Editors Note: Several months ago I received Mr. Ackerman’s diary transcribed on several audio tapes. With these in hand I decided that this is something that belongs in history and not lost in history.

It is over a half century ago that we entered World War II. This was a war fought on many fronts and was probably the last noble war that will ever be fought on such an epic scale. Millions of men entered all branches of the service and served in every theater of war the Americans participated in. This is the diary of a Seaman assigned to the USS WAKEFIELD, the largest ship ever to be manned by a U.S. Coast Guard crew. It was employed as a troop transport. This was an excellent usage of the ship as it had been a passenger liner before the war began.

Bruno Ackerman kept a diary. The diary recorded day to day events that he observed and lived. It really has no beginning and it has no end. Just a daily log of events and this is the way it will be presented on this website.

When the tapes were received I had no idea how they would ever be converted from the audio media to a word processing program that could be converted into a format suitable to be posted on the internet for all to read and enjoy. My dear friend Seamond Ponsart Roberts, our famous Lighthouse Keeper’s daughter and former Coastie in her own right came to the rescue and used her legal recording skills to interpret the tapes. For this she has my ever living thanks.
Seamond made an observation that I will share with you dear readers.

“.. I tell you what, doing this has been an experience - a good one. This all happened when I was a little girl and yet typing this brought back memories of hearing of soldiers who were stationed on the island talking about stuff and my parents and all their friends sharing their war experiences or letters from their sons. When I got to school, it was strange. We had old history books that stopped short of World War I. So what happened at the end of the year when we should have been well into World War II, we just didn’t study it. When some kid asked the teacher, “how come?” the teacher just shrugged it off and told the kid to ask his parents. I really think it was something so painful right then, a wound so still open, that no one wanted to talk about it. Hence, we were never taught the history of World War II. Kind of incredible when you think about it. So, I enjoyed doing this and learning a whole lot of stuff - first hand......”

The diary is presented just as Seamond was able to transcribe it. There are blanks, areas where the narrator could not be understood. The diary started in 1942 and she tried to continue the year dates as well as she could though some inaccuracies can be expected.

This Diary Covers the period between April 8 and October 8, 1942
Aboard the USS WAKEFIELD, a Coast Guard manned Troop Transport in the early days of World War II.

DIARY OF BRUNO ACKERMAN
TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

April 8, 1942: I sailed from Brooklyn, New York in afternoon. Sea very rough. Foul weather. Sleet and rain. Men getting seasick. Convoy consists of nine destroyers, the Texas, the Brooklyn, fourteen American transports, five Dutch ships and one of them is missing.

April 10, 1942: Sea still rough. Men still getting sick. Raining and cold. I'm the talker on the flying bridge. I have the 3-inch and the 5-inch guns and the crow's nest on my phone. 4-8 watch every day.

April 11, 1942: 8 o'clock a.m. Sighted Norfolk section of convoy, sighted off Virginia. Getting very hot. Soldiers are crowded and grouped. Men are starting to sleep on deck nights. The Texas is the flagship. We are the flagship of the transports.

April 12, 1942: Off the Carolinas. Getting hotter. Destroyer got two subs diving during the night. Made two emergency turns.

April 14, 1942: 8 o’clock a.m. Near Cuba. Bombers coming out to meet and escort us from Cuba. It is still hot in the afternoon. We sighed land. Dominican Republic on the starboard and Puerto Rico on our port.

April 15, 1942: Saw from 7 to 10 falling stars. In the morning, the Barnett broke down. We slowed down to 8 knots. She finally caught up to us. We are now doing 14 knots. In the Caribbean now. Next stop: Panama. Rumor is we’re going to an island one-half way between Panama and Australia. Headed west most of day. Farther due south. Cloudy and stormy looking weather. In for a tropical storm. Read one message!! “All woolen overcoats and clothes will be returned X. Instructions for debarkation will be issued later.”

April 17, 1942: Getting hotter. Still haven’t got to Panama. Should have been there long ago. Had two general alarms – nothing happened. I was taking a shower at the time. Everybody ran to their battle stations. Saw a bird this morning. I hope we see some land soon. In the morning, we are all ready for an attack. Had the guns all ready. Nothing happened. We are at the Gulf Stream.

April 18, 1942: Starting to come into land. Saw birds, buoy lights, steamers and freighters. About 9 o’clock we saw high mountains. That was South American. We are coming into port and are docking on the next pier to the Texas. It’s beautiful down here. Well, we have finally reached Panama. I don’t know the name of the town yet. The town is Cristobel. We are just stopping for fuel and supplies, no liberty, very hot. Supposed to leave this morning, but there was an explosion in the engine room. One man was seriously injured.

April 19, 1942: The explosion was more important that I thought. Three men were injured. The ship is disabled. The convoy left without us. The convoy commodore transferred to another ship. The soldiers were ordered to pack all their stuff. Looks like they are leaving us. We have to have repairs before we can go anywhere. We might even go after the convoy. We have movies tonight. We are anchored in the bay now. I hope we get back soon.

April 20, 1942: We are going through the canal. We went through the first locks – three locks. We started about 7 in the morning. After the locks, we went through lakes and rivers. On the way, we passed a submarine going the opposite way. S-40 is the submarine. At 2:45, we came to the last locks. At the locks, we passed the Balboa barrage, saw a lot of crocodiles. The Army
is leaving us today. We passed the Pedro Tongulu Lock. We are passing through the Pacific Locks. Balboa barrages around both locks. Balboa only 4-5 miles. We came through the locks. We are docked right outside of the locks. Balboa is not far from here. We passed an English ship with English troops. They are anchored near us. The American troops razzed the hell out of them. The ship is the Orchades. I think it is an Irish ship. The medical corps and the infantry are going ashore. The artillery is staying. I think we are going on to the Pacific.

April 21, 1942: Saw a submarine pulled in during my watch last night. There are three more tied up in front of us. I get liberty tomorrow. This is Tomona Bay, and Panama. City is near here. All the soldiers left for Ft. Sherman.

April 22, 1942: Went to Panama City. Very nice scenery. I never saw so many sailors and horses. It’s colorful. It reminds me of a small town. The streets are so narrow. I had a very good time. They drive on the wrong side of the street.

April 23, 1942: The port side went on liberty last night. They were worse than us! They came in late. There were a lot of fights. A lot of sailors brought rum with them. The O.D. had to break up all of them. They started a fight. They started drawing guns. The O.D. went down with this gun ______ and it. They put them on report. No more liberty. I bought a few souvenirs. Four of the boys were thrown in the clink. The officer of the Estes paid their fines. The starboard was worse than the port. Soldiers are moving on ships now. They started this morning. It won’t be long before we shove off. We might shove off tomorrow morning.
April 25, 1942: Left at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. We are now in condition #2 – enemy attack likely. I have the 8-12 watch. The country is beautiful. A lot about hills and bush country. It is very pretty. Escorted by powerful torpedo boats and planes. Five miles out we met our escort. One old four-stacker destroyer. On the way, we picked up a Dutch transport that is going with us, heading west 100 degrees.

April 26, 1942: Radio picked up messages that convoy that left without us was attacked. The enemy sunk two ships.

April 27, 1942: Hit a storm last night. Raining on and off. Saw an airplane this morning. We were ready to blast the hell out of him. We will be near the Equator soon. As soon as we get there, we get initiated as Shellbacks. Shellbacks are those that have crossed the Equator and those that never have are called Pollywogs. When we cross, we get certificates.

April 28, 1942: Saw a light last night, but nothing happened. Destroyer leaving us today and heading back, taking mail with it. The ocean is smooth, not like the flying fish weather at the Gulf Stream or in the Atlantic.

April 29, 1942: The weather has been cool and chilly during the nights. We are on the Equator now and it's still cool. We got to the Equator this morning at 8 o'clock. The Shellbacks have fixed us a tank with a platform where the King will sit on his throne. They fixed up from a mop and a crown. Everything is ready. Mr. Anderson, Chief Warrant, is going to be Neptune. The water is smooth today and a little bluer, something like the Gulf Stream. It hasn't been rough. We had full moons the last two nights. It's almost as bright as day. The destroyer is going to pick up mail this noon. Passed the Galapagos Islands the morning on our
starboard side. The Spanish used to call them the Enchanted Islands because of the currents long ago. Sighted a plane this morning. Had our guns on it, but it turned out to be friendly. Crow’s nest aft caught sleeping last night. The bridge called him this morning. He’s to get a Captain’s mast court.

