

JAMES DREW

Mr. Drew told Linda about a scrapbook his daughter just finished. He said Mr. Alvers would have one of them in his permanent record. You have to write to get a copy of it.

Linda looked at his picture. He is only 17 and he enlisted. His brother Robert Earl Drew was in also. He was in for 3 years. They were both listed as missing in action at the same time.

Linda told Mr. Drew and his wife about the letter her dad wrote to her mom about the kamikaze plane. Linda mentioned the camaraderie on the boat.

Mr. Drew said that they break off into little fraternities on the boat. He said the one he was in and they would do things to just aggravate people. Mr. Drew felt Linda could get more information from Willie Gunn. Willie knows the date the ship was commissioned and where it was made. He won't part with it but he might make you a picture. He was a yeoman. A yeoman was sort of a secretary. He took care of all the personnel records so he knew what was going on with everybody. Gunn was sort of the Captain personal secretary. The captain was R.J. French.

Is there any kind of log of where the ship went?

I think you can get that log. Look in the back of Scuttlebut and it will tell you who to write to for the log.

Linda has requested pictures of the 534 or any information and has been told they don't (the government) have any information on that particular boat. The Museum in Evansville, Indiana has a lot of information on the 534 and all the boats. There was about 180 manufactured.

Linda said her dad was a Coxan and she asked what does a Coxan do. Mr. Drew said he operated a small boat. That would be his major responsibility. In addition to being responsible for the boat he probably had to supervise a crew of several people who were responsible for keeping the ship clean. He would be responsible for the integrity of the ship.

Linda told a story about her dad putting his name on the side of the ship.

Mr. Drew said Mr. Gunn is a former college president and he is a brilliant conversationalist. His memory is like a steel trap.

Linda – I need Mr. Gunn for the historically perspective of the ship but for the personality of it I need information from everybody. The crew list he sent was very helpful.

Linda – What she thinks is there are probably crew members that are members of the ST Association. But there also might be crew members that aren't members of the ST.

Linda told about her contact with Jim Seares.

After you got out of the field hospital – did you go back? Mr. Drew – Yes went back.

I am looking for information about the crew after the plane hit it. Her dad's personnel records are very skimpy.

Linda – What are coffer dams.

Mr. Drew – The ship had a big hole in it and the bomb went through the tank deck and exploded beneath everything. Just blew a big hole. In the middle of the ship and it built a dam on each side of that hole to pump water out and the ship came back out. It is amazing how they got it back up so quickly.

I am sure at that time they were trying to save as many ships as they could at that time.

Mr. Drew – The war was over on August 14th and they made our ship, they started cannibalizing – anybody needed a part for another ST came by our ship and helped themselves to it because they knew we were no longer needed for the war effort. So we were kind of put in a ship's graveyard really. I think perhaps your dad transferred in August and somebody came by and wanted that LCVP paper to which he was responsible and when they let the LCVP go they let your father go with the boat.

He showed Linda some pictures. He showed her a picture of the ship with a big hole in it and said this was before the typhoon hit them. The ship had been hit by a torpedo.

He said the hospital that he and Mr. Alvers were in it was a lot like the TV series MASH. It has tents and everything. My first impression was when I got there and I was lying down on this cot, my cot didn't have a mattress on it. It had a blanket and I used the blanket for a pillow and I was looking up at the top of the tent and I saw all these holes up there and I asked the fellow next to me what these holes were for. He said those were bullet holes. So the first night I was there I remember they had a squeamish outside the hospital, the tent, and there was shooting going on. After a while I got some flashlights out and it turned out he had killed a goat. The soldier thought someone was trespassing and the "goat" didn't know the password so he got shot.

Linda asked how he was injured. – He had a foot injury and was walking around on crutches and he's sure Mr.

Alvers was too.

Linda told Drew about how during the gulf war that one of her companies did a video for Emergency Nurses Association who wanted to honor their employees that went to the gulf war. It was very touching tribute. So Linda said she was familiar with field hospitals today and she is sure they are little more sophisticated today than they were 40 years ago.

Mr. Drew – It was just behind the enemy lines and the war was going on just across the hill. They were bringing wounded in every day. I remember a fellow they brought in next to him died the next day. He was only 17.

They have two daughters. His daughter that is 39 and has a child is very interested in her father's service career.

