

Bill's Story

The First 25 Years
&
Memoirs of World War II



Written by Bill Baldauf

BILL'S STORY – THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Written in and around 2012

Entered from Bill's actual hand-written notes

“The Way Things Were” – I was born on September 5, 1925 in St. Elizabeth’s Hospital in Chicago and lived on Chicago’s northwest side at 2814 W. Nelson St. (formerly named Warsaw Avenue). I was the 4th son born to Carl and Rose Baldauf. I lived in the same house for almost 18 years until enlisting in the Navy at age 17 during WWII.

Here are some memories starting with very early childhood.

At about age 5 or 6, Aunts Emilia and Margaret who lived next door, came over, as they frequently did, and along with my Mom made bottled grape jam. The grapes were purchased at the grocery store in an oval basket and cooked in a couple of large pots. After cooking and adding sugar or whatever, the jam was preserved in small jars. The method of sealing the bottles was interesting for me to watch as hot wax was poured over the jam for preservation purposes.

For a more exciting event, some time prior to the grape jam event, I remember leaning over the back of a chair, which slipped and I split my tongue on the corner of the kitchen cabinet. This required stitches and, I think, the scar can still be seen.

That incident was just one of my earliest memories when I was quite small – maybe even before I was 5 years old.

Several years later and prior to starting school, I had a Lionel train set. It was fun putting together and rearranging the tracks. When we were a little older, we were given an erector set, usually for Christmas, which was more involved and much more challenging in constructing various things like bridges, cars, etc.

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER PARISH AND GRAMMAR SCHOOL

I attended St. Francis Xavier Grammar School for eight years. Of course, the teachers were ALL nuns, in their usual dark brown wool garb. As with lay people, some nuns were jovial and others quite stern. While in the 5th or 6th grade, it happened that the nun was of the stern type – totally humorless. A couple of times, I was lined up with others and took a slap across the palm of my hand with a 15” ruler. The reason was for talking while the nun was out of the room.

On the subject of nuns’ demeanor and switching quickly to while I was in the 8th grade, my friend, Buddy Nielson, and I had the honor of being patrol guards. This required wearing an across- the- chest white belt and that was big-time stuff. We were assigned to watch the 2nd graders as they left and returned to class from recess. They had the youngest and nicest nun, named Sr. Judith. While she was out, Buddy and I would set her desk alarm clock to ring in mid-afternoon during class. Seeing she was open to humorous things, it didn’t take much for her to figure out who did it.

When in the upper grades, I became an alter boy. In that era, it was necessary to say the prayers in Latin. Even today, I can recite one of the most difficult prayers in Latin – the *Suscipiat*.

Being an alter boy had some monetary advantages. I would, occasionally, be called out of class to participate in a funeral service. This worked out very well as the church was situated next to the school where we also attended daily Mass. On weekends, I was, occasionally, asked to serve at weddings. I thought this was pretty neat, as the groom always gave us some generous “folding” money.

My attending school at St. Francis was more directly or indirectly involved in Church activities than I realized at the time. Dad was a member of the Holy Name Society and ushered at the Sunday ten o’clock Mass. In addition to the collection money taken up by the ushers, when entering the Church for Sunday service, we would be required to place ten cents or whatever seat money on a table set up for that purpose.

Uncle John Freese was also affiliated with St. Francis Parish as a full time caretaker in charge of all the buildings – church, school, rectory, etc. He, also, had the responsibility of ringing the church bells manually at noon and six in the evening. When he couldn’t make it, he would quite often ask if I would go. I always found it exciting, to be going into an empty church and into the choir loft area where the rope was hanging to ring the bells. I found it fun and exciting to hang on the rope during the ringing process and have the rope pull me up about three feet. How else can a boy have fun in church without being punished?

OTHER FAMILY MEMORIES

One of the memories, which can’t be ignored, is our potbellied stove. To me, the stove always appeared huge and had small isinglass windows. Eventually, this coal and wood-burning stove was replaced with a gas heater, which was thermostatically controlled. What a blessing that was!! I was no Abe Lincoln but later I did do some log splitting and breaking up of wood boxes to have some kindling wood to get the logs and coal started. The old stove, definitely, was not missed by any of us. The new stove, which was purchased through the Gas Company and paid for on a monthly basis, had its work cut out for it. It had to heat the dining and living rooms, in addition to two bedrooms. Back then, the winters were severe and the front bedroom window, usually, got completely frosted up on the inside, which made it the COLDEST room in the house. That was my and my brother, Carl’s, room. With the newer stove, the window was only partially frozen and it made things more bearable.

For heating purposes, the kitchen had what we called a garbage burner because we did burn some garbage in it. This was a small rectangular shaped stove about 3 to 4’ long. Coal still had to be carried up to the second floor where we lived. This stove heated a large kitchen and the third bedroom. I still have the small iron shovel, which served the purpose,

very well, in keeping both stoves going with coal, before gas conversion. I'd like to have the shovel chrome plated and hung on a wall for posterity. It brings back many memories.

Around the Christmas holidays, the family would take turns going over to each other's homes. Aunt Anna and Aunt Kate lived the farthest, which meant waiting in the cold for a Belmont Ave. streetcar as we did not own a car and never did. In those days, it seemed to have been a lot colder. The streetcar ride took about an hour but it was more fun to go there as the two houses were newer, had a basement and the parties had more people. I found the basement at Aunt Anna and Uncle Gus Studzinski's house fascinating as it had a punching bag and, on the walls, were pictures of Uncle Gus' Navy days and one of him wearing a BLACK belt in boxing.

Anyway, it didn't take long after everyone arrived that the men were in the basement indulged in a very serious game of cards. My dad wasn't much of a card player so it appeared that, after losing a few dollars, he dropped out. I think he started to play, if at all, just to be sociable and knew the games would be long and the stakes high and they were.

Of course, Santa Claus was always there at all of the Christmas Eve. parties and the presents were there for us kids after we sang or did something to deserve them.

One year, when the gathering was at Mom and Dad's house and after the card game was on for a while, apparently, the beer was getting low and Uncle John Freese suggested I take the pail with the cover and a bale handle and get it filled at Rhodes Tavern just a block away. They knew me there as I stopped in once in a while to tell Uncle John that he was wanted at home. I must have been only in my early teens but John was well known at Rhodes and, much to my surprise, I did get the beer to bring home.

When the party was at Aunt Anna's or Aunt Kate's, returning home was even worse than going. It usually was around midnight and we, normally, had to wait for the street car after walking about six blocks to the streetcar end of the line on Belmont and Central Ave. After getting on, it was interesting seeing the conductor reversing all the backs of the seats to proceed moving in the other direction.

