THE UNITED STATES NAVY HOSPITAL SHIP

RELIEF (AH 1)

A CHRONICLE OF HER WARTIME OVERSEAS MOVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

PREFACE

WHAT IS TO FOLLOW is a chronicle of the movements of the Navy's hospital ship U.S.S. RELIEF during the period February 1943 - December 1945. During that time, the RELIEF served as hospital ship in the Pacific war areas.

Three things prompted the writing of this history; the request of the Navy Department, the orders of the Commanding Officer (Joseph C. Sever, Commander, USNR) and the desire of the RELIEF'S crew members for a factual record of their ship's part in the war.

It is deemed unnedessary to establish a thesis for this work. What it proves or demonstrates should be apparent as the movements of the ship are sketched across the map of the Western hemisphere.

The men who served aboard the RELIEF are proud of her record. Sometimes they loved her; sometimes they hated her. They hated the horror she led them through. They respected her for the mercy she represented. They rebelled at the regimentation she forced upon them; they growled because she kept them away from home.

But the war is over now, and she has brought them through it safely. And now they love her, for giving them a right to citizenship in the government they fought for. So many of them grew up on her.

Every attempt will be made to keep this record down to a bare statement of fact. To record the times when the routine operations of the ship approached boredom, the story will be cut down to outline form. There would be no profit in dragging the crew members through the dull months of waiting in words, when they have already sweated them out in fact.

To the Navy Department, here is what you asked for. To the skipper, same to you. To the men who sailed the ship, here is an audited account of where you have been. You can fill in the rest.

The story begins with the RELIEF in Boston Harbor.

Prior to February, 1943, the ship had served the fleet as its number one hospital ship. When the war broke out she was in Argentia, Newfoundland. Before being sent to Boston, she had lain in Casco Bay, Maine, almost forgotten, it seemed. She acted as station hospital ship in Casco Bay for nine months prior to the time she came to Boston. The crew members swore she could never be moved out of the bay, because she was aground on a mound of coffee grounds. Just prior to the time she received orders for Boston, the Admiral present in Casco Bay moved his flag aboard her while his own ship went into dock for repairs. The flag remained aboard for a few days only. In approximately the time it would take for Washington to get word of the flag's shift to the hospital ship, a reply came, directing the flag to get off at once, and directing the RELIEF to proceed to Boston to make ready for war.

The crew took this in stride. They decided that Washington had lost track of the ship for the past nine months, and when the flag reported aboard, Washington was suddenly reminded that the Navy had a hospital ship in the States, and immediately dispatched her to the fighting fronts. The crew said the ship would be in Casco Bay still, if the flag hadn't given away her location.

CHAPTER ONE

Between the days of 8 February and 23 February, 1943, the USS RELIEF was docked in the Navy Yard at Boston, Massachussetts.

Technically, no one knew why she had been ordered to Boston. Actually, everyone aboard realized that she had been sent to Boston to prepare for actual participation in the War.

She entered the Navy Yard painted drab grey, her peacetime color. When she left, she was painted white. A broad green stripe was painted around her hull, and Red Crosses on her sides, superstructure decks and stack.

The white paint on the outside of the RELIEF was the symbol of what was happening to the ship. The whole importance of the yard period in Boston was that the ship was being brought to readiness for the task ahead. For the rest of her war career, she would be strictly governed by the regulations of International Law as outlined in the Geneva and Hague conventions.

Her outward markings were her protection. The life of the ship and of her crew and of the patients she would receive was going to depend upon those symbols. The crew said she was getting "torpedo-proof" paint.

The men who were to sail her seemed to know that this would be the last time they would see the United States for a long time. They didn't realize then for how long a time.

The men were assigned to help in the job of getting her ready for war. They turned to chipping the grey paint from her sides and putting the white paint on. Every liberty was numbered for them. They worked with a vengeance to get the job done. The yard workers worked one side of the ship; the crew worked the other. The crew, anxious to get on liberty, finished their side far ahead of the yard workers. They worked in shifts. As one shift would be relieved, the men would get out of their dungarees and into their liberty blues, and go uptown for liberty. When they came off liberty, they got out of their blues and into dungarees and went back to work.

No one was supposed to know where the ship was going. When the crew saw the stores coming aboard, day and night, ton after ton, they knew it would be a long cruise. Biggest hint to the officers was the Executive officer's suggestion that everyone buy several tropical white uniforms. Later, when the ship was sweating out the tropical sun, with the Officer of the Deck in an open collared khaki shirt without a tie, those dress white tropical uniforms became a stock joke.

The ship's red crosses were outlined with red light globes; ton after ton of stores, food, supplies and clothing came aboard. Sulfa drugs, gauze, merthiolate, plaster for casts, portable operating tables, morphine, made the ship ready for the job. The main operating room was air conditioned; the crews reception room was converted to a living space, and living spaces to wards. New navigational equipment, radio gear, signal lights and flags came aboard.

They even took on a new skipper. He called the crew to quarters before sailing, and said to them, "This crew will be the salts of the sea before this cruise is ended.

February 23rd the RELIEF sailed out of Boston harbor, bound for the Panama Canal.

The old ark was a-moverin.

CHAPTER TWO

From March 3rd to March 6th, 1943, the Relief was at Balboa, Panama Canal Zone.

Some of the men felt salty enough, in Panama, to buy their first souveniers. But those they have lost, for the most part, or thrown away, because the souveniers they got later have a different value - a grimmer, but a better one.

When the ship sailed from Panama she was under orders to proceed deep into the south Pacific. She was bound for Noumea, New Caledonia.

Enroute, the Captain exercised the ship at emergency drills, over and over again. The crew had to teach themselves how to take care of their ship, and the only way was by constant drilling.

One of the first of the drills was Man Overboard practice. To make the drill realistic, a life jacket with the name of the ship stencilled on it was thrown over the side. The life jacket

was supposed to represent a man. The ship was stopped, boats lowered, life rings and life preservers thrown in to save the dummy. The greenest trick of the afternoon was executed by the Ensign in charge of the boat sent to pick up the man. He guided the boat through the water to each of the life rings first, and last of all picked up the drowning dummy. By the time hearrived at where the dummy life jacket was last seen, it was gone. The captain explained that in a real emergency, the man would be more important than the life rings.

When the ship crossed the equator, traditional rites of initiation into the ancient order of the deep were performed. Davy Jones, Neptunus Rex, and the whole Royal party boarded in spite of wartime hazards, and conducted full scale operations. Only difficulty was that all but a few of the men aboard were "pollywogs" who had never before crossed the line. The "shellbacks" had their hands full maintaining order and respect. But with the aid of fire hoses, paddles, and hair clips, the job was done.

On the way, the ship passed a few miles from Pitcairn Island. The drills, the shellback initiation, and the proximity of an actual South Sea Island had the cumulative effect of convincing the crew that they were getting salty.

The ship's route was well clear of normal shipping lanes. This was a sign of things to come. During the remainder of her cruise in the Pacific, the hospital ship would be routed away from normal shipping lanes. Reason for this was that it would ensure her immunity from attacks on normal shipping, and also would protect other shipping from detection by being outlined against the horizon at night, in the glare of the bright hospital ship illumination.

CHAPTER THREE

From April 2nd to April 26th, the ship lay at Noumea, New Caledonia.

Noumea was the first South Pacific port the Relief saw. Her duty there was to service the fleet. When she arrived,

the battle for the Solomons was raging, and transports brought the wounded and injured out of the battle zones to where she lay in the rear area. Dessatisfied with being so far removed from the scene of action, the crew grew restless very soon. They felt, and rightly so, that they were not in a position to do their greatest service. The opportunity would come later. Meanwhile, the RELIEF lay in Noumea among tenders and repair ships. She was, in effect, a repair ship herself, repairing broken men as the tenders repaired broken machinery.

The RELIEF was in Noumea during Holy Week, Good Friday, and Easter. Some of the crew attended Good Friday Services in the immense park in the center of town. Civilians suddenly appeared from nowhere, crowding the park and cathedral. There, for the first time, they saw civilians and servicemen. united in a common endeavor; uniting in prayers for peace.

Close off the port beam lay the leper colony for the area. Doctors made frequent visits to see first hand clinical evidence of this dread disease. They brought back with them specimens and cultures. The ship's laboratory was used for research into the cause and treatment of leprosy. A pickled finger still remains on the laboratory shelves.

In Noumea, the medical staff encountered malaria and dengue fever for the first time. Some of the ship's crew came down with the fevers.

In the first mail, word was received that the ship had been reported lost at sea. The life jacket that had been used in the man overboard drill at sea between Balboa and Noumea had drifted ashore, and was picked up by Coast Guard authorities. The name of the ship was stenciled on the life jacket. The story grew from there, until it reached the newspapers at home. Printed, it read that the RELIEF had gone down at sea, and all the evidence remaining was one life jacket stenciled with the name of the ship.

CHAPTER FOUR

From April 29th to July 6th, the ship was at Espiritu Santo, in the New Hebrides group.

Espiritu Santo is about 420 miles north of New Caledonia. The Japanese had been stopped. The war was moving back again, for them, forward for the Allies. The RELIEF moved forward with it. The battle for Guadalcanal had been won, and Noumea had become a rear area base. Espiritu Santo had become the forward base. The ship moved after the fleet, to the new base of repair and supply.

In Espiritu Santo, the RELIEF received her baptism of fire. There she was subjected to the first air raids of her career. They were token raids, meant only to be the nuisance they were. "Washing Machine Charley" flew his lone plane over a few nights a week, and dropped an ineffectual string of bombs about the harbor. He hit nothing, but cost the men on the ships hours of sleep.

The RELIEF did the same job in Espiritu Santo as she did in Noumea. She serviced the fleet. Boredom set in full time then. The crew began to think that they were doomed to spend the whole war far behind the lines, sprinkling powder on athlete's foot.

For recreation, the crew took over Aore Island, on one side of the anchorage. A beautiful tropical island, Aore provided perfect recreational facilities. The base built baseball diamonds, tennis courts, golf links, in the dense foliage. The ship organized baseball teams, and played off an endless intra-mural schedule. Each division of the ship had its own team - the goldbrickers, the bilgerats, the holystone kids, and the hospital corpsmen, who called their team the Pan Handlers.

