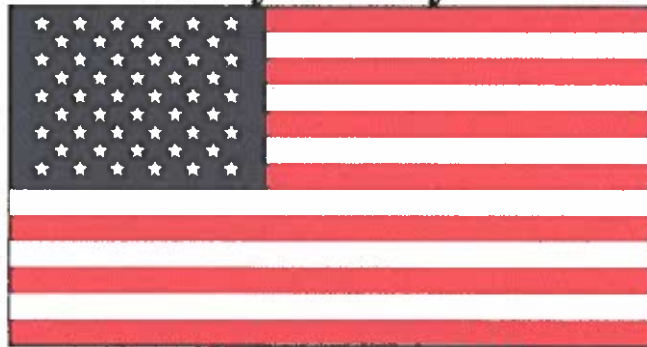




# Uncle Al's Stories

Recorded by: Kathryn Wroten



## Foreword

The following pages are stories and pictures of my Uncle Al's (Albert Albritton) experiences in the Navy from 1937-1957. The interview took place in June of 2004, 3 months prior to his 91<sup>st</sup> birthday. The four full page pictures in the order that they appear are: 1.) a document of the Japanese surrender with the signature of those signing; 2.) a picture of Admiral Nimitz signing the peace treaty, along with General MacArthur, General Halsey, and Rear Admiral Sherman, on September 2, 1945, aboard the U.S.S. Missouri in Tokyo Bay; 3.) the U.S.S. Dempsey, one of the ships Uncle Al served on; and 4.) a fish Uncle Al caught in the Pacific, a story discussed in later pages. The people from my family mentioned in these stories, other than myself, include Timothy Wayne Wroten (my father), Ruth Wroten (my father's mother and my grandmother), Albert Albritton (Ruth's brother), Bess Albritton (Albert's wife), Bill Albritton (Ruth and Albert's brother), Jimmy Albritton (Ruth and Albert's brother), Karl Albritton (Bess and Albert's son), and Paw Will (Ruth and Albert's father, William Albritton).



Albert Albritton, US Navy  
Circa 1940

Signed at TOKYO BAY, JAPAN at 0904  
on the SECOND day of SEPTEMBER, 1945.

重光葵

By Command and in behalf of the Emperor of Japan  
and the Japanese Government.

總司令官

By Command and in behalf of the Japanese  
Imperial General Headquarters.

Accepted at TOKYO BAY, JAPAN at 0908  
on the SECOND day of SEPTEMBER, 1945,  
for the United States, Republic of China, United Kingdom and the  
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and in the interests of the other  
United Nations at war with Japan.

Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers.

[Signature]  
United States Representative

Republic of China Representative

[Signature]  
United Kingdom Representative

[Signature]  
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics  
Representative

[Signature]  
Commonwealth of Australia Representative

[Signature]  
Dominion of Canada Representative

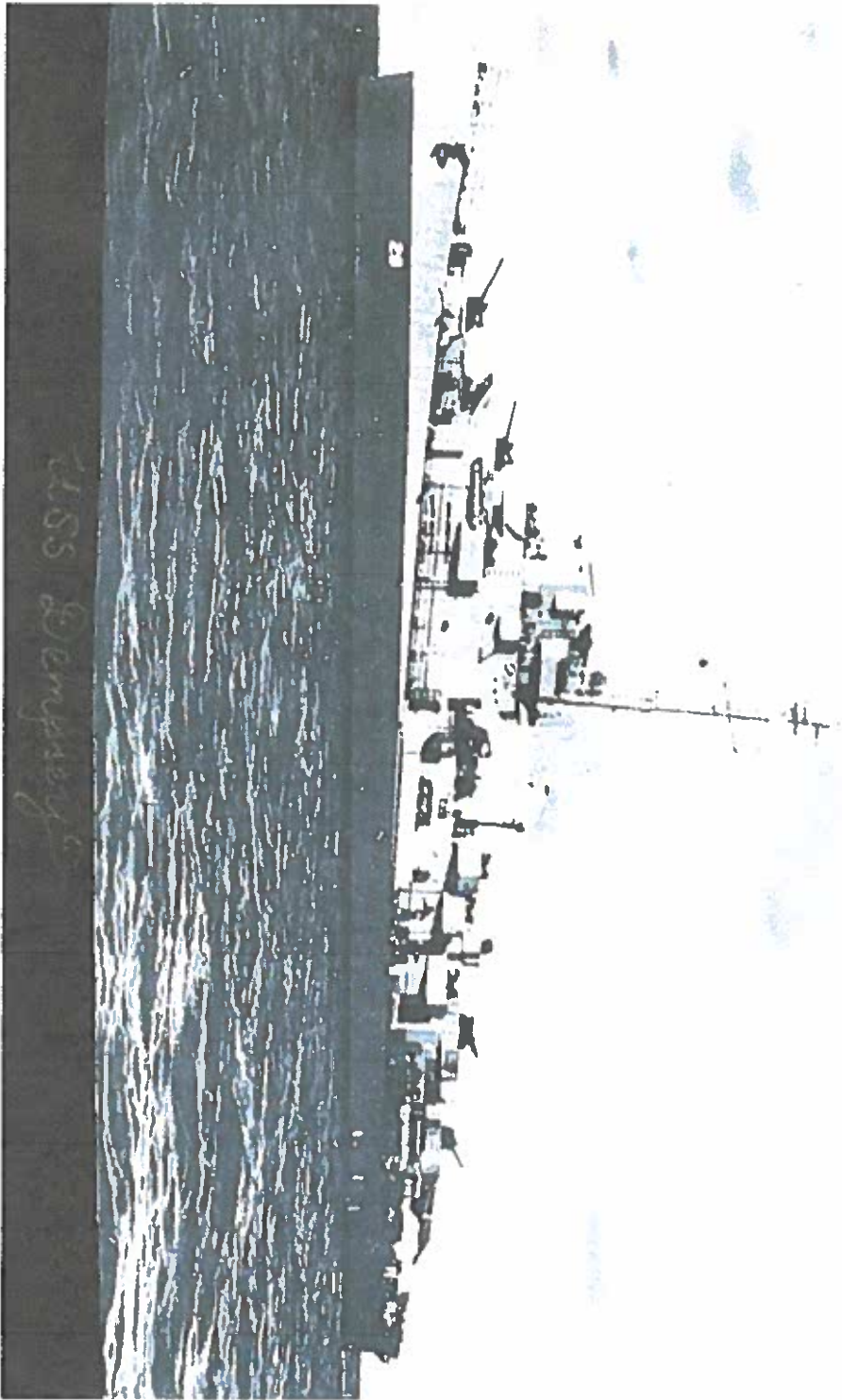
[Signature]  
Provisional Government of the French  
Republic Representative

