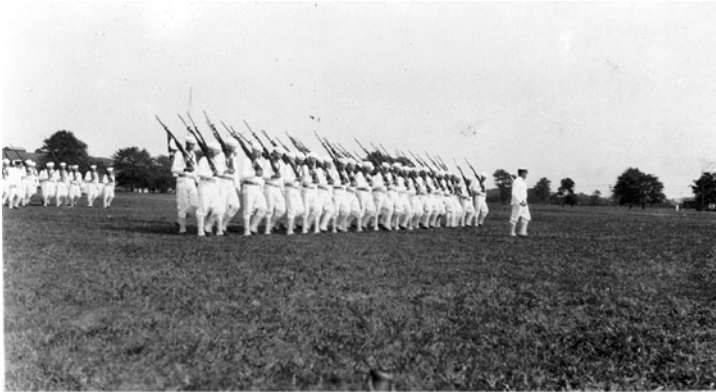


## **Wartime Memories of a Tin Can Sailor**

*By Kermit Beverly*

My youngest granddaughter called me from college not long ago and asked; "Grandpa, were you ever in the Armed Services"? When I replied, "Yes, I was in the Navy during WWII," she yelled "COOL"! She had to write a paper on the subject; so I prepared a journal of some of the memories that I recall which are as follows.

It was still Depression time in the beginning of 1939 when three of my high school friends and I decided to visit a Navy recruiting officer who came to the small town where I lived to learn about life in the Navy. He described an exciting life aboard ship with gorgeous girls in foreign ports and four years of leisure life. This was just the thing for four kids with



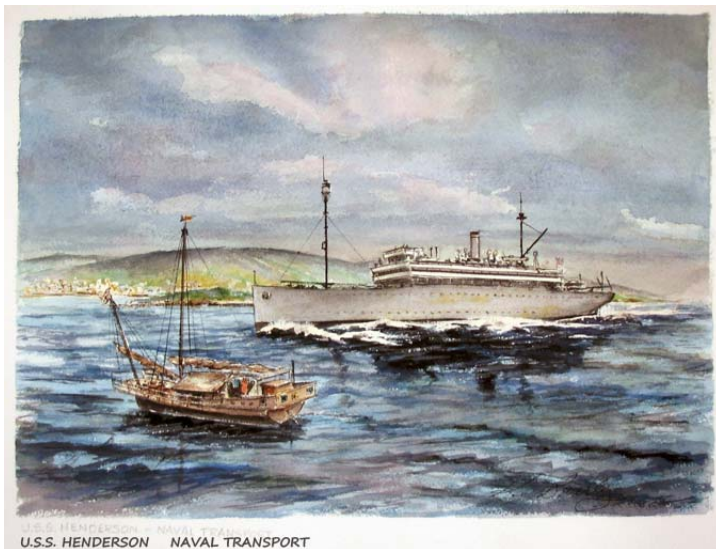
*PLATOON TRAINING AT NOB, NORFOLK, FEB 1939*

fantastic dreams of the future and we said; "SIGN US UP"! We needed our parents signatures since we were only 17. My mother was reluctant to approve, but after many days of pleading, she surrendered. One of my friends reneged, one failed the physical exam, and the other and I were sworn in and sent for training at N.O.B., Norfolk, Va. We were separated and never saw each other again. All of my worldly possessions were taken except my toothbrush and I was given a bag filled with complete uniforms, towels, etc. along with bedding, a

mattress and a pair of canvas leggings to wear at all times while in training to identify me as a lowly BOOT (recruit). I soon learned that I was one of the lowest creatures alive and I had to wash my clothes in a bucket, darn my socks and tie a "zillion" knots, that I still find handy today.

I was chosen to be the Recruit Yeomen of my platoon. That meant I worked in the office, assisted with records, etc. and was the errand boy for the Chief and Officer in Charge. This caused some jealousy and resulted in my first fight. We drilled, drilled and drilled until I thought it would never end. I had to take turns at guard duty which meant having a web belt around my waist with a wooden board dangling with my orders and carrying a billy club. We would have to walk in a prescribed route and cross to the opposite side of the street from the high-ranking officers' homes so as not be too near their homes. Sometimes we would be hassled by their kids but we were ordered never to speak to anyone unless spoken to.

We were granted the privilege to go into town on weekends for a few hours. I didn't realize that people in coastal cities didn't like service men and regarded them as potential criminals, thieves and hooligans who were up to no good with their daughters. Some restaurants would not serve enlisted men. There were some signs stating "SAILORS AND DOGS KEEP OFF THE GRASS". This changed of course when the war started because most families had members *in* the service.



I was allowed to enter a service school for further specialized training to become a Storekeeper to handle supplies aboard ship. Just two weeks into classes, everyone in the special classes was ordered to the fleet for duty. Along with many of my school mates I was called out of my bunk at 2 o'clock in the morning and ordered on to a bus.

We had no idea where we were headed but disembarked at Pier 2 where a large Navy transport ship, (the U.S.S. HENDERSON), was nestled alongside the dock and we were shepherded aboard like sheep driven to a barn.