

SAILOR MAN

*The Troubled Life and Times
of J.P. Nunnally, USN*

DEL STAECKER

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SAILOR MAN
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*This book is for all the veterans wounded by war,
their families, and loved ones, and especially for
J.P., Harold, and Audrey.*

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FOREWORD

SAILOR MAN IS THE UNUSUAL AND TOUCHING STORY about a man who survived the horrors and dangers of war in the Pacific in World War II only to return home broken in spirit and an alcoholic before his twentieth birthday. The account itself is remarkable because it comes from the book's main character through a significant series of letters to his son.

After illegally enlisting in the U.S. Navy at age sixteen, the author of those letters, James P. Nunnally, found himself a crewman aboard an attack transport, a kind of mother-ship which carried troops and supplies to be off-loaded aboard landing craft in beach assaults. As a floating supply base and source of reinforcements just off the beaches under assault, an attack transport was a primary target for Japanese aircraft. The fight at sea in order to survive these attacks was about as hazardous for the crew as fighting on the beaches was for the troops which they delivered.

In these letters, we find a vivid account of crewmen burned to death, shattered by bomb fragments, and in other ways mangled. They further describe how young sailors worked feverishly to supply the beaches, recover the wounded on them, and to man the ship's antiaircraft batteries. The constant labor as well as fear often led to exhaustion and it is

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recalled that on one occasion the author of the letters was left to sleep peacefully through a three-hour Japanese air attack. Moreover, this kind of experience was repeated again and again as the U.S. fleet worked its way toward the Japanese homeland.

It's not surprising that many sailors turned to alcohol in their limited free time to help endure the unendurable. When allowed leave, sailor Nunnally and his fellow crew members made the local bar their first port of call and long before the war ended he was already in the advanced stages of alcoholism.

The young hero of this book remained an alcoholic to the day of his death as an elderly man, and was as much a victim of the war as any soldier or sailor who died as the result of enemy action. But before he went, he left an invaluable store of letters about one boy's experience of war.

There are many stories about the war in the Pacific; this one is about what happened to a boy's soul that put him on the road to perdition. We have Mr. Staecker to thank for presenting this thoughtful revelation about the cost of war.

—Larry H. Addington, Emeritus Professor of History,
The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina.

Author of *The Patterns of War Since the Eighteenth Century*, *The Blitzkrieg Era and the German General Staff: 1865-1941*, *America's War in Vietnam: A Short Narrative History*, and *Patterns of World War II*.

INTRODUCTION

UPON EXAMINING THE RECORDS CONCERNING World War Two's Pacific Theater, one finds no mention of James Preston Nunnally. Within those works individual seamen receive emphasis only under extraordinary and/or heroic circumstances, and, although he served ably as a crew member of the legendary attack transport U.S.S. *Fuller* (APA-7) from 1943 through the war's end and bravely participated in seven invasions, Nunnally did not distinguish himself through heroic acts notable enough to receive singular recognition. As far as the historical record is concerned Nunnally is merely one of the numerous veteran sailors who served as best they could and remained anonymous, both during and after the war.

However, the Pacific war was won by these ordinary men who enthusiastically answered the patriot call that swept the United States after December 7, 1941. And, what makes this otherwise ordinary man noteworthy is his ability late in life to simply and honestly portray his war-time experience in a series of remarkably honest letters written to the son he barely knew.

Within his personal accounts Nunnally candidly and vividly describes the dull grind of the routine at sea, the stark terror of combat, and, sadly, his reliance upon alcohol to ease

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his pain and to erase the memories of what he had seen and done during his transformation from a naive country boy to hardened veteran. And sadly, his letters reveal the price he paid to be a member of what has been called the greatest generation.

Nunnally, like so many young enlistees, knew very little about war. Beyond the posters and pamphlets produced to entice his service he had no idea what perils he would face in war nor what his service would cost him, the people he loved, and those who loved him. Under-aged, (he was only sixteen when he illegally enlisted) J.P., as he was known to his family and friends, was not yet twenty when he returned home at the conclusion of the war. An adolescent at its start and barely an adult at the end of his service, J.P. faced challenges beyond his abilities to interpret and cope, and ultimately to prevail, and, most sadly, to function in life upon returning home.

