume Shima bearing 102°(T) distance 40 miles. 0939 passed Kume Shima abeam to port 6.8 miles. 1222 passed Koba Shima abeam to port 4.9 miles. Rounding southern end of Okinawa Shima proceeding to Buckner Bay. 1620 entered Buckner Bay and anchored in berth B-90 at 1719.

A severe typhoon underway for several days was expected to pass near Okinawa on the 17th. All ship's in the harbor were placed on one hour sailing notice after 0500 on the 16th.

Positions:	0800	Lat.	26° 23.5' N	Long.	126° 17.5' E
	1200		26° 05.5' N		127° 08' E

U.S.S. RELIEF (AHL)

CONFIDENTIAL (WAR DIARY CONT.)

16 September

0610 underway in accordance with Port Director Okinawa, despatch #151417 of September, to Machinato anchorage on western side of Island to disembark our passengers, steering various courses rounding southern Okinawa.

1150 anchored in berth #228 Hagushi Beach, Okinawa. We attempted to contact the authorities at Machinato to partially disembark some of our passengers especially those who were berthed on deck, but because of rain, poor visibility, and increasing wind, sea, and swells it could not be accomplished.

1416 underway and retiring to the Westward from Okinawa (To ride out typhoon approaching the islands) in accordance with SOPA instructions.

All passengers berthed on the upper deck were moved below as well as possible, the ship battened down to ride out the storm center which was due in the area at 2100. But did not actually pass until after midnight.

Proceeded to a position Latitude 26° 47' N, Longitude 126° 40' E and reduced speed to one-third.

Position: 2000 Lat. 26° 47' N Long. 126° 40' E

17 September

2100 Hove to. Riding out typhoon 100 miles to the West of Okinawa. The ship behaved exceedingly well and no great discomfort was experienced by passengers or crew. Winds reached velocity of 50-55 knots and swell up to 30 feet during the night. Lowest barometer reading observed at 0230 at 29.05 inches. This typhoon was severe in intensity and did a great deal of destruction to shipping in Buckner Bay.

1000 storm abated somewhat and we commence returning to anchorage.

1505 sighted Aguni Shima bearing 180°(T) distance 18 miles and at 1600 stopped engines and hove to off Aguni Shima to await decreasing of swells in Machinato anchorage.

Position: 0800 Lat. 27° 21' N Long. 126° 17' E
 1200 27° 20' N 126° 42' E
 2000 26° 42' N 127° 19' E

18 September

0345 underway and proceeding to anchorage area. 0517 sighted Okinawa Shima bearing 094°(T) distance 9 miles. And proceeded to anchorage berth H-228 and anchored at 0647.

1200 commenced disembarkation of recovered Allied Military Personnel and internees to Medical facilities on Okinawa. Completed debarking at 1505 and at 1643 shifted anchorage to Naha Ko. Anchored off Naha Ko, Okinawa at 1822, and commenced receiving stores.

19 September

Two Chinese Nationals transferred to a U.S. Naval Hospital for disposition.

U.S.S. RELIEF (AH1)

CONFIDENTIAL (WAR DIARY CONT.)

20 September 1025 underway and shifting to anchorage at Hagushi Beach. 1140 anchored Northeast of berth H-289 Hagushi Beach. Administrative Senior Officer Present Afloat on board U.S.S. CRESCENT CITY.

21 September - 23 September

22 September 0626 underway in accordance with Commander Amphibious Group 7 despatch #211002 of September 1945, proceeding to Buckner Bay for stores, fuel, and recreational facilities for the crew. Captain conning rounding Southern Okinawa. 1019 commenced entering port. 1128 anchored in berth B-45 Buckner Bay, Okinawa. Administrative Senior Officer Present Afloat on board U.S.S. HAMUL.

24 September Transferred men to receiving ship Okinawa for further transfer, to the Continental U.S. for reenlistment and rehabilitation leave and for discharge.
 0805 underway for shifting berths to fuel ship.
 0852 moored port side to U.S.S. CHOTAUK and commenced receiving fuel at 0927.
 1249 underway and proceeding to Nago Wan, Okinawa to report to Commander Transport Squadron 17 for duty. Proceeding around southern Okinawa and along western coast to Nago Wan.
 1845 made all preparations for entering port. Anchored Northeast of berth E-178 at 1935.

25 September 0605 shifted to berth E-146 Nago Wan.

26 September 1537 underway in accordance with orders Commander Seventh Fleet despatch #210304 dated September 1945. Station serial 28318 for Taku, China, forming convoy disposition of 3 columns. Officer Tactical Command aboard U.S.S. CHILTON. Senior Officer Present Afloat aboard U.S.S. CATOCTIN. Column guide U.S.S. SARASOTA. Ship's distance 600 yards, interval 1000 yards and speed 13.0 knots. This is the first time the RELIEF has been in convoy and station keeping was new to most Officers.

