



RULON COOK, 1943  
He was proud of his mustache

## RULON W. COOK

**When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7 1941 it changed my life forever. I was working in the Mercer, Utah mines and had done so for 4 years. I felt it my duty to help defend our country and decided that I would like to join the Navy.**

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I boarded a train in Salt Lake City on April 17, 1942 arrived at San Diego Navel training station the next after noon where I spent the next five and a half months. Six weeks in Boot Camp and four months in fire control school. While in the school I had liberty every other Sunday and I was able to attend church in one of the wards on the opposite weekends I had liberty on Saturday. The LDS wards in San Diego held dances each Saturday night for LDS service men. I attended them.

All the time we were in the school they kept telling us that when we finished the school we would be granted a short leave for a few days at home, but that did not happen. About the time we thought we would be having a few days leave, they loaded us on some antique railroad cars on a Monday morning, and we left those cars the following Saturday about noon in Norfolk, Virginia.

We were assigned to ships alphabetically. As there were two other fellows named cook in the class, and we were assigned two to a ship, naturally one of them was assigned to the same ship I was. More about that later.

While waiting for transportation to Brazil, I was assigned to work in the commissary butcher shop on the base where the officers on the base did there shopping. Since that time, I have never been to fond of hamburger. About once every hour the head butcher would go through and gather up all the scraps that had fallen on the floor and been walked on for a while and he would throw them in to be ground up in the hamburger. He would really laugh as he did



it. It was while working there that I took out some garbage to load on the truck that hauled the garbage. I decided the garbage already on the truck needed some straightening so I climbed on the truck. Then instead of climbing down like I should have when I finished I jumped onto a pile of garbage at the side of the truck. I hit something hard with my left foot, that forced my knee in and I felt something tear it was kind of tender the next day, but did not seem to be too bad. The next day I carried my gear aboard a troop transport to go to Brazil. Where the ship I was assigned to was operating. The second evening out of port my left knee locked itself in a bent position and I could not straiten it. So I was transferred to the navel hospital in San Juan Porto Rico as I remember that was the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 1942.

The medical staff examined my knee took x-rays and told me they were sure it was a torn cartilage but they wanted to wait a while before operating to see if it would get better by itself. It didn't improve at all so just a few days before Christmas they operated on and removed all the cartilage that was all they could do at that time.

The cook at the hospital had been the cook on a fishing boat out of Seattle and he knew how to drink. He became drunk about a week before Christmas and didn't sober up until a week after new years. They fed us just what they could find.

I left Puerto Rico on February 14, 1943 aboard the USS Moffett to go to Brazil to catch my ship. The chow on the Moffett was not good for breakfast every morning it was cornmeal mush the only way I could eat it was to put enough salt on it so all I could taste was the salt. We arrived in Recife, Brazil about the 1<sup>st</sup> of March. About ten days later the USS Jouett returned to port and I was able to board her.

When I walked aboard and handed my orders to the officer of the desk he looked at my name put his hand on his forehead and muttered ok my (G.) please not another one. I knew exactly what he meant. The men from the class in Fire control school had been assigned two to a ship alphabetically so it was automatic for a



fellow named Milton Cook to be assigned to the same ship I was on. Due to my injured knee he arrived on the Jouett about four months ahead of me. Knowing Milton as well as I did after four months in a class with him I knew exactly what the O.D. was referring to.

As it turned out Milton had been sent to a trade school to get him off the ship for a while.

All people in Fire Control, Torpedo, Gunners mates are all in the gunnery rating and my first assignment besides my watch duty as to do the house keeping in the gunnery division living quarters for a three month period. About six weeks into this assignment they decided the compartment needed a paint job. There were the three of us assigned. There was a torpedo man, a gunner mate and myself. They decided we would need more help so each of us was given a helper. In the meantime, Milton Cook returned from school where he had been advanced to third class petty officer. So whom did they give me for a helper, none other than Milton? Even though I was only seaman 2<sup>nd</sup> class, Milton 3<sup>rd</sup> class petty officer was my helper, which was strictly against navy regulations. He was the only person I ever met, who could take a gallon paint can, with one-inch of paint in the bottom, and try to paint one square yard of flat deck. He would have both feet in the paint can and paint all over himself and everything close by, before he would have that piece of deck painted. I felt sorry for the poor fellow. It was only a very short time until he was transferred.