April 30, 1942: The destroyers left us at noon yesterday. It was a beautiful day - a blue sky and a blue sea. There isn’t much of white caps, only valleys of ocean that when the ships steer into them, it moves back and forth. The ship is just as rough in the Pacific as it was in the Atlantic, but the sea is calm and smooth. It looks like glass on a clear sunny day. We are all alone now. Just a transport and a Dutch freighter. We have a 5-inch gun and four antiaircraft, the 3-inch guns and eight .50 calibers. The Army set up about 6 mm .50 calibers. The Y boats hold two .30 caliber Lewis machine guns. In general quarters, I am in one of the boats in the starboard - that makes a .30 caliber machine gun. Altogether, port and starboard sides, that’s all the arms we have. Another full moon last night. Saw the sun and the moon at the same time this morning. It was half-day and half-night. Our navigator is ill. The map in the wardroom says we are going to the _____ Group of the Tonga islands. It is right by the International Date Line. The Army uses the code name, Leecher for the island, about 5,000 miles to go. I saw the Southern Cross last night. It’s four stars shaped like a diamond. Saw a school of flying fishes this morning. Today is the Dutch Queen’s Birthday. The Dutch ship raised three flags in her honor. We raised our flags fore and hoisted the Dutch flag aft in respect. We have reached the Equator, 102 degrees latitude west. The initiation has started already. The look-outs with reversed pea coats, woolen caps, bathing trunks and galoshes. Two glasses taped together like binoculars are given to them to look out for Davy Jones.
May 1, 1942: I’m a mess cook now. What a celebration we had. Had a swell time, band playing, whistles blowing. The Dutch came in close to see part of the celebration. They initiated most of the Navy and Army officers. They cut off some of their hair and then they dunked them and then they smeared them with grease and then they paddled them. The nurses got the same thing, too. They threw water bags down the bridge. The celebration took place on the foc’s’l on the starboard side. A grand time was had by all. I’m a Shellback now.

May 2, 1942: I’m still a mess cook and nothing happened. We averaged about 360 miles a day. We will get there sooner or later.

May 3, 1942: Nothing happened yet. We are getting deeper into enemy territory. We had a full moon last night and every night since we left Panama.

May 4, 1942: Yesterday was my birthday. Today, I am a man. Nothing happens. We had gun practice this morning at general quarters. They make a lot of noise.

May 5, 1942: We must be near land. I saw a bird this morning. We will be near the Polynesian Islands soon. I figure about 2200 miles to go yet.

May 6, 1942: It was a beautiful sunrise this morning, but a little later it started to rain. We are still going – stormy – should sight land in a couple of days.

May 7, 1942: Just had 3-inch gun practice at general quarters this morning. A new destroyer met us this morning. It will
probably escort the rest of the way. The destroyer’s probably from Tahiti.

May 8, 1942: Planes were reported coming from the south. They never appeared.

May 9, 1942: Weather is calm. The water is clear. You can see all of the ships. We are going about 5 knots watching for the destroyer and relieve the one with __________.

May 10, 1942: A new destroyer came to relieve the old one. She pulled up astern of us to pick up a steel capsule. The Dutch freighter left us a little later. She headed north, probably for Tahiti. We are about 400-500 miles north of Tahiti. A little later, a seaplane was sighed dropping a yellow flare and then a green flare.

May 11, 1942: No entry.

May 12, 1942: No entry.

May 13, 1942: (Wednesday) Near the International Date Line. Should cross it today or tomorrow.

May 15, 1942: (Friday) Skipped a day as we passed the International Date Line. We have been losing about a half-hour a day. They have been setting back the clocks since we left Panama. We will probably arrive at our destination today. All the boats are ready to be lowered to unload.

May 16, 1942: Sighted land at general quarters this morning. Tonga ______ at last. We passed our high mountain island. Right next to it was a very low one. At Tonga ______, three
transports or destroyers. Sighted destroyers ______ class today.

Can't read this.

Followed the transports and destroyers after circling the islands for a couple of hours into the harbor. We had to go around the mines and reefs which are many. We laid anchor a couple of miles from shore. Anchored around us is the U.S.S. Saratoga, three heavy cruisers, nine destroyers, one Navy supply ship, one hospital ship and four transports and freighters. Most of them are the ones we started from New York with. There are about 15-20 small islands around us. We lowered the tank and Jeep lighters already and have secured life jackets. The planes have been circling all day. One was sending a blinker message while circling.

May 19, 1942: At noon, two destroyers pulled out. 3 p.m. a couple and the aircraft carrier pulled out. Went on the island today. The people are very friendly there. No fights or quarrels. They have a golf course and their air base. The island is of coral, flat and no hills. Vama Road and Tilahati Road are a few of the roads. There are some English soldiers and sailors. The Tongans have a weight of about 600 pounds. I saw the Queen’s Palace. Some of the men from the ______ are stationed there permanently and they have their own stamps and money bills. A few Englishmen have stores there. It has about 7,000 people. Supply ships being pulled along side to give us some food.

May 20, 1942: The days are hot and the nights chilly. It’s the winter season down here now. There are a lot of oranges, lemons, bananas and cocoanuts. You can find them in the streets. The
oranges are as big as grapefruits. ______ party and some sheet wrapped around their lips.

Can’t read this.

Cigarettes are just as valued here as money. There is hardly any town here. The natives know a lot of beads, rings, baskets, grass skirts and other things you ________.

Can’t read this.

Went swimming out at Takaha-Tabu island today. The water was swell. Some part of the water is so shallow that you can walk from one island to another, the distance of about one mile or more. The best transportation the natives have is horses and donkeys. There are also a lot of pigs and beautiful flowers and plants. We rode on one of those native canoes which they make out of trees.

May 21, 1942: We are moving our _______ this morning. The Navy tanker is alongside now, giving us fuel. We promise to bring some rings alongside this morning with his canoe.

May 22, 1942: Left Tonga __________ yesterday at 4 o’clock. Heading south and southwest probably to New Zealand. Should be there in 2-3 days. The days are getting colder. Had to wear our jackets at general quarters this morning. It is about like it’s the winter down here in New Zealand. They say it’s cold there now and there is no escort and it looks like we are making good headway.

May 23, 1942: The weather is getting colder. It’s like winter now. Last couple of days have been the roughest of the trip so
far. Said this ship is empty. It’s lighter. The seas toss it around more. It’s also a little too __________.

May 24, 1942: The uniform of the day is undress blues. From New York to Panama to Tonga, it was undress whites. Down here, it’s blues. A light was sighted last night. It must have been a ship. Saw snow flakes this morning. There’s a strong gale that started yesterday at 3 and it’s still on. The waves are so rough and big, they come right up over the bow and reach up to D-deck. The water was splashing right through the closed ports. It’s really cold today. Sometimes in the storm, the ship would shake like it was in an earthquake. I slept with a strap over me. The storm is still on; only worse, the ship is leaking and creaking. Sighted land this morning, but we still have to go a-ways.

May 26, 1942: Storm still coming on stronger than ever. I’m writing at 7 a.m. - 40 hours so far. All the compartments are flooded. The ship is leaking. All the bunks are wet. It’s freezing out. Waves are 25-35 feet high. No one is allowed in the forecastle. Had a dream last night about sometimes the ship shapes as if would fall apart.

May 27, 1942: Getting rougher. Roll of the ship is knocking everything over. The radio set fell over twice last night. All the trays slid off the table in the mess hall. The _____ plenty off. She is still leaking. We’ve been trying to turn all day. We can’t because it is so rough and we will capsize. We are going to circle, trying to get in the port. We need a pilot to pilot us in. We’ve got to steer clear of the mines.

May 28, 1942: It’s very calm. There’s hardly any wind and the sea is calmer. We will probably head into port today. If it was not for the storm, we would have been there a couple of days ago.
It started about 84 hours. Reached Wellington at noon. The country is mountainous. Nothing but hills from the waterline up. The natives have homes built on the hills. The _____ and another freighter that came with us from Brooklyn. There is also a dry dock and some English freighter in the harbor. It’s a big and beautiful harbor in here, anchored as of now, but we will probably dock tomorrow. The water is very bright green and choppy. The weather is squally, just like when we left Brooklyn.

May 29, 1942: Left Wellington to get some water distilled. The water in the harbor is too oily, so we have to go out a-ways. The liberty is from 4:30 to 7:30.

May 30, 1942: The people of New Zealand are very friendly. They’d rather be part of the U.S. than to remain under English rule. They are crazy about American music, movies and everything else. The pubs close at 6, but there is a lot of speakeasies.

May 31, 1942: The country is only 100 years old. They want to be like the U.S. - free from England. Wellington is the capital. There are other cities just as big as Wellington is. Among the hills in the harbor, they are not allowed to have tall buildings on account of the earthquakes. They are crazy about American cigarettes. They are all jitterbugs. They do a lot of dancing in the morning, afternoon and evenings. They are not allowed to dance on Sundays, so they start in a Sunday midnight and wind up 6 a.m. the next morning. The West Point pulled in this morning. This was the S.S. American carrying 6,000 troops. The people like America because it is more modern than England. England is too old-fashioned.
June 1, 1942: Saw the West Point. She is almost as big as the Normandy and almost as fast. She does 28 or 30 knots. It took her 11 days from 'Frisco. She also has a crew of 600 and 600 nurses. Today is the King's Birthday. I start as a radio striker today. The natives down here are called Maoris.

June 2, 1942: The West Point pulled out yesterday. Firut, Jones, Garcia, Gowan, Dick were promoted to lieutenant commander by the President, orders and oath to follow. It took effect May 26th.

June 3, 1942: At general quarters at 3 this morning. A submarine entered the harbor. The boats were lowered and ready to chase it. This morning at dawn, we had general quarters again. The sub proved to be a friendly one. A Red Cross ship pulled in after this morning, the Orange. All of the boats are doing patrol duty.

June 4, 1942: There are putting ash cans on the boats for regular patrol. The Fuller, the Legion Neville, the ________, the Orange, and the American ships in the harbor. Dutch Harbor was attacked twice today.