One morning the ship received word that one of our cruisers was standing into the harbor with a load of burn cases. A gun turret had had a flash back, and burned the men manning the guns. Flame had leaped up Through the turret openings and into the inner construction of the ship.

Immediate preparations were made to give emergency treatment to the injured men. All of the men were healed. None had scars, excepting one man, who sustained a scar on the extreme end of his heel. Reason was that during the treatment of the burns, the medical department had a chance to experiment and determine which type of treatment was most effective in the humid tropical air.

Later the ship would take on men burned by flash burns, bomb bursts, mortar fire. The treatment these men in Espirity Santo received formed the basis for the treatment men would receive later as they were carried from the beaches at Kwajalein, Saipan, Peliliu, Okinawa.

Now the ship had spent seven months in the area. By this time the routine of caring for the men of the fleet was well established. The crew felt that they had learned much from handling boats in the middle of the night, from sailing the distances they had already covered, and from drilling themselves in the daily living of this new life.

But they ached from the boredom of it. They longed to take an active part in the fight.

CHAPTER FIVE

From July 7th to August 3rd, the RELIEF was at Havannah Harbor, Efate, in the New Hebrides group.

The Relief had been called to Efate to perform repair services to the men in the battle ship fleet. At the time, the concentration of battleships that would soon after strike at the Munda area lay in the harbor. The ship stayed in Havannah Harbor just long enough to prepare the men of the battleships for the strike. They needed their teeth repaired their appendix removed, their tonsils out, their colds cured.

Then the ship moved to Fila, Efate, a few miles away.

CHAPTER SIX

August 3rd and 4th, the RELIEF spent at Fila, Efate.

At Fila, the RELIEF embarked a load of patients who were ready to be evacuated from the area. The evacuation was a part of clearing out the rear bases and preparing them to receive casualties from the battles that were to be fought soon.

CHAPTER SEVEN

August 5th and 6th, the ship was again at Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides.

The RELIEF had cleaned out the hospitals in the Efate area and was routed to Espiritu Santo to "top off" with a load of patients. The patients she received there were also men ready for evacuation. They were to be taken to Auckland, New Zealand, where a large Naval medical force was established. Auckland provided the perfect rear base for medical treatment. The RELIEF carried on that trip mostly cases of war neuroses, combat fatigue. Auckland was civilized and Auckland was out of the Tropics.

CHAPTER EIGHT

August the 11th to August 22nd, the RELIEF spent at Auckland, New Zealand.

Auckland was the first liberty port the RELIEF crew had seen

since they had left the United States. They made the best of it. Auckland is a friendly, modern city. Its people are hospitable.

The ship was greeted at the dock by a brass band, and from the time she docked until the moment she sailed, the town was like a carnival.

The ship sponsored a ship's dance, with all hands attending, on two alternate nights. The dance was a real party. The RELIEF'S sailors, in dress blues for the first time in many months, felt as if they were wearing white ties and tails.

CHAPTER NINE

August 26th to October 3rd, 1943, the RELIEF lay again in Noumea harbor, New Caledonia.

During that month the routine services of the fleet were resumed. It was at this time, the Mail clerk reports, that the crew suddenly shifted over to using air mail.

CHAPTER TEN

October 6th to October 25th, the RELIEF was at Havannah Harbor, Efate. Entering port, the ship was lost at sea for 24 hours.

The current had set her more than was thought, and when time came for land to be sighted, nothing was visible excepting the flat horizon. Radio communications came to the rescue, however, and after one night of searching around in the ocean, playing "island, island, who's got the island", land was

sighted directly ahead.

Again at Efate, the fleet was serviced. Again the drudgery of commonplace treatment of little ills set in. If the perspective had only been clearer, none of the crew would have minded. But the apparent fact was that the ship had been in the Pacific almost a year, and had never seen action. Only a few realized that the drudgery was a part of the preparation for the plentiful action that would follow.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

October 25th to October 26th, the Relief spent at Fila, Efate, and, mixture as before, took on board a load of patients to be evacuated to the rear areas of Auckland.

CHAPTER TWELVE

October 26th to October 28th, the ship was again at Espiritu Santo.

She filled up with a load of patients and started again for Auckland. In spite of gripes about being "out of things", no one minded going to Auckland.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

November 2nd to November 15th, the RELIEF lay for the second time at Auckland, New Zealand.

The second time in Auckland, everyone knew his way around. Some of the men even had old acquaintances there by this time. Once again, the town became a playground for the ship's crew.

In November, the ship was ready for her first experience with actual warfare.

She sailed for Funafuti, Ellice Islands, to wait for the Tarawa invasion.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

November 21 to November 27 the ship was at Funafuti, Ellice Islands.

Funafuti was the first coral atoll the ship had been in. Later it would seem to the men that they had never seen anything else but coral atolls.

The ship arrived at Funafuti in a heavy sea. Her entire stay there is memorable for the roughness of the water in the atoll lagoon. It was chronically rough. The boats that had to make the runs around the harbor at all times of the day and night were almost unmanageable in the swells. The lagoon was studded with submerged coral reefs jutting up from the bottom, waiting to tear a hole in the side of the boats. First afternoon in the lagoon, the communications officer was sent to the beach for orders, and on the way he ran the Captain's gig aground and had to be towed back to the ship. The whole stay in Funafuti was like that. The mission there was to service the fleet, but with the additional incentive of waiting for the Tarawa invasion to begin. Finally, on the 27th of the month, word came that the invasion of Tarawa was on, and the ship sailed.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

November 28th to January 4th, the RELIEF lay at anchor in Funafuti, Ellice Island group.

At least the men on the RELIEF sensed that hospital ships were finally being used to support the amphibious operations. Typical comment the night of her return to Funafuti was, "It wouldn't be so bad if the would let us get into the thing."

In Funafuti, the routine of caring for the fleet was resumed. Weather was the greatest obstacle. Sudden winds and squals would spring up within a few seconds time. A heavy black cloud of rain, preceded by a streaking wind would race toward the ship. The air would turn sharply cold, and the wind would hit the ship with a twenty or thirty knot force, rocking her, and sending her swinging heavily around the anchor.

The boat crews were heroes. They were called out at any time of the day or night, in the foulest weather. Most of them had been in high school a few months before, with no more responsibility than getting their home work done on time. Their Mothers would have shuddered to think of them even being out in a boat in weather like that. The swells would toss the boats up on the sea, and drop them straight down into the troughs. They had their boats to think about, they had their own skins to save, and besides that, they carried in the boats, men who were seriously sick, who depended upon their seamanship and boat handling skill to get them to the hospital ship. They fought against the sea all day and all night, and won out every time.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

January 7th to January 31st, the RELIEF was in Tarawa.

Seeing Tarawa after seeing Funafuti was like seeing an advertisement labeled "before and after". When the palm trees had risen into sight over the horizon at Funafuti, they showed as a fringe, like moss growing on the sea.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

On November 27th the ship made a run to Apamama, during the attack on Tarawa. She was to receive wounded at a rendezvous point to which transports were supposed to bring them from the island of Tarawa.

The plan had been for the RELIEF to proceed to Apamama, a few miles south of Tarawa, and receive patients there.

The ship arrived at the rendezvous in a heavy sea. None of the crew knew whether the battle had been a success or a failure. Everyone on the bridge stood with their binoculars to their eyes, watching to see if the first ship we sighted flew stars and stripes or the rising sun.

The crew was in energetic spirits. They felt that they were in the war at last. During the night a radio message advised the ship that patients were to be received from a submarine and a small craft.

The deck divisions rigged gear for transferring patients at sea. In the morning, the convoy was sighted. The captain sent a message asking the position of the task force commander to whom the ship was to report. The answer came back "He is under air attack fifteen miles north of here."

The submarine surfaced off our port bow, and came close aboard. Stretcher gear was waiting for the patient. But when the submarine came alongside, the patient, agile and alert, scrambled up a jacobs ladder, carrying his own ditty bag. He had tonsilitis. Then the tug was sighted, and she transferred a man afflicted with a hernia.

The convoy had challenged the ship, established her identity, and then quietly reversed course and steamed away. The RELIEF was left alone at sea with no orders. From over the horizon, another hospital ship appeared. It was the USS Solace, the arch rival of the RELIEF. The Solace steamed close aboard, loaded down with casualties taken from the transports an hour before the RELIEF'S arrival. The Solace passed within a few yards of the RELIEF, close enough for the men on one ship to shout to the men on the other. They did shout.

The RELIEF returned to Funafuti, disappointed.

When Tarawa came in sight, there was nothing but stumps.

It was the ship's first look at the utter destruction left in the wake of Naval bombardment. It was as if an immense knife had been swept across the tops of the island, and had trimmed all the foliage in one blow. Nothing but grotesque ruins remained. There was no sign of life, no sound, no movement on the beach. Not even the palms waved, for there were no waving parts to the palms, only the rigid, jutting stumps.

The RELIEF anchored in the lagoon and went to work.

The beach was a shambles. Stinking, torn, putrid, every inch of it, from the dangling remains of the Japanese barbed wire defenses along the beaches, to the exploded pillboxes and gun emplacements along the air strip.

Decay could be smelled all the way out into the lagoon. On the beach, seabees worked feverishly, day and night, to clean out the rottenness. They installed a sewage system, built living quarters, repaired the airstrip, pieced back together what was left of the demolished strip of coral.

They never rested; it seemed they never tired. They moved in with their tractors, steam shovels, bulldozers, and sewed up the torn beaches with as relentless a force as the guns that had ruined them.

On the beach, an epidemic of bacillary dysentery was raging. The disease was costing man-hours, and every hour was precious on that beach. The atoll had been taken at a terrible price. No square inch of the beach had escaped the damage of the shelling, bombing, flame throwing.

When the RELIEF arrived, the island was sick, and without facilities as yet to determine the cause of the trouble. The RELIEF'S medical staff went ashore and brought back the sick men, and specimens from the island. The laboratory tested the specimens, diagnosed them as bacillary dysentery.

The island looked and smelled as though an insane giant had run amuck, and had dug it up with his heels, torn into it with a spike. The coral surface of the island looked as if it had boiled over. Flies picked up the disease and spread it over the area.