Mr. Drew showed Linda a picture of the ship. The hole is where the bomb and the plane hole. In one of the pictures it shows the plane scattered all over.

Linda said it was amazing that anything was left after the fire. James said there were actually two fires. The initial fire and then the second fire broke out. The second one was worst than the first. We had a lot of help from other people. While the fire was going on I stayed on the ship until it got where I couldn't walk and late afternoon they put me in an ambulance and brought me to the hospital and I believe your father was carried over to the hospital several hours before he was.

Linda told a story about her dad falling down due to his war injury.

Linda asked how Mr. & Mrs. Drew met. They met in college. He went to college on the GI bill.

Mr. Drew – I am surprised how easily you found this place. Mr. Drew showed Linda some more pictures. He said Frank and Willie have all the negatives to the pictures. We had pup tents and we used to call our area the Taj Mahal. Mr. Drew said he thinks his ship was the last ship sunk by a kamikaze. That was the last kamikaze attack on a ship. He showed Linda propaganda that was put out by Japan. When you write about the records in St. Louis you send them a copy of that and tell them that your dad has one of those in his personnel record and that you want a copy of it. Everything is reduced to microfilm. He would have a citation in his records.

Linda said she does have a couple of his honorable discharge. Mr. Drew said you need to send that St. Louis when you apply for his decorations. Mr. Drew showed Linda the emblem that they wore on their uniform. When her father had the emblem it was navy blue and red. Linda asked what it meant. Mr. Drew said it means Land, Sea, and Air. They were in the amphibious branch of the Navy. Land is represented by the Machine, the sea is represented by Anchor, and the air is represented by Eagle. Mr. Drew showed Linda his various medals.

After the ST 534 did you serve on any other ship? Yes he served on the 705 and then he was on flagship US Eldorado.

Did you serve in the same capacity?

Mr. Drew – I was a cook. I fed them. We did eat good. We took pride in the food we put out.

Linda – When you went into the Navy you just went into whatever they said to go?

Mr. Drew – I had a little experience as a butcher. I enjoyed it. We had this little fraternity. Willie Gunn, two pharmacies mates, two gunner mates, and one or two others. The pharmacy, we had a hospital that had two beds, we called it sick bay and I had a hot plate near me and so when we had beef I would sneak a tenderloin to the sick bay, Of course the hospital corpsman we had to give alcohol. We would go down there about midnight and have some good food and alcohol. We even made ice cream.

Mr. Drew read that the French were going to issue a medal and he wanted Linda to be sure to apply for her father. He believes her dad should have quite a few medals. He feels you should be insistent about getting the medals. If he is in a VA hospital you need a copy of DD214. Do you know what that is? It has discharge information. When they discharge a service man they issue what you they call a DD214. They used to put this information on the back of the discharge, but they no longer do that. They put it on another sheet of paper and that is how they reference number. If he is in the VA hospital someone along the line had to have a DD214. So get a copy of that because you will need it when you send the information to St. Louis to get his decorations. You would send a copy of discharge with a copy of DD 214. He would probably have a copy of all these letters too.

Linda – I do have some copies of different letters but I don't recognize either one of these. Mr. Drew – That was the initial shoulder patch that we once wore but I never did wear one. That is the invasion currency. Before you went ashore they gave you, they exchanged your money and you got stuff like that so you could buy things that was so the enemy couldn't get hold of American currency. That is the only two pieces I have left.

Somebody (Powell) was a GI's friend. He wrote about things that were common to the GI's. He got killed at Okinawa. On an island just off Okinawa. He was killed around April 3rd or 4th. His wife should out that she thought she saw an article about him that said he had a neurotic mind. They all laughed at that. Mr. Drew asked about Linda being a nurse and she explained the type of work she does and how she is going to put this project together with the help of her editor. Mr. Drew was very impressed with that.

Linda told Mr. Drew how she decided to do this project.