When making this trip in later years, we were able to stand up front of the streetcar to watch the conductor at the controls. He would quickly move the handle of the controls back and forth while stomping the bell located on the floor. This made it very exciting to watch. He got things moving so fast that the whole car was moving from side to side that we thought we were going to come off the tracks. I think the carfare at that time was 7 cents for adults and a transfer was punched with the date and time in the event it was necessary to switch cars to get to one's destination.

Looking back, I guess I found riding the old streetcars very exciting. Even in going to Foreman High School, when returning home, there were usually a lot of kids waiting to get on when school was out. But, my friend and I would lag behind so we could get on last and

stand on the outside step for a block or two, while holding onto the bars. But, I'll write about High School in another chapter.

Returning to younger years, on school days and during some evenings, we played games under the streetlight with the neighborhood kids. The games we played were kick the can, hide and seek and we played ball by throwing a hard rubber ball against the ledge of the corner brick building to see how far back it bounced and who would catch it. Usually by 8 p.m., we had to be in the house to do any homework.

During the summer months, other things were going on that got our attention. There was the iceman. While he was delivering ice, we would crawl on his truck and get ice chips to eat. This would anger the delivery guy, as he wasn't very friendly. People received their ice by placing a card in the window showing how much to deliver – 50, 75 or 100 pounds. People didn't have refrigerators like we have today. We all had iceboxes, which kept the food chilled by having ice in one section of the icebox. After the ice would melt, a pan under the box would catch the ice water. This would require someone emptying it – which was often forgotten and required a cleanup of the water that overflowed onto the floor.

Other trucks driving through the neighborhood sold ice cream and even fresh hot waffles. Neither of which, we got very often due to our lack of money.

Other vendors whose services we don't see today were horse-drawn wagons selling vegetables and fruit as they went through the alleys, or knife and scissor sharpeners that sat on a cart with a large round stone that turned by pumping with his legs. He got attention by moving along and ringing a bell. And there was a horse-drawn wagon, usually used by an older man, who was hollering, "old newspapers, rags and iron". It sounded as if he was saying "rags-o-lion".

Mrs. Kusic, just a friend, made an impression on me. Mom would call her to come to our house and bring some of an all-purpose green ointment, which she made at her own home. When she arrived, she also brought a heat lamp that she carried in her medicine bag. I think she used the heat lamp for sore knees and feet. I don't believe there was a specific fee involved in her visits but I'm sure Mom would always give her something. Mrs. Kusic lived around Diversey, which was at least a 6 or 8 block walk and, being a heavier person, it was quite a task for her to get around.

Those were the depression days and, although Dad worked as a butcher at Hillmans store downtown (Stop and Shop), I believe we were given food stamps. I recall several times using our red coaster wagon and picking up a couple of boxes full of groceries – no money involved. The store was located around Brandt Park, which was about a 20 or 30-minute walk. I think that a political-talking guy named FIKE gave out the food stamps. When he came to visit, Dad would offer him a glass of Mogen David wine, which we always had in the pantry. He, usually, did this when we had visitors that we didn't see very often.

I don't recall Mom ever going shopping as Dad brought many groceries and meat home from where he worked. The smaller things we got at a little grocery store just minutes away. Our meals over the weekend were chicken noodle soup and a pork roast or some other type of roast. It was at Sunday dinner that Mom would always like us to eat together. In later years, when dating Irene, this became a little problem, as Irene wanted to head for the beach about mid-morning. With a little compromise by all, it worked out.

In the evening, after playing games and when the Anders corner bakery was closing for the day, us guys would gather in front of their store window. If we stayed long enough, Mrs. Anders would come out with a tray full of cream puffs or éclairs that were left over and gave them for us to share with each other.

The Anders knew the Baldaufs as an old time family in the neighborhood and it was a pleasure for me to stop in before school and get some hot biscuits and long johns. However, it was far from an "every morning" occurrence.

During a severe thunder or electrical storm, Mom would awaken us and we would get on our knees and say some prayers for about ten minutes or until the storm subsided. Mom usually lit a candle for this ritual. During that time, we were also told not to go near the water heater. I did not know what that was all about.

Mom liked a clean house so Saturday was the day we washed the kitchen and bathroom floors. This was not with a mop but on our knees, using a bucket of water then, when the floor would be dry, spreading out newspapers on the floor for the rest of the day. I guess it was to keep the floor clean longer. The two flights of back stairs were washed at least once a month.

Mom's health was not good so it severely restricted her outside activities and she was pretty well home bound. I recall at times taking her to Dr. Wagner's office, which was just a short streetcar ride to Logan Blvd. Regarding shopping for Mom's clothes, I would take her to the Klaus Dept. store on Milwaukee Ave. and also to Goldblatt's Dept. store at Diversey and Milwaukee Ave. That was a big accomplishment for her.

Mom spent considerable time in bed and, toward the end, Dr. Wagner came out to the house to see her. Seeing we lived on the second floor, when he was leaving, I sometimes took him down the stairs to the front entrance door. At one time I recall he telling me that she might not be able to have any more blood transfusions to replace the blood she was losing due to the occasional breaking of the cysts she had on her kidneys. However, I don't remember her condition ever being referred to as PKD. Amelia and Margaret were of great help during those times. But I'm getting ahead of my story as this happened much later in my life.

MEMORIES OF MY BROTHERS AND SISTER

MY BROTHER, HENRY:

Because Henry was the first-born of my brothers and, unfortunately, died from pneumonia when he was only ten years old, I have no memories of him. I was only two years old at the time.

MY BROTHER, GEORGE:

Seeing that brother George was about five years older, I don't recall him spending any time around the house. That was the depression era so I'm sure he was always working somewhere as a butcher. Times were difficult for the family in a financial way and there was a time he had to resort to using paper in his shoes because of a hole in the sole. This was at a time when he had to walk to his job downtown. That was about 7 miles from our house.

For a short while, George worked nights in a hamburger place located on a very little concrete island in the middle of the intersection of California, Belmont and Elston Avenues. There is nothing there today as it was torn down and removed years ago.

I don't recall George getting into any trouble but there was an incident when he bought a used car from a close neighbor without informing Dad. This caused quite a stir in our household, as he wasn't of age. Well, story short, the next day the car was returned to the neighbor.

George always loved music and played the coronet (trumpet). He was an active member in the CYO (Catholic Youth Organization). I recall that on one Sunday he was dressed in their sharp-looking band uniform with a white belt and he was going out to play with the CYO in a parade downtown Chicago. We still have a photo of him in that uniform. In much later years, George took up the accordion. He took lessons and enjoyed them so much that he owned several accordians.

George enlisted in the Navy right after the start of WWII. It was so soon after the start of the war that I remember George telling me that the training was with make-believe guns. Being a butcher, he started with the rank of "Cook" and before long had the rank and duties of a "Commissary Steward" in charge of food and supplies. Being on board several large ships, it wasn't long before he carried the rank of "Chief" which is highly respected by Navy personnel as it is usually accomplished by one rank promotion at a time. I recently found out through George's daughter, Roseann (Shales now) that he was discharged as a Commissioned Chief Warrant Officer not just an Enlisted Chief Petty Officer, as I had thought he was. George loved the Navy and it's unfortunate he didn't spend the balance of his working days serving in the Navy.