As a civilian, the good life of the post-war American boom evaded J.P. Nunnally. Overwhelmed by the negative elements of combat-related service in the Pacific Theater, J.P. was seriously damaged by the war and further broken by well-intentioned but ineffective treatment after returning to his family and home town.

Unsuccessful in his fight with the demons he brought home, J.P.'s life began to spiral downward in a few short years. Unable to hold onto a job, he became an embarrassment and, at times, a burden for his family. One could blame his troubles solely on alcoholism, but it is not that simple. War never is.

When Harold Nunnally, J.P.'s son, shared his father's letters with me I was fascinated by their clarity and honesty. J.P. had a gift for telling the truth and no matter how indelicate or embarrassing the acts in his recollections were he readily

revealed them. In his correspondence J.P. is frank and painfully honest in exposing his fears, which explain his dependence upon alcohol.

Importantly, J.P. provides insight into his failure to build a civilian life. And even more so, no matter how difficult it had been to live, J.P.'s life ended with bittersweet success when he wrote his illuminating letters to his son. J.P.'s letters are timeless in the lesson they share about the cost of war. It is a message that is particularly relevant today.

When Harold shared these letters with me I was intrigued. When he told me that as an adult he could barely remember spending even a dozen hours in the company of his father I was compelled to tell the poignant story of this particular *Sailor Man*.



James "J.P." Nunnally at about the time of his illegal enlistment in 1943.

CHAPTER ONE

A Lovable Southern Country Boy

“I LOVED HIM MORE THAN I LOVED MY MOTHER AND FATHER,” she said with a heartfelt sigh that bridges time. “But, of course, everyone loved J.P.”

I challenged her, asking with just enough skepticism to prompt her for more. “Come on. No one is loved that much.”

Audrey Alarcon-Rivera (nee Nunnally) responds to my challenge with a slight graceful drawl that hints back to her native Alabama. Even after the passage of decades the love in Audrey’s voice is intense and pure when she recalls what her brother was like before he went off to fight in World War Two. “He was such a nice, sweet person before he left us. J.P. was a gentle and loving boy. Every person in Talladega who knew J.P. loved him.”

“Everyone?” I express an even higher level of skepticism.

“Oh, yes,” she firmly answers.

I pause before continuing. The J.P. Nunnally I have come to know is nothing like what she described. Honest? Yes. Interesting? Very much so. But, lovable? I think not.

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I press to learn more about her brother. I say, “Tell me about him.”

She laughs and tells me, “We called him Speedy because he was as slow as molasses in the winter. J.P. sang and was very musically inclined. He played the guitar and later, also the piano, to accompany his singing. It added to his popularity.”

“What else do you remember about him before he went to war?” I asked. “Tell me why he was so loved.”

“He was a caring person,” Audrey explains. “J.P. was very caring, musical, and attractive—quite a combination. J.P. looked as good as he was kind. He was tall, six feet plus, with jet black hair and violet blue eyes. I idolized him.”

To broaden the subject I asked, “What about your family? Tell me something about them.”

“We were not originally from Talladega. Pell City, about twenty miles northwest, is where our family comes from. That was where J.P. was born in December 1926. He was the eldest of four boys and me. I’m the youngest and was born in 1936. When we were in Pell City we lived near the Cogswell crossroad. Back then, in the 1920s, ’30s and ’40s, the area was very rural. We were country folk.”

“If he was born in 1926 that means he was only sixteen when he joined the Navy,” I said. “The minimum legal age was seventeen, which means he enlisted illegally.”

“Yes, that is correct,” she said plainly. The family trait of being honest and direct is apparent.

I asked, “Do you have any idea how he skirted the rules?”

“No, I was very young. I had no idea about how he got around the age limit. I recall that my mother was against his enlisting, and I guess J.P. just lied about his age to get in.”

“What else do you remember?”

“I just knew that J.P. couldn’t wait and he quit school to go to war. He was a good student, but he got caught up in the enthusiasm to enlist and did not graduate high school. His childhood friend, Billy Black, joined the Navy with him very early in 1943. All he could do was talk about joining the Navy. It meant the world to him. J.P. was always looking at the Navy posters and reading the pamphlets that seemed to be with him all the time back then.”

