



OBON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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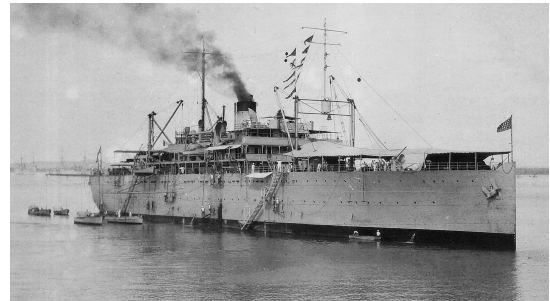
Pearl Harbor Stories

Ed Johann: Part Two

On December 5th, 1941 the **USS Lexington** departed Pearl Harbor on a special mission to deliver 18 planes to **Midway Islands**. Accompanying her was the typical 'carrier escort fleet' of several cruisers, destroyers, supply ships and the **USS Wright**.



USS Lexington (CV-2)



USS Wright

The **USS Wright** was outfitted with a massive crane that could lift a seaplane from its deck and set it in the water. Before helicopters were invented a seaplane was the only way to recover downed pilots. The convoy got underway,...except for **Ed Johann** who, in the last minute, was pulled off the USS Wright and ordered to remain in Pearl Harbor and undergo a minor medical procedure.

The **USS Solace** was originally built as a passenger ship but American government purchased and converted it into a floating hospital. After she arrived in Pearl Harbor someone felt it was a good idea to keep their doctors busy. Several hundred sailors were selected to participate in a delicate **tonsillectomy** procedure; Ed Johann was one of them.

Ed was led to a large room below deck that was crisscrossed by blankets suspended from ropes. Placed in the middle of each 8 by 8 foot cubicle was a stool. Ed was instructed to sit down and wait. From the distance he heard a gruff voice order "Open your mouth!"

This was immediately followed by a howl of pain.

"Open your mouth!" "AGGGHHHHH!"

"Open your mouth!" "AGGGHHHHH!"

"Open your mouth!" "AGGGHHHHH!"

The voice got closer and closer.

Finally the curtain parted and a doctor holding a slender wooden stick with a thin, wire loop at one end, stepped in front of him. "Open your mouth!"



USS Solace (AH-5)

Several days later Ed was standing along the railing of the Solace in his pajamas, admiring the early morning light of Pearl Harbor. A steady stream of young nurses were passing by and each was a easy target for his charming wit and twinkling eyes. He felt he was in paradise.

Suddenly an officer happened upon the scene; the nurses instantly disappeared like smoke.

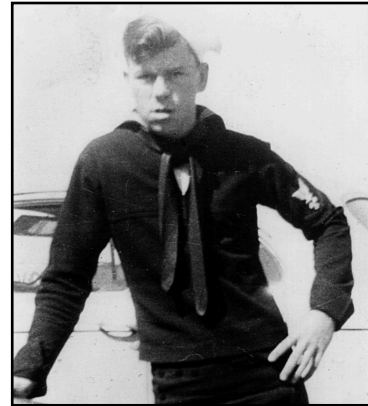
"Sailor, what are you doing here in your pajamas?"

Ed replied that he was in *recovery* following his surgery.

"Well, you are *OUT* of recovery now, so get dressed!"

The officer shouted.

"And report to that launch!" he commanded, gesturing to a 40 foot motor boat moored to the side of the ship below. **"IMMEDIATELY!"**



Ed Johann was born on July 11th, 1923. On December 7th 1941 he was exactly 18 years, 4 months and 26 days old.

Ed soon found himself in the engine room of a skiff that had been assigned to ferry nurses and doctors from the **USS Solace** to the PX on the other side of the harbor. This would be their first opportunity to buy anything they needed since leaving America, so everyone was eager to go shopping.

It was **Sunday, December 7th, 1941**. The PX opened at 8:00 AM and the medical team wanted to get their shopping done early so they wouldn't get caught in a long line. As soon as the last nurse took her seat Ed started the engine. They tossed off the mooring line and began their excursion across Pearl Harbor, completely unaware that 30 miles away several hundred Japanese fighters, bombers and torpedo planes were rapidly approaching.

To be continued....