

War Era Story Project 2012

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Shortly after Japan surrendered at the end of WWII, my seaplane squadron of PBM Martin Mariners was anchored off the coast of Japan near Nagasaki when a typhoon hit. To keep the seaplanes safe, the crews started the engines and kept the aircraft headed into the wind. One of the seaplanes ran out of gas, was driven ashore and wrecked.

I was assigned to a crew to salvage the engines from the wrecked aircraft. While we were working, a Japanese civilian started talking to us. He said his name was Ito Kasumi. He had been educated in a Christian school and spoke perfect English. He also said he had been in the Japanese army, had been wounded and discharged. He told us he had several records of American big bands, such as Glenn Miller, Harry James, Artie Shaw, etc., and invited us to his home to listen to them. One wing of the wrecked aircraft was resting on a dock, so we walked along the wing and joined him. At his front door, he asked us to remove our shoes, in observance of Japanese custom.

Some passing MPs saw our size 10 GI shoes at the front door, banged on the door, and arrested us for "consorting with the enemy," since the army of occupation had not yet arrived. The MPs took us to our seaplane tender and in front of the skipper, read us the riot act. Our skipper, S.P. Weller, was an academy graduate, but he bit his lip to keep from laughing at the MPs' tirade. They wanted us thrown in the brig and court martialed. When they left, the skipper smiled, laughed and said, "Don't do it again, guys."