June 5, 1942: The Women's Auxillary is giving a dance for all men in uniform. The supply ship, Bellatrix, pulled in yesterday. The Orange is a Dutch ship.

June 6, 1942: Received a radiogram: “Being attacked 150 miles north of Midway. Task force 7.”

June 7, 1942: Big battle going on at Midway Islands. The Japs have lost two battleships and two carriers, two cruisers and two transports at least from the press news. Today was visiting day.
aboard. All the officers brought women and three officers aboard and showed them around. Nothing much doing. The Japs were pretty well beaten at Midway.

June 9, 1942: The Orange pulled out yesterday. A freighter of about 15,000 tons pulled in carrying about 600 Marines and manned by the Merchant Marine.

June 10, 1942: Not much news. Battle still going on at Midway and Dutch Harbor. Submarines shelled Sydney. I think we will move this afternoon at 4. We are moved. We are moored to the locks while next in the dry dock.

June 11, 1942: The ship is giving a dance at the Majestic Theatre for the ship personnel.

June 12, 1942: The exec has issued orders for no one to carry knives or sharp weapons ashore.

June 13, 1942: The West Point pulled in this morning. She is going back to the States. She will carry mail back. The Wakefield is due in from the States with mail.

June 13, 1942: Yesterday was Flag Day and Allied Nations Day. All American sailors were in the parade yesterday - about 70 men from each ship. When our company passed, we got a good hand from the crowd. There were Scotch Highlanders and two New Zealand Home Guards, infantry, New Zealand Air Force, British
soldiers and air force and some American Army men. Planes flew overhead. We lost the aircraft carrier, Lexington at sea, but Japan lost about five or more in all the battles.

June 15, 1942: New freighter went into dry dock. There are quite a few go in there. Wakefield hasn't come in yet.

June 16, 1942: The ship is giving a dance tonight at the Majestic Theatre for the starboard watch. The Japs have landed some troops in the tip of the Atlantic.

June 17, 1942: Everybody had a good time at the dance last night. Two of the West Point’s crew were left behind. They overstayed their leave by a couple of hours and when they came back, she was gone.

June 18, 1942: The Wakefield is going back to the states soon. All the nurses were in town last night. They might come aboard our ship and live here until their barracks are finished. A bulletin came over for the anti submarines to keep clear of Summer Island. Any craft appearing within 200 yards will be fired upon - nationality no matter.

June 19, 1942: Payday. Today, the pay raise went through. Our crew has to unload the Wakefield every day. The Marines will be moving about 22 miles from here. The M.P.’s will probably move on this ship.

June 20, 1942: The pay raise went through, but we still have to get paid. Officers still have orders. The fighting is still going on in the Aleutians. The Japs have a foothold. A submarine was sighted in the entrance to the harbor this morning. Sent a couple of boats after it.
June 21, 1942: Liberty was cancelled yesterday. It still is cancelled today. We don’t know when we will get it now. It’s all on account of that submarine. The officers are giving a dance today in the B Deck lounge. It’s all fixed up with flags and they waxed the floor. It’s real pretty.

June 22, 1942: We had liberty at 3 o’clock again yesterday. The Wakefield was supposed to leave Saturday morning, but when they sighted the sub, they anchored in the harbor and sent a boat - two ash cans over the side. Later, the boat had to be towed in minus the ash cans. Then, the Wakefield docked and left yesterday morning. She can do about 30 knots. She is the old Manhattan.

June 23, 1942: The dispatch came over the loudspeaker. Shellaware Bays are mined and that no vessel to enter without proper authority.

June 24, 1942: We are going to get the flag for the transport ships next week. The Electra is out in the bay now. I guess she will pull out soon. One sailor went over the hill from the Delbrazzi. He left from there the 17th and he came back the 21st. He said he just missed it by an hour.

June 25, 1942: The Melville is giving a dance tonight at the Majestic. It’s the last of the ships’ dances. The pay raise became official today.

June 26, 1942: Had a minor earthquake last night at 11:30. The ship started to sway and rock. The dock was moving. The two spanions holding the boating dock to the pier crashed into the
water. I don’t know how much damage there was in town, but the boys there said they felt it.

June 27, 1942: Had dive bombing practice today. The plane flew over the dock and kept dive bombing the gun crew. The gun crew were tracking the plane as it dove.

June 28, 1942: Our daily muster the morning at the dock. The captain is going to inspect us.

June 29, 1942: No entry.

June 30, 1942: We got the flag from the McCauley today. We got no signature and radioman and the whole staff.

July 1, 1942: The Legion and the Neville are docked on at _____ Quay, astern of the Fuller. They docked this morning.

July 2, 1942: We just got 40 new men yesterday. They are with the flag. They are the harbor patrol. They have a couple of picket boats stationed with us. We also have Marines onboard now.

July 3, 1942: They are building barracks right here in _____ Wharf. Practically the whole wharf is laid down with concrete. It is already for construction. The U.S. transports brought all the national lumber and concrete and tanks, guns, Jeeps, etcetera.

July 4, 1942: Today’s a holiday. It is peaceful and quiet. No one is working. There is early liberty and the town is celebrating it. All the ships but us are loading up with Marines and guns. Looks like they are going someplace.
July 5, 1942: The weather was nasty yesterday. It rained and was foggy all day. I'm glad I didn't have liberty. The YMCA had a 4th of July party.

July 6, 1942: Nothing much. Some of the ships are leaving. There are some more coming this week.

July 7, 1942: An investigation is going on, on the Formalhaut concerning an accident in which some of the crew was killed. The ship's present at Wellington are the Leggitt, the Legion, the Fuller, the Neville, the McCauley, the Formalhaut, and the Bellatrix.

July 8, 1942: Having inspection today. The Governor General is coming aboard to visit the ship.

July 9, 1942: Looks like we're leaving soon. They are building a staff office and Marine office, right near the shack. They are prepping the troops' galleys. They have been loading up with gasoline and ammunition. One of the New Zealand boats thought they saw a sub last night and sent up white flare, meaning “Have sighted a sub, and am attacking.” It turns out to be a false alarm.

July 10, 1942: We are moving to Queen's Wharf at 3 o'clock this afternoon. It's right new town. It's only a few blocks from town. Right now, we're a couple of miles from town.

July 11, 1942: We are docked at Queen's Wharf. The McCauley is docked on our port side. She is the sister ship of the Barnett.

July 12, 1942: Three ships came in yesterday morning. One was the Barnett with mail. The other was the Erickson, a large
Swedish passenger liner. Liberty is every four days and starts at 4 o’clock and ends at 1 o’clock. About ten more ships came in last night.

July 13, 1942: All the ships are loaded with Marines. They’ve got so many - that’s why we get liberty every fourth day now. We loaded up with Marines yesterday.

July 14, 1942: We are loading up with supplies. We got mail yesterday. I didn’t get any. There is more coming. It’s still raining and it’s been raining for ten days now.

July 15, 1942: We had a little accident yesterday. A ship coming into the dock sideways sideswiped us and damaged a couple of our boats and the lowering gear. It was the same ship that crashed into the dock awhile back. We are loading up with ammunition and fuel. We are drawing the new type helmets, getting new lifeboats, and getting new machine guns, ammunition boxes and equipment. The Formalhaut is fixing her port engine and asking for a week to do it.

July 16, 1942: The ship broke loose from the dock earlier this morning. We were drifting out in the bay. The hole is full of Marines. It’s dead without the sailors in town. I was out in Tatonia last night. I saw the search lights that reach out across the bay from each side. They are powerful and they just skim the water. The can see anything that comes across the light.

July 17, 1942: The Fuller lost one of their boats the other night. Some of the officers were promoted yesterday to full lieutenant. Some of the officers are Este, Krotean, Mekean, O’Haig, Humphreys, Peterson. The Haywood pulled in yesterday. All the ships that were out at _______ Quay are out in the stream now.
The admiral was coming in today and takes command tomorrow. He is commander of AMPHISPAC Force. We got new 30-mm guns in place of the .50 cals.

July 18, 1942: It rained awfully hard. The rain is hot. The Neville just sailed in opposite of us. We've got paratroops aboard. The Admiral is on the McCauley.

July 19, 1942: Our escort is here this morning. The Barker came in with the Haywood and left this morning about 9:15. The other ships that are in, an American cruiser, the Chicago, the Salt Lake, destroyers: The Talbot, Blue, Warm and one more, Australian cruiser, Cartolaban, Hobart and one more. There are probably more outside the bay. The Australian has ________ aboard.

July 20, 1942: Two more destroyers came in last night. We have been loading day and night now with trucks and ammunition. The Barker is doing patrol duty outside the bay.

July 21, 1942: We are ready to pull out today. Most of the transports are out in the stream already. Liberty expires at 1700 today and the AS patrol will secure at the same time. At 4 o'clock we went out in the stream. We have been loading up with gasoline all night. She's blowing here tonight. Must be a storm going on outside the harbor.

July 22, 1942: Left this morning. It's a nice day, kind of rough. We are CTF 62. The following ships are with us: Cruisers: Salt Lake City, Chicago, Canberra, Australia and the Hobart. Destroyers: Blue, Barker, Warrington and 30 others. Transports: The McCauley, the Barnett, the Liggett, the Legion, the Fuller, the Neville, the Haywood, the Alshiba, the Bellatrix, the Elliott, the Libra and the Formalhaut.
July 23, 1942: Headed due north. The sea is a little rougher. We are supposed to take on some more ships at Auckland. It is rumored we've got to take over a Jap island called Coral Island.