At the time I boarded the Jouett I was told there was some new equipment on the ship called radar and the Jouett was the first ship to have it. It had been on the ship about six weeks before I went aboard. It was fire control radar for sighting a target at night. As soon as the gunnery officer found out I could stay on a target better than most that was my assignment both for my regular watch and for general quarter or, as some would call it Battle Stations. There were probably twelve to eighteen men at different times operated that radar but I operated it more than all the rest of them put together.



Most of the next nine months we were on a very regular patrol our mission was to look for German submarines and also to check any merchant ships we spotted in the area. We would leave port and travel north east until we crossed the equator then zig zag along the equator for about four days generally swinging south around Ascension Island and back to port. Either Recife or Bahia. We would usually be in port for one or two days then back out to sea. About July or August we caught a German sub on the surface it had been partly disabled by two US fighter planes. We were able to sink it the crew were able to abandon it before it went under they had lifeboats. They were later picked up by the US Coast Guard A day before they would have reached the coast of Brazil. We then stayed on our regular patrol until the later part of October. Then we stayed in port for about three weeks. When we next left port it was to be an entirely different schedule than before. We would be out for about two weeks making port shortly after daylight provision ship and be back out to sea by noon. That went on until in January 1944. We knew there must be a reason for this the first few days of January made the reason very clear. There were four German ships that had been raiding allied shipping in the Pacific. Germany was becoming desperate for rubber so those four ships were sent to Japan. Some of the guns removed and they were loaded with rubber and were trying to make their way back to Germany. They rounded the tip of South America and went into an Argentine Port to wait for a chance to make a run for Germany on January 2<sup>nd</sup> we got word the British had sank one of those ships that had made it to the north sea. On January 3<sup>rd</sup> the Moffett, another destroyer operating in the same area we were, caught one of those ships and sank it. On January 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> we sank one each day and the best part when the ships broke up from the water pressure, as they went down all the rubber returned to the surface. It was baled in 250-pound bales and the US Coast guard was able to recover all the rubber. Rubber being a very vital and necessary commodity in the US at that time we felt very good about that.



After sinking those ships I guess they decided we deserved a rest so they sent us down to Rio de Janeiro for fifteen days R&R. While in Rio I was able to attend sacrament meeting the first time in about fifteen months. There were only about thirty people in attendance.

I was able to take the tram to the top of the sugar loaf and also spent quite a bit of time on Copa Cabana beach. That is a beach with all the colorful curved sidewalks you see in movies about Rio. But my most memorable experience was while on shore patrol duty. I first had to report to shore patrol headquarters for my assignment. there the shore patrol officer said I know it is against navy regulations but I am short of men So I am going to send you down to the Florida Bar by yourself. He said if he could break some one loose he would send them down later. I knew immediately I would be on my own. The Florida Bar was by far the largest in that part of the city. It had one half-block frontage with one door on the corner and another at the center of the block. The place was pretty well filled to capacity with about two thirds being about evenly split between US navy sailors and Merchant Marines. There was usually a little tension between Navy sailors and Merchant Marines that evening the very air was charged with the tension. I walked out the door on the corner down the sidewalk and entered the door at the center of the block. As I entered I could see navy sailors and merchant marines coming out of their seats all across the room ready to fight. I yelled and I yelled loud all the navy sailors all looked around at me and settled back in their seats. But the Merchant Marines mostly stood by their chairs. Some of them started trying to tell me that as shore patrol I did not have any authority over them. I just told them go ahead and start something, I won't try to stop you I'll just go to the bar, pick up the phone, call shore patrol headquarters and have some help down here in about three minutes. Then we will just take you up to shore patrol headquarters and you can explain to the officer that we don't have authority over you and he will make you aware of who has the authority. That seemed to convince them for the time being.