I would be remiss if I didn't make a comment about George's involvement during WWII. We never had any long discussion regarding the war, however, from some of the comments he made and being that he was on bigger and amphibious type ships, from the start of the

war, I'm certain he took part in some harrowing activities in both the Atlantic and Pacific theatres.

In my younger days, I worked for George in a couple of his Chicago butcher shops. This was usually on a Saturday doing menial work such as grinding meat, scraping the butcher blocks and cleaning showcases. He loved to kid the customers, especially the women, and they loved him.

George, Carl and I stayed in the Chicago area until we bought homes in the northwest suburbs of Chicago when we were married and raising our children. We saw each other on a pretty regular basis and celebrated Christmas Eves together, taking turns hosting the family get-togethers.

MY BROTHER, CARL:

Carl was two years my senior and, because of that, his friends and associates were different than the friends I had. Therefore, his childhood activities were separate from mine so we hung out in separate circles of friends. This is probably why I don't have many memories of Carl in earlier times.

In later years, Carl was a good businessperson and an entrepreneur. His livelihood was made in the electrical field and at one time, he worked for Uncle John Freese as an electrician at Amphenol Corporation. This was a company that built electronic equipment for the war effort. During WWII, Carl had a permanent exemption from serving in the armed forces because of the essential nature of his work at Amphenol. Because some relatives and friends were already in the service, I'm told that Carl didn't feel right about being exempt and gave up his exemption status and enlisted in the Navy. After doing so, it wasn't long before he was assigned to a destroyer escort (DE), which was a very active ship in the South Pacific during WWII.

After we all returned safely from serving in the Navy, what stands out the most in our adult years is when Carl's big project was to convert our parent's house, where we lived, from a one family first floor living quarters to two apartments. This, of course, required considerable work and knowledge in electrical, plumbing, carpentry, etc. This project took many months to complete.

At the time, the Cahill family lived in the entire first floor apartment. No doubt, after considerable planning by all concerned, it was thought that the first floor was now too big for the Cahills after their three daughters, Alice, Virginia and Helen, got married and moved out. In the final analysis, Mr. & Mrs. Cahill had a smaller rear apartment and Carl made the larger front apartment for his family. It worked out well for all. It was all one big project in which I got a little involved in helping hang the plaster ceiling and wallboard, along with other things, before it was all completed.

Carl's three best friends were Jim O'Donnell, Harold Hacker and Edzy. Edzy owned an ice-cream parlor where he served sodas, banana splits and various sundries. I believe this was a sort of a "hang out" place and only a short bike ride from our home. Carl and his friends played 16" Chicago softball games there quite regularly.

As I mentioned previously, even after George and Sally's marriage and Carl and Dolores got married, they continued to live in Chicago in the two Nelson Street houses until about a year after our Mom died and Dad put the house up for sale in 1955. At that time, George and his family bought a house in Morton Grove and Carl and his family bought a house in Elmwood Park. As mentioned previously, George, Carl and I and our families stayed close and visited each other over the years. Marguerite moved out of the Chicago area, even before she got married, so our visits with her were less frequent. Later, Carl and his family moved to Santa Clara, California around 1963. We stayed connected through mail, phone calls and some vacations.

MY SISTER, MARGUERITE:

Marguerite was born in 1934, almost nine years later than I. Therefore, I was already in school when she was just a baby. I think that because of our age difference, I don't have early memories of Marguerite. When she was five, I was 14 and starting High School. When I was 17 and leaving for the Navy, Margie was only 8 years old. It was after I returned from the Navy and Marguerite was in High School that we started to have a connection and we became close.

HIGH SCHOOL

My first years of high school were at a two-year commercial high school, St. Alphonsus. This included subjects of Gregg Shorthand, typing, bookkeeping and everything to do with business.

In order to get a four-year diploma, I completed the remaining two years at Foreman High School on Belmont Avenue, also located in Chicago. I had no idea what kind of a livelihood I wanted to pursue after Foreman High and much less thought was given when starting at St. Alphonsus. I think it was a matter of "let the chips fall where they may". College - what's that?? Looking back, if I wanted to do office work I should have reversed my high school education and first gone to Foreman and then to St. Alphonsus. When I completed 4 years of high school in 1943, World War II was well under way and it was a matter of being drafted in the Army or enlisting in the Navy before my eighteenth birthday. So, I joined the Navy. This required Dad's permission, as I was not yet 18 years of age. Deciding to join the Navy was probably because George had already been in the Navy for a couple of years - but more about that in my Navy Memoirs.

My work activities during High School years were delivering papers such as the downtown "Shopping News" on Wednesday afternoon and the Sunday morning papers. The Sunday

papers required getting up early and loading up the bike that had a super large wire basket tied to the handlebars over the front wheel. Being just a small guy at that time, things got pretty hard to handle, especially during the winter months. Fortunately, getting the papers to be delivered was located just across the alley in Frank Floreck's garage. Frank was the guy who ran the business. Everybody called him by the name of "Limpy" as he did have a bad limp and was a nice guy. He would, occasionally, drive us over to the Avaloe ice-cream parlor next to the Avaloe Theatre to buy whatever we wanted. I always ordered a banana split, which was really a big deal. After the papers were delivered, we returned to the route and made the collections. It all took a complete Sunday morning.

On my route, this particular morning, a man asked for a newspaper and said that a lady on the 3rd floor of the apartment building where he was standing would pay for it. Well, I just couldn't believe it when I went to the 3rd floor to collect ---no one answered. Needless to say, when I got downstairs, he was gone. Well, that didn't happen again but the usual tips I received made up for it --- some as small as two cents or a candy bar or cookies.

In addition to delivering papers, I was working as a clerk at the corner meat and grocery store. This was after school and on Saturdays. Well, what started as a job loading the shelves with canned goods, scraping the butcher block and trimming fresh veggies ended up with killing chickens. The store was just a small store with mostly Polish customers who liked fresh poultry.

The chickens were fenced in a cage located in the basement. Joe and his wife were the owners and when someone came in and ordered a chicken, I was asked to go down and get one and Joe would put it on the scale and give the customer a price. After that is where I took over. Joe showed me what it took to kill chickens, strip the feathers using boiling hot water and remove innards. Not a very pleasant job but doing other things in the store made up for the occasional terrible chicken kills.

One other more respectable part-time job that I had was downtown at Marshall Field and Company. This involved mainly typing shipping labels during the Christmas holidays. This proved more challenging than some of my previous jobs.

Well, during that era, it wasn't "all work and no play". Many good times were had through those years.