July 24, 1942: Picked up two more ships this morning about midnight. The destroyers are around us like a circle. The three Australian cruisers are directly in front and the two U.S. cruisers are astern of the convoy. The seaplanes are scouting around all day. The sea is very rough. The Alshiba and the Formalhaut are being pitched around like toys. The tank lighter carriage on the Alshiba broke down and damaged the gunwale and some hatches. Most of the ships are taking it on the bow.

July 25, 1942: The sea is still rough and windy. The Formalhaut was left behind. They sent a destroyer with her. If she can't catch up with the convoy (she is) to go to _____ near Fiji and await further orders. The position is 29: 11 degrees, 175: 00 degrees. The Alshiba broke down and was asked to join the Formalhaut. An officer on the Salt Lake City was washed overboard, but they fished him out all right.

July 26, 1942: It's getting very hot. We came out of the storm today and it was smooth. It was nice and smooth and blue. I met a Marine last night in the mess hall. His name is T. Lehr. He lives on the lower part of 124th Street. He joined the Marines before the war started. We missed four ships that were supposed to meet last night: The Formalhaut and the Bellatrix have caught up with us, but they are far astern this afternoon. Later on, we sighted the other part of the convoy. So far, there are about six ships and a few planes sighted. These six ships turned out to be the North Carolina, an aircraft carrier and two cruisers and 12 destroyers and five transports. Later on, another aircraft
carrier, three cruisers and about five destroyers were sighted. An hour later, two more groups were sighted on the port bow and another on the port beam. We’ve got half the fleet with us. There are more destroyers and transports and men of war than you can imagine. We’ve got three aircraft carriers all together.

July 27, 1942: We sighted land this morning. In the afternoon, we sighted a few of the Fiji Islands. Some of the transports that joined us are the Althena, Pres-Ho, Kadame, the Betelguese. The made me relief corpsman.

July 28, 1942: We started to unload this morning. They are landing equipment and troops on the island. It’s hot and itchy. The islands are pretty far from the ships. All the ships are anchored here. The Crescent City, Elliott, Zeland, President Jackson, Calhoun, Gregory, Little McKern, the Quinay, the Vincennes, the Astoria, the Ellit, the Wilson, the Huff, the Brockman, Bradley, Southland. The small boats have not been able to land on Coral Island. There are too many reefs and coral, so they brought all the men and equipment back to the ships.

July 29, 1942: We got all the men and equipment back to the ships after circling the island all night. The Adams has two of her boats missing. They sent out a destroyer after them. Some of the boats can’t get off the island until high tide. We will be leaving pretty soon.

July 30, 1942: There is an international service correspondent on the American Legion with the Marines. A second lieutenant was shot in his stateroom two days ago. He was playing commandoes with another man and they thought the gun wasn’t loaded. He was shot right through the belly.
July 31, 1942: The correspondent’s name is Richard Tresgkairs. A tanker will refuel all ships tomorrow. They finally told us where we are going. We are going to take the Florida to the Guadalcanal Islands off the Solomons Group. The Army Air Force from Australia is going to bomb them - just for 15 days. We should get there by Tuesday or Wednesday. We will be four aircraft carriers. This will be the first offensive battle of the U.S. in this war. They have maps and photographs and charts of the islands. They get daily reports from British and Marine intelligence. We will stay at the island for 48 hours, then leave whether the Japs are there or not. There are 17,500 Marines in the task force. An island about 60 miles from there holds about 20,000 Japs. There are three airfields that the Japs are building in the islands. They haven’t many planes and they have a few Zero’s seaplanes. Most of the islands are swamps and jungle. They know every single detail of the islands. How true all this is, I’ll soon find out. They have all the maps in the mess hall since yesterday.

August 1, 1942: Left Fiji yesterday afternoon. We are all ready for the battle. We had general quarters this morning at about 11:30. It was a plane and it turned out to be friendly. A destroyer______ can’t read it. Saw island today. Must be the New Hebrides. We were going south around the New Hebrides and then north to the Solomon Islands. The Japs have about 20,000 troops, 40 seaplanes from the islands that we are supposed to take. Most of them live in transports that were turned back in the Coral Sea battle.

August 2, 1942: It’s a beautiful day out. The sun is bright and the sky is blue. We are getting ready for the battle. It was supposed to have started Wednesday at daybreak. They had another general alarm this morning. There was nothing to it.
August 3, 1942: They put mattresses over the railings on the signal bridge. All the fire hoses are laid out on the decks, ready for instant use. Had another general alarm this morning. Another ship from the New Zealand group came. There are two more coming on the horizon. We are passing another group of islands today.

August 4, 1942: We are fueling a destroyer this afternoon. We threw a couple of lines to the destroyer and they came in pretty close. Then, we sent them the hose. All this takes place while we are underway. They just announced that we are to take the island by August 7th, Friday. The admiral sent over the mail-gram. We are to be supported by New Zealand and Australian naval and army forces. We are to take Guadalcanal and Tulagi Islands.

August 5, 1942: The aircraft carried showed up in sight this morning. The Betelguese slowed down due to engine trouble. The sky is cloudy and gray. It looks like we are going to have a storm.

August 6, 1942: Well, this is the day before the battle. I think I'm going out in the boats. It's raining today. The Japs were supposed to have sent reinforcement down to the islands. All the ships had battle maneuvers yesterday. I guess there won't be many sleeping tonight. They are all getting ready for the battle. Maybe I won't be writing this anymore. They are going to transfer some of the radiomen and seamen and signalman to the island when they take it for a couple of months. They are pretty sure of taking it. Had general quarters this morning. The Chicago sounded another __________; nothing happened.

August 7, 1942: It's a dreary and cloudy and dark day. At 6:30, the cruisers and destroyers started shelling the islands. Planes
were bombing the island. We could hear the recoil on this ship from the battleships and those cans really gave 'em hell. There was hardly no resistance. We got a TB and then airmail. We started by going ahead between the Florida and Guadalcanal Islands in a formation of two lines of transports and the ______ were between the islands. We were pretty close. They really bombed the hell out 'em. They are unloading our ship now and two battalions of Marines landed successfully on the island at 9:30. It is 9:30 while this was written. They are still bombing the airport. The dive bombers are diving straight down and missing the ground by about 20 or 30 feet or so. It's 12:05 now and they are still strafing and bombing the airport. It's up in flames since this morning. The other ships are unloading tanks. It's been reported that long range Jap bombers are coming. They should be here soon. We've moved in as near as we can to the beach. The “Hot” is the first and closest to the beach. The Japs bombers came at 1:25. At the first wave, we shot down two. The second wave, we got one more. They didn't do any damage at all. They haven't come back yet. The Marines chased the hell out of the Japs in the islands. The bombers came back at about 3 o'clock. We shot down three more. I saw a family album and some letters of the Japs who owned the schooner that was sunk the first time this morning. The exec boat found them yesterday in the water. Scuttlebutt has it that the planes are coming back tomorrow - about 100 strong. The men are still working at the unloading of the ship. This is 9 o'clock now. Everybody looks tired. They've been up since 4 a.m. and haven't stopped yet. They've been bombing Florida Island all afternoon. The raider battle cruisers must have bombed there last night. These old-time destroyers have two of their stacks cut off and carry one battalion of Marine Raiders aboard.
August 8, 1942: The Japs came at 11:55 – about 10 or 15 of them. One of them came flying low on the port side near the water. He got the hell shot out of him. There are wheels and dead bodies floating around. We got a Merge V signal that 250 more planes were coming to attack. The Elliott was hit and is burning. We’ve intercepted a message from the San Juan that the Marines needed reinforcements on the other island where the San Juan and the “Hots” shot down two or three of the bombers. The other island was Tulagi, where most of the Japs are. We are unloading all our support QM troops on Guadalcanal. We’ve got all the planes the Japs shot out the last time. 5:45: The Elliott was hit by a plane. A destroyer picked up six Jap pilots. They were alive. The Elliott is still smoking. We got a call at 3 o’clock that to expect an air attack within one-half hour. All the ships headed out to sea and cruised around for an hour and a half and then came back in and started to unload. They are coming to scuttle the Elliott. She is too far gone. Just got a message that three cruisers, three destroyers, two seaplane tenders or gunboats, and two submarines were coming our way. The Elliott is still burning. They are going to shell her. After awhile, she started to explode. There was one of our destroyers damaged with a hole in her side. She was near the beach. The Elliott’s men and wounded are coming aboard. About 1 o’clock we had general quarters. There was a big ______ battle going on. You could hear the rumble of guns and (saw) flashes of light far out on the horizon. We had general quarters at 11 o’clock. We went out in the harbor and there were orders to get the beach party aboard, unload all the Marines that were left, hoist all the boats and prepare to get underway. We took survivors of the Quincy, Vincennes and the Astoria and some Jap casualties. They look discouraged and weary and I don’t blame them. The Chicago had her lower bow shot off. The San Juan got a turret shot off. A couple of destroyers are sunk and one destroyer was torpedoed in two.
The destroyers brought all the survivors from the cruisers aboard. They didn’t have a chance. The Japs snuck at 9 and opened fire at less than 1,000 yards. A couple of Jap destroyers snuck up on a cruiser, put their flashlights on the cruiser, and filled her with torpedoes. We don’t know how many Japs we got during the night. Planes dropped flares and bombs. They machine gunned the beach where our men were. We are headed out to sea now with a couple of AK’s and AP’s and some destroyers and a cruiser or so. We are going through Zengo Channel via the San Cristobel. The wounded are all over the place – men with bloody wounds, bodies. One sailor was in the Coral Sea and Midway battles and he said that that was the bloodiest battle of all. The officer told them, “I except the battle fleet about 4-6 in the morning.” The fleet came at 1 o’clock and they weren’t ready for it. Some of the survivors have no shoes, shirts or pants. Some are half naked. The Quincy went down in 3-1/2 minutes with most of her men. We lost the Quincy, the Vincennes, the Astoria and a couple of destroyers and the Canberra. Some of the CPs and AK’s are still behind at the island. The Marines have one more point to take on Tulagi, then they will move (from) the island. Guadalcanal is already taken. The Haywood lost half her boats and about 40 of her crew on the first wave on Tulagi. All told, the Marine casualties in