But there was still a lot of tension in the air. As long as I stayed there no one got out of line. I left about 3:30 am. Sometime between then and daylight it broke loose. They just about tore that place apart almost every chair and quite a few of the tables were broken.

We left Rio about the last of February. Arrived in at Bahia just in time for carnival and that was really something to behold. It was almost impossible to just walk up the street to go anyplace. the fastest way was to grab the back end of a snake dance going your way. We were there about three days before heading for the states. We arrived in Charleston, South Carolina about the middle of March. I spent about six weeks there while they did some work on the ship. They removed one of the five-inch mounts and replaced it with two seven-forty twin millimeter anti aircraft mounts.

I was given leave starting the 5<sup>th</sup> of April. Ten days leave plus four days travel time making fourteen days in all. Donald was home at the same time on boot leave he had been in six weeks and had fifteen days I had been in two years and had fourteen days. I left home to return to the ship April 17<sup>th</sup> exactly two years to the day when I left the first time.

We left the navy yard about two weeks later. Headed for an area off the coast of Maine for a little gunnery practice. While in that area I managed to go ashore in Portland a couple of times.

About six of us went into a café for supper. One evening we all ordered, but one fellow from Missouri, the waitress said, "all right rebel what are you going to have?" He said, "how do you know I'm a rebel?" "I can tell by your looks. You look like a rebel." Being kind of a smarty at times, I spoke up and said, "if you're so smart, where do you think I'm from?" She came right back with "you're from Utah." I said, "How do you figure that?" Because in all the time I had been in the Navy, no one had seemed to think I was from Utah. She shot right back with, "you look like one of those Mormons with about five wife's." She had the Mormon right at least. And it kind of took the smarts out of me for a while.

Leaving the coast of Maine, we sailed south spent a few days in Boston harbor. Where a convoy was put together and we sailed for England to be ready for the Normandy invasion. There were two other destroyers the same class as the Jouett and five of the newer 2250 class escorting a convoy of about twelve to fourteen merchant ships. As I remember we were a little over two weeks crossing. We went north around the north tip of Ireland then south through the Irish Sea around the southern tip of England then north to south Hampton where we spent almost two weeks before the invasion. Going around the north end of Ireland at that time of year it would only be fully dark for about thirty minutes each night.



# **RULON WILLIAM COOK**

## **I JOINED THE NAVY**

On April 17, 1942 I was sworn into the United States Navy in Salt Lake City at the recruiting station. A few days later I was at the San Diego Naval Training Station for six weeks boot camp and then four months of Fire Control School. I graduated about the last of September 1942 from Fire Control School. I graduated in the top fourth of 150.

I boarded a train in San Diego on Monday morning and I left the train Saturday about noon in Norfolk, Virginia.

## **TORE THE CARTILAGE IN MY KNEE**

While there waiting for transportation to Brazil, I was assigned to a job in the commissary and I was unpacking some frozen chicken. I took a bunch of garbage out to throw on the garbage truck. I crawled upon the truck to make more room for the garbage. Instead of climbing down I jumped down onto a pile of debris by the side of the truck. I hit something hard in the pile and tore the cartilage in my knee. It didn't bother me much at the time but while I was on the ship headed south the torn cartilage slipped and I couldn't straighten my knee. I was put off the ship at a navel hospital in San Juan, Porto Rico. This was October 19, 1942. The surgeon who was my doctor said he was sure it was a torn cartilage, but cartilage does not show on x-ray. So, he thought it might be best to wait a while before operating to see if by chance it would heal by itself. When it didn't improve, about a week before Christmas, they operated on my knee, removing all the cartilage. This is all they could do at that time. About the same time the hospital cook became drunk. He didn't sober up until after New Years -- it was a mess. I left the hospital February 14, 1943 and boarded a ship headed for Brazil.