Although Dad was very involved in working and making a living for the family, he did take me to a Lane Tech High School ballgame on a Sunday afternoon. The School was located rather close and it took only about 20 minutes to walk there. It was a very new modern stadium and just being in attendance proved fun and exciting.

While attending St. Alphonsus, my close friend was John Morrison who lived about fifteen minutes away and also attended the same school. Many of our "getting around" was by bike as we were too young to own a car. We would often ride to the St. Alphonsus

neighborhood and see guys and gals that were in our class. We even rode, once in a while, to and from school instead of taking a streetcar. It was about an hour ride by bike. When we were in the area, John and I would make it a point to stop and see, a mutual friend, Sophie Schiefelbaum, at her house. She was a very attractive blond and was also in some of our classes. The visits weren't all that long and nothing ever came of it, unless John saw her in later years. I lost contact with John when I went into the Navy.

John lived across from Brandts Park, which was quite large with an active field house. We got involved in some of the activities playing table games like ping-pong and outside games such as tennis and 16" softball. (I never expected that in later years I would be playing these games, at the same park, with a beautiful wife and two very young sons). On some Saturdays, John and I would ride our bikes to one of the surrounding forest preserves.

As previously mentioned, after graduating from St. Alphonsus, I decided to complete the four-year high school program by attending Foreman High School. A close friend and neighbor, Harry Hopsicker, was attending Foreman and thought highly of the school, although it was about a 20 minute streetcar ride to get there. Harry's classes were different than mine so we didn't see much of each other at school. Except at lunchtime, when I once put grass (actual green grass from the lawn) in his sandwich when he wasn't looking. We sometimes ate our lunch outdoors. Harry and I both laughed about this for many days later.

While at Foreman, I eventually met a group of guys and started seeing them around school and classes. I don't exactly recall but it was in one of the classes that I met Tessy Sacco and started dating. Her family was Italian and the rules were strict. Tess also knew the guys I knew around school and we all, eventually, started going roller skating, mostly at Riverview Roller Rink. Although the rink was only about 20 minutes from my house, it was about 45 minutes from the Foreman area. We belonged to Foreman's Roller Skating Club and wore our HI HAT black satin shirts, as a Club, and enjoyed skating to the organ music as they played the Riverview Romp, the Waltz and other numbers. I had the honor of being the Club's President for a while.

Sometimes, I would see the guys after school or on Saturday and we played some touch tag football and baseball. Most of the time though, I spent seeing Tess and, eventually, gave her my class ring, which at that time, meant we were "going steady". After a date, we liked going to a small restaurant at Belmont and Central Ave. to order half of a cantaloupe with ice cream. Doesn't THAT sound exciting!!

I continued to see Tess thru graduation and until September when I enlisted in the Navy. She was a little younger than I so still had a semester to go until graduation. To jump ahead almost a year, while in the Navy and being assigned to a sub-chaser somewhere in the South Pacific, I received what was known at that time as a "Dear John" letter from Tess. These were not all that uncommon and meant that the relationship was over.

WORLD WAR II – U.S. NAVY

On September 3, 1943, I enlisted in the United States Navy at the age of 17. Years later, in 2003, at the age of 78, I wrote a memoir of my Navy experiences, titled “BILL BALDAUF’S MEMOIRS OF WORLD WAR II”, a copy of which is included at the end of this document.

LIFE AFTER THE NAVY: MAY 12, 1946 TO 1952

Memories of the years after I was “honorably discharged” from the Navy all seem to run together. To summarize in no particular order:

I rejoined the Navy Reserve, full time, with my best friend, Harry Hopsicker, who had also been in the Navy during World War II. We did not stay in the Reserves very long – maybe just a year and did enjoy a couple of flights out of Glenview Naval Air Station in Glenview, IL during that period.

My family and I continued to live at 2814 W. Nelson Street, Chicago on the second floor and, as mentioned previously, my brother Carl, his wife Dolores and their daughter, Sharon, who was born in 1950, lived in the front of the ground floor apartment. Mr. & Mrs. Cahill still lived in the rear smaller apartment.

My brother, George and his wife, Sally, now had 3 sons - Gerald, Tommy and Greg. They lived on the 3rd floor of the 2816 W. Nelson building, Aunts Margaret and Emilia continued to live on the 2nd floor and Uncle John with his wife, Agnes and 2 of their children, Marilyn and Tom lived in the garden apartment. Their two older children got married – Bob married a lady named Irene, while he was still in the Army, and Gladys married a man she had been dating named Vic Lindgren.

When I returned from the World War II, my sister, Marguerite, was 12 years old and I was 21. She was a tall girl with long blond hair and had many friends in the neighborhood. She and I had a similar sense of humor and liked to tease and kid each other. Of course, it ended with much laughter.

After I bought a car (a 1937 Hudson Terraplane) from a good customer of brother George, I was the one driving Margie to and from parties and dances, especially when she was in high school. Later she was the Maid of Honor at my wedding and later, I was the Best Man at hers.

After getting out of the Navy, I applied for work at Illinois Bell Telephone Co. as a lineman because of my electrical experience in the Navy. However, I was quickly rejected for being colorblind. This put me at a loss as to where to look for other employment. Consequently, I worked various sales jobs.

One of those jobs was making appointments with homeowners to demonstrate a smoke alarm system that would be electrically installed in the entire house. The system sold for about \$300 to \$400 depending on the size of the house. The “sales pitch” took about 20 minutes and involved showing newspaper photos of people who died from the “smoke, not the fire”.

Another sales job was working with Catholic suburban Churches to sell the “new” Catholic Family Bible to parishoners in their area. The company for whom I worked would be mentioned during the Sunday Mass and I would be given the names and addresses of people to contact.

The more “corporate” type sales job was when Minneapolis Honeywell’s Temperature Control Division hired me as a Sales Representative. This job involved going to Honeywell’s home office in Minneapolis and taking their six-week temperature control course. After that training was completed, I made “sales calls” on engineers and contractors involved in building new schools and hospitals in Chicago and suburban areas. After working in this position for some time, I was offered a move to Honeywell’s office in Danville, IL. Being recently married and having bought our first house, after some discussion with my wife, Irene, we decided against the move – but I’m getting ahead of my story.

Some of my social activities after the Navy and before I got married, involved two trips with Harry Hopsicker to the Jack and Jill Ranch which was a “dude” ranch resort for young adults. That’s where I learned to ride horses and liked to use an “English” saddle. I even have a humorous certificate stating that I’m qualified to ride a horse. Those were fun vacations.

I was invited to be an usher (groomsman) in many family weddings and, subsequently, was asked to be a Godfather to some of their children. Besides relatives, I was in Harry Hopsicker’s wedding. He married a great lady named Rita who was from our neighborhood. Harry died several years ago but I am still in touch with Rita. I am Godfather to their daughter, Carol. I won’t list all the wedding parties I was in or all the children for whom I’m Godfather as I’m afraid I may miss someone.