[Signature]  
Kingdom of the Netherlands Representative

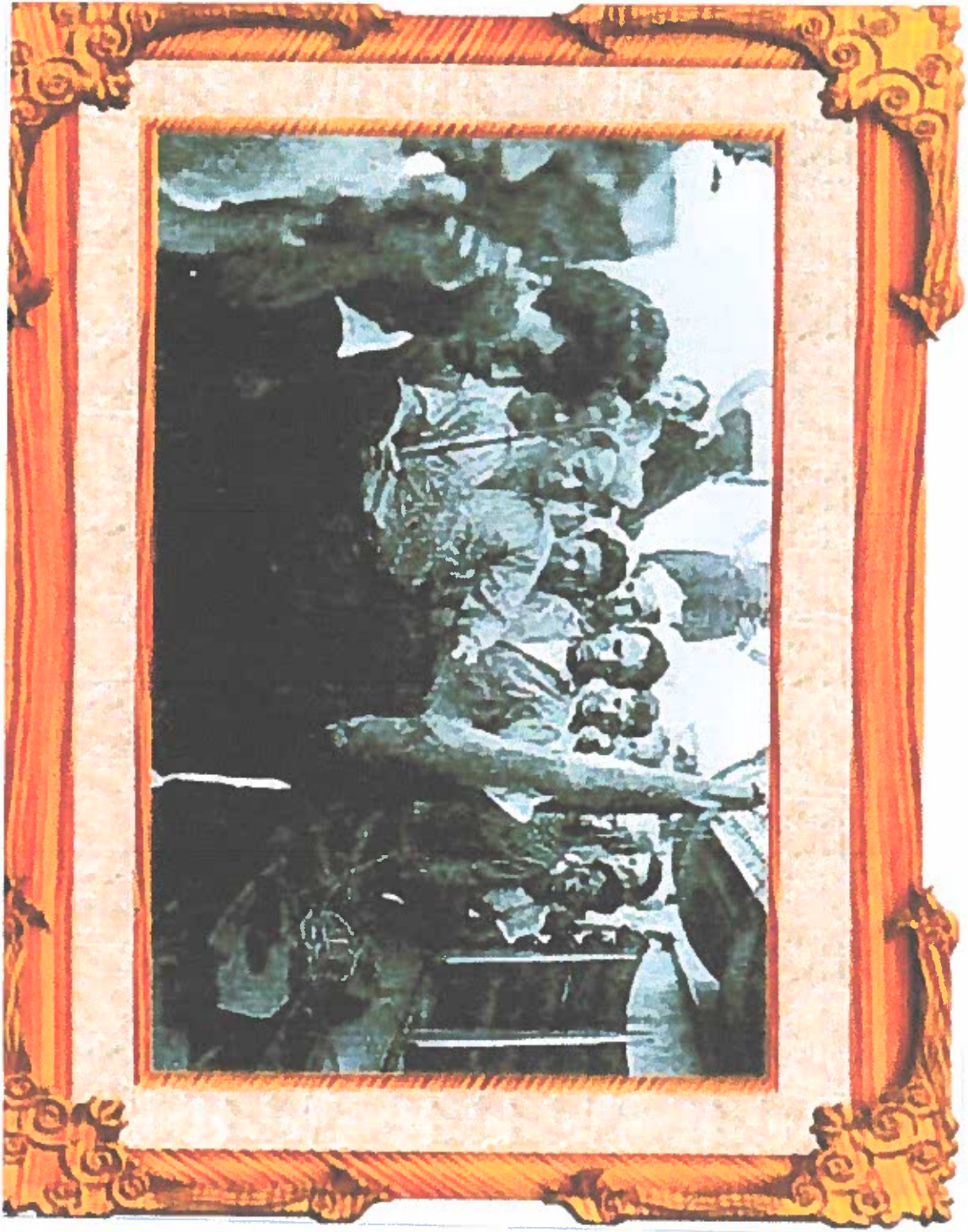
[Signature]  
Dominion of New Zealand Representative