“Did he know anyone who was already in the Navy?”

“He may have, but I don’t recall. What I do remember very clearly is that J.P. just wanted to be in the Navy more than anything in the world. I believe the decision was all his own.”

“What was it like when he came home?” I asked.

“He was so very different—no longer the most kind-hearted person you’d ever meet.”

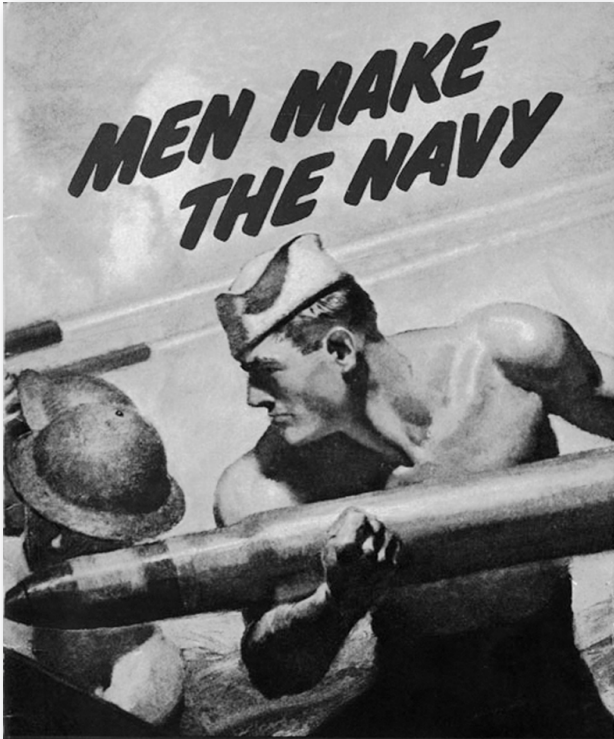
Her voice trails off. I wait. She continues, “J.P. couldn’t stand the noises at the mill where he worked. He had two nervous break downs. They put him in the VA hospital and gave him shock treatments.”

She goes silent again.

And again, I wait.

Finally, the sister who adored him so much describes the J.P. who came home. “After the war, my brother was never the same. He was just never the same.”

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**MEN MAKE
THE NAVY**

...THE NAVY MAKES MEN

- ▶ FIGHTING ACTION
- ▶ EXPERT TRAINING
- ▶ 49 SKILLED JOBS
- ▶ GOOD PAY
- ▶ QUICK PROMOTION
- ▶ GOOD FOOD & QUARTERS
- ▶ GOOD SHIPMATES
- ▶ FOR MEN 17 TO 50

The full front cover of the document which helped lure J.P. into illegally enlisting.

CHAPTER TWO

“This Is Your War!”

THE YEAR 1943 WAS A TIME BEFORE TELEVISION, cable, wi-fi, cellphones, and the Internet. During that era many of society’s concepts, ideas, and ideals were routinely communicated by word of mouth, the radio, movie house newsreels, and various print formats. Newspapers, magazines, and popular periodicals such as *Time*, *Look*, *Life*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* were familiar items in most homes. Air time on the radio was filled predominately by entertainment and the medium’s news content, as well as movie house newsreels, was better suited as a vehicle for the delivery of exciting and interesting facts rather than in-depth analysis. Consequently, in the early 1940s, many people’s opinions were heavily influenced by their reading materials.

For young men like J.P. and his friend Billy knowledge of naval service was attained primarily through materials which came from the Navy itself in the form of recruiting pamphlets. One such offering was the highly popular “Men Make The Navy... The Navy Makes Men,” which expertly combined the themes of patriotism, romance of the sea, and masculine camaraderie with economic opportunity and concrete benefits.

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From the first look it is easy to image the appeal this sort of publication had on impressionable American teenagers. It boldly declares that the war is theirs, making participation a personal challenge that must be decisively and immediately addressed.

From the poster:

THIS IS YOUR WAR

Never in all history has the call for defenders of freedom been so urgent as at this moment.