## **THE U.S.S. JOUETT DESTROYER 396**

As I remember, it took about two weeks to reach Recife, Brazil. This being our home port for the next year. It was another twelve to fourteen days before the ship I had been assigned to come in from patrol. The next morning I boarded that ship the U.S.S. Jouett Destroyer 396 -- my home for the next twenty-eight months.

## **SUBMARINE PATROL BETWEEN BRAZIL AND AFRICA**

Until January of 1944, we were on submarine patrol between Brazil and Africa. We sank one German Sub and in January 1944 we sank two German ships loaded with rubber (one January 4, and one January 5) from Japan. The rubber all floated. The U.S. Coast Guard picked up the rubber and was able to salvage most of the rubber. They then sent us on down to Rio for fifteen days for R&R (Rest and Relaxation). Following which it took us about ten or eleven weeks to work our way back to the States. We spent about six weeks in the Navy yard to have some new equipment installed. During which time I was allowed ten days leave plus four days traveling time. I boarded a plane to return to the ship on April 17, 1944, exactly two years to the day from the time I left the first time.

## **TO ENGLAND AND "D"-DAY**

Leaving the navy yard we headed north for gunnery practice off the Maine coast. After which, we came back down the coast and picked up a convoy just out of Norfolk, Virginia and headed for England going around the North of Ireland and South thru the Irish Sea to South Hampton, England. We spent about two weeks around England before picking up a convoy and heading for Normandy (D-Day). After fifteen days off the French coast, I have never been able to get excited about fireworks since then. We then escorted a convoy back to Clyde, Scotland, then to South Hampton again before picking up another convoy and heading for the Mediterranean.



## **THE SOUTHERN FRANCE INVASION**

In preparation for the Southern France invasion, we docked at Oran, Africa to prepare the ship. It was so hot we would try to find a little shade all day until the sun went down and then work hard as we could until dark. Leaving Oran, we went into Naples, Italy, for awhile before the invasion. We spent the rest of 1944 in the Mediterranean back and forth between the African coast and the French coast.

## **BACK TO THE STATES AND A FEW DAYS HOME**

On the morning of January 1, 1945, we came thru the Straights of Gibraltar on our way back to the states. We could only travel about 4 ½ knots as we could only travel as fast as the slowest ship

in the convoy. Therefore, it was about a six week voyage. After leaving the convoy just outside New York Harbor, we went south to Charleston, South Carolina's shipyard. Again I was given a ten day leave so I had a few days home.

## **WE WERE IN LONDON WHEN WE LEARNED THE WAR WAS OVER**

We then escorted a convoy to France. After leaving the convoy just off the French coast, we docked in the harbor of South Hampton, England. A few of us who rated liberty boarded a train at 4:00 AM the next morning and went to spend a day in London. Arriving in London, about four hours later, we learned the war was over in Europe. It was quite an event when evening came to see the reaction of the crowds of people when they turned on the lights for the first time since the start of the war.

## **CONVOYS WERE DISCONTINUED**

We arrived back at the ship about 2:00 AM the next morning. After a stop at Belfast, Ireland, it was back to the States. We were just ready to leave with another convoy when the skipper received orders that all convoys were being discontinued in the Atlantic.

## **TRANSFERRED TO NEW CONSTRUCTION**

Having time for it they gave us a ten day leave with no travel time we were told. But, I must have been doing something right, because four people in the chain of command between me and the ship's captain went to bat to get me some travel time. I ended up with fourteen days. When I returned to the ship I learned I was being transferred to new construction.

## **ASSIGNED TO A ROCKET SHIP**

I was first sent to Norfolk, Virginia, then from there I was assigned to a rocket ship still under construction in the Brown Ship Yard at Houston, Texas. The next few weeks was spent inventorying the supplies and equipment that would go aboard and being trained about the equipment we were unfamiliar with.

## **THE WAR ENDED IN JAPAN**

About two weeks before the ship was to be commissioned, the war ended in Japan. When the ship left port I had too many discharge points to go with the ship but not quite enough to get my discharge. I had to wait another six weeks. Having nothing much to do except attend muster at 8:00 AM each morning, some of us took a few short day trips by hitchhiking as far as we thought we could go and still be back for 8:00 AM muster. During this time, not having access to any LDS Services, I attended a few Baptist Services and sang in a Baptist Choir for awhile.