1/2 Albert Robinson, MR, ASN not - with best wishes and great  
appreciation of your contribution to the war effort that made  
possible the above scene.  
Al Robinson, ASN



USS Benguet



**Kathryn:** Today is June 15, 2004. I'm Kathryn Wroten and I'm interviewing my great uncle, my grandmother's brother, Albert Albritton, about his experiences in the Navy.

**Kathryn:** The first question I wanted to ask you is when you joined the military.

**Wayne:** When did you join the Navy?

**Albert:** 1937.

**Kathryn:** How old were you?

**Albert:** 20?

**Ruth:** You wasn't 20, cause you stayed in cc camp...

**Albert:** Yeah, that age was wrong. I was 22. [Actually, he was born in 1913, so he was probably 24.]

**Ruth:** His momma didn't want him to sign the papers.

**Albert:** Yeah, I had been in a cc camp.

**Wayne:** What is a cc camp?

**Albert:** It's a civil conservation corps, where they plant trees. And back then, that was during the depression. The Navy looked pretty good to me. 1937... 1937, yeah it was... I joined the navy and I went to San Diego, went to boot training – San Diego, and from there I went to the Dobbin to wait for the Arizona. I had put in, you know you'd put in a request for a ship, so I had a request in for the Arizona, and I went to the Dobbin. I spent about 3 or 4 years on it, waiting. And I never did get on off of it; they decided to keep me on there.

**Wayne:** How long was boot camp?

**Albert:** Uh, let's see... 3 months.

**Kathryn:** What was it like?

**Albert:** Well, it's a lot of marching, and grinding on a grinder, and everything. And it was definitely training. They'd teach you to fight. They'd get you out there and march you to church on Sunday, and Monday and they'd get you out there and show you how to cut somebody's throat with a bayonet.

**Wayne:** And do you remember how much they paid you?

**Albert:** Yeah, 21 dollars for the first 3 months.

**Wayne:** 21 dollars for 3 months?

**Albert:** Then 36 dollars after that.

**Wayne:** That was a lot of money, huh?

**Albert:** Oh yeah.

**Ruth:** Tell them about your coming up from – and how you got different ranks, like you got to be a chief petty officer, didn't you?

**Albert:** Oh yeah.

**Ruth:** Tell them about that.

**Albert:** Well, the ranks were closed then, so it was hard to make a rank. You did a lot of mess cooking, waiting on tables, and they were closed, but war started, they started to expand, they were pretty fast then. I made chief in 6 years.

**Wayne:** 6 years, wow!

**Albert:** That's from seaman apprentice to chief petty officer in 6 years.

**Wayne:** And that's the highest rank in the Navy – enlisted rank?

**Albert:** Yeah, uh huh. That's right.

**Kathryn:** Why'd you choose the Navy?

**Albert:** I don't know, I just like the water.

**Kathryn:** That's a good reason.

**Albert:** Yeah. A lot of times I wish I had a foxhole I could have got in. Not on my sea, there were no fox holes.

**Wayne:** There were no fox holes on the sea, huh?

**Albert:** No.

**Wayne:** Did you ever get seasick?

**Albert:** No, but I've been sick of the sea.

**Wayne:** I hear you.

**Albert:** We were ready to get some traveling.

**Wayne:** What was the longest time you were out to sea – what was the longest period of time you were out at sea?

**Albert:** About 2 years.

**Wayne:** 2 years – without ever going to shore?

**Albert:** Yeah.

**Kathryn:** What were you doing?

**Albert:** We were fighting Japs. Trying to keep them away from the shipping.

**Wayne:** So you were out on the sea for 2 years? That is a long time.

**Albert:** Yeah, 2 years.

**Kathryn:** Were your brothers in the military?

**Albert:** Yeah, my youngest brother was. And he was in the Navy – Jimmy. And Bill, he was working in Pearl Harbor there helping to get it straightened out after that time.