Position: 2000 Lat. 26° 45' N Long. 127° 03' E

27 September

Position: 0800 Lat. 27° 56' N Long. 124° 55' E
 1200 28° 39' N 124° 41' E
 2000 30° 16' N 125° 19' E

28 September 0710 sighted Saishu To bearing 037°(T) distance 60 miles.
 1128 sighted Chin To bearing 021°(T) distance 50 miles.
 1230 sighted Kakyo To bearing 353°(T) distance 46 miles.
 1555 passed Kakyo To abeam to starboard 12 miles.

U.S.S. RELIEF (AHL)

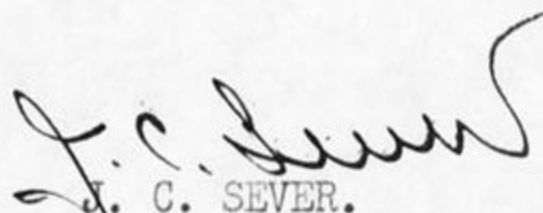
CONFIDENTIAL (WAR DIARY CONT.)

Position:	0800	Lat.	32° 26.5' N	Long.	125° 33.5' E
	1200		33° 12' N		125° 16' E
	2000		34° 49' N		124° 33' E

29 September 0805 sighted Mount Wade, Shantung Promontory bearing 273°(T) distance 45 miles.
1531 sighted Iaotieshekan Promontory bearing 313°(T) distance 45 miles.
1609 passed Encounter Rock abeam to starboard 11 miles.
1700 retarded all ship's clocks one hour to minus 8 time zone.

Position:	0800	Lat.	37° 16' N	Long.	123° 29' E
	1200		37° 49' N		122° 39' E
	2000		38° 35' N		120° 41.5' E

30 September 0728 anchored in company with various U. S. Naval units and Yard craft at a point 7 miles bearing 065°(T) from Taku Bar, Light-boat. Senior Officer Present Afloat aboard U.S.S. CATOCTIN. Administrative Senior Officer Present Afloat on board U.S.S. CHILTON.


J. C. SEVER.
Commander, U.S.N.R.,
Commanding.

U.S.S. RELIEF (AH1)

CONFIDENTIAL (WAR DIARY CONT.)

On the eleventh of September, 1945, the U.S.S. RELIEF received on board a capacity load of Recovered Allied Military Personnel. The hospital ship lay alongside the docks at Dairen, Manchuria, and the RAMPS were brought by train to her from the Japanese military prison camp at Mukden, Manchuria, two hundred miles to the Northward.

These were ex-prisoners of war. Many had been through the death march at Bataan. Most had survived prison camps in the Philippines, Formosa, Honshu, and finally, Mukden. On the night of the eleventh, between the hours of 2050 and 2245, a total of 753 surviving personnel came aboard the RELIEF.

The ship had lain alongside the docks at Dairen for three days, all preparations made for receiving the liberated men. A Russian military government controlled the town of Dairen. Through them, the ships Officers received their only word of the prisoners.

During the morning of the eleventh a Navy Doctor and a Marine Sergeant reported aboard from the camp. From them, the Ship's Doctors learned the approximate number and condition of the men we were to receive.

All afternoon rumors persisted that the train that was to bring the prisoners was on its way. When they finally began to arrive, at 2050, the scene was dramatic and poignant. They were heard before they were seen. Then, from out of the darkness beyond the docks, the first of them stepped into the glare of the dock floodlights, first one or two, then ten, then the whole procession. They carried all their worldly possessions on their backs or in duffle bags.

The entire ships company manned the rail to greet them. As the ex-prisoners crowded the dock at the foot of the gangway, the ship's crew shouted over the rail to them, tossing them cigarettes, swapping stories, finding out where they were from "Back in the States". The Ship's Red Cross lights and green bands had been illuminated, and the Ship started Stateside music playing over the Ship's public address system - Dixie, The Marine Hymn, Stardust etc. The RELIEF was the first American ship these men had seen in three years; in some cases, four years.

By 2245 they were all aboard; 753 of them, Dutch, British, Australian, and American.

The first thing they wanted was a shower. They were provided with soap, towels, and a clean soft bed. Then, after they were made comfortable, a huge steak dinner was served. They had ice cream for desert.

By midnight, most of them were bedded down. Ship's company continued to strike their gear below until two thirty in the morning. After everything was quiet some of the ex-prisoners, hungry for conversation with Americans, and too excited to sleep, stayed about the decks, swapping yarns with the crew, or listening avidly to accounts of what had been going on at home during the past four years. They wanted to know who the movie stars were, what songs were being sung; they listened proudly to descriptions of the rocket guns, and the accounts of Kwajalein, Okinawa, Guam, etc.