Mr. Drew – When they left Pearl Harbor going out to Guam everybody on the ship had the privilege of buying a case of beer. So I had friends who didn't drink beer so I managed to buy their beer ration and have that for my own

so when the sink got sunk everybody started hollering "Save the beer". The second or third night when we were in the hospital here comes these sailors, some of my friends, and they had a GI can and it was full of beer that they had salvaged from the ship. Divers had gone down in the ship and salvaged the beer. So we had this GI can full of beer and then we were trying to figure out how to cool the beer. Some fella came up with the idea to get some CO2 fire extinguishers and when you discharge the fire extinguishers they form an ice, dry ice. So we got two CO2 fire extinguishers and you turn them upside down and they start discharging. We got blankets and wrapped this thing around and sure enough when you took the blankets off there was just a cover of ice over everything. We shared the beer with everyone in the ward. The captain who was a doctor came in the next morning and there were beer cans and he interrogated everybody about the beer cans. He wanted to know how we had a beer party but of course everybody played dumb.

Linda is looking at something and she read – He says he thought it happened on a Sunday morning but I was only 18 and aboard ship one day wasn't much different from another. Mr. Drew – That is right really. I am not absolutely certain what morning it happened but I try to calculate which date precisely it happened on.

Linda – I think I'll write his name down. He might be a good one to contact. Mr. Drew – I believe I saw his name, I read in the scuttlebutt this past issue that the ST 1022 was having a reunion and I am thinking that is the same person that signed in the Scuttlebutt. Bill Cummins has died since that picture was made and I believe that is Bill Cummins.

Linda commented on how nice something was and Mr. Drew said his daughter did it for him. The name of the younger daughter's name is Anita Betha, Iowa Georgia, Box 177. She going to be upset that I didn't ask her to come today.

I remember one nurse who I wouldn't call obese but she was a little on the hefty side and her name was Franny. She liked to give GI's alcohol rub and massage on their backs. So she used to massage my back and everybody's back with a bottle of cool rubbing alcohol. It was all right. But her name was Franny and she was sort of a motherly type. She got along with everybody good. She was a lieutenant I believe. The doctor was a Captain. She was a good go between the Captain and the enlisted men.

Mr. Drew – Willie Gunn will share anything he has with you. He is unselfish. He will help you if he can if you tell him what you need.

Linda – Her dad was on the 534 for the entire amount of time that it was commissioned. She is very interested in Jim Sears account of what happened in Europe. He told her a story about a huge amount of ships and he was just floating around. He said when he woke up in the morning there were ships all over the place. Mr. Drew – Yes, there were a tremendous amount there and then I think the 534 had a collision with another ship. Ask him if he remembers that. Frank was in Normandy. You are going to enjoy Frank. He is a laid back character. Sort of

slow. I would say he talks like a Georgia redneck but he is from New Mexico but he is good fella and you can get a lot of information from him.

Now there is another fella going that day but I don't quite remember his name. His name (he looked it up) is Larry Gray and he is from South Carolina. There is a fella from New York. B. O Docks. Linda said she wrote to him and he said he was only on the 534 a little time. She found a guy named Oscar Cress in Florida and he is a member of the ST Association but he has never been to the conventions or anything. Him and his wife have volunteered to help. Mr. Drew – Another officer is Alex Fielding. Linda said she has written to him. Linda said she has heard back from Jim Seares, Oscar Cress, Mr. Drew and Docs.

Linda – Where did you do your basic training. Mr. Drew – San Diego. A lot of the guys I talked to were at Great Lakes. How many places were there?

Mr. Drew – The Great Lakes, there was a training base in Norfolk, VA. and Samson, NY. Linda - You sent me the crew list and I am going to compare the crew list with list of the people, her dad had the muster list, the training recruits at Great Lakes, and she is going to see if anybody that was at Great Lakes with him then went on the 534.

Mr. Drew is looking for a Luther C. Lyles who was on the 534 with him and was from his home town. He would like Linda to let him know if she finds him. He said they, Luther and him, left Long Beach at the same time and he hitch hiked from Long Beach to Atlanta. Luther caught the train. Mr. Drew said he beat the train home by three days. His first ride took him to Texas. He got to Atlanta about two in the morning and went to the YMCA for a bed but they didn't have any available. He wound up going to the bus station to lie down for a while. The train ride Luther took lasted almost 7 days.

Linda – The day the ship was hit by the plane, was that the most frightening day?