**Wayne:** When did Jimmy join the Navy?

**Albert:** Right out of high school.

**Wayne:** Wasn't Jimmy underage when he joined?

**Kathryn:** He was 17?

**Ruth:** Well, they took him at that time.

**Albert:** I think so.

**Ruth:** You were in the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> grade when you went off – when you went to cc camp.

**Albert:** Yeah.

**Ruth:** And then he stayed. How long did you stay in – 3 years?

**Albert:** In what?

**Ruth:** In cc camp.

**Albert:** I don't remember.

**Ruth:** I don't either. It wasn't that long, I bet it wasn't even a year, because I don't think he [Jimmy] could have been over 19.

**Wayne:** I just remember that Jimmy probably didn't tell the truth about how old he was when he joined so they'd take him.

**Ruth:** He told you that, huh?

**Wayne:** I think so... that he was really 17 when he went in and told them he was 18, and they took him. And he was somewhere further along down the road and, you know, they just said oh what the heck.

**Kathryn:** Were you ever stationed at the same place as your brothers?

**Albert:** No, but I saw him once, I think, or twice – a couple of times out there on the



ship. Our ships would meet. We come into Pearl Harbor there, and they was in Pearl Harbor there too.

**Kathryn:** How many ships did you serve on?

**Albert:** Well...

**Ruth:** The Dobbin, and the what-ya-ma-call-it.

**Albert:** I'll think of it... I've got a list of them. I spent a little time on each one of them. I was on mainly the Dobbin and the Dempsey. The Roe, I was on a couple years after the war ended.

**Wayne:** Were all of them the same kind of ship – were they destroyers, were they...

**Albert:** No, no, they was all of them different kinds. That one up there the Roe – that was a destroyer, and I was on it a couple of years after the war ended. And a couple years of shore duty out of the 20 years.

**Kathryn:** When did you get married?

**Albert:** Oooh, Bess come here.

**Bess:** I didn't get that one, what?

**Kathryn:** When did you get married?

**Bess:** Oh, uh, it was in '49, we got married while he was in...

**Kathryn:** After the war?

**Bess:** Yeah, it was after the war. And I still have the card that got him in trouble. He sent me a card from Hawaii, and asked me to write to him, and that's when he got in trouble.

**Wayne:** He got in trouble with who – you?

**Bess:** Yeah, if he hadn't sent that card, I probably wouldn't have written to him.

**Wayne:** And then all those letters writing back and forth led to a marriage?

**Bess:** But you know, no, no, really, now we had never even... we were just friends, all through the war, until the war was over and he started coming home. And we never really did call ourselves just courting or anything, we were friends.

**Kathryn:** Were you in the Navy when y'all got married?

**Albert:** Oh yeah, about 10 years.

**Kathryn:** Really?

**Bess:** We married in '49 and he got out in '54. [He actually got out in 1957.]

**Ruth:** Where were y'all stationed, up in the north...

**Bess:** He was in Astoria, Oregon when we got married, and we stayed there a little over a year. And that was when... what was that war? I get them mixed these last ones. What broke out after...

**Wayne:** Korean War?

**Bess:** I guess that's it. Ok, they moved us over to Burlington because they began to reopen the shipyard over there and everything, so we went over there and stayed a while.

**Wayne:** Where was that?

**Bess:** That's where we were, I think, when Paw Will got sick and we came home and he was in Natchez a while. And then from then on we were just at different places – went to Norfolk; Charleston, South Carolina; back to Norfolk; and finally ended up in Florida.

**Kathryn:** So you were stationed at Jacksonville in Florida?

**Albert:** No, Green Cove Springs, about 30 miles from Jacksonville down the St. Johns

River.

**Wayne:** On the St. Johns River?

**Bess:** Yeah, a beautiful river.

**Kathryn:** My dad said that there's a story about your brother coming to visit you...

**Albert:** Yeah.

**Kathryn:** In Florida.

**Albert:** Yeah.

**Bess:** An alligator sitting...

**Albert:** I forgot to tell Bill that alligator was out there.

**Wayne:** Can you share that story with her?

**Albert:** Oh yeah, yeah, I guess so. Well, he come down to spend a week with us and we wade fish, just wade out and fish, you know, and they had these big... what do you call them Bess?

**Bess:** Sea cows.

**Albert:** Sea cows!

**Wayne:** Manatees?

**Bess:** Manatees, yeah, that's right.

**Albert:** And the sea cows, well I told him about them, but I forgot to tell him about the alligator out there, and I had to go to work – had to go to the base and he just wade out in there and start casting. Boy there's fish out there. He got out in there, and I had just got home. Boy I looked and he was churning the water coming into the bank. I said, "What in the world happened?" He said, "Well I thought it was a log and I cast over by it and it started following my hook."