The medical staff of the RELIEF fought back at the disease before it had a chance to become a disaster.

The men from the beach came out to the RELIEF for liberty. They were grateful for any chance to spend a few hours away from the stench and filth of the rotten beaches.

In Tarawa, the RELIEF experienced her first severe air raid attacks. Almost nightly planes came over the lagoon. The seabees crouched in their foxholes and benind their guns, and cursed each hit on the ground they had repaired.

The men of the RELIEF sat on their ship and wished they had something to fight back with.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

February 3rd to February 4th, the ship was participating in the attack on the atoll of Kwajalein, where she lay close to the beaches, receiving the wounded.

When orders were received to move to Kwajalein, the RELIEF organized herself to receive patients direct from the landing beaches. The organization set up for receiving patients at Kwajalein remained in effect, basically, throughout all of the ensuing amphibious campaigns in which the ship participated. Outline of the organization is as follows: the doctors were organized into operating teams; certain corpsmen were made into transfusion teams; the deck divisions were organized into boat handling teams; doctors and corpsmen formed patient sorting teams at the gangways. The boat handling teams helped the landing craft come alongside. Stretcher bearers were standing ready at the top of the gangway, and lifted the patients out of the boats and carried them up to the wide hatch at the first landing of the gangway. There the patient was met by doctors and corpsmen who examined them and determined to which ward they should be sent. In the wards, doctors and nurses got the patients into banks, and the transfusion team gave blood where needed. Then the patients were moved to the operating room for surgery.

The RELIEF had the satisfaction of knowing that it was the first hospital ship allowed to steam within yards of the fighting beaches and receive casualties direct from the fighting.

She steamed into the lagoon, and lay to near the transports. After loading all of the casualties from the transports, she proceded to the beaches across the lagoon, and lay within a few yards of where the fight was in progress. She proceded with caution across the lagoon, for it was not known for sure whether the Japanese had mined the lagoon itself.

Once in position, the casualties began to pour aboard. The men could see the troops go by them in small landing boats, LCVPs and LCMs, and hit the beach. Most went on; some were hit. Those, they saw carried again to the boats and out to the RELIEF, which they had passed on the way in. Boats lined up by the gangway, sometimes twenty at a time, waiting to get the wounded men aboard.

That day, the blood banks paid dividends. In the opinion of one of the surgeons aboard, the two most important factors in saving lives that day were, first, the fact that the ship lay within a few minutes of the beach, and second, the administration of blood plasma.

All of the operating rooms and all of the dressing rooms were in use all of the time. In the main operating room, as many as five operations were in progress at one time. During the course of the afternoon, the eye surgeon performed an operation in the master at arms shack, when he saw that the patient was too sick to wait to be carried to one of the regular operating rooms.

The men all turned to all day and all night. Quartermasters, Signalmen, Radiomen, Cooks, Bakers, Coxswains, Boatswain mates, - they stood their watches, and when they came off watch they turned to carrying stretchers, scrubbing decks, helping in the wards.

Late in the afternoon, a landing barge pulled alongside. One of the seamen at the gangway shouted "For God's sake, those are Japs in that boat!"

Here was the RELIEF'S first look at the enemy. Lying in the bottoms of the landing boats, torn, bleeding, miserable, they looked pitiable.

Some of them were able to walk up the gangway; most had to be carried. Those who walked, scrambled up the ladders in a weird four footed crawl. When they saw our men, they bowed deeply and smiled, even though they were racked with pain.

The Japanese received the same treatment that the men of our own forces received. Afew dozen Japanese came aboard that afternoon, to fill the ship to capacity.

The attitude of the Japanese during the cruise back was a study in the psychology of fear. They were isolated from the American wounded. For the first few days, they seemed convinced that the doctors would torture them. When the corpsmen finally convinced them that all they wanted to do was to help them, and change their dressings, they finally weakened, and seemed grateful. Some remained sullen and morose. Some were despondent at having lost face. The corpsmen kept all implements with which they might have harmed themselves, out of their reach. One of the Japanese asked for a knife the first day, with which to commit hari-kari. During the next three days, the corpsmen worked on him, eased his pain, healed his wounds. On the fifth day, one of the ship's crew disobeyed the rules and offered the same Japanese a knife, to see if he would take it. He would not take it, and was frightened that it might be forced upon him.

One of the American Marines had lost a leg during the fight. He asked the doctor what the possibilities were for an artificial leg. The doctor said they were good. The doctor further told him that he would be able to use the artificial leg, in time, as well as he could use his own.

"Will I be able to dance on the artificial leg?" the Marine asked him.

"Certainly you will be able to dance on the artificial leg", the doctor said.

"That's wonderful", the Marine said, "I never used to be able to dance on the one I had."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

February 12th to February 14th, the ship was in Pearl Harbor, T.H.

The islands looked like the paradise they were advertised to be, after Kwajalein. At the Honolulu docks, the ship unloaded the patients. They were greeted by a brass band.

The Americans were unloaded first. When all but a few of the Marines had left the ship, the Japanese wounded were carried up to the quarter deck. As the Japanese lay in stretchers on the quarter deck, waiting to be carried down the gangway, the last few Marines came up from their wards and crossed the quarter deck. For the first time during the cruise, the Marines were face to face with their wounded enemy. The Marines looked at the Japanese; the Japanese looked at the Marines. These were the men who had shot each other four days before. The officer of the deck watched them. He looked around quickly for the Master at arms. After a moment the American Marines leaned down to where the Japs lay, and gave them cigarettes. Then they saluted, those of them whose arms were not in slings or casts, and stepped across the gangway and off the ship.

The crew worked all night taking on stores, fueling, cleaning up the ship. Next morning the compartments in which the Japanese had been were fumigated. Everyone was ordered off the ship during the process. That gave the crew four hours liberty in Pearl Harbor. Then the ship sailed for Roi Island.

During the cruise, the corpsmen had taught the Japanese an American song. Going over the gangway, to leave the ship, the Japanese sang it, and very well, too. The name of the song was "Remember Pearl Harbor".

CHAPTER TWENTY

February 21st to February 29th, the ship was at Roi Island.

From Pearl Harbor, the RELIEF carried a load of medical

supplies to Roi Island. The supplies were to be used in the hospitals being established on the island.

Roi Island had been hit as hard as Kwajalein or Tarawa. The heavy block houses were shattered; huge blocks of concrete hung in the reenforcement; the buildings were lopsided, grotesque. They looked like a movie set for Journey's End. The ground was seared; Japanese aircraft, Japanese wreckage of all sorts littered the beach.

The block house the Japanese had used for a power plant was being converted to a hospital. The ship unloaded her medical supplies, meanwhile treating the men of the fleet and the men on the beach. X-Ray, dental laboratory, eye-ear-nose and throat, had a steady stream of consultations.

After nine days, the ship sailed for Majuro, the most beautiful atoll in the world.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

March 1st to June 4th, the RELIEF lay at anchor in Majuro Atoll.

Majuro had been occupied quietly, with little opposition. There was no destruction of the natural magnificence of the tropical island. After Tarawa and Kwajalein, and Roi, Majuro looked like a Hollywood press agent's conception of where Dorothy Lamour should be next.

The water is as blue as the sky, and as transparent as crystal. The bottom of the lagoon is a mass of fairy story coral formations. Tropical fish swarm offshore, and glow in the light of the sun as if they had been painted by a clown. The islands are overgrown with the moist green of the tropics. The coral sand is padded with a carpet of fallen vegetation.

The largest fleet concentration the world had ever seen lay at anchor in Majuro. The size of it, the number of ships, was staggering. The RELIEF had never provided medical care for so many ships and so many men, nor is it probable that she will ever again.

The laboratory worked day and night. The dental clinic was never without a line of fifteen or twenty men waiting for treatment. The same was true of all other departments. The ship's wards carried a load that would have been a credit in a full load evacuation.

The medical staff conducted forums and medical meetings for all the medical officers of the ships in the harbor.

Every day there were picnics and parties for all the men off watch. They took barbecue steaks and beer to the islands, and swam and relaxed.

The ship established a regular schedule of ambulance trips to all ships in the harbor. The number of patients treated and returned to duty was so high that a regular boat schedule was established to carry men back to their ships.

A regular plane schedule was established, too, to evacuate non from the area, to Pearl Harbor or the States.

After three months in that tropical paradise (which is the only place in the Pacific most of the men want to see again) the ship sailed for Kwajalein.

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

June 5th to June 15th, the ship was in Kwajalein.

In Kwajalein the RELIEF was again a repair ship for the men of the fleet. Saipan was the next stop on the road to Tokyo, and the fleet had to be made ready for it.

The RELIEF hadn't seen the island of Kwajalein since the day of the strike. The seabees had healed her wounds. Now the beaches were built up with lines of quonset huts; pontoon docks reached out into the lagoon; the airstrip was lined with planes, and the sound of their motors as they took off and landed was a steady hum. They had even built a little chapel, with a steeple on its roof and pews inside.

The RELIEF'S main job at Kwajalein was to unload the patients remaining on board and sail for Eniwetok, where she was to wait for the Saipan strike.

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

June 16th to June 21st, the ship lay at Eniwetok.

To prepare for Saipan, the RELIEF loaded to capacity with medical stores. At the same time she continued the routine treatment of the patients in the fleet.

The air strikes over Truk had started. One afternoon the officer of the deck was watching a liberator coming in from a mission. He saw the plane come in low for a landing on the airstrip, falter, and crash into the sea, a few hundred yards from the beach. The ship's fire and rescue parties were called away. Boats were dispatched to the scene of the crash. The plane's crew were picked up and brought back to the ship. The next day they were well enough to be returned to duty. The pilot of the big plane said that the gas tanks had been shot up over Truk and on the return trip, the fuel had leaked out. One more quart of gasoline would have brought them to the island safely.

One night, at midnight, the skipper was awakened by the signalman. An urgent message had come in, directing the skipper to report to the Port Director. The attack on Saipan was about to commence. Before dawn, the ship sailed, making all possible speed.

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

June 24th the RELIEF was at Saipan Island, participating in the assualt upon the Japanese garrison there, and the occupation of the island.

