



## HE WAS A SAILOR

When I was but a youngster, and knew little of this world, I was sure of this one thing — A Sailor was the most important person that I had ever seen — He had sailed the world but said it was the 7 seas — He talked of Davy Jones, and white caps, and pennants whipping in the breeze. He also spoke of other things that were very strange to me — General Quarters, all hands man your battle stations! — and he said, “ I prayed, and I knew whatever was to be, would be, but I believe He answered me.”

That was in Pearl, as he recalled, and he survived that day — He never spoke of Shipmates suffering, he held it in his soul — and he wanted it that way. He always spoke of lighter things where he would have his easy thoughts create a friendly give and take — Those serious things he was concerned might make his strong voice break.

He was on that Battle Wagon, Arizona, on December 7, 1941. She was lost but he was saved — for what reason no one knows — He noted he was just the lucky one, and that is all he would disclose — He went from Arizona to other ships, for the duration as it was said, until the war came to a close. This “ Swab” as he called himself, still served on ships with wooden decks, and he still knew that holystone — But he had become a leading Seaman, and now his junior Shipmates had to moan and groan. He still talked of washing whitehats in the wake. And of scrubbing piping with toothpaste, and using masking tape to rid his blues of every piece of lint that might spoil that look that was each Sailor’s taste.

He rolled the brim of his whitehat, very carefully he mentioned — while it was still wet — It held that shape when it was dry and that was his full intention. As it set upon his curly hair, it was not square, as the regulations state — but it was he “the salty one” that had seen it and done it, that, no one could debate. The whitehat was the start of it, and then the 13 button blues, belled and spiked with dragons on the cuffs, with spit shined boots and a neckerchief that was tightly rolled and tied close to his throat — He was the envy of every whitehat, of his crew, as he stepped lightly from that liberty boat.

He later rode a Heavy Cruiser — I have indeed tried hard, but can’t remember Her name. He told me some about Her, and I know She gained Her fame. She was in many battles in that Second World War, She and Her crew did their best to even up the score — He told me he made second class before the War was done, and he was a Gun Mount Captain, aboard that Heavy Cruiser, when that same war was won.

He can speak no more nor tell me of a Sailors way, for he has been gone for many years — but I remain the reservoir of many of his thoughts and words and the very nearly tears — I spent my working life in Navy Blues, and it was always near to much of what he said — To me it was an honored place and he was more than right to speak of the life, which he, that Sailor once had led.

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