As mentioned before, my first car was a Terraplane and after that, I owned a Chevrolet. When I had a company car many years later, the cars were replaced with a new one every two years and I was able to buy the 2-yr. old car at a good price. This was a great way to buy a used car that I had taken care of properly for the previous two years.

I dated a few women, most of whom I met at dances at the Edgewater Beach Hotel and dates I had were mostly going to a restaurant and/or to a place where there was dancing. Many “super clubs” served food and had an orchestra for dancing. I had signed up for a few

dance classes at Arthur Murray Dance Studio and was a fairly good dancer (at least that's what the "girls" told me).

One would think that I would end up marrying one of the women I dated but, no, it was a new friend Marguerite brought to the house, Irene Romanowski. But, I'm getting ahead of my story and you'll have to wait to read the next segment of my story, which has yet to be written.



← MICHAEL BALDAUF
BILL'S PATERNAL
GRANDFATHER
(HE AND HIS 2ND
WIFE, ROSA LIVED
IN NEW ALBANY, IN.)
1901

- 1904 -
BILL'S FATHER,
↓ CARL BALDAUF,
AT AGE 12 (APPROX.)

MICHAEL BALDAUF - SUCCUMBS AT 78

Michael Baldauf, 78, died at 10 o'clock Saturday morning at his residence, one mile north of New Albany, following a long illness. He is survived by his Widow, Mrs. Rosa Baldauf, three sons, Carl Baldauf, Chicago, Walter Baldauf, Lafayette and Ernest Baldauf, New Albany and by two daughters, Mrs. Charles Welty, Jeffersonville and Mrs. Wallace Martin, New Albany.

The body is at the Kraft Parlors, 708 East Spring Street.

(Nov. 1, 1941 - NEW ALBANY TRIBUNE)



→
NUREMBERG, GERMANY
BORN ON 4/29/1892
CARL OR KARL
BALDAUF



JOHN FRESE AND
AMILA BICHOWSKA
WEDDING PHOTO
JULY 28, 1890
(BILL'S MATERNAL
GRANDPARENTS)

BILL'S GRANDMA
AMILA WITH HER
5 DAUGHTERS:
MARGARET, KATE,
ROSE (BILL'S MOM),
ANNA & EMILIA
1920'S



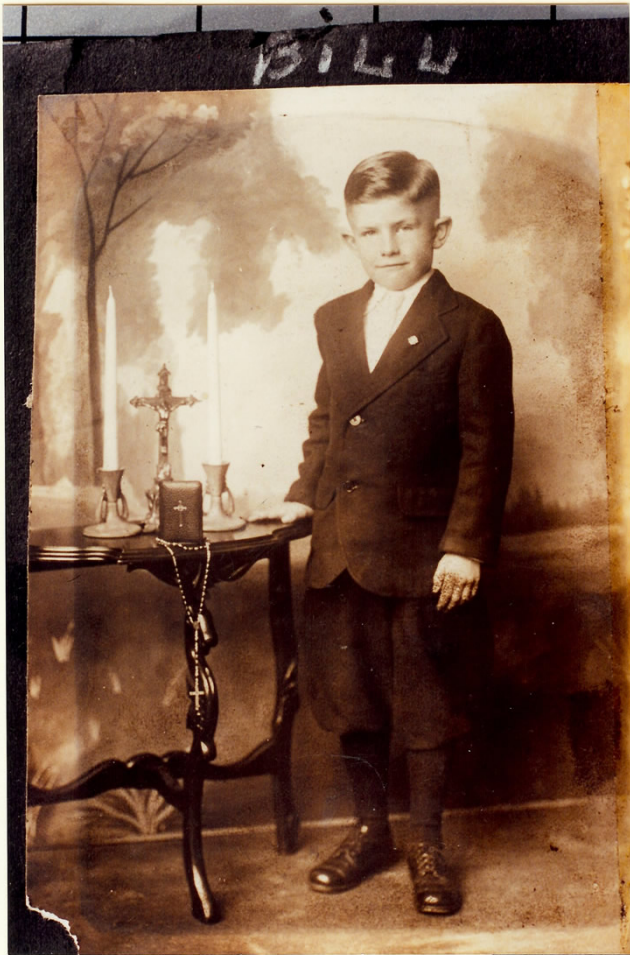


MARRIAGE
OF
ROSE FREESE
AND
CARL BALDAUF

(BILL'S PARENTS)
NOV. 15, 1916

BILL ON TRICYCLE
WITH HIS PARENTS,
ROSE & CARL AND
HIS 3 BROTHERS,
OLDEST HENRY ON
R, THEN GEORGE
AND CARL ON L.
1927





BILL'S FIRST HOLY
COMMUNION - 1931

- 1934 -
CARL AND ROSE
BALDAUF WITH
BABY MARGUERITE
AND HER BROTHERS,
BILL, CARL, JR. AND
BIG BROTHER GEORGE



BILL 4TH FROM LEFT / 2ND PHOTO: CARL, 3RD & BILL, 9TH FROM LEFT.



1933



ST FRANCIS XAVIER SCHOOL GRADE 4



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER'S ALTAR BOYS 1936



BILL IS IN 1ST ROW, FAR RIGHT IN FRONT OF FLAG

8TH GRADE
GRADUATION
MAY 1933
LEFT





1939

FAMILY PARTY:

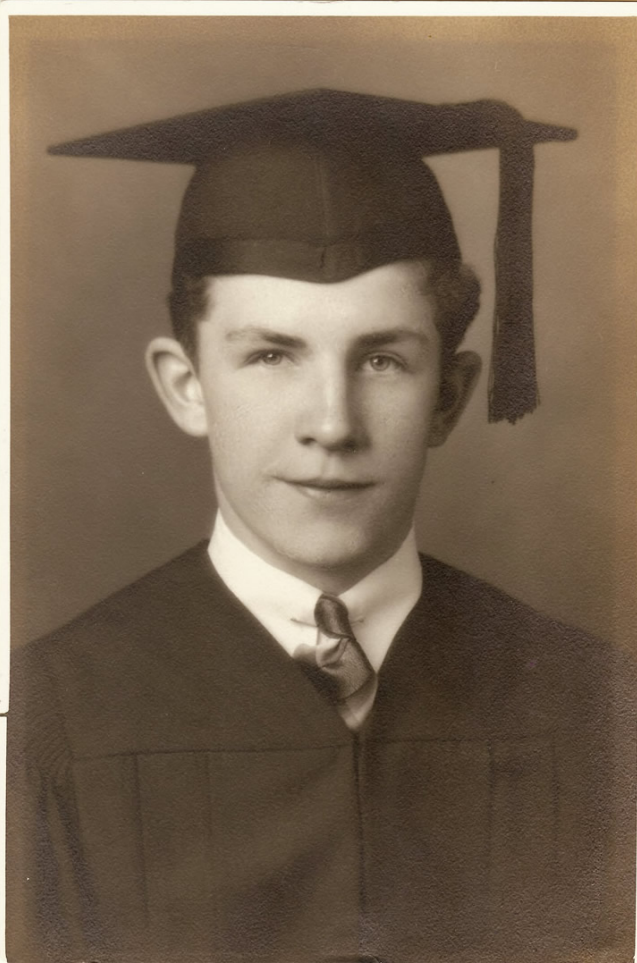
BILL is 2ND
FROM LEFT

BILL'S MOTHER
is IN 2ND ROW
ON FAR RIGHT.