At Saipan, the crew knew approximately what to expect. The entire ship was organized on an evacuation bases. Transfusion teams were reorganized, a manpower pool for utilizing all men off watch was instituted. The ship's superstructure decks were rigged with cots. The crew volunteered to organize a blood bank. Their blood was typed and the bank built up. The crew knew how much plasma and whole blood would be needed. All the life saving gear, the life jackets and the helmets, were gone over and made ready for instant use.

Every part of the ship's routine work was rechecked and intensified.

The RELIEF was to make a rendezvous, and proceed to the island from there. But at the rendezvous point, the plan was cancelled and the RELIEF proceded to the Saipan beaches alone.

Saipan is an island, not an atoll. It looked massive against the skyline. The immense bulk of the island appeared out of the mist, and solidified as the ship approached. The smoke of the Naval bombardment appeared and the artillery fire ashore. Dive bombers wheeled and whined above the island, driving relentlessly at the Japanese dug into the island.

A short distance off the island, the radios picked up the sounds of the dive bomber pilots talking to the fire controlmen on the ships, and the sounds of the men in the tanks talking back and forth. It was the dialogue of warfare, the most dramatic sound in the world.

The Japanese had held the island for more than twenty years; the charts of the anchorage were scarce. At one point in the ship's approach to the island, the Captain turned to the Navigator and said, "I'm coming in by guess and by God; how about a few bearings and distances.!! He got them, and the ship dropped her anchor just off the beach at Charan-Kanoa.

Boats loaded with casualties began to swarm out to the ship. The wounded men were carried out in landing craft of every description; amphibious tractors, amphibious trucks, ramp barges, the ship's own launches, LCVP's and LCM's. The boats made an endless chain from the beaches to the ship's sides.

The wounded were picked up where they were hit, and brought to the boats on the beaches in ox carts, jeeps, trucks, or whatever was available. Then they were loaded onto the boats, and carried direct to the RELIEF. The patients were received bleeding, crippled, unconscious. Many received plasma and whole blood transfusions on the way from the beaches to the ship.

The ship loaded steadily all day long. Just after dark, Jap planes came over. A smoke screen was laid in the harbor, but did the RELIEF little good. The smoke parted, by a freak in the wind's direction, and passed on each side of the ship's bow, leaving the RELIEF gleaming white and apparently alone in the harbor. Jap planes flew directly over the ship,

but dropped nothing but flares. If they took pictures, it must have appeared that the entire support for the landing at Saipan was one hospital ship.

The men of the ship's deck division had been hoisting the motor boat when the alarm sounded, announcing the arrival of the Jap planes. They carried on with their work until the sound of the planes was actually heard, then the flares were dropped, and in half a second, all the decks were cleared, and the boat was left dangling in mid air over the forecastle.

The all clear sounded, and the Captain called for standard speed and started out of the harbor. The smoke still lay thick in the anchorage. The skipper took the RELIEF through the smoke, through the ships at anchor and moving about the anchorage, and led her safely but precariously out to sea.

The ship headed for Kwajalein to unload the patients.

CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

29 June to 1 July the ship was in Kwajalein again.

The RELIEF stayed in Kwajalein only long enough to unload the Saipan casualties, onto the pontoon docks, and then sailed for Eniwetok, to take on supplies again.

CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

1 July to 2 July, the ship was again at Eniwetok.

At Eniwetok, the RELIEF took on medical supplies, stores and provisions, and made ready for sea. Then she sailed for Saipan again.

CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN

On the 3rd of July, the RELIEF sailed out of Eniwetok and headed for Saipan again. One day out, she was recalled by radio orders and directed to return to Eniwetok.

The crew passed the word among themselves that the ship had been recalled because a Japanese submarine was lying in wait for her between Eniwetok and Saipan. It was an unlikely story, for the ship had sailed through areas in which Japanese submarines had been sighted before that time, and to date had gone unmolested.

CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT

4th of July to 11th of July, 1944, the RELIEF lay at anchor in Eniwetok.

Again, the ship was prepared for another trip to Saipan. When she sailed, she took with her, two Japanese children, orphans of war. They were natives of Saipan island, and had been picked up by a transport during the fight and brought back to Eniwetok. The RELIEF was designated to take them back to Saipan and turn them over to authorities who were to find their family, if possible, and return them home.

One was a boy of seven, and the crew called him "Butch". The other was a girl of twelve, and the crew called her "Susie". They had been wounded when the Americans invaded the island, and picked up by Marines.

When they first came aboard, they were both badly frightened. They were given a separate room in Sick Officers' quarters, and a special corpsman to care for them. They were the only patients on the ship on the way back to Saipan. The ship had never had any patients like them. Japanese or not, they were tiny children, helpless babies, frightened and alone, caught mercilessly in the brutal horror of war. The whole medical staff turned out to help them. The

nurses made clothes for them. The crew members brought them ice cream. Someone gave Butch a yo-yo. The nurses made Susie a cloth doll. Butch was so used to sleeping on the ground, that the corpsmen had a hard time keeping him in bed. The corpsman stayed just outside the door to their room as they slept. One night when he looked in to see if all was well, Butch was missing. He had climbed out of the port-hole, and was asleep in the hard waterway on the weather deck.

CHAPTER TWENTY NINE

On the 15th of July, 1944, the RELIEF was again at Saipan participating in the battle for possession of the island.

The ship was organized along the same lines as on the first trip to Saipan. The island was not yet secured, but the battle was progressing. Most of the mountain was in the hands of the Marines.

The RELIEF took on board 276 wounded Japanese, in addition to the load of American casualties. Among the Japanese wounded were Korean troops. They invariably made a great point of letting the doctors and corpsmen know that they were Korean. They would say "Korean Christian, like you" and point to the wounded Japanese and say "Nippon". They thought they would receive better treatment. But on a hospital ship, there are no Japanese, Americans, Germans, or Koreans. A wounded man is a wounded man, regardless of race, creed, or color.

Among the Japanese, there were some who spoke English. One was a graduate of McKinley high school in Honolulu, T.H.; one was a graduate of the University of Hawaii.

One of the Japanese was called "good time Charlie" by the Corpsmen. He was always smiling, always bowing, always letting the corpsmen know that he wanted to help. The corpsmen put him to work cleaning the head, serving food, helping the doctors change dressings. Best of all, he acted as interpreter, and helped the doctors determine the nature and extent of the wounds among the other men.

At first, the Japanese were fed the same food that the Americans were fed. After a few days, it became evident that the American food was too ridh for their stomachs. They asked for rice.

Among the Japanese, there were many cases of Tetanus. Not one case occurred among the Americans. The Japanese do not inoculate their troops against tetanus; the Americans do.

Many of the Japanese requested that radical surgery be performed on them. A small wound on the arm or leg, and the Japanese would request that the doctor amputate. From an American Marine Intelligence officer the medical staff learned that radical surgery was common among the Japanese military medical men. The wounded Japanese on board the RELIEF, however, were treated according to American standards.

On the return trip to Kwajalein, one of the corpsmen taught the Japanese how to play blackjack.

The Marihe Intelligence officer asked the Japanese if they wanted to return to Japan after the war. Almost invariably, they replied that they would never return to Japan if they could help it. They had lost face by being taken alive.

CHAPTER THIRTY

July 20th to July 21st, the RELIEF was unloading patients at Kwajalein.

While the Japanese were leaving the ship, forces on the beach were conducting gunnery practice. When a plane flew over, towing a target, and the guns on the beach opened up, the Japanese flattened themselves on the gangway.

Again the RELIEF refueled, took on new supplies and stores, and the next day sailed for Saipan again.

CHAPTER THIRTY ONE

July 25th to August 4th, 1944, the RELIEF was again at Saipan, taking patients from the beaches.

By the time the RELIEF arrived this time, the island of Saipan had been secured. But the fight was still on for Tinian.

Casualties came from the beaches of Tinian slower than they had from Saipan. The Japanese were tiring; they knew the fight for the islands was hopeless. Foul weather delayed loading for the first few days. Meantime, the RELIEF resumed the regular services to the ships around her, much as she had done in the early days at Espiritu Santo and Efate. It was the old routine of waiting, the fillings and the refractions, on the doorstep of a terrible battle.

Then the weather subsided, and the ship filled to capacity with American wounded and sailed for Eniwetok.

CHAPTER THIRTY TWO

During the 8th and 9th of August, 1944, the RELIEF was at Eniwetok.

The ship stayed only a few hours at Eniwetok. During that time, she took on some few supplies, topped off with fuel, and sailed for Pearl Harbor, with the Tinian casualties still aboard.

CHAPTER THIRTY TWO

The 16th of August to the 25th of August, the RELIEF spent at Pearl Harbor, T.H.

When the ship stood into Pearl Harbor, she was welcomed by a brass band. The men of the RELIEF knew that the band was for the wounded men she carried. They liked that. They had seen them fall on the beaches, and they knew that they were real heroes.

One of the Marines had been wounded in the neck by a Jap sniper. He had lost his brother on the beaches at Kwajalein. He himself had a reputation for being fearless, nerveless, courageous, cool. He was up for the highest honor the Navy gives a man, the Navy Cross, because of his outstanding courage. His comrades told stories of how he would walk alone into a cave filled with Japanese and come out alone, without anyone following him. They said he killed Japs with his bare hands. One of the ship's officers asked him how it felt to walk alone into a cave full of Japs.

"It felt alright", the Marine said.

"Weren't you afraid?" the officer asked him.

The Marine thought for a moment. "Well," he said, "there was one thing that worried me - I was wondering if there might be any bears in those caves."

CHAPTER THIRTY THREE

September 3rd to September 19th, 1944, the RELIEF was at Eniwetok.

Pearl Harbor had been the first time in two years the ship had had a chance for Navy Yard repairs. It was also the first time the ship had been able to transfer some of the men who had been with the ship since long before she had left the States.

Then the ship was needed in the forward area again. She loaded down with medical supplies. Once again the ship dropped her anchor into the coral bottom of the lagoon. An epidemic of Bacillary dysentery was raging in the atoll. Screens were rigged on the ports of the ship, to keep the fat sluggish flies out. A conference of all medical officers in the area was called. A preventative campaign was recommended, including prohibition of swimming over the side of the ships, measures to control the sanitary conditions of food handling, screening tents on the islands. Within a week and a half, the spread of the disease was checked. One ship remained in quarantine. She was moved to an isolated anchorage.