END TAPE ONE SIDE TWO

CONTINUATION IS ON NEXT DOCUMENT ENTITLED ACKERMAN-2

ACKERMAN-2

TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE
CONTINUATION – Bruno Albert Ackerman, U.S.
Coastguardsman 1942, Pacific Theatre

August 10, 1942: It is steamy and hot today. It’s been so hot the past week that the water turns warm. It is actually warm. I think we are going to Noumea, in New Caledonia. There is a hospital ship there. The Chicago and about six destroyers are with us. There is the Athena (or Alhena), the Crescent City, Barnett, Bellatrix, Betelguese, Fuller, Neville, Liggett, Lesion, Zebra. We’ve got survivors of the Vincennes, Astoria and Elliott, the Barnett and the Canberra and the Quincy. There were six of the 1200 Quincy crew left up. The Canberra captain died aboard the Barnett. They also have Jap prisoners aboard. The wounded aboard our ship are all over B Deck. The PM’s and doc are working day and night. Most of them - shrapnel in their bodies. They have shrapnel in their legs, stomachs, rumps, hands. A lot of them had to be amputated. Lots of their hands are burned to a crisp. They are so black they look like Negroes. It’s a pitiful sight. Press News just came in. The Japs lost 16 warships and 11 transports. All told, they claimed 79 ships sunk and they even itemized. What baloney!

August 11, 1942: The rest of the AP’s and AK’s and warships we left at Guadalcanal to unload have caught up with us. They were sighted this morning about 7:30. We got a small squall. It rained like hell.

August 12, 1942: One of the cans dropped a couple of depth charges yesterday afternoon. It’s still hot. We are near Noumea and should be there soon. They are going to distribute the Elliott crew among the transports. They are getting reports from each member of the crew about what happened the morning of the
battle in which their ship was sunk. The code name for Noumea is White Poppy for New Caledonia. Roses for Wellington. They are going to have boats patrol the ship as they enter the harbor with machine guns and depth charges.

August 13, 1942: The sea is rough today. Tankers are waiting for us at Noumea. The Bagley, which was reported sunk, is with us now. Eleven Jap cruisers were reported at south 152 degrees east 55 degrees, course 315 at 12-0-452. Sighted land at about 12 o’clock noon. Pulling into the harbor of Noumea. New Caledonia is a rough country. There is a lighthouse in the entrance to the harbor which you have to go around in order to avoid the mine fields. In the harbor, there are about 20 small islands which block the town from the sea. There are a lot of coral reefs outside the harbor. The town looks very small, but modern. The U.S. Army has a camp there. Most of the ships are anchored in the harbor. The island nearest us has a villa on the top of it and a landing pier at the bottom of the island. All the islands are mountains on mountains. The hospital ship, Solace, is anchored near us. So are a few tankers.

August 14, 1942: CAMAUSPAC is on the Argomore, which is in this port. They are transferring all the wounded to the hospital ship. We got more mail today. We are loading up with Marines again. We had a fire alarm this afternoon. The fire consumed deck and the engine room.

August 15, 1942: Nothing much today. There is going to be liberty for 5% of the crew a day. That’s about one liberty every 20 days.

August 16, 1942: Liberty starts at 1 and ends at 5. The town is pretty. The U.S. Army group near there retained it pretty well.
Forty-three of their francs make one dollar. Cigarettes they get are from Java. Subs were sighted this afternoon at the lighthouse in the entrance to the harbor. We also are getting more mail today. It’s been cool for the last few days; nothing new. Politically, the country is divided between Vichy and DeGaulle. The Negroes are for the U.S. The sides are about even.

August 19, 1942: Enemy vessels were sighted earlier this morning in Tulagi. One was seen fishing. Those _______vessels that vessel seen at Tulagi are bombarding the hell out of it.

August 20, 1942: Went to W.O. Worman today. It’s a little bigger than Tantolaba and a little larger than Panama. I saw a lot of red-headed Negroes. There are some nice French girls there. There are _______. Most of the people speak French. There are a lot of armed guards and sentries on every corner. They must expect trouble. Went on liberty in a ramp boat. Most of us were soaked to the skin. The T.L. threw a lot of waves right into the boat and we all got soaked. There were a few French soldiers and sailors there. Saw some of the Aussie sailors in their short pants there.

August 21, 1942: Received a message this morning that the Japs were placing boats in Tangeree Rine in Guadalcanal. It said they were landing strongly and at least two ships were seen in the harbor.

August 22, 1942: There is nothing new today. Still in the harbor of Noumea. A lot of new transports came in during the past week.
August 23, 1942: The Chicago left for Pearl Harbor to fix her bow. Some of the cans left also. The Jap fleet is still around Tulagi.

August 24, 1942: The Achilles pulled in yesterday. She was one of the ships that chased the Graft Spee into Montenegro. A couple of cruisers came in yesterday. One of them is an old square ender. A message just came over today that 10 transports, five cargo ships and one sub, three destroyers and one cruiser were sighted on a course 100 degrees in the vicinity of the Solomon Islands.

August 25, 1942: We are supposed to pull into Nickel Pier tomorrow to load up. We haven't refueled yet. We've got three flags aboard now. _____ direction is 10 degrees. A squad mine room two. Convoys and ships have been reported every day since we left The Solomons. A convoy was reported consisting of two cruisers and two destroyers, two transports and two gunboats. Later, a report came from Guadalcanal that one transport, one cruiser were burning fiercely, but no aircraft carriers were sighted. The last bunch of Jap troops they sent there were wiped out. They've been downing most Jap planes the Japs have been sending since we took over. Those Japs sure are stubborn. They've been sending ships, subs, and planes and we're blasting the hell out of them.

August 26, 1942: We moved into the inner harbor yesterday. They were unloading the ship all night. They kept loading it and unloading. Marines came aboard. They leave again. They've been doing this since we got here. I wish they would make up their minds of loading and unloading it.
August 27, 1942: We are out in the outer harbor now. I went on liberty yesterday. All the boys are buying combs so they can make a hit with the girls in Wellington when we get there. You can't buy a comb in Wellington. Some of the streets are Rue de Marshall Foch, Rue de Anton ______.

August 28, 1942: We are supposed to fuel up at 0700 this morning. So far, the tanker hasn't shown up yet. The Bellatrix is going back to Tulagi. A new tanker came in this morning. Some new ships came in yesterday. We got a message that the whole Pacific area is short of communication personnel and to rate as many men to qualify as possible, so we are going to have a school in here. I hope I can make a rating. We got another message that the Japs are on the move again. They've reported a small convoy here, another one there. They are all in different positions.

August 29, 1942: The Sinclair Rubeline came alongside at 5 o'clock yesterday and started fueling us. About 7:30 this morning, it has almost completed the operation. It's getting chilly here. The nights and mornings are cold. So cold that you have to wear blankets at night.

August 30, 1942: The Hughes pulled in this morning. The Fuller, Haywood and a couple of others came in from Long Bow.

August 31, 1942: The Legion is mooring into the dock today. There's a lot of rumors that we are going to the States or to Tonga. The girls in Wellington want to know when the P-27 is coming back. They had an earthquake there recently.

September 1, 1942: We were supposed to shove off today, but I think we will shove off tomorrow. Guadalcanal was bombed
yesterday again. A Dutch transport and an American cargo ship came in, escorted by a destroyer. We are supposed to leave early tomorrow.

September 2, 1942: Left harbor this morning, escorted by the Achilles and two cans. The Legion, Barnersville, Haywood, Libra are with us - nine ships altogether. An Interceptor plane came out to meet us and flew low over us for awhile. She's a beautiful job, just like a bird. _______ on the Legion broke down. His steering gear stuck and she started to turn to her left and the Haywood and the Achilles started to turn away from her. She was headed right for the Haywood. The Achilles and the Haywood got out of the way just enough.

September 3, 1942: Sighted the top of _______ on some islands. We've been sighting them all morning long. The Legion is still with us. She is steering from her engine room. The islands are southeast of the Loyalty Islands. They are uncharted. The Pagonies are over the right today.

September 4, 1942: Still heading east. Should get into Tonga Sunday.