Mr. Drew – Not really. I think the typhoon was the most frightening. The weather didn't have respect for anybody. We didn't have any rudders because some ship had cannibalized our rudders so we couldn't steer the ship. We didn't have any means to steer the ship except what we had were twin screws or twin propellers and you could run one engine in reverse and the other would pull ahead and it would sort of twist the ship and we managed to steer it in a somewhat deviated way. We were going across that bay and the wind was blowing 150 miles an hour. The ship would go out of sight and you couldn't see the top of the wave. We collided with one ship. It was frightening and you couldn't see. It was just black. The salt spray on you would beat you down. If you didn't hold onto something you would get blown away. I remember when we hit that coral reef and the Captain said flood the ship and we did. We literally took on all the water we could to sort of anchor the ship so the wind wouldn't blow it away. It worked. The next day the wind began to die down and the tide started going out. Our ship was set way up on dry land. Fortunately I think it saved us. Our ship had a big hole right in the middle of

it. It went all the way from the top deck to the bottom. I think it gave me time to think about and appreciate my mortality. I got confronted more about my mortality during the typhoon during the suicide incident. The next day the ships were literally were scattered along the beach where they were blown. One ship in particular which was a repair ship, it literally had a sea going tub rammed right through it. It went through that ship like an arrow. The bow was sticking out one side and the fantail was sticking out the other.

Linda – What happened to Captain French?

Mr. Drew – I really don't know. If anybody knows Willie Gunn will. The Captain was a little bit of a withdrawn person. He was brilliant but he was sort of introverted. He stayed to himself. Of course as Captain of the ship he has the full responsible for everybody and everything. I really think when the ship was sunk and he didn't declare it sunk and decided we were going to be hell bent to raise it up and repair it. Of course I was all for it. Gung Ho. But rumor was they were going to take the ship's crew and send them to the Philippines on another ship to train for the invasion of Japan. And that was going to take place on November 1st. So they were planning on shipping us out to the Philippines on another ship. Of course that rumor never did prove true mainly because the war ended on August 14th when they dropped the bomb. I remember reading on the bulletin board they had an all hands memorandum – it said one bomb dropped on Hiroshima and killed 250,000 people and I said that ain't right. I can't believe that one bomb killed that many people. Then they told us over the radio that it was an atomic bomb and it just leveled the city. Of course I was all for it then because it ended the war.

I was still on the 534. It was tied up to a livery ship.

Linda – When the typhoon came and became beached how did you get off it?

Mr. Drew – They declared it uninhabitable. I remember we ran out of fresh water so we were drinking pineapple juice and I never got so disgusted with something as pineapple juice. We had a steady diet of pineapple juice. I was glad to get off it. They issued us all combat boots and combat trousers that had big pockets on the side. They were olive green and they gave us each a pup tent. They paired us off and gave each pair a pup tent.

We built a little tent city in Okinawa. We wanted some coffee and all we were getting were these three in one rations, ten in one rations. They were about the size of a cracker jack box and in there was a can of meat, eggs and ham, something like we had in a candy bar and a pack of cigarettes (4 cigarettes) and that is what we were eating. So I started bumming around. I would see these ships out. I didn't know these ships but I knew how to get to the galley because that is where they kept the food. So I would talk to the head man and told him what our predicament was. I told him we really needed some things. So they gave me a slab of bacon, a box of coffee. So we managed very well. We got a lot of food from just bumming.

Linda – What did you do when you came out of the service.

Mr. Drew – His father had a farm in South Georgia and he wanted me to come to farm but I was never much of a

farmer. We made this red syrup which was kind of like a community proper. I really couldn't stand it anymore and I told my mother I don't want to farm I want to go to college. I played baseball. My Junior year of college I met Annette. I did pretty well. Before I went in the service I hadn't graduated high school. I was in the 10th grade when I joined the service. So when I got out of the service I took a GED test and I passed. Of course they accepted it in college. I did okay. They let you take a test in what is required in the course and if you pass they will give you credit for it so instead of being a freshman I became a sophomore. You have to enjoy whatever you do and you have to have a sense of humor. After college I taught school and I played professional baseball. I became a school principal and then a trade school supervisor. I went to school in New York one time. We had a place down on 23rd Street almost down on the river called Institute of Crippled and Disabled. I don't know what it was I think ICD. I think it was part of New York University. So I went up there. Annette – He got quite a bit of training after he went with the vocational rehab. He was with the state for about 30 years. He then retired.

Linda – What have you done since your retired?

They all talked about how freely cigarettes were given to the soldiers during the war. They were included with the C-Rations.