One night an urgent signal was received requesting oxygen for a man on a ship anchored across the lagoon. Earlier, the entire lagoon had been alerted to prepare for a possible hurricane. The boat crew was broken out, an oxygen tank loaded into the launch, and within a few minutes, the boat had shoved off toward the waiting ship. When the boat arrived alongside, the men of the ship were waiting for the oxygen. The only oxygen tank they had aboard had just run out. The RELIEF'S oxygen was rushed to the ship's sick bay, where the sick man lay gasping for breath. It was inserted into the breathing aparatus, just in time to save the man's life.

Orders were received to sail to Palau. The Peliliu-Anguar attack had begun.

CHAPTER THIRTY FOUR

?September 24th to September 30th, 1944, the RELIEF was at Peliliu, participating in the assualt and occupation of that group of islands.

All the old familiar routines were rechecked and rehearsed. The manpower pool was formed, the blood bank renewed, the transfusion teams, the patient sorting teams, the operating teams, the stretcher bearers.

The Palau group is evil looking. It is dark and dank, full of shadowy grottos and grotesque rock formations. The sea washes into it and is caught in a wild perplexity of tangled crevices and caves, and swirls angrily about in escape. The whole aspect of the place is forbidding, sharp, jagged. An air of sheer evil seems to hang over it.

The men could make out the battle as the ship approached, raging in the thousand caves that punctured the surface of the volcanic rock. The American troops were forcing the enemy back, deeper and deeper into the creviced sides of the rocky island, digging them out with fire and with shell.

Even the weather was foul. The sea around the beaches was frothed and swollen, as if the ocean itself had been hurt by the constant beating of the guns.

It was too deep to anchor, so the ship lay to, waiting for the weather to subside enough for the casualties to be sent out in boats. The ship had to be maneuvered constantly, away from the underwater reefs. The RELIEF lay off the beaches in daylight hours, and at night steamed out to sea, fully illuminated.

The ship loaded patients for a week. During that time, Tokyo Rose announced that Peliliu was a disaster for the Americans. She said that American hospital ships were streaking to the scene of the catastrophe. Someone evidently was watching the RELIEF steam in to the beaches each morning, and thought that she was a different ship each time.

One of the chief complicating factors in the treatment of the wounded at Peliliu was Gas Gangrene. The medical department attributed the prevalence of Gas Gangrene to the fact that the island had been an agricultural settlement prior to the invasion, and the Japanese fertilized their soil with human excretia. The Americans were wounded, and fell into that soil, and the infection spread.

After a week, orders were received to sail with the load of wounded men to Guadalcanal, which was by that time a rear area with a large hospital. After a week of sailing, the ship was diverted to Noumea, New Caledonia, where the ship had first seen the Pacific islands almost two years before.

CHAPTER THIRTY FIVE

October 11th to October 15th, the RELIEF lay at Noumea, New Caledonia.

On the way to Noumea, the ship received a message from the commander of the forces invading Peliliu. "Well done", it said. Every man took it as a personal congratulation.

In Noumea, the ship was greeted by two separate brass bands on the dock. It was the finest reception she had ever received. They both played at once.

Then news came to sail for home. The ship needed repairs, badly. The men aboard her needed a look at their homes. They spoke of the States as "the old country" or "the mother land" now.

She had discharged the patients from Palau. Now she loaded up again. Some were the same men she had brought out of Palau. Some were new to the ship, men who had been recouperating in Noumea.

CHAPTER THIRTY SIX

On the 27th of October, 1944, the RELIEF stopped at Pearl Harbor, T.H. on her way to the United States of America.

The crew, who hardly dared believe the ship was really going home at last, were nervous lest the orders be changed. The ship stood into Pearl Harbor on the 27th, and sailed out the same day, headed for home. Everyone breathed easier.

CHAPTER THIRTY SEVEN

On the 4th of November, 1944, the RELIEF entered the Golden Gate at San Francisco, and came home.

At ten minutes after eight the RELIEF passed under the Golden Gate bridge. As the bridge passed over the ship, a shout went up. It started with the men on the forecastle and passed back the entire length of the ship.

The ship moored to Pier number Seven at nine o'clock. By noon, the patients had been disembarked. On the fourth of November, the ship moved out into the stream. She anchored in berth 12. On the sixth of November, the RELIEF entered General Engineering and Drydock Company, pier #1, Alameda, California. Commander Service Force, Pacific Fleet granted her availability till 15 February, 1945. She was to be ready for sea 21 February, 1945.

CHAPTER THIRTY EIGHT

From November 4th 1944 to February 13th, 1945, the RELIEF lay in San Francisco Bay.

On the 22nd of November, 1945, the Relief shifted to floating drydock #1 for repairs. On the 5th of December she shifted out of Drydock and alongside pier #1 again.

During the availability, meetings were held, weekly, between the ship's officers and the General Engineering and Drydock Company officials. These meetings were considered very valuable by the commanding officer, as they provided an opportunity for the ship's officers to make comments and suggestions concerning the work in progress, and to point out urgent work, and unsatisfactory work.

The crew shifted off the ship as soon as the workers moved in. It seemed that there was not a square inch of the ship that was livable. Welding leads, generators, fire hoses, tools, workers, lay all about the decks.

The crew went on duty as fire watches. They were granted leave and they were granted liberty. The entire ship was worked over. As a result, the old air conditioning of the operating room was replaced with newer equipment; and the wards were air conditioned. The Radio Room was dismantled and a completely new installation provided. A new emergency Radio Room was installed aft. New insulation was provided, compartments shifted, new emergency generators, auxiliary fire pumps,installed. The RELIEF came out of the yard rejuvenated.

Toward the very end of the availability period, and at a time when all hands were back from leave, the ship had a dance. All hands were invited.

On the 13th of February, 1945, the RELIEF headed out to sea again, bound for Ulithi, West Caroline Islands.

CHAPTER THIRTY NINE

From the 5th of March, 1945 to the 26th of March, the RELIEF lay in Ulithi.

The air attacks on Tokyo were in full swing. On the sixth of March, the RELIEF received on board the crew of a crashed B-29, which had been returning from a raid over Tokyo. The plane had crashed at sea after having been damaged over the Japanese target. The crew was rescued after four days by a destroyer. The destroyer brought the men to the RELIEF, as she lay in Ulithi.

On the 11th of March, 1945, Air Flash Red was received in the harbor. Two Japanese suicide planes came into the area. One crashed into the after flight deck of the U.S.S. Randolph, and aircraft carrier lying off the RELIEF's starboard quarter. The other Japanese plane mistook Sorlen Island for another aircraft carrier, and made its suicide dive into the coral island just forward of the

just forward of the RELIEF. The response to the alert had been very slow in the harbor. Many ships had working lights, cargo handling lights still burning, even after the second plane had crashed. Some of the ships were having movies on their topside decks, and never did secure from them.

At four o'clock in the morning, the RELIEF received casualties from the U.S.S. Randolph. Most were suffering from severe burns of the body. Again during the evening of the 12th of March Air Flash Red was received from SOPA. No attack this time.

Again on the 13th of March, Air Flash Red was received, but no enemy planes were sighted.

On the 18th of March another alert was sounded, but again no enemy planes were sighted over the anchorage.

On the 20th of March Air Flash Red was again broadcast through the harbor, but no planes were sighted over the harbor.

Once again on the 22nd of March Air Flash Red was the condition in the harbor. Again no planes were sighted over the anchorage.

On the 24th and 25th af March, the RELIEF received casualties from ships returning from the task force operations against the Japanese homeland. The USS Bountiful was in the harbor at the time. The RELIEF transferred many of her cases to the Bountiful, retaining on board only those casualties which were to be evacuated to rear area hospitals. Among the casualties received were patients from the huge first line aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. Franklin. The big ship stood into the harbor on the 24th, and lay off the stern of the RELIEF. She was an awesome sight. Twisted, torn, her entire structure distorted by the intensity of the explosions, she lay listing hard to one side. The casualties came aboard horribly burned. They had brought the ship back from off Tokyo, in spite of the severest damage any ship has ever suffered, and still survived.

CHAPTER FORTY

From the 27th of March to the 28th of March, the RELIEF was at Guam, Marianas Islands.

The RELIEF moored to dock X-4 and disembarked the patients remaining aboard. The patients were taken to Navy Hospital #926.

She now prepared for the most rigorous duty of her Pacific career -- Okinawa.

Two correspondents were taken aboard. They didn't know why they had been sent to the ship.

A portable radar set was installed on the flying bridge. A technician was borrowed from the shore facilities to make the next trip with the ship and instruct the crew members.

The Navigator and the Communications Officer made a trip to the beach and picked up the ship's orders. She was ready to sail.

The plan was to rendezvous with the U.S.S. Comfort, two days out, and travel in company to the assigned area.

The Comfort, one of the new hospital ships (she had been converted from a C1 hull at Los Angeles) looked bright and new as the RELIEF approached. The RELIEF, veteran of the two, took lead position, and the Captain assumed the duties of Officer in Tactical Command.

Almost immediately there was a close liaison between the two ships. There are ships that are natural rivals. There are others, like the RELIEF and the Comfort, which are natural running mates. In the light of what was to happen later to the Comfort, the friendly relations between the departments of the two take on an air of poignancy.

The Comfort became a veteran quickly. She had been through the Leyte campaign, and was narrowly missed by a Japanese torpedo. During the battle of San Bernadino Straits, the Comfort had been caught between the Japanese task force and the American fast carrier force, and was strafed by Japanese fighters. She had been lucky both times and had sustained no casualties.

At 0830 on the 30th of March, the rendezvous was made with the other hospital ship and she took position 1000 yards astern of the RELIEF. It was the first time the RELIEF had travelled in company with any other vessel since she had been in the Pacific area.

The two ships proceded toward Okinawa Gunto,

CHAPTER FORTY ONE

On the 2nd of April, 1945, the RELIEF was approaching Okinawa Gunto, with the U.S.S. Comfort in column disposition 1000 yards astern. The battle for the island had commenced on the first day of the month.

