

War Era Story Project 2012

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Current home town: LaFayette, Ohio

Age: Not given

My uncle, John Leslie Kimmel, died at age 21, only one year after being discharged from the Navy. His military experiences are captured in a log recently uncovered, which he titled "My Life in the Navy." He can tell his story through his own hand and I can get to know an uncle I never met through these excerpts. John Leslie Kimmel died on April 12, 1947, of cancer. His older brother, William R. Kimmel, also was in the Navy. He has a son named John Arthur Kimmel and a grandson named John Patrick Kimmel.

December 13, 1944

Arrived at Seneca, Ill. and went aboard our ship, the LST 856. We started down the Mississippi, where we took on supplies. We left for the Panama Canal, and crossing the Gulf was very pretty; we had a full moon.

Feb. 3, 1945

Arrived in Panama and we got liberty. It was fun to see how the people lived in other countries. This was the first time we were out of the States. We started through the Canal and it was interesting to see how the locks worked. We then stopped in Nicaragua. One of the ships had a little trouble. Some of the boys went on liberty and when they came back they had seven parrots, two dogs and a monkey, but the old man would not let us keep them.

March 2, 1945

Arrived in Pearl Harbor and had liberty, but it was not so good. We painted the sides of the ship and took on the 64th C.B.s.

April 27, 1945

Arrived in the Philippines, beached and unloaded the 64th and picked up the 77th of the 10th Army. We arrived in Okinawa to unload the 77th on the beach. A dead Jap drifted by the side of the ship. Sometimes we couldn't see anything for the smokescreen, but at night you could see our boys dropping flares over the Jap lines and you could hear our battle wagons shelling the Japs on the beach. We didn't stay there very long, thank God.

August 14, 1945

Arrived in Guam, the worst island I've seen yet. There was no grass anywhere. We went to Saipan, where we picked up a few C.B.s and some Army boys of the 7th who got wounded in Okinawa. We are

now in a large convoy of about 64 ships. The seas were very rough. A troop ship almost ran into us. A mine floated right through the convoy, but an escort ship went after it and blew it up.

Sept. 2, 1945

We got word today over the radio that the peace terms are being signed in Japan and know the whole world is at peace again. We are headed to China.

Sept 29, 1945

Arrived Tientsin China. I was in a reconnaissance party to explore the river. We started up the river and the Chinese people came down to see us. They were waving flags and cheering us. They were glad to see the U.S. flag. Their homes weren't very much to look at and they were made of mud and straw. We kept going up the river and tied up alongside the Chinese Navy. They were something to see. Their uniforms fit them like sacks and their boats weren't anything to look at.

Oct. 4, 1945

Left China for Okinawa. On the third day, the seas started to get rough. We were headed for a typhoon that was coming up from Okinawa. On the fourth day, we were on the outer edge of it. We kept changing course, sometimes we were running into it, sometimes away from it. The waves were running about 50 feet high, some higher. Our LST was taking a beating. I thought our ship was going to break in two. One of the ships split a seam but they fixed that dam fast. We lost two LSTs on the fifth day. All day and night we kept getting SOSs and messages that ships were sinking and on the beach. The center of the storm was over Okinawa. We were told to stay at sea until the storm passed. We did a lot of praying and we still don't know how we came out alive.

Oct. 21, 1945

We didn't stay in Okinawa very long. We got a little liberty, a couple cans of beer and a coca cola. A couple of us boys looked around the island but there wasn't much left. We arrived in Korea several days later. We unloaded the Army on the beach and stayed that night on the beach. While we were there, we saw a little Korean boy beating his face. He was crazy, so I was told. The Japs killed his mother and father and he's been like that ever since.

Oct. 31, 1945

We arrived in Saishuto, Korea and loaded up with 1,400 Japs. They were kept on the deck, which we had fenced off for them. They didn't give us any trouble and we had them chipping our main deck until our captain came out and apologized to the Jap officer in charge. He said he had nothing to do with putting them to work and he told him they didn't have to do any more work, the dirty so-and-so. It took two days to unload the Japs when we got to Sasebo Korushu.

Nov. 6, 1945

Arrived in Okinawa and loaded with fresh supplies, something we haven't had in a long time, and boy did it taste good. We loaded up with negro Army personnel and loaded our tank deck with Army equipment.

Nov. 23, 1945

Arrived in Korea. We almost hit a mine on the way here, but the other LST blew it up. We went to China again and this time I got a three-day pass. I went to Peking, which was 90 miles away, and it took us all day to get there.

Jan. 9, 1946

Left Shanghai for Woosung. We were loaded with Japs. Shanghai is quite a modern city.

January 24, 1946

Left Shanghai again and we are loaded down with Japs, but this is our last trip because we received orders to return to Pearl Harbor.

February 28, 1946

Arrived in Pearl Harbor, 18 days of Hell. I was never so glad to get into port in all my life. Now we are going to wait and see what the outcome is – whether we go to the States or stay here. We are all hoping to go home.

March 16, 1946

Left Pearl Harbor. I was one of the lucky ones to stay aboard. We are headed for the States.