## **DISCHARGED FROM THE NAVY**

About November 1, 1945 I left Houston to go to Shoemaker, California to be discharged. I was discharged November 6, 1946.



# THE THANKSGIVING I REMEMBER MOST

By

Rulon Cook

The Thanksgiving I remember best was not spent at home, but in a hospital in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The year was 1942. I was a Second Class Seaman in the Navy, had just passed my twenty-third birthday, and the world was in war. I had never been farther from home than Wyoming and Colorado, but I spent this particular Thanksgiving in a Naval Hospital five thousand mile from home. I was there among strangers on an occasion that had always included family and friends. World War II changed that for many.

As I lay there, I recalled the past year and the contrast I felt on this day. I thought of those at home, and that chronic, empty feeling in my stomach became more intense. Last year I had had a "traditional Thanksgiving" with my family and friends. The morning began with a rabbit hunt, followed by a beautiful dinner prepared by loving hands, and culminated at the old Cedar Fort Gymnasium, dancing up a storm at the annual Thanksgiving Day Dance. That's how it had always been -- family, friends, togetherness.

In April of 1942, I joined the Navy. After initial training I was sent to Norfolk, Virginia, where I worked in the bass commissary awaiting a troop transport ship to Brazil. On route to Brazil I injured my knee and it became necessary to be left in San Juan for treatment at the Naval Hospital.

My Thanksgiving dinner sure wasn't like at home, but it and trimmings prepared by a former fishing boat sailor from Seattle who was drunk more often than not! No it wasn't like Mother's dinner, but I was more fortunate than many such as men serving in the Aleutian Islands who were eating Spam when President Roosevelt came over the radio saying, "All American Servicemen would have a turkey dinner for thanksgiving."

It was a Thanksgiving Day filled with contrasts, of loneliness, and memories of home. It made me thankful for my home and the values taught in that home.

**San Diego, California, About May 5,\* 1942**

\*(There is no date on the letter or place from which it was written.. The estimate is based upon the following: 1. Rulon says in this letter to Edris, "I arrived here two weeks ago today. In his personal history Rulon says he was sworn into the Navy April 17, 1942 and left immediately for San Diego. A few days later he arrived in San Diego. 2. Marion got home from his mission April 15, 1942. He tried to join the Marines but was rejected because of his age on April 24th. He was inducted into the army June 2, 1942 at Fort Douglas. Based upon what Alice Cook wrote onto Rulon's letter about Marion helping on the farm and going into Salt Lake "tomorrow to see if he can get on a construction job for the army" this letter had to have been written after April 24th when Marion came home from his mission and June 2, when he was inducted into the army. Estimate of May 5th is because that was about two weeks plus "a few days" after Rulon was sworn into the Navy and left for San Diego. The place where the letter was written from has been put at San Diego because that is where Rulon was on May 5, 1942 based upon the above information.

See the letter Alice S Cook added to Rulon's letter in the section of letters from Alice S Cook to Edris Cook Karren)

Dear Edris, Bert and family,

I don't know your address so I'll send this to mother and have her forward it.

I arrived here two weeks ago today and so far it hasn't been bad. If a fellow will just keep his mouth shut and his ears open he will get along just swell. It only takes a day or two to get used to it.

From all indication they are getting our Co ready to send to sea. We had our last shot in the arm yesterday, and went to the dentist. I had seven fillings and boy was it torture.

It is rumored that this Co is slated for the next sea draft and it will probably be about the end of this week. Well the sooner the better as far as I'm concerned.

It was sure interesting when we were still over at the receiving unit after we got used to it, to watch the new recruits come. They would all have such a bewildered and half scared look on their faces as if they were about to turn and run.

Well there isn't much more I can think of tonight so I'll close. With love for now.

Rulon