On the second day of the month, at 0558, the RELIEF sighted Okinawa Jima bearing 034 degrees true, distant 30 miles. At approximately 0610 a single engined aircraft was sighted crossing the bow of the RELIEF at a distance of about five miles. The aircraft was identified as a Japanese fighter. The hospital ship's lights were still burning at full brilliance. The morning was clear and dark. The Red Crosses and green band of the ship were clearly visible. Without warning, the enemy plane made a ninety degree turn and approached the RELIEF and the Comfort from bow on. The plane made a straight run on the RELIEF, and from a short distance ahead, released a bomb. Lookouts claim to have seen gun flashes coming from under the plane's wings, and splashes in the water along the sides of the ship, indicating that the plane was strafing at the same time.

Meanwhile, from over the horizon, on the port beam of the hospital ship, a destroyer on patrol off the island had picked up the Japanese plane on its radar screen. The destroyer witnessed the attack on the hospital ships, and opened fire on the Japanese plane. Just as the plane released its bomb, a close burst from the destroyer's anti-aircraft guns rocked its wings, throwing the bomb a few yards wide of the target. The bomb landed 25 to 50 yards off the port side of the RELIEF, and the ship passed over

it before it exploded. The explosion of the bomb shook the RELIEF violently, but the only casualty was loss of suction in a lubricating oil pump, which was placed back in operation immediately.

The enemy plane turned for another run, but the destroyer (later identified as the USS WICKES) engaged the plane again, and drove it away before the approach was completed.

The RELIEF manned her security stations (hospital ship equivilant of battle stations) and kept her hospital illumination on, and maintained her course and speed, in accordance with hospital ship procedure and International Law.

The USS WICKES (DD578) became the favorite destroyer of the RELIEF's crew. She was not proceding in company with the RELIEF, and her appearance was a fortuitous accident.

A few hours later, another Japanese fighter was sighted. This one flew directly over the ship and stunted above her for several minutes, but no attack was made.

The hospital ships proceded to the transport areas and anchored off the beaches where the landings were made. Casualties began to come out from the beaches immediately. During the day, two alerts were received, and enemy aircraft were sighted in the vicinity each time.

Just prior to sunset, the hospital ships retired from the landing beach areas, and proceeded to sea. The ideas was to afford the hospital ships the protection of their illuminated markings. Enemy planes were over the anchorage area many times each night. It was believed that the hospital ships would be afforded greater protection from attack if they proceeded to sea fully illuminated than if they remained in the harbor. Accordingly, the RELIEF and the Comfort proceeded to sea each night, lit up like Christmas trees, shielded from air attack by nothing more than a document. Once at sea, a sitting duck, the crew remembered that the Japanese had never signed the Geneva Convention.

The two hospital ships proceeded out to sea until midnight, and then reversed course, and steamed back toward the landing beach area. In the morning, they entered the anchorage and commenced loading patients once again.

As the RELIEF returned to the landing areas, she had to reduce speed and use emergency whistle signals to make her way safely to the anchorage berth. The harbor was still covered with smoke from the raids of the previous night. Visibility was nil.

Early on the morning of the fourth, an unidentified plane was heard overhead. No attack ensued, although the harbor was under air attack at the time. Until the ninth of the month, the hospital ships continued to retire at night, relying on their supposed immunity from attack for protection.

During the afternoon of the fifth of the month, all ships were warned of an impending mass air attack on the island and anchorage areas. That night, a new retirement plan was instituted. The new plan retired the ships between Kerama Retto and Okinawa, and proved to be hazardous because of the numerous air attacks on Kerama Retto during dusk and dawn hours.

During the afternoon of the fifth, four alerts were received. Many planes were sighted over the transport area. About 1400, a large disposition of enemy planes came over the anchorage area. Most were Kamikaze planes, suicide planes. It was the RELIEF's first look at that weird type of warfare. The Captain recommended to one of the officers on the bridge that he relay a description of what was going on in the harbor as the planes came over, in order that the men below decks would be kept informed of the progress of the fight. The officer tried to keep count of the enemy planes attacking. "Jap plane just shot down off our port bow", "Kamikaze plane just dove into an LST on our starboard bow", "Three suicide planes under attack on our port beam". But within a few minutes so many planes were making suicide dives and so many were being shot down in the area, that he could not keep up with the account.

Three alerts were received on the sixth; six alerts were received on the seventh, and on that night another unidentified plane was heard overhead during the retirement. On the eighth, three alerts were received, and another plane was overhead during the retirement. On plane was shot down off the port bow after having passed directly over the ship as she was retiring from the anchorage area fully illuminated.

On the ninth of the month, the retirement plan was abandoned, because of the numerous attacks and attempted attacks on the hospital ships during the retirement. The hospital ships remained in the anchorage area, and took advantage of the cover of smoke screens, securing their illumination, and thereby discarding for those hours, any claims to immunity from attack.

On the tenth of April, the RELIEF had a full load of casualties from the beaches, and got underway for Guam, using full hospital ship procedure, including lighting.

One night during the stay at Okinawa, the RELIEF and the Comfort were retiring as usual, using full hospital lighting and procedure. The Officer of the Deck on the RELIEF intercepted a message from the Comfort, stating that she was under aerial attack. The Comfort was a short distance off the RELIEF's bow at the time. No damage was sustained by either ship, but it is important to note that the Comfort, because of that attack was delayed in port when she returned to Guam to unload.

CHAPTER FORTY TWO

One day out of Okinawa, enroute to Guam, the RELIEF was diverted to Saipan island, to facilitate the unloading of casualties.

On the thirteenth of April, the RELIEF sighted a contact mine, which she avoided and attempted to sink On the 13th of the month, the ship half-masted colors in memory of the late President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Colors remained at half-mast for thirty days.

The RELIEF arrived at Saipan on the 15th of April, and unloaded casualties. She remained moored to the dock at Saipan overnight, and the next day got underway and proceeded enroute to Ulithi.

CHAPTER FORTY THREE

The RELIEF arrived at Ulithi on the 18th of April.

She took on stores and fuel. During the afternoon, and Air Flash Red was received, but no enemy planes were observed over the anchorage area. The same afternoon, the RELIEF was underway again, bound for Okinawa Gunto for the second time.

It has been previously stated that the Comfort had been delayed in Guam because of certain complications ensuing from the attack during the stay in Okinawa. The Comfort had gone to Guam to unload her casualties, and the RELIEF had gone to Saipan, and then to Ulithi. It is not improbable to assume that because of the delay at Guam, the Comfort and the RELIEF switched schedules for the next trip The RELIEF left Ulithi and returned to Okinawa. The Comfort remained for a few days in Guam, and then returned to Okinawa.

CHAPTER FORTY FOUR

On the 22nd of April, the RELIEF stood into Okinawa, and remained there taking on casualties until the 26th of April.

Once again, the retirement plan was abandoned, and the RELIEF stayed at anchor during the dark hours, taking advantage of the cover of smoke.

On the 22nd, there were two air raids in the anchorage area. Each night and each day the raids continued. The casualties were loaded during the alerts, and between times.

On the 26th of April, the ship was underway, with orders to proceed to Guam. On the way out of the anchorage, a message was received from APA 212, requesting that the RELIEF stop to take aboard an emergency case. The man was transferred to the RELIEF in an LCVP and both vessels proceeded on their routes.

The Comfort had stood into the Okinawa anchorages in the meantime. She was on the run that the RELIEF had originally been sceduled for, and the RELIEF was leaving ahead of her because the Comfort had been detained at Guam.

In the tragic light of what befell the Comfort later, this is most important.

CHAPTER FORTY FIVE

On the 27th of April, the ship was diverted to Tinian. She arrived in Tinian on the 30th of April, and executed a quick turn around after discharging her casualties onto the beaches.

She had orders to sail to Saipan on the first of May, for logistic purposes.

As the RELIEF stood into Tinian, the shocking news of the Kamikaze attack on the Comfort was intercepted on the radio. She had been on the run originally scheduled for the RELIEF. If the Comfort had not been detained at Guam, the RELIEF would have been steaming out of Okinawa at the time of the attack.

CHAPTER FORTY SIX

On the first of May, the Ship got underway from Tinian to Saipan, only a few miles distant. On the second of May, the ship proceeded to Guam, but on the third, when she was about twelve miles off the Guam harbor entrance, she received radio orders, diverting her from Guam to Okinawa.

From the third to the seventh of May, the RELIEF was underway from Guam to Okinawa.

CHAPTER FORTY SEVEN

From the 7th to the 10th of May, the RELIEF again lay at Okinawa, taking on the wounded from the beaches.

Again the ship remained at anchor during the dark hours, taking advantage of the concealment afforded by the smoke screen laid in the harbor.

On the 7th, one alert was broadcast to the harbor, but no planes were visible in the immediate anchorage area. By this time, the picket screen of Destroyer escorts and the outer interception screen of fighter planes was functioning well, and most of the attacking planes were being intercepted prior to their arrival in the landing beach area.

On the evening of the ninth of May, six alerts were sounded. On the morning of the tenth, two more alerts were sounded.

On the tenth of the month, the ship was again underway with a full load of casualties. She was bound for Guam.

CHAPTER FORTY EIGHT

On the 14th of May, she stood into Guam; again she unloaded her casualties, and did a quick turn around.

On the next day, the 15th of May, the RELIEF was again underway bound for Okinawa.

CHAPTER FORTY NINE

On the 19th of May, the RELIEF again stood into the Hagushi beach area at Okinawa, and started loading casualties from the beaches. She remained there loading from the nineteenth of May to the twenty-sixth of May.

On the 20th, two alerts were sounded. On the 21st, one alert was sounded. On the 22nd, 3 alerts were sounded. On the 23rd, 2 alerts were sounded. On the 24th, one alert was sounded. That alert lasted until 0430 the next morning. Heavy anti-aircraft fire and many attacking planes were visible during the night.

On the 25th, a continuous air raid was in progress from 0800 until 1158.

CHAPTER FIFTY

On the 26th of May, the RELIEF got underway from Okinawa and proceeded toward Guam. On the 30th of May, she stood into Guam. Once again she did a quick turnaround after unloading the casualties. On the next day, the 1st of June, she was underway from Guam to Okinawa.