September 5, 1942: The U.S.S. Lokatoi, a small tray-like ship, was sunk yesterday. She was carrying most of the Elliott crew. There were 29 survivors sighted at 0100 today. Saw the same _______ church that we saw the last time. The same coral reefs, the same palm trees. The bow of the ship that was sunk before we got there the last time is still sticking up. The South Dakota - there is about 4-5 cruisers in there. Can't see everything yet. We are too far out. After the Achilles will get to Strauss Dock, which is the code name for Samoa. Bobcat is the code name for Tahiti. There are three destroyers, six APAs
that came down with us. The South Dakota, the new light cruiser Juneau and two provisional ships.

September 6, 1942: The Achilles has gone to Strauss Dock. It’s chilly, cloudy and windy today. There are some gunboats, minesweepers all along the shore. I recognize the island we went swimming on. Some of the cans pulled out today and the Saratoga, the Atlanta, the New Orleans, the Minneapolis and some cans pulled in at noon.

September 7, 1942: Had movies yesterday afternoon and last night. The nurses _____ tonight down with the Army came aboard yesterday afternoon to see the officers. Some of the Army officers came also. Yesterday at 3 o’clock, the Achilles, the City _______, The Jackson, the ________, Hayes, et cetera came in. We’ve got some task force now.

September 8, 1942: We are getting an admiral aboard. We’ve got a commodore and now we’ve got an admiral. That’s a lot of gold braid. The N2 officer that is aboard is going back to Tulagi. He and his brother own half the Solomons. He is the pilot that steered us into Tulagi Harbor. He knows every harbor in this area.

September 9, 1942: We’ve got another commodore aboard temporarily. That makes two commodores and one admiral. That’s Contradon. He was captain of the Vail until he was relieved by Captain Woe Bailey of the Elliott. The South Dakota has holes in her. She got caught on the reefs down here.

September 10, 1942: Most of the ships left yesterday. The Haywood and Libra next to Tulagi. The Neville left this morning. There is a can and over there that came in this morning.
September 11, 1942: Today we are having the inspections at 0830. CTD-14 is going to inspect us. The uniform of the day is dress blues. Everybody is cleaning and painting the ship. I think they must have painted the whole thing yesterday. Everybody was painting, dampening their clothes, soggy like mud and got ready for inspection.

September 12, 1942: The admiral came aboard today at 6:30. He is COMBATSHIP6, Commander Battleship ________ 6, the South Dakota is going to Pearl Harbor. The Saratoga is going to the states with the Minneapolis. We have liberty today and tomorrow only. Since we’ve been here, the natives have been coming out in canoes to sell us things. Once in awhile, a whole party of men have come out in a sailboat. When it’s low tide, you can see the dry corals all around us and between some of the islands, the reefs that join them together so that you walk from one island to another.

September 13, 1942: I’ve got liberty today. Three aircraft carriers, a couple of heavy cruisers and destroyers going to Guadalcanal. Tonga Point, CTF-61 is going to the Solomons at the same time. Tonga has changed then. The Army is inland. The natives are smart now and know their money. Beads we used to buy for a dime are now a dollar. Mats cost anywhere from 3-15 dollars. The admiral and the commodore were ashore. There are more buildings and better roads now. We are having boat drills today. The Legion is leaving today.

September 15, 1942: The Washington and three cans came in yesterday afternoon. The Gulf Queen came with them. Admiral Lee is going to move in and his staff to the Washington. The
Japs are bringing four battleships and seven aircraft carriers to the Solomons.

September 16, 1942: We are going to have inspection every week. The commodore wasn’t satisfied with the last one. We’ve got to clean and fix all our uniforms up. We can’t come to quarters in slippers or moccasins anymore. You have to wear clean dungaree shirts and trousers. What a way to win a war! The men haven’t got any of the clothes we need in small stores.

September 17, 1942: The Washington left two days ago with the cans. There is not much happening here. The natives are learning how to speak pretty good English.

September 18, 1942: We are having ships inspection today. Tomorrow, the commodore is going to inspect. They just announced the sinking of the Yorktown at Midway. She was here at Tonga the first time we were here. The quartermaster of the South Dakota noticed that the water ahead was discolored when they pulled into Tonga. He told the officer. The officer told him to shut up and mind his own business, so now she is full of holes.

September 19, 1942: We are having another inspection today. This time, our commodore is going to inspect. We are supposed to leave today. The Jap warships are bombing and shelling Guadalcanal and Tulagi. This morning, the North Carolina pulled in from Tulagi with three torpedo holes in her. The Washington must have went up to Tulagi to relieve her. We were supposed to leave today, but we are giving the North Carolina supplies and stores. The rumor is that the Wasp is on fire. Late this afternoon, we fueled a couple of destroyers and exchanged movies with them.
September 20, 1942: We left at 6 o'clock this morning. We are all alone. We are supposed to go to Wellington, but the dry dock might not fit us in, so we might go to Auckland. I was talking to a fellow from the North Carolina. He says the Navy were in battle with other ships. She fought submarines, but that's all in the Tulagi area.

September 21, 1942: Today is payday. We are going along pretty fast. It's cold and misty since we left Tonga. Today, the barometer is dropping and it looks like we are in for a storm. A sub was reported to be in our vicinity last night at 10:30. They doubled all the watches.

September 22, 1942: It was cold as hell and getting rougher yesterday. We should be in Wellington about Wednesday. They had target practice yesterday. They lit a series of three red balloons go up. The 20-mm guns got loose, then the .50-cal guns shot at the next batch. Finally, the 3-inch guns let loose. They did pretty good.

September 23, 1942: It's cold and very foggy. This morning, a land plane came out to meet us. It circled and sent no signals. About 10 o'clock, land was sighted. The usual high mountains. It's cold and very windy, but the sun is shining. At noon, a land plane was spotted. It was an English Fairey. A few minutes later, a ship was sighted. The general alarm was sounded. It turned out to be an English freighter. The albatross are following us like the last time.

September 24, 1942: Cold and stormy morning. It's raining hard. We are heading in the harbor now at 7 o'clock. The pilot is supposed to come out and meet us. We are to dock at
TAPE WENT BLANK HERE (MIDDLE OF THE TAPE) ????????

TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

September 25, 1942:  The Legion and us and a few Marines are the only ones in town. There are plenty of girls. The town isn’t as lively as the last time. The whole port side was drunk. The ship was deserted. It was dreary and lonely. It’s cold as hell. We are docked at the outer quay. The Legion is in dry dock. She will out Sunday or Monday. The standing order is liberty for every ship entering the port is 50% the first of four days from 1-11; 25% after that 4-11.

September 26, 1942:  The starboard came back just as drunk as the port. The town is still just as friendly. Everybody welcomes you with open arms.

September 27, 1942:  It was a nice day yesterday. It looks like a nice day today. I have liberty today. All the buildings have been repaired since the last earthquake.

September 28, 1942:  Monday. An English transport and a U.S. merchant ship came in yesterday with some Marines. We also got some mail. I see a lot of people I know yesterday in town. It’s still pretty dead in town. Six of the seaman went over the hill last Friday and are having a good time.

September 29, 1942:  That merchant ship is the Matsonia a luxury liner of the Matson Line. She is moving armed. She took Marines to Pago Pago from the states. The Legion is still in dry dock. She should have been out a couple of days ago, but the
markers are sticking out of the Legion, scrambling and dangling in the crane.

September 30, 1942: The town is dead. It’s dreary and looks _________. There are plenty of girls, movies, dance halls, but there’s something missing. I guess it’s because we have to be back by 11 o’clock. You keep worrying and you can’t start to have any fun because it will be cut off short. The Matsonia pulled out this morning and the Legion pulled out of its dry dock and are astern of us in _____ quay.

October 1, 1942: We are in the dry dock. We came in yesterday afternoon. We are raised, but she can’t raise us all the way. The Legion is still here. All the men are coming in late. It’s a deck court if you are in late. Four of the boys were caught going over the side. The coxswain of the watch ratted on them. There are more of the men going over the side than regular liberty. All the men are discontented and mad. The Legion and us are the only ships in here and we can’t see why we can’t have 50% liberty - all night liberty. The _____ don’t start ’til 9 and the movies until 8, and you have to start back at 10:30. It’s late so you haven’t got much time to do much except get drunk and came back. That’s why they all came back drunk every night. Some of the officers stay all night and get away with it. That doesn’t help morale any. The morale is very lot. Six of the boys went AWOL last Thursday and haven’t come back ’til yesterday. The executive [officer] is going to throw the book at them. He is another drunk. Yesterday, they had a list of about 50 names that came in late and are going to get deck courts. If we were in the states, 50% of the crew would go over the hill. I’m speaking mostly of the seaman. They are getting all the dirt. Instead of giving the men a rest after the battle, they have inspection and working parties down there and shove inspection and working parties down
their throats. The COMTRANSDIV-14 doesn’t like the way the ship is looking, so he makes them work like slaves and then keeps them cooped up in here. That’s why the executive officer Betzner is in the hospital. After that inspection in Tonga, he sort of told the commodore off. He had a breakdown after that and was relieved. He is in the hospital in Wellington now. The Barnett came in this morning and the Legion moved next to us by the dry dock and the Barnett moored where the Legion was. The Solace came in about 3:30. She is very fast.

October 2, 1942: It’s getting warmer here and the days are getting longer. Our ship doesn’t need much repairing. It looks clean.