Brave men are needed—stout-hearted men—men who would rather fight to stay free than live to be slaves.

If that's the way you feel about it, your place right now is with the Navy—your Navy—in America's first line of attack—shoulder to shoulder with the red-blooded men of action who are determined to defeat the Axis, who are not only remembering Pearl Harbor—but are doing something about it.

It's your war—as well as theirs. And the Navy needs your help to win it. All the warships, all the fighting planes America can produce, count for nothing without the men to man them. Skilled men who know their jobs. Fighting men who want action. Patriots who love their country—and serve it as true Americans should.

TO EVERY MAN WHO WANTS TO SERVE HIS COUNTRY

You have an important decision to make.

Today, every true American is asking himself one question. It comes from the heart: "How can I help my country most?"

Many of your friends have already answered your country's call to service. More will be going. You, too, are ready, eager to do your part. But you want to serve, and rightly so, where America needs you most—where you can do the most for your country, and for yourself.

Clearly, the Navy was relying on patriotism as the prime motivator for enlistees. However, there were additional points to be made. Facing the reality of the draft was an important inducement for eligible men to consider. The notion that it is better to select a branch of service (i.e., the Navy) than to be assigned to the Army or Marines was married to the idea that time was running out.

Again, from the poster:

CHOOSE NOW WHILE YOU CAN.

Make your decision carefully. But make it while you still have time. Choose a service that will give you action, thrills, adventure, travel. A service where you'll live a rugged, healthy, outdoor life that will build you up physically. A service that will make you an expert at a skilled trade, fit you to do a better fighting job now, fit you to land a better peacetime job later on.

Take a step you will be proud of all your life—volunteer now for the United States Navy.

You must act quickly.

Many men who have delayed too long in volunteering for the Navy now regret it. Don't wait till it's too late. Choose your service while you are still free to do so. Remember, even though you have received your orders to report for induction under Selective Service, you may still volunteer for the Navy. You can do so right up to the actual moment of your induction.

This was an important argument. In 1943 the age for registering for compulsory service was eighteen with selection coming soon thereafter. Like all physically able young men J.P. could expect to be drafted within a short period following his eighteenth birthday, or graduation from high school. Choice and urgency were certainly points that resonated with J.P.; so much so, in fact, that he enlisted illegally at the age of sixteen.

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Also, his ego must have been in the mix. The Navy made no bones about its view that it was the preferred branch of the military and it boldly stated so:

There are no finer men in all the world than those who serve in the United States Navy.

As our Navy is great—so are its men. Red-blooded Americans who have got what it takes to fight for their country. Men who are physically fit, mentally alert. Men of action, men of responsibility. Men who live up to the glorious tradition of courage and heroism that has made the U. S. Navy the finest in the world.

Layered heavily on top of the call for patriot duty the Navy skillfully presented its economic benefits. All the offerings of Navy life—bed, board, pay, and health care benefits—were explained in detail. Pragmatic options for learning a trade and obtaining an education were listed, with the ultimate bait of attending the Naval Academy being mentioned without any specifics on the possibility. Finally, the allure of travel was included for added spice.

The pamphlet was an impressive marketing tool, and if J.P. had any doubt in the merit of his decision, it most probably melted before the Navy's powerful presentation of the ultimate appeal to a young man's ego: "You, Too Can Write Your Name In Your Country's History."

Considering the circumstances of the times, the potency of the argument, and its powerful presentation, how could a patriotic citizen not enthusiastically respond to the call to defend his country?

Early in 1943, James Preston Nunnally, a sixteen-year-old boy, illegally enlisted in the U.S. Navy with the dream of becoming the type of Sailor Man depicted on the pamphlet.

In his own words, here is J.P.'s story....

CHAPTER THREE

The War According to J.P.

Harold,

*I will try through a series of letters to give you a little
run down on WWII...*

WITH THESE WORDS J.P. NUNNALLY BEGAN a lengthy correspondence with Harold, his estranged son. His remarkably candid account came in response to Harold simply asking his alienated father, “What happened?”