CHAPTER FIFTY ONE

From the first of June to the seventh of June, 1945, the RELIEF was proceeding underway from Guam to Okinawa. During the nights of the fourth and fifth of the month, a warning was received to alter the ship's course in order

to avoid a typhoon which was closing on her. By the 5th of June she had resumed course, and the typhoon center had cleared.

On the 7th of June, 1945, the RELIEF once again entered Okinawa.

She remained in Okinawa until the 11th of June.

Again, during the dark hours, the RELIEF remained at anchor in the harbor, taking advantage of darkness and smoke screens for protection against the suicide planes.

On the 7th of the Month, two alerts were sounded, but no planes were sighted over the anchorage.

On the 8th, there were three raids. Anti aircraft from the ships and from the island was very intense.

On the ninth, there were six air raids. Again the anti-aircraft fire from the beach was very heavy.

On the tenth, there were two alerts, but no planes appeared over the anchorage.

On the eleventh, the ship got underway for Guam, with a full load of battle casualties.

CHAPTER FIFTY TWO

From the 15th of June to the 21st of June, the ship stayed at Saipan, where she had been diverted on the 13th, by radio dispatch.

The ship was granted a four day availability for needed repairs. The engines needed overhaul, the boilers needed cleaning. Stores and provisions were loaded on board.

On the 21st of June, the RELIEF was once again underway for Okinawa Gunto, using full hospital ship procedure.

CHAPTER FIFTY THREE

On the 26th of June she again arrived at Okinawa. She remained there until the 30th of the month.

On the trip to Okinawa, the Captain exercised the Officers of the deck at ship handling drill, using a life raft as a dummy, and sumulating the conditions of man overboard, and maneuvering the ship alongside a raft, to rescue shipwrecked personnel.

On the 25th, while underway, the ship sighted a large contact mine.

Again while at Okinawa, the ship remained at anchor during the dark hours, again taking advantage of the darkness and the smoke screen for protection against the attacks of the suicide planes.

On the 27th, there was one air raid. On the 30th of the month, the Japanese conducted a bombing raid on the island itself. Heavy anti aircraft was observed from the island.

On the 30th of the month, the RELIEF received orders to proceed to Guam, for routing to Leyte, Philippine Islands, to report to Commander Service Squadron Ten for duty with the Third Fleet in that area.

CHAPTER FIFTY FOUR

On the 30th of the month, the ship got underway from Okinawa and proceeded toward Guam. On the 2nd of July she was diverted to Saipan. She arrived in Saipan on the fifth of July. Immediately she was unloaded and routed to Guam. On the 8th of July she arrived at Guam. She was enroute from Saipan to Leyte, Philippine Islands, but she had been routed through Guam for logistics.

CH APTER FIFTY FIVE

On the 9th of July, the RELIEF got underway from Guam and proceeded toward Leyte. She arrived at Leyte on the 13th of July, and remained there until the 25th of August.

When the RELIEF arrived in Leyte, she was assigned the duties of Station Hospital ship. An epidemic of bacillary dysentery was raging in the harbor. Once again, the old harbor routine was established. A conference of the medical officers in the area was called, and a preventative campaign against the disease was recommended by the medical staff of the RELIEF.

The RELIEF acted as the center of research on the epidemic, and also received the majority of the cases for treatment.

On the evening of the tenth of August, 1945, while the ship's company was at the movies, word was received ofer the radio, of the Japanese government's willingness to accept the provisions of the Potsdam conference, providing they could keep their Emperor as supreme ruler of Japan. Immediately, searchlights swept over the harbor, blinking in a series of V's, or whirling in wide arcs. An enormous display of pyrotechnics was released from the ships in the harbor. The entire horizon seemed to be banked in pyrotechnic display. Whistles, sirens, bands, ships' bells, all joined in wild celebration. The demonstration lasted for over one and three quarters of an hour in full force, and continued throughout the night, sporadically.

On the 24th of the mohth, the RELIEF transferred the first group of her men for discharge from the Navy under the point system.

On the 24th of the month, the RELEIF got underway from San Pedro Bay, and proceeded to Guinan Harbor, Samar Island, to discharge all hospitalized patients, and to obtain further routing to Subic Bay, Luzon, Philippine Islands.

CHAPTER FIFTY SIX

On the 25th of August, the RELIEF got underway from Samar and Leyte and proceeded to Subic Bay, Philippine Islands.

She remained in Subic Bay just one day, and was routed to Guam.

CHAPTER FIFTY SEVEN

On the 28th of August, the RELIEF got underway from Subic Bay, Philippine Islands, and proceeded toward Guam.

On the last day of the month, a typhoon of tremendous intensity was encountered. The day after the typhoon had subsided and passed by, the RELIEF received a radio order, diverting her to Okinawa. On the second day of the month, while the RELIEF was still at sea, the war ended.

The next day, the third of September, the RELIEF arrived once more at Okinawa.

On the next day, the fourth of September, the RELIEF was underway again, proceeding toward Dairen, Manchuria. The mission of the ship was to evacuate recovered allied military prisoners from the Japanese prison camp at Mukden.

The RELIEF proceeded in company with two destroyer escorts, the McNulty and the Elmore, who were assigned to escort the ship through the dangerous minefields in the East China Sea and the Yellow Sea. Many floating mines had been reported in the area.

CHAPTER FIFTY EIGHT

On the 4th of September, the RELIEF got underway from Okinawa and proceeded toward Dairen, Manchuria. The ship arrived in Dairen on the eighth of September, 1945, and remained there until the twelfth of September 1945.

The destroyer escorts took station, on the trip to Dairen, 2500 yards ahead of the RELIEF, and 500 yards on each bow.

On the 6th of Septmeber, a Chinese Sampan was sighted, directly in the path of the ship. The sampan had swamped in a recent typhoon, and two survivors remained aboard her.

The USS McNulty picked up the survivors, and transferred them by meand of a modified breeches buoy to the hospital ship.

The survivors were Chinese, one woman, and one man. They were suffering from exposure and abrasions. The typhoon that had passed over the area five days previously had blown them out into the Yellow Sea.

The ship's officers made attempts to communicate with the Chinese. By means of sign language and a Chinese grammar, their story was related. The woman was a girl of eighteen. The man was a few years older. The girl's brother had been a merchant in Suchow, and had been in the habit of making trips to Shanghai to buy goods which he would then transport to Suchow and sell in the small shop he owned there. The man was the owner of the boat, which was rented for the trip. Originally there had been several people in the small craft. The merchant, his wife, the girl, her younger sister, and the man who owned the boat. About halfway to Shanghai, the typhoon struck the little ship, and all but the two survivors were killed. They were blown by the force of the storm, far out into the Yellow Sea, where they drifted into the path of the hospital ship. They were taken on board and given treatment for their injuries.

On the 7th of September, ten floating mines were sighted by the destroyer escorts. Seven were exploded; three were sunk. At fifteen thirty that same day, the McNulty came alongside to transfer a crew member who had been injured by a piece of shrapnel from one of the mines she had exploded. The shrapnel had struck the man in the head, and torn the upper part of his head off. The patient was transferred to the RELIEF by means of a breeches buoy, but a few minutes after he was received on board, he died.

During the night, searchlights were used to illuminate the path ahead of the ships, in an effort to sight the mines and avoid them. The RELIEF arrived in Dairen Manchuria on the 8th of September.

The Captain brought the ship alongside the docks without the aid of tugs or other vessels. The Russians, who were in control of the port, had promised to provide tugs or pilots, but they never did show up.

No liberty was allowed to the enlisted men, but officers of the ship were invited ashore on observation tours. Until the 11th of the month, the RELIEF lay alongside the pier, waiting for the released prisoners from Mukden, north of Dairen.

Finally, on the 11th, the RELIEF took aboard a capacity load of Recovered Prisoners. The prisoners were brought by train from the Japanese prison camp at Mukden.

Most of them had been taken prisoner at Bataan, or elsewhere in the Philippines. They had survived the prison camps in the Philippines, Formosa, Honshu, and finally, Mukden. They were the men who had made the death march at Bataan. Most had been prisoner three years. That night, 753 surviving personnel came aboard the RELIEF.

During the morning of the eleventh, a Navy Doctor and a Marine Seargent, themselves released prisoners, had come aboard the RELIEF. From these two men, the ship's medical staff learned the number and condition of the men who were to come aboard that night. The ship had lain alongside the dock for three days, with all preparations made for receiving the prisoners. All day, during the 11th, rumors persisted that the train was just coming into Dairen. Finally, at 2050, the men began to arrive. The scene was dramatic and poignant.

They were heard before they were seen. The dock itself was floodlighted. Beyond the dock was darkness. At 2050, the first of them stepped out of the darkness, into the glare of the dock floodlights; first one, then two, then ten, then the whole procession. They came in a mob, carrying all their worldly possessions on their backs or in duffle bags.

The entire ship's company manned the rail to greet them. As the ex-prisoners of war 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 band had been illuminated, and someone had started stateside music playing over the ship's public address system...Dixie, the Marine Hymn, Stardust. The RELIEF was the first American ship those men had seen in three years; in some cases, four.

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 had gone to bed. 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, and too excited to sleep, stayed about the decks, swapping yarns with the crew, or listening 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, and Guam, and the others.

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 RELIEF sailed from Dairen at 0530 on the morning of the 12th 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 provided each passenger with 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 was kept on constant watch over specially designated circuits, waiting to intercept messages addressed to the ex-prisoners from their families. Each day 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 prisoners. 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 or states, and helped them to re-envisage what life would be like in the community to which they were returning.

Stories told by the prisoners, of the treatment they had received at the hands of the Japanese, will live in the memories of the men of the RELIEF as first hand records of the infamy of the enemy they fought.

CHAPTER FIFTY NINE

On the 12th of September, the RELIEF got underway from Dairen, Manchuria, and proceeded toward Okinawa again. On the 15th of September, the RELIEF stood into Okinawa.

On the fifteenth, as the ship was making preparations to debark the ex-prisoners of war, word was received that a severe typhoon was expected to pass near Okinawa on the 17th. All ships in the harbor were placed on one hour sailing notice after 0500 on the 16th.

