

2 September 1945

The story of Attack Transport number 51, the U.S.S. SHERIDAN, is not necessarily one concerning individual acts of bravery in moments of extreme action, although there were those cases, but rather the courageous tenacity of 500 men and officers doing their jobs well month after month and year after year in one of the most desolate and depressing theatres of war of all history. The Pacific may well be compared to a boundless desert only to be crossed by exhausting journeys from one oasis to the next. The thirsty, tired men of the Sheridan have seen most of the Pacific's sandy oases from Bougainville to Okinawa, from Tarawa to the Philippines. Each time the disappointment was the same - the inevitable coconut trees, the broiling sun, and the natives. The story of the Sheridan is the story of its' men who, without the glory of sustained combat, without adequate recreative facilities, and with little hope of return to the blessed United States, continued to bring assault troops to Tarawa, Roi-Namur, Saipan, Guam, Leyte, Lingayen, Okinawa, and today, finally, to Japan.

Commissioned July 31, 1943, the Sheridan still holds many of its' original complement of men, who remember well the time off Tarawa when Japanese shore batteries lobbed eight inch shells into the convoy, one landing two hundred yards astern. They remember the times screening destroyers off Tarawa, Saipan, and Leyte chased away or sank submarines attempting to attack our invasion forces; they remember the time in the middle of the night returning from the Zambales beach-heads when a sister transport was struck by a torpedo or floating mine, the times the ship next to the Sheridan in formation was singled out by suicide planes and struck, once off Leyte, once at Okinawa; they remember well the flash of fire when the planes struck and the debris of wood, steel, and human bodies that were catapulted high in the air. The men manning the small boats so ably in so many invasions will remember the mortar fire from the beach which greeted their assault landings and the days without rest or sleep after the initial attack when they brought ashore the food, equipment, guns, and tanks for the troops they had already landed. The beachmaster and his beach party will recollect the problems they faced keeping the Army and Marines equipped when the beaches were jagged shallow areas of coral at Tarawa, Saipan, and Guam. At Saipan the beach party was overrun by counterattacking Japanese; it was then that the Navy learned about fox holes. Everywhere, the beach party medical officer and his competent staff will remember their tireless efforts to save the wounded and dying.

The many times our transports were attacked and large combatant units of our Navy struck by suicide planes will remain in the minds of these men, as will the Purple Hearts, Bronze and Silver Stars, and citations won under fire - but not for long. Rather they will call to mind later on the occasion during the initial assault landing at Leyte when the beach party medical officer sent a very ill Filipino woman to the ship to be delivered of a son, named Sheridan Cayobit in

honor of the ship, who so aroused the paternal feelings of the crew that they spontaneously gave a tremendous sum of money to the family. The Cayobits will never forget the good deed done that day in the heat of combat, for it is in actions of this kind that the United States will remain a friend after we have left the Philippines for good.

Long after the names of Torokina, Hollandia, Noemfore, Eniwetok, Ulithi, and Tacloban have dimmed and the visual memories blurred with the oneness of all in the sea and under the sun, long afterwards will be remembered the day when the Sheridan passed out of the fog and under the Golden Gate. The sun came out at that moment and civilians, yes civilians, waved from the towering span, and it seemed as if simultaneously the odor of temperate fields and trees and flowers assailed the nostrils. For the first time in over a year and a half the tension and loneliness disappeared. Everyone chattered and laughed and felt like exploding with joy. Yes those marvelous ten weeks in God's own country, ten weeks of reprieve, will never be forgotten.

Then afterwards again began the long weeks of training and preparation and waiting under the ever present tropical sun, everyone expecting a final assault. The same amphibious pattern would be there - the approach of the large group of transports to the enemy held coast an hour or more before dawn, the occasional salvoes from battleships, cruisers, and destroyers, whose tracers arched the sky, the parachuting star shells, the rustle of the troops getting to their debarkation stations, the lowering of the boats, finally daylight and the tremendous bombardment of all kinds of shells, bombs, and rockets, and then the assault. There would follow then, day and night, the sleepless, feverish hours of unloading the equipment to bastion the landed troops, with always the possibility of air attack.

The Sheridan lost two of her men at Saipan but has carried over 50,000 troops with their equipment to the Pacific's far-flung battlefronts without a single loss and one, only one, casualty - the soldier who got into the assault boat and sat on his bayonet. Her part in a vast amphibious war has been great, and now, fittingly, she has carried her last combat load to the ultimate landing, Tokyo. One of the first transports in this theatre, the Mighty "S" has weathered most of the offensives that have prepared the way to Japan. Now that the clash of battle and the sound of trumpets are dying in the still air of peace, her long-patient crew hopes that soon she will be given to other hands for the more permanent pursuits of peace.