U.S.S. RELIEF (AH1)

CONFIDENTIAL (WAR DIARY CONT.)

Senior Officer of the group was Colonel Lawrence Sprague Churchill of New York, formerly of the Far Eastern Air Force. Colonel Churchill was the first of the RAMPS to come aboard that night. Also aboard was Captain Arthur Wermuth, USA, of Chicago, Illinois, known in the early days of the war as the "One man army of Bataan". "Lt. Claus M. Fraleigh (DC) USN, of Gulfport, Miss., formerly Army detachment Commander of General Hospital # 1 at Bataan, was also aboard". The Ship's Chief Nurse, Lt. Anne Bernatitus, served on Bataan and Corregidor (prior to her escape in a submarine) with Lt. Fraleigh and Commander C. M. Smith (MC) USN of San Diego, California, another released prisoner on board the RELIEF.

Two civilian internees came aboard that night. They were Mr. Franklin G. Lewis, and his wife, Mrs. Claudia S. Lewis, of Washington State. Mr. Lewis had been American Consul at Mukden prior to the war.

The Ship sailed from Dairen at 0530 the morning of the twelfth of September and set a course for Okinawa. During the cruise, every attention was paid to the comfort and convenience of the passengers.

Special entertainment programs were played over the ship's public address system; the Chaplains made sure that each had all of the comforts the ship could afford them. News of the outside world was broadcast over the Crew's entertainment radios, direct from San Francisco. The ship's official communications equipment kept a constant watch over specially designated circuits, waiting to intercept messages addressed to the ex-prisoners from their families. Each day all the passengers were served ice-cream and the Ship's Company donated a part of the welfare profits as personal credit in the Ship's Canteen and Ship's store for each of the RAMPS. And the men of the ship spent their off hours listening to the accounts of cruelty and brutality these returning heroes told, and swapping with them accounts of life at home, the history of the war, and the latest music and popular songs. Crew members sought out prisoners from their home towns, from their home states, and helped them to re-envisage what life would be like in the community to which they were returning.

A majority of the prisoners had been captured at Bataan, Corregidor and in the Philippines. The stories they told of the treatment they received at the hands of the Japanese will live in the memories of the men of this ship at a first hand record of the infamy of the enemy we fought.

The RELIEF stood into Buckner Bay, Okinawa, on the 16th of September 1945. Preparations were made to disembark the RAMPS but foul weather prevented unloading that day. A typhoon was closing on Okinawa from the Southeast, and the RELIEF got underway during the afternoon and retired to the Westward to ride out the storm. The typhoon was intense, and caused extensive damage to the shipping in Okinawa harbors. The RELIEF, however, in spite of an overload of passengers, rode the storm out at sea and suffered no damage. Next day, the eighteenth, she returned and the unloading of the RAMPS was effected.

U.S.S. RELIEF (AH1)

CONFIDENTIAL (WAR DIARY CONT.)

Captain Wendel H. Perry, (MC) USN, Senior Medical Officer of this vessel stated that in his opinion, the general physical condition of the recovered Allied Military personnel received from the Japanese Prison camp at Mukden was higher than expected. "There were evidences of malnutrition, and many of the personnel suffered from a dimution of visual acuity, and almost all were suffering from the presence of some paracitical intestinal growths. But the general condition was excellent, in view of the treatment they had received. The average loss in weight had been forty pounds."

Asked to what he attributed the general excellence of the personnel's physical condition, Captain Perry stated, "In addition to the supplies dropped by our own forces by parachute to the prisoners, they had been getting ample food from the supplies that the Japanese had previously withheld, and which were now available. They had been on an ample diet since the sixteenth of August."

In the opinion of Commander William J. Sheehan, (MC) USNR, of Santa Barbara, California, who is the Chief of the Surgical Service aboard the RELIEF, the general condition of the ex-prisoners was above the level generally expected. All of them, with one exception, was able to come aboard without aid. The one exception was a man suffering from a severe attack of gall stones, and he had to be carried aboard in a stretcher. Asked if he thought the general level of health among the returned prisoners was high due to treatment received while prisoners in the Japanese camp, or whether it was due to the supplies dropped to the men from B-29's, Doctor Sheehan stated that he attributed the general good condition of the patients to the fact that, by general admission, conditions in the Mukden camp were somewhat higher than in the camps in which the men had been previously, especially as compared to the camps in the Philippines. And secondly, the supplies dropped by our own forces had beneficial effects during the month prior to the time the RELIEF arrived in Dairen. Most of the patients gained from ten to thirty pounds during that period. Commander Sheehan states that there was some evidence in the facial expressions of the men, of the ordeals they had been through, and some of the older men gave evidence of being prematurely aged. But in general, the average physical condition was higher than we had been led to expect.