October 3, 1942: At roll call, we had about 25 men going ______ as the old man was coming on leave. The boys who stayed AWOL for six days got a Summary Court. Rated men were coming in late, just like the seamen.

October 4, 1942: We are leaving the dry dock this morning. The Solace left and we are tied to Estoya Quay near the dry dock. We are supposed to leave Monday or Tuesday.

October 5, 1942: The Achilles pulled in. Today is payday. The Barnett went into dry dock this morning. We had a fire in the dock next to the ship. The electrical wires were on fire.

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READER:

THAT IS THE LAST ENTRY IN THIS DIARY.

My father told me that he sent the diary home to his family and some friends to hold onto and didn’t see it again until after he came back. And, indeed, it says here on October 8th that they were letting them send souvenirs home in the mail, so that’s probably how this got back in the states.
Today is December 11, 1999, and my dear old dad is still alive. In fact, me and my brother, Curt, are going to see him later on.

Thanks, Dad. END OF TAPES

ACKERMAN-2

TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

CONTINUATION – Bruno Albert Ackerman, U.S. Coastguardsman 1942, Pacific Theatre

August 10, 1942: It is steamy and hot today. It’s been so hot the past week that the water turns warm. It is actually warm. I think we are going to Noumea, in New Caledonia. There is a hospital ship there. The Chicago and about six destroyers are with us. There is the Athena (or Alhena), the Crescent City, Barnett, Bellatrix, Betelguese, Fuller, Neville, Liggett, Lesion, Zebra. We’ve got survivors of the Vincennes, Astoria and Elliott, the Barnett and the Canberra and the Quincy. There were six of the 1200 Quincy crew left up. The Canberra captain died aboard the Barnett. They also have Jap prisoners aboard. The wounded aboard our ship are all over B Deck. The PM’s and doc are working day and night. Most of them - shrapnel in their bodies. They have shrapnel in their legs, stomachs, rumps, hands. A lot of them had to be amputated. Lots of their hands are burned to a crisp. They are so black they look like Negroes. It’s a pitiful sight. Press News just came in. The Japs lost 16 warships and 11 transports. All told, they claimed 79 ships sunk and they even itemized. What baloney!

August 11, 1942: The rest of the AP’s and AK’s and warships we left at Guadalcanal to unload have caught up with us. They were
sighted this morning about 7:30. We got a small squall. It rained like hell.

August 12, 1942: One of the cans dropped a couple of depth charges yesterday afternoon. It’s still hot. We are near Noumea and should be there soon. They are going to distribute the Elliott crew among the transports. They are getting reports from each member of the crew about what happened the morning of the battle in which their ship was sunk. The code name for Noumea is White Poppy for New Caledonia. Roses for Wellington. They are going to have boats patrol the ship as they enter the harbor with machine guns and depth charges.

August 13, 1942: The sea is rough today. Tankers are waiting for us at Noumea. The Bagley, which was reported sunk, is with us now. Eleven Jap cruisers were reported at south 152 degrees east 55 degrees, course 315 at 12-0-452. Sighted land at about 12 o’clock noon. Pulling into the harbor of Noumea. New Caledonia is a rough country. There is a lighthouse in the entrance to the harbor which you have to go around in order to avoid the mine fields. In the harbor, there are about 20 small islands which block the town from the sea. There are a lot of coral reefs outside the harbor. The town looks very small, but modern. The U.S. Army has a camp there. Most of the ships are anchored in the harbor. The island nearest us has a villa on the top of it and a landing pier at the bottom of the island. All the islands are mountains on mountains. The hospital ship, Solace, is anchored near us. So are a few tankers.

August 14, 1942: CAMAUSPAC is on the Argomore, which is in this port. They are transferring all the wounded to the hospital ship. We got more mail today. We are loading up with Marines
again. We had a fire alarm this afternoon. The fire consumed deck and the engine room.

August 15, 1942: Nothing much today. There is going to be liberty for 5% of the crew a day. That's about one liberty every 20 days.

August 16, 1942: Liberty starts at 1 and ends at 5. The town is pretty. The U.S. Army group near there retained it pretty well. Forty-three of their francs make one dollar. Cigarettes they get are from Java. Subs were sighted this afternoon at the lighthouse in the entrance to the harbor. We also are getting more mail today. It's been cool for the last few days; nothing new. Politically, the country is divided between Vichy and DeGaulle. The Negroes are for the U.S. The sides are about even.

August 19, 1942: Enemy vessels were sighted earlier this morning in Tulagi. One was seen fishing. Those _______vessels that vessel seen at Tulagi are bombarding the hell out of it.

August 20, 1942: Went to W.O. Worman today. It's a little bigger than Tantolaba and a little larger than Panama. I saw a lot of red-headed Negroes. There are some nice French girls there. There are ______. Most of the people speak French. There are a lot of armed guards and sentries on every corner. They must expect trouble. Went on liberty in a ramp boat. Most of us were soaked to the skin. The T.L. threw a lot of waves right into the boat and we all got soaked. There were a few French soldiers and sailors there. Saw some of the Aussie sailors in their short pants there.
August 21, 1942: Received a message this morning that the Japs were placing boats in Tangeree Rine in Guadalcanal. It said they were landing strongly and at least two ships were seen in the harbor.

August 22, 1942: There is nothing new today. Still in the harbor of Noumea. A lot of new transports came in during the past week.

August 23, 1942: The Chicago left for Pearl Harbor to fix her bow. Some of the cans left also. The Jap fleet is still around Tulagi.

August 24, 1942: The Achilles pulled in yesterday. She was one of the ships that chased the Graft Spee into Montenegro. A couple of cruisers came in yesterday. One of them is an old square ender. A message just came over today that 10 transports, five cargo ships and one sub, three destroyers and one cruiser were sighted on a course 100 degrees in the vicinity of the Solomon Islands.

August 25, 1942: We are supposed to pull into Nickel Pier tomorrow to load up. We haven't refueled yet. We've got three flags aboard now. ___ direction is 10 degrees. A squad mine room two. Convoys and ships have been reported every day since we left The Solomons. A convoy was reported consisting of two cruisers and two destroyers, two transports and two gunboats. Later, a report came from Guadalcanal that one transport, one cruiser were burning fiercely, but no aircraft carriers were sighted. The last bunch of Jap troops they sent there were wiped out. They've been downing most Jap planes the Japs have been sending since we took over. Those Japs sure are stubborn.
They’ve been sending ships, subs, and planes and we’re blasting the hell out of them.

August 26, 1942: We moved into the inner harbor yesterday. They were unloading the ship all night. They kept loading it and unloading. Marines came aboard. They leave again. They’ve been doing this since we got here. I wish they would make up their minds of loading and unloading it.

August 27, 1942: We are out in the outer harbor now. I went on liberty yesterday. All the boys are buying combs so they can make a hit with the girls in Wellington when we get there. You can’t buy a comb in Wellington. Some of the streets are Rue de Marshall Foch, Rue de Anton ______.

August 28, 1942: We are supposed to fuel up at 0700 this morning. So far, the tanker hasn’t shown up yet. The Bellatrix is going back to Tulagi. A new tanker came in this morning. Some new ships came in yesterday. We got a message that the whole Pacific area is short of communication personnel and to rate as many men to qualify as possible, so we are going to have a school in here. I hope I can make a rating. We got another message that the Japs are on the move again. They’ve reported a small convoy here, another one there. They are all in different positions.

August 29, 1942: The Sinclair Rubeline came alongside at 5 o’clock yesterday and started fueling us. About 7:30 this morning, it has almost completed the operation. It’s getting chilly here. The nights and mornings are cold. So cold that you have to wear blankets at night.
August 30, 1942: The Hughes pulled in this morning. The Fuller, Haywood and a couple of others came in from Long Bow.

August 31, 1942: The Legion is mooring into the dock today. There’s a lot of rumors that we are going to the States or to Tonga. The girls in Wellington want to know when the P-27 is coming back. They had an earthquake there recently.

September 1, 1942: We were supposed to shove off today, but I think we will shove off tomorrow. Guadalcanal was bombed yesterday again. A Dutch transport and an American cargo ship came in, escorted by a destroyer. We are supposed to leave early tomorrow.

September 2, 1942: Left harbor this morning, escorted by the Achilles and two cans. The Legion, Barnersville, Haywood, Libra are with us - nine ships altogether. An Interceptor plane came out to meet us and flew low over us for awhile. She’s a beautiful job, just like a bird. _______ on the Legion broke down. His steering gear stuck and she started to turn to her left and the Haywood and the Achilles started to turn away from her. She was headed right for the Haywood. The Achilles and the Haywood got out of the way just enough.

September 3, 1942: Sighted the top of _______ on some islands. We’ve been sighting them all morning long. The Legion is still with us. She is steering from her engine room. The islands are southeast of the Loyalty Islands. They are uncharted. The Pagonies are over the right today.

September 4, 1942: Still heading east. Should get into Tonga Sunday.
September 5, 1942: The U.S.S. Lokatoi, a small tray-like ship, was sunk yesterday. She was carrying most of the Elliott crew. There were 29 survivors sighted at 0100 today. Saw the same _______ church that we saw the last time. The same coral reefs, the same palm trees. The bow of the ship that was sunk before we got there the last time is still sticking up. The South Dakota - there is about 4-5 cruisers in there. Can’t see everything yet. We are too far out. After the Achilles will get to Strauss Dock, which is the code name for Samoa. Bobcat is the code name for Tahiti. There are three destroyers, six APAs that came down with us. The South Dakota, the new light cruiser Juneau and two provisional ships.