**Wayne:** And he realized it was an alligator.

**Albert:** Yeah... he thought it was a log.

**Kathryn:** Well, when you went out to sea, how long were you usually out?

**Albert:** Well, different lengths of time, I was on a ship that was going from San Francisco to Pearl Harbor. It was about a couple weeks.

**Bess:** You know, back then, though, we didn't have very good communications, cause I know when I'd get a letter from him sometimes it'd be, maybe been in the mail for a month or more. And sometimes you'd get one that had been censored, I guess – it'd been opened or...

**Wayne:** They censored your mail, they looked at what you were sending to make sure it wasn't anything...

**Bess:** Yeah.

**Ruth:** What kind of letters did they send back there then... what you call them?

**Bess:** Airmail.

**Ruth:** Airmail. They'd put it on little pieces of paper and they'd take it and make it smaller and the little things were about that big [shows size with her hands]. I got a letter from him like that.

**Bess:** Yeah, Paw Will and I used to meet up at the post office pretty regular, didn't we?

**Ruth:** That's our daddy.

**Wayne:** Paw Will is William Albritton.

**Bess:** We were both waiting for that. When the mail come in, we knew what time to come in. We were both waiting for a letter.

**Ruth:** He was probably looking for his check.

**Kathryn:** Well, how long were you usually at a land base?

**Albert:** 2 years, 4 years – probably 4 years. I had 2 tours of shore duty – 2 years each.

**Ruth:** That was after the war?

**Albert:** Yeah, oh yeah.

**Wayne:** During the war you were out to sea the whole time?

**Albert:** When the war ended, I had, I don't know 30, 60 days or more on the books – of leave. I hadn't been on leave for a couple or 3 years.

**Ruth:** Tell them about that fish you caught out there and fed all of them and what it was like.

**Albert:** Oh, that picture there, yeah. We had been eating k-ration for 60 days. See, they sent a ship, but the meat on it spoiled. And instead of routing another ship in there, we was up in those northern islands there in Japan keeping an eye on some of these torpedo boats, which is like watching a hornets nest...

**Bess:** That's when you went up that little stream, and you wasn't supposed to or something?

**Albert:** Yeah.

**Wayne:** Is that where you caught the fish?

**Albert:** We pulled into this island, and it was the first time we'd stopped – we'd been cruising, you know. And we pulled in there and dropped the anchor, and I had the only fishing pole on the ship. So I went back there and started catching these bonitos, they're like a tuna, and we had some fishermen on the ship there, and they'd take them and bleed them. And the cook was there. Boy, he'd take them and got a big ol' dishpan like that piled up full of them. And boy, we all had fish. I thought he was going to take the captain the first ones off his grill there – aint none of us had anything but k-rations, some of them put up in World War I.

**Wayne:** So the captain got the first fish to eat?

**Albert:** No, no, I got the first one.

**Wayne:** You got the first one?

**Albert:** The cook sent it back there and said "Give this to the Chief."

**Kathryn:** Are you willing to tell me about Pearl Harbor?

**Albert:** Yeah, I was going to tell you about the Arizona. The Arizona took one down the... well it was about 7:00 in the morning. The Arizona took one down the stack – an airplane – they dove it right down the stack on there. And it sunk. And it didn't go too deep, but it burned till Wednesday. That's from Sunday morning to Wednesday, it burned. That smoke rose up from it. And we got as many off of there as they could, and then it just went down. That was it – wasn't nothing sticking up out of the water but the flag staff. It was sticking up out of the water, and every morning a motor launch would go out there and run the flag up on it and in the evening, they'd go out and take it down. But when it just sunk and the smoke went coming up, we knew there wasn't no chance of getting nobody else off of there.

**Wayne:** Were you on the Dempsey there?

**Albert:** No, I was on the Dobbin.

**Wayne:** The Dobbin.

**Albert:** Yeah – repair ship. And there wasn't no chance of getting no more off of there [the Arizona].

**Ruth:** What'd you do – you were...

**Albert:** Let me finish here... they put that flag up every morning and take it down in the evening. And I don't know how long they did that – we left there about a month after that and went on further overseas. But anyway, there's two-thirds of the crew on board – that's over about 1300 or 1400 men. They're still aboard and they carry them in the Pentagon – the ship being in commission with two-thirds of the crew on board the Arizona. They got this big thing built up out there now, I haven't been out there.

**Bess:** It's a memorial, now they go out to... one of the ladies that worked up at Albertson's had gone over there – her daddy was missing in action and she kept going until they finally, she finally got her daddy's things back – his bones or whatever. She used to work here at Albertson's.