UNCLE AUGUST
STUDZINSKI is
AT CENTER & HIS
WIFE ANNA ON RIGHT.

← BILL'S GRADUATION
FROM ST. ALPHONSES'
2 YR. COMMERCIAL
HIGH SCHOOL BEFORE
FOREMAN HIGH SCHOOL.

1941





1942 - BALDAUF FAMILY AT 2814 W. NELSON STREET,
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS; BILL'S FATHER, CARL, OLDEST
SON IN UNIFORM, GEORGE, THEN MARGUERITE AND
MOTHER ROSE. BILL AND CARL (JR.) ARE IN TOP ROW.



BILL, THE STOCK BOY, AT JOE'S GROCERY STORE
LOCATED AT THE CORNER OF NELSON ST. AND
CALIFORNIA AVENUE IN 1942 - BILL IS AT LEFT



WILLIAM ROBERT BALDAUF - 1943 GRADUATE
OF FOREMAN HIGH SCHOOL, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



← MARGUERITE BALDAUF'S
FIRST HOLY COMMUNION
(BILL'S SISTER) 1942

SEPT. 15, 1943:
WEDDING OF AGNES
CEROTZKE (SALLY) AND
BILL'S BROTHER GEORGE,
COMMISSIONED CHIEF WARRANT
OFFICER - U. S. NAVY ↓



1952
MARGUERITE'S
ALYBORNIA H. S. GRAD.



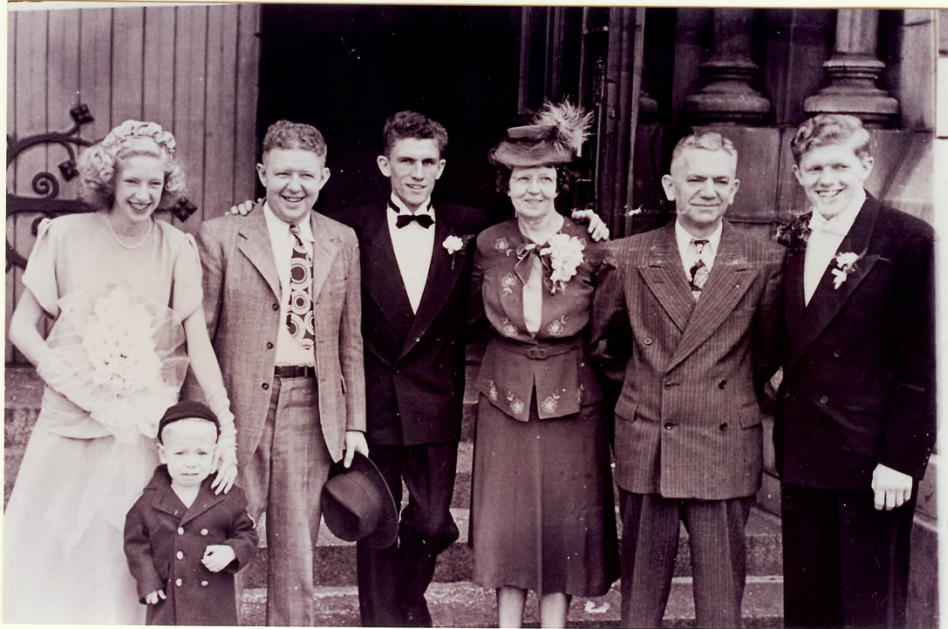
SEPT.
1943

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BILL BALDAUF

1948 BUSINESS MAN,
BILL BALDAUF



CARL (JR.) FAR RIGHT WITH HIS BALDAUF FAMILY
ON HIS WEDDING DAY. BRIDE WAS DOLores
LAKOWSKI (NOT IN PHOTO) AND GERALD BALDAUF
NEXT TO MARGUERITE IS GEORGE'S SON. (1947)



1947 BROTHER CARL AND DOLORES LAKOWSKI'S WEDDING - BILL'S NEXT TO GROOM + MARGUERITE IS ON FAR RIGHT



June 25, 1949

1949 - GLADYS + VIC LINDGREN'S - WEDDINGS -



GERALDINE + JOE HAY'S

BILL WITH BRIDESMAIDS - COUSIN'S WEDDINGS



BILL AT FAR RIGHT SERVING AS USHER AT HIS BEST FRIEND'S, HARRY HOPSICKER, WEDDING - 1948?
 (CHILDREN ARE NIECE AND NEPHEW OF HARRY + RITA)



BILL'S FAMILY AT COUSIN, JAMES
 STUZZINSKI'S WEDDING TO JUNE 4/12/47
 BILL'S MOTHER, FAR RIGHT + HER SISTERS + BRO. JOHN



1950 CHRISTMAS PARTY AT AUNTS EMELIA
AND MARGARET'S HOUSE - GUESTS ARE BILL'S
1ST COUSINS AND SPOUSES OR FRIENDS.
1 TO R BOTTOM: ED STUDZINSKI, VIC LINDGREN,
LORETTA POBLOCKI, GERALDINE + JOE HAY
2ND ROW: BERNIE, JUNE + JIM STUDZINSKI,
GLADYS LINDGREN, DOLORES BALDAUF (CARE
TOOK PHOTO), BILL BALDAUF + HIS DATE
TOP ROW: AMELIA BOEVER, SYLVIE POBLOCKI
AND MARGARET FREESE



SEPT. 1952 - "OUT ON A DATE"
BILL BALDAUF AND IRENE ROHANOWSKI

BILL BALDAUF' S MEMOIRS OF WORLD WAR II
(The Small Part He Played) Written in the year 2003

September 3, 1943, two days before my 18th birthday --- World War II was well under way. I suppose, to sound good, I could say that I wanted to be a hero so I enlisted in the Navy. This required Dad's signature, seeing I was just under the age of 18. However, when enlisting, the truth being, I would have been drafted into the Army but really preferred being in the Navy.

My older brother, George, (by about 4 years) had already been in the Navy for 2 years, which placed him in the service prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941. I believe that this had some influence on my choosing the Navy. Brother Carl was in the Navy, also as an electrician -must run in the family.

During the war, the folks had one of those banners hanging in our front door window with three blue stars. This indicated that three family members were in the service. It brings to mind that in swimming class while in boot camp, we were always reminded that we'd better pass the grade if we didn't want a blue star replaced with a gold one. We knew what that could mean.