Then in his forties, Harold wanted to know more about the absentee father that had allowed him to be raised by relatives. Harold explained that he asked the question of his father because, “I had a great deal of anger and hostility toward the situation and him. Over time I mellowed out, but I just wanted to know why he was the way he was.” According to his son, J.P. was the man “who was seldom there” and “was incapable of functioning in this world.”

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As with other seemingly uncomplicated questions, Harold's query is a request that can only be satisfied through a lengthy and complex explanation, and J.P. proved to be up to the task. His response was to provide an in-depth answer through the production of hundreds of pages of correspondence.

Also contained within the initial query are other questions, such as: "What did you feel?" "What did you see?" "Were you scared?" and, "How and when did alcohol become the curse and not the cure?"

Without hesitation, in a direct and open manner, J.P. attempted to answer all for Harold. In plain language he recounts his service in the Pacific Theater of World War Two and through his straightforward approach sheds light and insight on a life that was forever transformed by the trauma of war. Following a self-deprecating appraisal of his ability as a narrator J.P. does not hold back in describing the horrible aspects of his wartime experience.

I can't do much to convey to you such things as the stench of death, the oily, greasy, dirty tore up shell-mutilated bodies and dead men. I can't convey to you the fear on both my and other's facial features until their expressions are nothing but frozen fear and dread and our faces look like they came out of a damned deep freeze.

J.P. maintains his blunt approach and proceeds to describe the enormity of facing death while continuing to perform your duty, a daunting task for anyone, certainly more so for one so young.

How can I explain to you how it feels to resign your soul to God and eternity and your body to a gallon of embalming fluid, or the goddamn rat that keeps gnawing at your intestines. and yet there is a sanity in this goddamn insane operation. You, a man, a sailor, or soldier, you have work to do and come hell, high water, death, destruction, life or death, you keep on doing, shooting, shitting, or working, hollering, groaning, praying, cussing. You keep on doing your job like a goddamn man is supposed to do and after you wonder how in hell you and others were able to do so.

Surprisingly, relief came to J.P. in the form of the routine, and at times the drudgery, of his wartime service. It was a topic not covered in the recruiting pamphlets that absorbed young J.P.'s attention. In his looking back, J.P. had no illusions about the romance and adventure of military service.

Most of the time it's only work, work, work—making preparations, doing without rest and sleep—planning—training—dull boring work . Most of war is work, planning, education. It is mostly a dull goddamn absolute nothing. Most of the time you spend wishing you were far far away somewhere else.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Doing One's Duty

ALTHOUGH J.P.'S LETTERS CONTAIN CLEAR and specific remembrances of his commendable and colorful wartime experiences, they are at times surprisingly short on some vital details. For example, the date of his enlistment, boot camp, specialty training, and his initial assignment in Hawaii are barely described, if mentioned at all. Even his illegal under-aged enlistment goes unmentioned.

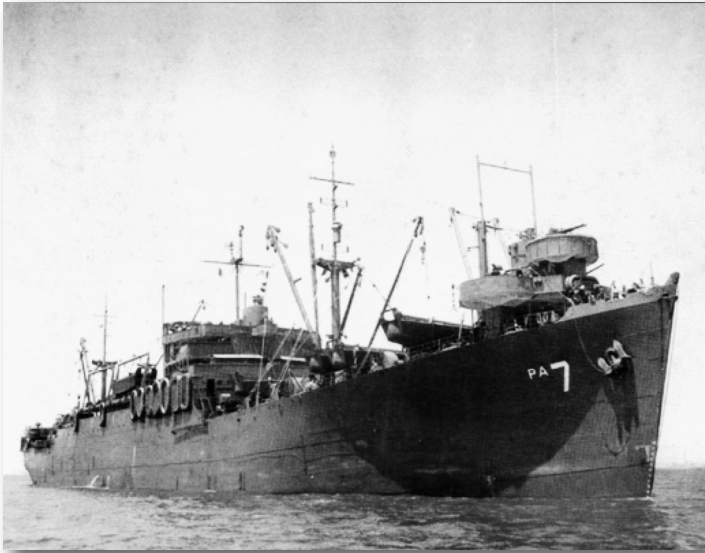
However, the absence of those items is not crucial to telling his story. For J.P., "the war" only meant the time he served aboard the USS *Fuller*. As a reader of recruiting pamphlets, J.P. got what he wished for and the exuberant and patriotic teenager landed duty aboard a ship that earned fame as the "Queen of Attack Transports."