September 6, 1942: The Achilles has gone to Strauss Dock. It’s chilly, cloudy and windy today. There are some gunboats, minesweepers all along the shore. I recognize the island we went swimming on. Some of the cans pulled out today and the Saratoga, the Atlanta, the New Orleans, the Minneapolis and some cans pulled in at noon.

September 7, 1942: Had movies yesterday afternoon and last night. The nurses ____ tonight down with the Army came aboard yesterday afternoon to see the officers. Some of the Army officers came also. Yesterday at 3 o’clock, the Achilles, the City ________, The Jackson, the ________, Hayes, et cetera came in. We’ve got some task force now.

September 8, 1942: We are getting an admiral aboard. We’ve got a commodore and now we’ve got an admiral. That’s a lot of gold braid. The N2 officer that is aboard is going back to Tulagi. He and his brother own half the Solomons. He is the pilot that steered us into Tulagi Harbor. He knows every harbor in this area.
September 9, 1942: We've got another commodore aboard temporarily. That makes two commodores and one admiral. That's Contradon. He was captain of the Vail until he was relieved by Captain Woe Bailey of the Elliott. The South Dakota has holes in her. She got caught on the reefs down here.

September 10, 1942: Most of the ships left yesterday. The Haywood and Libra next to Tulagi. The Neville left this morning. There is a can and over there that came in this morning.

September 11, 1942: Today we are having the inspections at 0830. CTD-14 is going to inspect us. The uniform of the day is dress blues. Everybody is cleaning and painting the ship. I think they must have painted the whole thing yesterday. Everybody was painting, dampening their clothes, soggy like mud and got ready for inspection.

September 12, 1942: The admiral came aboard today at 6:30. He is COMBATSHIP6, Commander Battleship ________ 6, the South Dakota is going to Pearl Harbor. The Saratoga is going to the states with the Minneapolis. We have liberty today and tomorrow only. Since we've been here, the natives have been coming out in canoes to sell us things. Once in awhile, a whole party of men have come out in a sailboat. When it's low tide, you can see the dry corals all around us and between some of the islands, the reefs that join them together so that you walk from one island to another.

September 13, 1942: I've got liberty today. Three aircraft carriers, a couple of heavy cruisers and destroyers going to Guadalcanal. Tonga Point, CTF-61 is going to the Solomons at the same time. Tonga has changed then. The Army is inland. The
natives are smart now and know their money. Beads we used to buy for a dime are now a dollar. Mats cost anywhere from 3-15 dollars. The admiral and the commodore were ashore. There are more buildings and better roads now. We are having boat drills today. The Legion is leaving today.

September 15, 1942: The Washington and three cans came in yesterday afternoon. The Gulf Queen came with them. Admiral Lee is going to move in and his staff to the Washington. The Japs are bringing four battleships and seven aircraft carriers to the Solomons.

September 16, 1942: We are going to have inspection every week. The commodore wasn't satisfied with the last one. We've got to clean and fix all our uniforms up. We can't come to quarters in slippers or moccasins anymore. You have to wear clean dungaree shirts and trousers. What a way to win a war! The men haven't got any of the clothes we need in small stores.

September 17, 1942: The Washington left two days ago with the cans. There is not much happening here. The natives are learning how to speak pretty good English.

September 18, 1942: We are having ships inspection today. Tomorrow, the commodore is going to inspect. They just announced the sinking of the Yorktown at Midway. She was here at Tonga the first time we were here. The quartermaster of the South Dakota noticed that the water ahead was discolored when they pulled into Tonga. He told the officer. The officer told him to shut up and mind his own business, so now she is full of holes.

September 19, 1942: We are having another inspection today. This time, our commodore is going to inspect. We are supposed
to leave today. The Jap warships are bombing and shelling Guadalcanal and Tulagi. This morning, the North Carolina pulled in from Tulagi with three torpedo holes in her. The Washington must have went up to Tulagi to relieve her. We were supposed to leave today, but we are giving the North Carolina supplies and stores. The rumor is that the Wasp is on fire. Late this afternoon, we fueled a couple of destroyers and exchanged movies with them.

September 20, 1942: We left at 6 o’clock this morning. We are all alone. We are supposed to go to Wellington, but the dry dock might not fit us in, so we might go to Auckland. I was talking to a fellow from the North Carolina. He says the Navy were in battle with other ships. She fought submarines, but that’s all in the Tulagi area.

September 21, 1942: Today is payday. We are going along pretty fast. It’s cold and misty since we left Tonga. Today, the barometer is dropping and it looks like we are in for a storm. A sub was reported to be in our vicinity last night at 10:30. They doubled all the watches.

September 22, 1942: It was cold as hell and getting rougher yesterday. We should be in Wellington about Wednesday. They had target practice yesterday. They lit a series of three red balloons go up. The 20-mm guns got loose, then the .50-cal guns shot at the next batch. Finally, the 3-inch guns let loose. They did pretty good.

September 23, 1942: It’s cold and very foggy. This morning, a land plane came out to meet us. It circled and sent no signals. About 10 o’clock, land was sighted. The usual high mountains. It’s cold and very windy, but the sun is shining. At noon, a land plane
was spotted. It was an English Fairey. A few minutes later, a ship was sighted. The general alarm was sounded. It turned out to be an English freighter. The albatross are following us like the last time.

September 24, 1942: Cold and stormy morning. It’s raining hard. We are heading in the harbor now at 7 o’clock. The pilot is supposed to come out and meet us. We are to dock at

____________

TAPE WENT BLANK HERE (MIDDLE OF THE TAPE) ?????????

TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

September 25, 1942: The Legion and us and a few Marines are the only ones in town. There are plenty of girls. The town isn’t as lively as the last time. The whole port side was drunk. The ship was deserted. It was dreary and lonely. It’s cold as hell. We are docked at the outer quay. The Legion is in dry dock. She will out Sunday or Monday. The standing order is liberty for every ship entering the port is 50% the first of four days from 1-11; 25% after that 4-11.

September 26, 1942: The starboard came back just as drunk as the port. The town is still just as friendly. Everybody welcomes you with open arms.

September 27, 1942: It was a nice day yesterday. It looks like a nice day today. I have liberty today. All the buildings have been repaired since the last earthquake.

September 28, 1942: Monday. An English transport and a U.S. merchant ship came in yesterday with some Marines. We also got
some mail. I see a lot of people I know yesterday in town. It's still pretty dead in town. Six of the seaman went over the hill last Friday and are having a good time.

September 29, 1942: That merchant ship is the Matsonia a luxury liner of the Matson Line. She is moving armed. She took Marines to Pago Pago from the states. The Legion is still in dry dock. She should have been out a couple of days ago, but the markers are sticking out of the Legion, scrambling and dangling in the crane.

September 30, 1942: The town is dead. It's dreary and looks _______. There are plenty of girls, movies, dance halls, but there's something missing. I guess it's because we have to be back by 11 o'clock. You keep worrying and you can't start to have any fun because it will be cut off short. The Matsonia pulled out this morning and the Legion pulled out of its dry dock and are astern of us in _____ quay.

October 1, 1942: We are in the dry dock. We came in yesterday afternoon. We are raised, but she can't raise us all the way. The Legion is still here. All the men are coming in late. It's a deck court if you are in late. Four of the boys were caught going over the side. The coxswain of the watch ratted on them. There are more of the men going over the side than regular liberty. All the men are discontented and mad. The Legion and us are the only ships in here and we can't see why we can't have 50% liberty - all night liberty. The _____ don't start 'til 9 and the movies until 8, and you have to start back at 10:30. It's late so you haven't got much time to do much except get drunk and came back. That's why they all came back drunk every night. Some of the officers stay all night and get away with it. That doesn't help morale any. The morale is very lot. Six of the boys went AWOL last
Thursday and haven't come back 'til yesterday. The executive [officer] is going to throw the book at them. He is another drunk. Yesterday, they had a list of about 50 names that came in late and are going to get deck courts. If we were in the states, 50% of the crew would go over the hill. I'm speaking mostly of the seaman. They are getting all the dirt. Instead of giving the men a rest after the battle, they have inspection and working parties down there and shove inspection and working parties down their throats. The COMTRANSDIV-14 doesn't like the way the ship is looking, so he makes them work like slaves and then keeps them cooped up in here. That's why the executive officer Betzner is in the hospital. After that inspection in Tonga, he sort of told the commodore off. He had a breakdown after that and was relieved. He is in the hospital in Wellington now. The Barnett came in this morning and the Legion moved next to us by the dry dock and the Barnett moored where the Legion was. The Solace came in about 3:30. She is very fast.

October 2, 1942: It's getting warmer here and the days are getting longer. Our ship doesn't need much repairing. It looks clean.

October 3, 1942: At roll call, we had about 25 men going ________ as the old man was coming on leave. The boys who stayed AWOL for six days got a Summary Court. Rated men were coming in late, just like the seamen.

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END OF TAPES
USS WAKEFIELD returning troops home during Operation Magic Carpet – 1945-46