**Wayne:** So how many ships were sunk at Pearl Harbor, do you remember?

**Albert:** Man I wouldn't know, I wouldn't know exactly how many.

**Wayne:** Did y'all take any hits on the Dobbin?

**Albert:** No, we had 5 destroyers alongside, and they got 5 inch guns all over them – anti-aircraft, and we got all of them in that I could see. We was third choice. And we beat off that second attack them tin cans took the blunt off of that, and they just give up. They didn't get in that second attack – we had them going then. We done broke the lock off all the ammunition, had them aircraft guns going, but here's the sad part of the story: shooting up in the air like that, all of them had to fall, and a lot of them fell on the beach – a lot of casualties.

**Wayne:** On the beach.

**Albert:** See, anytime you fire a gun up in the air, it comes down with the same speed it goes up – by the time it gets down.

**Wayne:** It's got to hit somewhere.

**Albert:** That's the reason they don't want you to fire for celebrations.

**Kathryn:** So what did you do in the aftermath?

**Albert:** Oh we had a lot of ships around there that had to be put in commission, worked on, and everything – welding up port holes and what have you. That's what we was doing when the war had started.

**Wayne:** Were you expecting another attack?

**Albert:** We expected dozens to come. It was on the radio and everything, that they was landing over there, but they never did. The Japanese Admiral said "Boy, I've stirred up a hornet's nest." He did too. We had been up in the northern islands up there and we come in and we hadn't seen another ship – nowhere we could bum any food or nothing off of. We come in there, and I have never seen as many ships. As far as you could see there were ships. I said, "Man, look at that." You'd have to get in line to shoot at something.

**Wayne:** All flying the American flag?

**Albert:** Man, America come through. Boy I tell you they did. They built some ships. They tell me they built one of the Liberty ships in about 29 days. They had a lot of ships. Boy I tell you, that's the best sight I ever saw. As far as you could see, there were ships. Most of them were transports and stuff like that.

**Ruth:** Did you get some food from them – from the support ships, from the ships that was carrying some food?

**Albert:** Oh yeah, yes indeed. The ship that come in there to relieve us, [we] sent a message over that said “Y’all got any extra food, we’d like to have it.” I said “I got just about enough for 3 days.” [The other ship did have extra food.] The captain said “Just hold everything, I’ll be right over.” He went over and got him a steak!

**Wayne:** How often, and I know Aunt Bess said that sometimes it’d take a month for her to get a letter that you had sent, but how long did it take you [to get a letter], or how often did you get mail when you were out at sea?

**Albert:** Well, we’d get it. Sometimes it’d be burnt, or it got [damaged] on the way, but we’d get it. It’d take a good while – a month or so anyway.

**Wayne:** I bet you cherished the mail that you did get – enjoyed getting it.

**Albert:** Yeah.

**Kathryn:** Do you have any other memorable experiences that you can recall?

**Ruth:** How long has it been – it’s been about 50 years?

**Wayne:** More than that – it’s been about 60 years. How long did you stay in the Navy?

**Albert:** 20 years.

**Wayne:** 20 years. So you went in in ’37?

**Albert:** Yeah, got out in ’57.

**Wayne:** Got out in ’57.

**Albert:** Yeah, got married in ’49.

**Wayne:** Would you do it again?

**Albert:** I don’t know, I think I’d renig. No, I was joking. We used to get some good stories from the Air Force there too. I’d go over to the club, and we’d hear them talking about those navigators. They’d say “Well, we got to go spray the garden.” They was going down to spray the one on Okinawa, or some place. Where a Jap was trying to raise a garden, they’d go to spray it with diesel oil.

**Wayne:** Did you ever have a ship that you were on to be sunk?

**Albert:** No, no. I come mighty near it, though. Their ship was sinking and the packing around the shaft had worn out, water was coming in. And they put me and my crew on board, and they was all at abandon ship stations. Everybody on the ship was at abandon ship stations. I’m not a good swimmer, and I don’t like them sharks, anyway. We got them into port.

**Wayne:** You patched them up and got them into port?

**Albert:** Yeah, we got them in.

**Albert:** Guam. Guam is where we got them in. I can tell you about this storm moving on this picket line in Okinawa. We lost 27 ships there – picket ships. We hadn’t been on it too long, and here come one of those typhoons. The wind velocity was 200 knots. And we were trying to get out of it, and we lost 2 ships in that storm – 2 destroyers. They took water down the... they had the main draft blowers on the main deck, and they took water down there. We had to pick up survivors. You can’t find those survivors in 40 foot waves. Boy we were over one [wave] and under two.

**Wayne:** 40 foot waves – I can’t even imagine that.

**Albert:** Yeah. [We were on] a small ship, like a fishing cork.

**Wayne:** So the picture of Admiral Nimitz signing the peace treaty up there – how did you get that picture?

**Albert:** Through Jimmy. Jimmy sent it. They give it to Jimmy and Jimmy sent it. But I knew Admiral Nimitz.

**Bess:** You know, Jimmy was in Lake Pawnee and I don't know if Jimmy was out [of the Navy] then or not. But anyway, he went over to Nimitz's place to do some work for him, so they got to talking, and he [Nimitz] remembered Al, so he wanted to send him that picture. Jimmy brought it to him.