At 0610 on the 16th, the RELIEF got underway and proceeded to Machinato anchorage, on the western side of the island, in order to disembark the passengers. Because of the rain, poor visibility, and increasing wind, sea and swells, disembarkation of the passengers could not be accomplished.

At 1400, a small craft hove to off the RELIEF's beam, and gave her instructions to retire to sea, to the Westward, to ride out the storm, which was due to strike the area at 2100.

All passengers berthed on the upper decks were moved below as well as possible, and the ship was battened down to ride out the storm center. The center did not pass the area until after midnight.

During the night of the 16th and all of the 17th, the RELIEF lay hove to, headed into the storm, 100 miles westward of Okinawa. The ship behaved exceedingly well and no great discomfort was experienced by the passengers or the crew. Winds reached a velocity of 50-55 knots, and swells up to 30 feet were observed during the night.

Lowest barometer reading was observed at 0230 and was 29.05 inches. The typhoon was very severe in intensity, and caused much destruction to the shipping that remained in Buckner Bay.

At 1000 on the 17th, the storm abated somewhat, and the RELIEF returned. At 1600 the RELIEF hove to in sight of Aguni Shima, and waited for the swells to decrease in Machinato anchorage. On the 18th of the month, the ship stood into Machinato anchorage and disembarked the recovered allied military personnel.

The two Chinese had been retained on board. On the 19th of the month, they were transferred ashore at Okinawa, and turned over to the military authorities for transportation back to China.

CHAPTER SIXTY

On the 20th of the month, the RELIEF shifted to Hagushi beach anchorage. On the 22nd she shifted to Buckner Bay again, for stores, fuel, and recreational facilities for the crew. On the 24th, the second draft of men were transferred to the receiving ship at Okinawa, to be sent home for discharge under the Navy point system.

On the 24th, the ship shifted to Nago Wan anchorages. She had orders to report to Commander Transport Squadron 17 for inclusion in a convoy bound for Taku, China.

CHAPTER SIXTY ONE

On the 26th of the month, the RELIEF sailed from Nago Wan, Okinawa, with a convoy of more than thirty ships. They were bound for Taku, China. On the 30th of September, the convoy anchored in Taku, China. The RELIEF remained in Taku, China, anchored at a point 5.2 miles bearing 094 degrees true from the Taku bar light vessel, until the 29th of October.

The convoy that sailed to Taku was the first convoy the RELIEF had ever sailed in, since she had come to the Pacific.

The convoy was composed of transports and support vessels. The First Marine Division was moving into the Taku-Tientsin area to help maintain order during the establishment of local Chinese government, and to disarm the Japanese nationals in the area. The RELIEF was included in the group to provide medical and hospital facilities in case of any difficulties, and also to provide the routine services of a hospital ship.

She did exactly that. She lay off Taku one month, conducting the routine consultations and emergency hospital facilities for the area. At the same time, maximum possible liberty was granted to the ship's company. Taku is separated from the open sea by Taku Bar, over which the water is extremely shallow. The ship had to anchor almost out of sight of land. The crew members were transported up the Hai Ho (the Chinese River leading past Taku and into Tientsin) on LCI's and LSM's.

CHAPTER SIXTY TWO

On the 30th day of October , the RELIEF was underway from Taku, China, bound for Tsingtao, China.

Orders had been received placing the ship on "Magic Carpet" duty. Magic Carpet duty meant that the ship had been assigned to task group 16.12, which was assigned the

task of returning overseas military personnel to the United States. The ship was directed to load to capacity in Taku, and proceed to the United States, to San Francisco. If a capacity load of patients could not be obtained at Taku, the ship was to proceed to Tsingtao. If a capacity load could not be obtained there, the ship was directed to proceed to Okinawa.

All these things were done. The RELIEF anchored in Tsingtao on the first of November and the crew was grnated liberty in the city. The next day it was determined that a capacity load of patients could not be obtained at Tsingtao, and so the RELIEF sailed for Okinawa. She anchored in Buckner Bay, Okinawa, on the 5th of the month.

In Okinawa, orders were received to load the ship to capacity with patients and recovered allied military personnel. When all of the patients in the area had been loaded, the ship was still not filled. No RAMPS were available in the area.

LCT's brought 710 personnel out to the RELIEF on the 7th and the 8th of the month. About half of them were passengers for Guam. The other half were personnel returning to the United States for discharge and patients returning to the United States for further treatment.

The RELIEF sailed for Guam, Marianas Islands on the 8th of November. On the 13th of November, she stood into Apra Harbor, Guam, Guam, and discharged the passengers destined for duty in Guam.

On the 13th, a message was received, changing the designation of the ship from a hospital ship to a hospital transport (AHH-11). Her hospital ship markings were not to be altered, but her medical staff was to be drastically reduced, and the type of duty which she was to perform was to be radically different from her war time duty.

She was now a part of the tremendous fleet whose sole mission was to return to the United States the service men who had spent the past few years with her in the Pacific war.

She loaded to capacity in Guam, with homeward bound men.

CHAPTER SIXTY THREE

On the 14th of November, 1945, the big white ship headed out to sea once more, and turned her bow toward home.

It was done. The war was over. The job had been completed, successfully. Most of her men were eligible for discharge and return to civilian life, to take up where they had left off three years before.

That's where she is now, as this is being written...plowing a furrow in the sea, headed for home. She has run the gamut. She has seen much, done much.

It was a long story, looking back over it. She started grey, in Boston. She lay in the sub tropics for months, sweating out boredom. She moved forward with the amphibious assualt of the warfare. She grew in strength and courage as her men grew. She had her baptism of fire; saw her sister ships violated by treachery, narrowly escaped herself. At the height of her healing powers, the war suddenly ended. She was still strong, still seaworthy, still able to withstand attack from the enemy and from the elements. She had proven herself to her men in every possible way. Now she was going home, and the cycle was being completed with her new designation as a hospital transport. She played her part from Boston to China.

It was a satisfying thing to contemplate.

And there it is - the story.

APPENDIX

The ship's work; what does it look like in facts and figures? How many miles did her engines actually turn over? How many gallons of fuel oil did she actually burn? How many patients did she take aboard.

First, the number of patients. There is no record aboard the ship which would show the actual number of men treated during the war years. There are records, yes. But the records show only those patients actually admitted to the sick list. Out of the hundreds that came aboard for consultation each day, for dressings and first aid to small injuries, only a part were admitted to the ship and retained as patients. The endless line of men waiting outside the dental lab each day for treatment, the line in front of the eye ear nose and throat lab, in front of x-ray; none of those were counted on the ship's sick list.

But what does the sick list itself look like?

Year	Total No. of admissions	Av. per month.
1942	1277	106.42
1943	3028	252.33
1944	5607	467.25
1945 (to 1 Sept)	4890	407.50
Total for period	14802	336.42

Add to this figure, the patients taken on board since the first of September, 1945 and the total for the period jumps to 16,139. That figure shows the actual number of patients admitted to the ship's sick list, retained on board, as on evacuations. It does not include dental patients, x-ray, eye consultations, etc.

There is no complete record of all those patients available. But to get the idea of how many there were, look at the figures from just two of the departments - x ray and dental.

In 1942 X-Ray treated	1819 patients	
In 1943	2842	
In 1944	3081	
In 1945	2678	Making a total of 10,420

In 1942 the dentists treated	3,402	patients
In 1943	5,896	
In 1944	5,860	
In 1945	3,425	Making a total of 18,583

Add to those figures the figures of the sick list, and they make a total of 45,162. Those are the ones that were actually logged in and out, not counting any other departments, and not counting casual treatment and consultation.

How about the number of evacuations? How many did she take out of each of the major battle areas?

Out of Kwajalein, the RELIEF evacuated	594
Out of Saipan-Tinian (three trips)	1706
Out of Peliliu	678
Out of Okinawa (six trips)	3569
Out of Dairen (recovered prisoners of war)	743
Out of Noumea to San Francisco (Nov '44)	499
Guam to San Francisco (383 patients 358 passengers)	741.

So much for the passengers and patients.

How far did she go? Best place to find out is from the Engineering log book, which shows the number of miles the engines actually turned over.

In 1942 she steamed	2457	miles
In 1943	20081	miles
In 1944	32887	miles
In 1945	40321	miles
Total miles steamed	93290	miles - almost 4 times around the world.

During the war, the RELIEF consumed 8,041,812 gallons of fuel oil, up to 1 November, 1945.

What were the figures on medical supplies consumed?

During the Okinawa invasion alone, 2,015 pints of whole blood were administered.

During the Okinawa invasion alone, 1,068,000,000 units of penicillin were administered.

During the Okinawa invasion alone, 181,000 cc of plasma were administered.

During the Okinawa invasion alone, 1,692,000 cc of dextrose were administered.

During the Okinawa invasion alone, 15,220,000 units of Gas Gangrene antitoxin were administered.

The U.S.S. RELIEF was under command of the following officers during periods indicated:

Commander J. M. Lewis, USN	From	12/7/41	to	2/2/43.
Captain P.M. Money, USN	From	2/3/43	to	10/21/43.
Commander J. B. Bliss, USN	From	10/22/43	to	6/4/44.
Commander J. C. Sever, USNR	From	6/4/44	to	Present time.

The following executive officers served on board this vessel during periods indicated:

Commander G.D. Morrison, USN	From	12/7/41	to	6/20/42
Lieut.Comdr. J. B. Bliss, USN	From	6/20/42	to	10/21/43
Lieut.Comdr. J. C. Sever, USNR	From	11/28/43	to	6/4/44
Lieutenant C. A. Parsons, USN	From	6/4/44	to	7/13/45
Lieut.Comdr. J.N. Davis, USNR	From	7/13/45	to	Present time.

The Senior Medical Officer of this vessel were as follows:

Captain C. W. Ross, (MC), USN	From	12/7/41	to	1/7/42
Captain S. S. Cook, (MC), USN	From	1/7/42	to	12/9/42
Captain A.L. Bryan, (MC), USN	From	12/9/42	to	3/6/44
Captain L.H.Roddis, (MC), USN	From	3/6/44	to	9/14/44
Capt. W. H. Perry, (MC), USN	From	9/14/44	to	Present time.