He writes:

Harold,

Perhaps before we go farther we should take time to learn something about our operations and everyday

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The USS *Fuller*, legendary *Queen of Attack Transports*, earned nine battle stars in the Pacific Theater after performing admirably in the North Atlantic and Caribbean.

life aboard the USS Fuller, APA-7, (code name in radio transmissions as Del Rio-7). First of all, we were not a warship (in the classic sense, like a battleship or destroyer) and we could operate better if we ran into no trouble instead of attacking elements of the Jap war machine. The ship was crewed by 590 men and officers. We could carry anywhere from 1,600 to 2,000 passengers, Marines, Army, CB's, and so forth.

We were about 550 feet long and 60 feet at the beam. We were armed with four 3 inch pieces of navy

artillery. At one time we had a 5 inch gun which is as big as the main batteries of a Fletcher Class destroyer. Every time the gun was fired it put the laundry underneath the gun out of commission. Finally, it was removed and a twin 40mm was installed in its place.

When I was aboard the ship, we were armed with four 3" guns on two main batteries, both forward and aft, near the stern of the ship. We also had nine 20mm AA (anti-aircraft) and two twin 40mm AA added to this when we had ten 50 cal MGs (machine guns) and 38 light 30 cal MGs, a pretty good AA gun.

We spent many days and nights going from island to island, picking up troops, supplies and transporting them around from place to place in the Pacific, south, central, and southwest and sometimes in Asian waters of the Pacific.

We greased machinery, painted, and worked on boats. Also, there was gun practice and general quarters (battle stations) just before daylight in the mornings and just before dark in the evenings.

We carried troops and supplies and took them into beaches on D-day where the Jap was generally ready with their field artillery to try to blow us out of the water when we carried the troops in boats and assorted landing craft. We had quite a few air raids which done some damage to the larger ships. Generally speaking, except for rare occasions, the Jap aircraft didn't waste their time attacking landing craft.

Most of our time was spent far out to sea. There are vast stretches of ocean far away from military

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installations, shipping routes that can hide a dozen navies in them, out of range of aircraft and hidden by the vastness of the open sea. There, we were about as safe from Jap attack as we could be.

J.P. constantly played down the value of his service by saying he was not aboard a “warship.” That was not how Admiral William F. “Bull” Halsey, Commander of the South Pacific, saw it. In a letter to his command Halsey gives credit to his “non-combatant” sailors, he wrote: “Your resourcefulness, tireless ingenuity, cooperation and indomitable fighting spirit form a battle pattern that will everywhere be an inspiration, and a great measure of the credit for the sky blazing, sea sweeping, jungle smashing of the combat forces goes to the construction gangs and service organizations that bulldozed bases out of the jungle and brought up the beans and bullets and supplies.”

Such exemplary service was commonplace aboard J.P.’s home, the USS *Fuller*. Its reputation was excellent and widely known. The *Fuller* was the perfect place for J.P. to become the Sailor Man depicted in the recruiting literature.

CHAPTER FIVE

“His” Ship

IN A REVEALING AND ILLUMINATING ARTICLE ABOUT THE USS *Fuller*, Marine Corps Combat Correspondent Staff Sergeant Maurice E. Moran filed this report on the ship that would be J.P.’s home for more than two and a half years. Moran’s in-theater report appeared in several wartime publications:

(Dateline unknown, aboard a U.S. Navy Transport in the South Pacific)

Combat planes dip their wings in salute as they pass this ship because they recognize her as a queen with a glorious pedigree. She’s ploughed through these waters so long that pilots regard her as a “landmark.” Although old as ships go, she has played a dramatic part in America’s war on the oceanic fronts.

Commissioned in 1919 as a cargo-passenger vessel, this transport was re-commissioned as a U.S. navy vessel in 1941. Since then she has rolled up an unbelievable record of “firsts in war.”