**Wayne:** Did you work for Admiral Nimitz?

**Albert:** No, I drank coffee with him, though.

**Wayne:** You drank coffee with him.

**Albert:** After the war – in the federal building there in Frisco at shore duty. And he come along. If one of these ensigns come along or a lieutenant or something, boy I'd salute them. So here comes the Admiral and they'd go out there and say [to me], "Boy, I don't know about you. You salute all these little guys, and the Admiral come along and you [wave]."

**Wayne:** Because you knew him.

**Albert:** He said, "Come on in, chief, let's have a cup of coffee." He'd talk about the war.

**Wayne:** In the picture up there is Admiral Nimitz, General McArthur, and General Halsey?

**Albert:** Yeah, that's on the Pennsylvania in 1945 after they dropped that bomb. [It's actually the Missouri.]

**Wayne:** After they dropped the atomic bomb.

**Albert:** The second one.

**Kathryn:** Where were you when they dropped the bomb?

**Albert:** I was in Mare Island, California.

**Wayne:** That was a good place to be.

**Albert:** I couldn't believe it. We had just come back from a Navy yard overhaul. You can believe this, we'd just come back. The ship – we'd been out there a [good] length of time for a ship that size. We'd just got back, got it all fixed up. Man, I got them salt water lines and stuff all fixed up and everything. Well, we was getting ready to go back, and they dropped that bomb. Man, I couldn't believe it. We come back in this ship, me and this Doc Moore had been over on Liberty, [and] on this [other] ship this guy was trying to tell us about it. Well, we thought he was kind of funny anyway, we had all been out there in the Pacific too long. But anyway, he was going to try to tell us about it and we just humored him – "Yeah, yeah." We thought he done cracked up – "Dropped a bomb and destroyed a whole city, I don't believe that."

**Wayne:** So how did you hear that the war had ended?

**Albert:** How did I hear it?

**Wayne:** Yeah, where were you and how did you hear that it ended?

**Albert:** San Francisco.

**Wayne:** You were in San Francisco?

**Albert:** We had come back for a 30 day overhaul. We were getting ready to go back. We were just about ready to go back. They put the ship out of commission. Put us on shore duty – we hadn't had any in a long time. They'd give those that had shore duty – they'd let them go home.

**Wayne:** So they announced that the war was over, and you didn't have to go back out?

**Albert:** No. I come back to the states and got on a ship that was going around the world.

**Wayne:** Around the world!

**Albert:** We had a bunch of midshipmen on there, senior midshipmen. We went by Korea. We went around, and by the time we got back, that's one reason I got out of the Navy, we had Karl then.

**Ruth:** Well what about when you went over the equator or whatever?

**Wayne:** [You mean] the International Dateline?

**Ruth:** Yeah the International Dateline. [It actually was the equator.]

**Albert:** Oh yeah, I got all kinds of things there, when we crossed.

**Ruth:** What'd they do to you?

**Wayne:** Did they have some kind of ceremony?

**Albert:** They do. Man, it is really rough. See, I'd been across the equator when I went to this new construction sight on the Dempsey. And we had a crew on there – there were 10 people on there that had been to sea before. You talk about a mess. But when we come back, you talk about a bunch of old salts, we had them. I took them all off of that ship.

**Wayne:** They learned fast.

**Albert:** Oh man, did they.

**Bess:** Tell them what they did to Admiral Weber going across the equator.

**Albert:** Yeah, Stormy Weber we called him, after that song. I was signing them in. Boy you get a big certificate – everybody wanted one. And he come back there, and we just give it to him – he was the captain of the ship. He said he wanted to go through [the ceremony], and I said alright. I said "Well what's your name?" He said "Captain Weber." I turned around to the high sheriff there, you know they had a court, I turned around to the high sheriff there and I said "Take this low life pollywog back there and teach him a lesson." They washed his mouth with a salt water hose. They beat him and they brought him back. He come back in there and I said, "Alright, now what's your name?" He got it down to Lieutenant Commander Weber. I said "Take him back." He come back this time and said "Weber, sir." This is the captain of the ship!

**Wayne:** He finally got the right answer?

**Albert:** Oh yeah.

**Ruth:** He wanted to do it. He wanted to go through it.

**Albert:** Yeah, but he got it – he was so proud of it too... instead of just giving it to him. When I went across [the first time], they give it to the chaplain. We had a chaplain on the Dobbin. When I went across they had a chaplain – he come back there and give them all cigarettes and stuff, to the court. And I was wishing I had some cigarettes to give them, because they put me through it. They was a little bit rough at the initiation, and I think they've quit it, though now.