Linda asked if Annette worked. Annette is a retired school teacher. She taught elementary. They have two daughters Beth and Debbie.

Linda said she wanted to get together again with Mr. Drew for some further information. Mr. Drew said he will have his daughter with him next time.

Linda said she will get in touch with Mr. Drew's daughter and let her know what she is doing and she will give Beth a copy of the transcription of tape that is being used. Maybe they could work together on this project. When you do something like this the more input you have the better it becomes. Linda wanted to know if Mr. Drew ever thinks about those days or does he try to put them behind him.

Mr. Drew – Not really. Sometimes I think about it and I try to remember. I remember the ship best and how easy it was for me. I was never seasick. A lot of people had seasickness. He particularly remembers a fella named Docs from New York used to walk around with a trash can because he was always sick. I remember how easy it was for me to adjust to the ship at night. You had all these things on the deck of the ship that you could stumble over if you weren't careful and I remember that after a few nights I could run from one end of the ship to the other and never fall over a line or anything. They had chains that you had to look out for. It was almost like reading Braille. Being young has a lot to do with it. Now I understand why young people are so important to be in the service. It is a spontaneous. They do it without any perception of their mortality. They can do it in a snap and not worry about dying. You take an older person. He is a lot more calculating.

Linda – What happened the day when you were up in the tents and did somebody come along and say under your tents we are sailing out of here?

Mr. Drew – No. I remember when we got our orders. They just said to leave everything as it is. Somebody will clean it up. I had an innerspring mattress that I pilfered from somebody. There was a soldier from Dublin, Georgia and his name was Luther Freeman. I remember telling him that I had an innerspring mattress and I thought maybe he could get it. It is amazing one night Willie and I decided we were going, we heard rumors that they had a 10 in one rations popout not far from where we had our tents. He and I decided we were going to go down and pilfer a case or two of these 10 in one rations. 10 in one rations had bacon, candy, everything. So we decided we needed some of the 10 in one rations and I went down there to this repression pile and it was covered up with canvas and I said well what I will do is I will take this knife and cut a hole in the canvas. About the time I was going to cut a hole in this canvas this light was shone in my face and this fella challenged me and all I could do was back off and just say yeah you caught me and he shone the light in my face and he said Richard Drew, he and I went to high school together and I said I was just trying to get some box or two of these rations and he said well don't cut my canvas let me help you. So he gave Willie and I a box apiece. It is amazing. Luther Freeman. He was in the Army while we were in the Navy and he had the assignment of being the guard on duty of that ration pile. Of course he guarded everything because the Japanese sometimes at night would slip down on their heels and they would pilfer things from our men. It amazing we did things and didn't really calculate the consequences of what we were doing.

Linda – When you were up in that tent were you afraid of the Japanese coming up and down?

Mr. Drew – No, not really. I think some of us had carbines and they never did bother us too much. He apologized not knowing her dad better.

Linda pointed out that her dad was there so knowing what everybody else did helps to know about the things her dad possibly did. Mr. Drew said that his (her dad) rating was a coxan and that was a third class petty officer and that was a very enviable rating because they sort of determined what the deck hands did. Who cleaned up what. Who chipped paint, who didn't. Everybody sort of envied him and they envied cooks took. We had about 6 or 7 coxans on the ship and their main responsibility was these LCPB's. When you were going to make an invasion those things had to work. They depended on them to move everything. In addition to that when we went port they had to move all supplies in and off the ship. When we got supplies they put them in the LCPB and then they brought them out on the ship and we unloaded them. They went and got mail. They did everything. So he was a responsible person or he wouldn't have been a coxan.

Linda – When you were on that other ship, if the war ended on August 14th, then what did the other ship do? Mr. Drew – The next ST I was on I caught it in Pearl Harbor. They brought that ship back to the United States and they were going to decommission it. It was after the war. So what we did was we brought it to San Francisco Bay

into the Navy yard. They were going to dismantle it and decommission it. That was ST 705.

Linda – But it wasn't a war time thing then. It was like post war. Mr. Drew – What they did was inventory everything on it. Some of it they threw over the side and some of it you unloaded on barges. Mr. Drew told Linda to call Willie Gunn. He already talked to him about her and he will be expecting her call. He told her to ask him for a picture of the commission plate he has.