

## War Era Story Project 2012

Submitted by: Nancy Doerger Ollier  
Current home town: Cincinnati, Ohio  
Age: Not given

### WWII Tales

One of my earliest memories of my father is seeing his face in the train station before he left for the Navy, headed for duty on the *USS Hancock*, and later saluting his picture in uniform. My mother had made two Navy uniform dresses for me, one in navy blue and one in white. She did so for a trip on the train from Cincinnati to see my father before he was deployed. As the train approached the railroad station, people began gathering their belongings. Another little girl, about my size, approached me and asked how old I was. I replied, "I'm four."

With that she swayed her hips back and forth, put her nose in the air and declared in a southern-accented voice "Wellll, I'mmmm FOH!"

Just then, we pulled into the station and my eyes were drawn to the platforms, which were covered in a sea of white uniforms. Immediately I caught sight of my tall and handsome father and pulled my mother's skirt, crying "There's our Daddy! Let's go hug and kiss him!" I've always wondered if that little girl was as fortunate as I was to have my father return safely.

While my father was away, my mother and I lived with my maternal grandparents, and my mother worked the night-shift at Wright's engine plant, working on airplane engines. My grandparents took me everywhere, including the local "watering hole," The Washington Grill. There, they would place me on top of the piano, while Al Morgan played and sang all the popular music. No one talked about the war around me at that time, because "Little pictures have big ears."

My grandfather was the St. Bernard fire chief and my grandmother and I would visit the fire station and I was able to climb on the big fire engine. Everyone helped each other and no one complained about the shortages. My grandmother would feed anyone who came to her back door. We were definitely a united people with a common cause. The atmosphere of cooperation was similar to that experienced after September 11th. Unfortunately, that seems to have deteriorated.

Unlike many returning service people, my father would talk about his experiences, if asked. He was trained and served as a radar man second class, so his duty station was in the island of the ship, which contained the bridge and the control tower.

He would tell the story that on January 21, 1945, one of the *Hancock's* planes returned from a sortie with a bomb still attached. After several attempts to release the bomb at sea, the pilot was instructed to land on the carrier. The plane made a normal landing, taxied to a point near the island, the bomb dropped, and the plane disintegrated in a blinding explosion that killed 50 men and injured 75 others.

Another instance he would talk about occurred in April of 1945, when the *Hancock* was supporting the Army's landing on Okinawa. A kamikaze cartwheeled across the flight deck and crashed into a group of planes while its bomb hit the port catapult and caused a tremendous explosion killing 62 men and wounding 71. The damage was so severe that the ship had to go to Pearl Harbor for repairs.

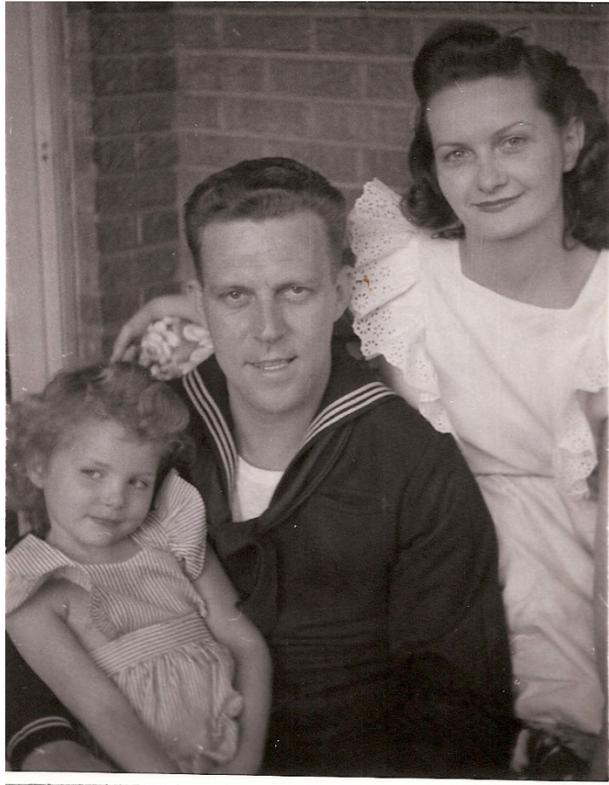
For years after the war, my mother and father would go to reunions with the men who had served on the *Hancock* with him. My father, Urban W. Doerger, who died in January 1996 at the age of 83, was a very generous man, who knew how to laugh. He loved his family deeply and cared for all of us. I am very proud of him and of his service to our country, and I miss him terribly.



*Saluting my father*



*Urban W. Doerger*



*Marguerite  
and  
Urban Doerger  
with  
Nancy Kaye*

*My parents and me*