**Wayne:** And it was the equator you crossed, not the International Dateline.

**Albert:** Yeah... we was operating down there so much you'd never know what day it was.

**Wayne:** Bill – when he was at Pearl Harbor, his job at Pearl Harbor was to go down and restore ships, and float them back up?

**Albert:** I don't actually know exactly what he did, but he helped get them back in commission, yeah.

**Wayne:** They would patch the holes and pump air into the ship and float them back up. Bill was never in the Navy, it was just you and Jimmy?

**Bess:** Bill's heart was bad, wasn't it?

**Ruth:** Yeah.

**Bess:** So he didn't get in.

**Ruth:** I think he tried to.

**Wayne:** But he was a hard-hat diver in Pearl Harbor – that's what he was doing, that's what I remember.

**Bess:** He worked over there.

**Albert:** We was at Pearl Harbor 2 ½ years when the war started.

**Wayne:** So you operated out of Pearl Harbor for 2 ½ years?

**Albert:** No, we were mostly stationed there in Pearl Harbor. When ships come in, we'd work on them, get them ready to go back.

**Wayne:** Sounds like that was good duty.

**Albert:** It was a lot of hard work out there.

**Ruth:** Did you see any movie stars over there?

**Albert:** Oh yeah, every Wednesday. They would come in, this was before the war. They'd come in and I used to go down there and watch them. Boy, they'd be so excited and everything. And those guys would dive off the ship – they'd throw money in the water and dive and get it... maybe 50 cent pieces or nickels or anything. They'd throw them in the water and those natives would dive and go get it – dive off the ship.

**Ruth:** Bob Hope wasn't there when you were there, huh?

**Albert:** Well, he was on one of the islands down there. I almost got to see him, but I didn't. I was going to take the recreation crew over.

**Ruth:** What about baseball, didn't y'all play baseball too?

**Albert:** Yeah, in peacetime. We didn't play nothing during the war. We had 3 inch guns – there was a big gun on the Dempsey. Boy, they were potent. Them guys on there could shoot them guns. We had them all over.

**Ruth:** Who were you shooting at, the Japanese?

**Albert:** Yeah.

**Wayne:** How long were you on the Dempsey?

**Albert:** A couple of years.

**Wayne:** Two years?

**Albert:** Yeah.

**Ruth:** Let's have some coffee.

**Kathryn:** Well thanks for telling me about your stories.



## Postscript

After interviewing Uncle Al and compiling his stories into this book, my dad and I gave copies to several people, including my grandmother and Uncle Al himself. It wasn't long before others in the family found out about the book and expressed a desire to own one. Dad and I decided that the books would make great Christmas presents for them. Several days before Christmas, we made and wrapped the copies, and put them under the tree. On Christmas Day 2004, we had 32 relatives over, and we were excited to finally be able to give the book out to the whole family. Around 2:00 pm, my dad received a phone call from my Aunt Karen (his sister). She was calling to say that Uncle Al had fallen that morning and wasn't expected to survive the rest of the day. At about 3:30 pm, we received the call saying that he had died. Christmas Day – The very day we gave the book out to the family was the same day he died. He was 91 years old, and had never spoken about his experiences at Pearl Harbor prior to this interview. The following is his obituary from a newspaper in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

4B ■ Monday, December 27, 2004 ■ The Advocate

### Albritton, Albert

A retired U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer and former employee of Cargill with 16 years of service, he died at 2:54 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 25, 2004, at Lane Memorial Hospital, Zachary. He was 91, a resident of Baker and native of Lincoln County, Miss. He fought in four major conflicts, receiving four Bronze Star Medals. A veteran of the Korean War, he also received the keys to the city of Baker

for his duty aboard the USS Dobbin in the attack on Pearl Harbor. Visiting was at Baker Funeral Home from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Monday. Visiting at the funeral home from 11 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 28, until funeral service at 2 p.m., conducted by the Rev. Ed Dillworth. Entombment in Hillcrest Memorial Gardens Mausoleum. He is survived by his wife, Bessie Mae Zumbro Albritton of Baker; a son and daughter-in-law, Karl and Betty Albritton of Baton Rouge; two sisters, Ruth Wroten of Baker and Lillian Whitfield of Mendenhall, Miss.; two grandchildren, Jennifer Hutto and her husband, Dale, and Joshua Albritton and his wife, Ashley; a great-grand-

child, Rebecca Hutto; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, William Albritton and Elizabeth Albritton; two brothers, Jimmy and Bill Albritton; and two sisters, Maude Miller and Ruby Albritton. Pallbearers will be Joshua Albritton, B.B. Hemphill, Bobby Cotton, Larry Weits, Jeff Day and Jason Day. He was a member of First United Methodist Church of Baker, VFW Post 4224, Fleet Reserve Association and a mason who belonged to Seaport Lodge 7. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the First United Methodist Church of Baker, 1255 Camelia Ave. Baker, LA 70714.