She was in the convoy which transported U.S. Marines to Iceland, the first American troops to land on foreign soil in this global war. When the Japs’ sneak punch forced America into the conflict, she helped transport the First American Expeditionary Force to the British Isles. On her return trip she served as a mercy

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ship, bringing hundreds of bomb-beleaguered British men, women, and children to haven in the United States.

Then she sailed into the Pacific.

Out here she became one of the first transports to land U.S. Marines at Guadalcanal. Her tough hide endured a rain of Jap bombs. On her bridge deck are emblazoned four tiny Jap flags, symbols of torpedo bombers who tried to get to her and fell before the marksmanship of her crew.

Since the first thrust at the Solomons, the *Queen* has been engaged in a perilous shuttle game, transporting troops and supplies to the area's hot spots and bringing out the wounded, sick and prisoners. She has had several close squeaks.

Several times she brought supplies to the Solomon forces on a hit-and-run basis, unloading until the bombs got too hot and then running out of the harbor until the raiders disappeared. Once when the Marines' supplies were virtually non-existent, the Old Lady saved the day by rushing in an overload of dry stores. Every inch of available space was used for food, including holds normally used for troops.

A ship bearing such distinction could be manned only by a gallant crew. Its first skipper, Captain Paul S. Theiss, USN, of Indiana, Pennsylvania, won the Navy Cross for his handling of the vessel in the Solomons. According to William E.V. Stewart, Boatswain's Mate First Class, USN, of Seattle, with the ship in all her adventures, Captain Theiss is "the fightingest man I ever saw—and our new old man is just like him."

Although J.P.'s ship was officially named USS *Fuller*, during the years of World War II, she was also known by additional names and designations: AP-14, APA-7, the *Queen*, and the *Old Girl* are just a few. To the battle-hardened marines and soldiers of the South Pacific she was *That Glorious Lady* and *The Only Ship in the Navy*. To her original commissioning crew of

Chicago reservists activated early in 1941 she naturally was known as *The Gangster*. Its assumption of the role as the epitome of World War Two's attack transports is a tale of both predestination and circumstance.

Examining the records of its origins reveal that the *Fuller* may have always been meant to be the *Queen of Attack Transports*. Originally laid out in 1916 at Bethlehem Steel's Alameda shipyard as the SS *War Wave* to fill a purchase request by the British Admiralty as a troop transport, it was renamed the SS *Archer* following the April 1917 entrance of the United States into World War One. And, as the *Archer*, it briefly did transport troops.

After the war the *Archer* was acquired by the Baltimore Mail Steamship Company for renovation and conversion to civilian duty, and following renovations, including lengthening of its hull and repowering, the *Archer* reappeared in 1931 as the *City of Newport News*.

Between wars, the future-fabled ship waited to fulfill its destiny. In November 1940 the *City of Newport News* was re-acquired by the U.S. Navy and renamed USS *Fuller*. As a prototype for the new class of ships known as attack transports, the *Fuller's* performance in the Atlantic and Caribbean was impressive. However, it was merely a precursor for the lead role it would take in delivering troops to the very front of battle—on the beaches of the South Pacific—where it earned a record nine battle stars. Indeed, the attack transport known in street slang as *The Gangster* was meant to be a warship.

By the time J.P. joined its crew in 1943, the *Fuller* was well on its way to becoming a legend. Due to its standout performance in the Solomons, the *Fuller's* original Captain had moved up. Yet, Paul Theiss's Navy Cross was only one part of an impressive

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three-way career boosting honor for *The Gangster's* skipper; he also received promotion to the special war-time one-star rank of Commodore and assignment as Chief of Staff for the amphibious forces under the command of Rear Admiral Richmond K. (Kelly) Turner. As the past commanding officer of the *Fuller*, newly promoted Commodore Theiss knew firsthand what the fabled ship was capable of accomplishing and his good fortune meant that the *Fuller* was guaranteed to continue being in the forefront of the Navy's combat efforts in the Southern Pacific Theater.

Duty in the North Atlantic, two battle stars for service at Guadalcanal, and standout performance in the Solomons were just the beginning of the *Fuller's* rise to prominence and recognition as the *Queen of Attack Transports*. Seven additional battle stars were in its future, and J.P. would be there to earn all of them.