The day of my enlistment stands out very clearly in my mind. I recall that Dad and I took the California Avenue streetcar to the elevated train and we were off to the downtown Plymouth Court Naval Enlistment Center. In looking back, it didn't seem that big of a deal. I would say that it was almost as if I was applying for a new job, with Dad's approval. He was a rather quiet guy, somewhat unemotional, and that had something to do with the lack of excitement at that time.

A few days after I enlisted, I received my official papers to report to Great Lakes Naval Training Station. This would last 8 weeks of what the Navy referred to as "boot camp".

Seeing as my Uncle "Gus" Studzinski spent time in the Navy, Mom thought it would be a good idea to visit him before leaving and get some idea what the Navy is all about. At that time Gus was a Fire Fighter on the Fred A. Busse Fire Boat which docked at Lake Michigan - downtown Chicago. I did spend a little time with him before going to Great Lakes training and now, when I look back, what I got most out of it was "keep your mouth shut and your bowels open".

Training at Great Lakes, of course, involved many hours of calisthenics, study classes, aptitude testing, American and foreign aircraft recognition and target practice with rifle and a type "45" pistol. This later came into play when standing guard duty while in port aboard ship in the South Pacific.

While in boot camp Mom, Dad and my sister, Marguerite, came up for a visit. Of course, they brought Mom's pound cake along with home made cookies, sandwiches, etc. It took Mom and Marge a little while to get used to my almost shaved head.

After eight weeks at Great Lakes, I received papers to attend electrical training school for a period of three months at Iowa State College in Ames, Iowa. This came as somewhat of a surprise seeing that during high school I studied shorthand and typing for 2 years. I even took a refresher course before enlisting in order to pursue a Yeoman rating. However, after all of this, when boot camp was over I was on my way to Ames, Iowa. When enlisting in the Navy, everyone was quickly given a test for color blindness. I wasn't doing so well and got a little coaching from the guy in line behind me. Little did I realize at that time I'd be working with color-coded wires. Fortunately, I didn't have any problems in that regard even though I'm color blind to shades of blue-green.

While attending school in Ames, I was able to get home several times via the train. We always made a short whistle stop in Des Moines where the U.S.O. had sandwiches, doughnuts and coffee for the service people.

After completing school, I received papers to go to Shoemaker, California where I was to report to the U.S.S. SQUIRE, a troop ship leaving for the South Pacific, more specifically, the Philippines. It was always interesting awaiting papers to find where I would be sent.

While on the ship, my bunk bed was in the lower bowels of the ship where the beds were arranged closely, one on top of each other.

When arriving at what I think was Subic Bay in the Philippines, I received another set of papers where I was assigned as "sole" electrician to the sub-chaser SC 982 where, little did I know, I would serve for 18 months. The crew was made up of 18 enlisted men and 2 officers. Our primary duty was convoying all types of naval ships, troop and cargo ships, and even tugs towing barges from one island to another. The 982 was a comparatively small ship, 110 feet long with a beam of 18 feet.

When not at sea, which was most of the time, we had the assignment of patrolling harbor entrances using radar and sonar equipment in helping keep watch for Japanese subs. While at sea and on convoy duty escorting various ships, we went from one station to another, each for about a half an hour. The various stations aboard ship were standing watch on the bridge with one of the officers, working the helm and sonar equipment. Also standing watch with binoculars on the aft gun turret. Sometimes while on harbor patrol, we could see the tracer and other bullets flying all over the island.

In addition to these duties, being an electrician and part of the so-called "black" gang, I also spent time down in the engine room monitoring the electrical equipment, engines, checking gauges and seeing that the motor and bilge pump were pumping out the water. The bilge is the lowest part of the inside of the ship where water would accumulate.

The engine room was very small and just big enough to hold the 2 long GM diesel engines with a walkway between. The sound of the engines was deafening and made it impossible to hear when talking or even shouting.

The "black" gang made up of an electrician (me) and 2 engine mechanics, who would also work the engine room, stand watch and work on the engines when necessary. The others made up the deck crew.

I always considered having the electrical responsibilities was good duty, as I was very much on my own.

It was the guys other than the black gang that swabbed the deck, scraped and chipped the paint and repainted which was a continuous task because of the salt water.

While in port, my duties were maintaining the motors, generators and electrical systems. There were times I had to climb up the mast where the "crows nest" would be, if we had one, and check out the electrical system and change light bulbs. Sometimes the guys called me "Sparks", other times "Bulb snatcher".

Two of the crew members were cooks who did a real good job. The one was from Wyoming who was especially good at desserts. His best was apple fritters. We received our supplies by tying up next to a bigger ship and loading up. However, we didn't have that big of a riffer (fridge). This being the case, when we got a whole case of eggs, we would have to finish them before they spoiled. To do this we all fried two or three before sacking out for the night.

Our entertainment was also tying up to bigger ships while in port and seeing a movie. After that a couple of eggs and toast really hit the spot.

On this type of ship, most times were informal and relaxed. Never any personal or other inspections as found on other Navy ships. Not to make it sound luxurious, but a couple of times we even swam off the side of the ship.

While anchored in one of the harbors off Leyte in the Philippines, I was informed through a letter from home that cousin, Jim Studzinski who was in the Army might be stationed there. Hearing this, I received permission to go ashore and arranged to be picked up by one of the amphibious boats. I must have contacted the right sources because once I got at his camp sight, it didn't take long and someone was taking me to his tent. Lo and behold, there he was!

What a pleasure and surprise it was meeting him thousands of miles from home, not on a vacation but in the "big" war. I wasn't able to stay very long but popped a couple of Atabrine tablets (malaria prevention) which was army routine. After that we had an army lunch together and then back to the ship.

Oh, yes, around that time, I also got a so-called "dear John" letter from my friend, Tess, back home. She had my graduation ring and said she no longer wanted to go steady. That should explain the "dear John" letter, which a lot of guys received while overseas. Anyway, we did see each other when I returned and very nicely got my ring.

After seeing Jim, I hadn't returned to the ship but a short time when the skipper received a message over the radio that we were to immediately rendezvous with two tugs that were each towing two barges. Our assignment was to convoy them to another port in the Philippines.

It's difficult to give the sequence of events as they occurred. I'll just give highlights as they come to mind. The purpose in escorting even bigger ships, even though they may have had more gun power, was they didn't have the maneuverability in the event of enemy sub activity.

One of our most unusual assignments was with the Air Force. What this involved was towing a target the size of a movie screen. After a few hours of this, the water was getting rough and their fire was getting a little too close. This made the Skipper somewhat nervous. He got on the radio and told them the towline was getting too short and that we'd better cease activities. I thought it was a nice subtle way of saying they better get more practice elsewhere.

There were times when we had to have some gunnery practice of our own. I was assigned as loader on a 22mm gun. This involved hooking up a round canister of ammo when the other one was empty. As to our overall firepower, we had two twin 50's, three 20's and one 40mm which was the biggest, located toward the bow of the ship, also, one machine gun mounted on the bridge. Fortunately, the closest that we came to a Jap was a dead one floating with his backside up. This occurred while going up a river on one of our assignments. I don't know what island this was, as they all looked alike.

A couple of times, while patrolling the harbor, we saw a Japanese mine that broke loose from its mooring which was to keep it submersed and out of sight from our ships when they came onto the beach. This was a little frightening for fear of it hitting against the ship. To preclude this from happening, we were fortunate to set it off with our guns. However, one time at dusk, we saw one and were unable to set it off before night set in. I don't know what ever happened to it but there was that fear of hitting it with our hull while patrolling. It made for a couple of uneasy nights.

On another of our assignments, the sonar equipment picked up a signal that appeared to be a potential sub. The Captain checked on the communication system to see if any of our subs were in the area. Being confirmed that they weren't, we then prepared to drop depth charges (ash cans) if indeed it was an enemy sub. They were set by the gunner's mate to go off at a depth of approximately 300 feet. After two or three of the charges being dropped - not sure of the numbers - we quickly left the area. This was done to get away from any

reverberations that could harm the ship because of its wooden hull. We then returned to the area looking for any indication of a possible hit. Seeing there wasn't, eventually, we left with even more alertness.

Mother Nature wasn't always very nice and this happened to be one of those times. When I first came aboard, being seasick was somewhat of concern as even in the harbor, I found myself feeding the fish with regurgitated food. However, my gut and I eventually got used to being tossed about and was ready for the "high" seas. Not realizing it, but this was a big one coming up. In the Pacific, they call it a "typhoon".

The seas continued to get so rough that when the ship rode the crest of the waves, the aft end, along with the drive shaft and screws (that propelled the ship) was completely out of the water. This resulted in a loud rumbling sound and vibrations that shook the entire ship.

In coming down from the crest, the bow hit the water with a thunderous bang and was then completely submerged. This continued with one wave after another. Our sleeping quarters were at the very front of the ship, which made it difficult to get to without being washed overboard and once there, was not very conducive to sleep. Seeing the movie, "Big Storm" was a true re-enactment of what this was all about.

When stationed at the helm, which was about 5 feet in diameter, and taking orders from the officer on the bridge as he hollered down the tube, one only had the strength to hold out for about 10 minutes. It was a continuous command of "right full rudder" and "left full rudder". This meant three full turns of the helm in each direction, right and left so as to continue hitting the waves straight on and not be caught in a so-called trough. This could result in a capsized ship.

The steering system on these smaller ships was all controlled manually, without electrical or hydraulic assistance. In high seas, we found out that it made things very difficult.

About this particular typhoon, we were later informed it was one of the more severe ones. I believe it lasted about three days and two nights. We were in it that long as we were being pushed in the same direction as the typhoon was moving. The captain finally figured the quickest way out would be to make a 180 degree turn and ride it out against the storm. In so doing, we got caught in what is called a trough which almost capsized ye ole "982" along with ole Sparky (me) and the crew.

While making the turnaround in direction, the tilt of the ship was so severe that the yardarm of the upper part of the mast and radar dome hit the water. One of the containers holding three or four life jackets broke loose and was washed overboard.

The captain eventually sounded general quarters alarms for all to assemble mid-ship, as the word was given to prepare to "abandon ship". In getting into life jackets, it was found that there was one jacket short. Finding this out, the big guy from Iowa removed his and

gave it to the pharmacist mate who was quite sick. Fortunately, however, we never had to use them.

During all this, Rocky, one of the cooks from New York was on his knees praying the rosary. His prayers were answered and so were ours.

Just before all of this was happening, I was below in the engine room trying to get the bilge pump motor going to empty the bilges as the water was over the floor boards. Suddenly a huge wave of water washed down the hatch into the engine room. I thought it was the entire Pacific Ocean. That's when I dashed for the ladder to get topside and out of there.

In talking with the skipper, he said, "Baldauf, we just have to get that motor and bilge pump going". But to no avail. The starter kept kicking out as the motor, being situated on the floor boards, got completely saturated with salt water from the extremely high water in the bilge. With this condition, we had to form a "bucket" brigade using every container we had and, finally, got the water below the floorboards so as to be able to walk around.

This must have all taken place after our watch, as I later managed to go down and tried to get some sleep.

When I awakened and got up on deck, I found the water to be as smooth as glass. What a surprise! It was like a miracle took place. The storm was finally over.

The question now pondering the captain was our location, after being tossed around for days. Before long, we saw a huge sailboat on the horizon. The signalman got on the blinker light and found they were natives from the area and, hopefully, friendly. Fortunately, they were. They tied up along side, came aboard and showed the skipper on a map exactly where we were. We then headed for a main port in Leyte.

It wasn't long after the ship was placed into "dry dock", the engines were overhauled, drive shafts repacked and, yes, even a new motor for the bilge pump. The damage was more extensive than originally thought. The radio gear, radar, and sound gear were inoperative and also had to be repaired or replaced.

The wind had torn some of the canvass windbreakers used on all the railings around the top deck. Some had to be repaired and/or replaced. A complete cleanup with some painting was done inside and out. After about two weeks, we were once again under way on another assignment for convoy duty.

Soon after returning to port, a commendation was received from Vice-Admiral Kaufman, Commander of Philippine Sea Frontier congratulating captain and crew for bringing the ship safely through a severe typhoon without loss or injury to personnel. We later heard another ship was not so fortunate.

Well, that's about it for the very memorable highlights of activities while in the Navy and, especially, on the 982.

With continuous encouragement by my lovely wife, Irene (Ike), I was able to get this started and completed. Also, thanks to her for the finishing touches on the computer. I hope whoever reads this enjoys it as much as I did putting it together.

As to embellishment, there isn't any. This is conveyed as much as memory could serve, going back almost sixty years. Additionally, old files and notes were researched. I truly feel there was very little given on my part during WW II. Nothing at all relative to others who also served and fought in this and other wars and so-called skirmishes.

The prime purpose of this writing is just in case the Grandkids or their offspring should ever ask if they had relatives in WW II. I very much doubt that they will.

However, if the question does come up, they can be told about ole "Grandpa Bill". Kind of wish Dad had told me more about his life. I would now have fewer questions to ask.

POSTSCRIPT: A while before writing this, I phoned the Navy Department Bureau of Ships in Washington, D.C. to see if they had any information on the SC982. They said they normally wouldn't on smaller ships or ships without a "formal" name. However, surprisingly, when looking it up, they did have a record that did describe the "982" activities. I believe they described the typhoon in their report more clearly than I did.



With love,
Phil



