Herbert S. Bailey

Professor and Chair
Physics
(1950-1970)



U. S. Navy
WWII

I was teaching mathematics and science in Northville, NY when the attack on Pearl Harbor put us in WWII. I applied to the Navy; was commissioned as an Ensign and sent to Naval Training School at Harvard for Indoctrination and Communications. I was assigned to the USS Naos (AK-105) in July, 1943 where I served as Communications Officer and Deck Officer for the next 28 months. The Naos was a troop transport and cargo ship serving the South Pacific.

Departing San Pedro in August, the Naos loaded cargo at San Francisco and made a round trip run to Pearl Harbor and back between August 28 and October 25. During the next month she was converted for use as a combination troop transport and cargo ship. She cleared the Golden Gate on December 10, embarked 1,080 troops at Port Hueneme, and sailed for the South Pacific in convoy the 12th. The Naos reached Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides on January 3, 1944 and discharged her troops and supplies. A week later she sailed for Fiji and thus began shuttle duty throughout much of the South Pacific. Troop and cargo runs during the next eight months sent her to numerous American bases scattered from Samoa and the Ellice Islands to New Caledonia and the Solomons. While carrying more than 1,000 troops from Tulagi to New Zealand in mid-March, she was pounded by a severe tropical storm, which left her relatively undamaged but damaged her escort, PC–588. The Naos was able to provide emergency aid before sending the battered escort to New Caledonia.

The Naos maintained a busy pace of operations, departing Guadalcanal for the Admiralties. We operated out of Manus in October, and then sailed to carry troop reinforcements and supplies to the Palaus. We reached the Kossol Passage on October 31, and for more than a month operated in the coastal waters off the northern Palaus. During yet another tropical storm November 8, the Naos sent a volunteer crew to rescue 26 men from SC–633 which was thrown upon a reef by heavy seas. Early in December, we embarked 1,114 troops and loaded Army tanks at Anguar and Peleliu before departing in a convoy December 8. Travelling via the Russell Islands, we returned to Noumea on December 22. Four days later we resumed shuttle runs that continued throughout the South Pacific for the next five months.

After embarking Seabee units at Nouméa, the Naos sailed for Okinawa May 15, 1945. We touched at bases in the Solomons, the Marshalls, and the Western Carolines and finally

arrived off Hagushi Beach, Okinawa on July 11. We completed discharge and reload operations later that month and on the 29th, the Naos joined a 65-ship convoy bound for the Marianas. Sailing via Saipan, we reached Pearl Harbor on August 22.

Following the Japanese surrender, the Naos returned to the western Pacific to carry repatriated prisoners-of-war and military cargo. We arrived in Okinawa October 2, after we avoided Typhoon Louise a week later, embarked 1,040 troops for return to the United States. We then sailed on October 14 to San Francisco, arrived on November 5. The Naos was decommissioned there December 6, 1945 and was struck from the Navy List January3, 1946. The ship remained in custody of the Maritime Administration under the name William R. Nelson until sold for scrap in 1962.

My wife, Inez, and daughter, Barbara, spent the war years in San Francisco. By the end of the war, I had been promoted to Lieutenant. I stayed in the Naval Reserves after the war; while teaching at Brockport, I worked with the Naval Reserve Officers School in Rochester. The NROS met weekly and I was a Commanding Officer from 1953 to 1958. This was given up when I went to Indonesia in 1958 for 2 years. I returned and continued at the NROS until I retired as Commander in 1974.

Addendum:
My dad was proud of his service and I was much honored to attend the Naos reunions with him for several years. What a privilege to hear their stories; not about the war as much as the relationships they forged from the situations they found themselves in. As you can see, my dad recounted what the Naos did but not his personal contribution. I remember the first reunion we attended when a white-haired man walked up to my dad and told him he had come 1500 miles just to see him again. He told me he worked in Communications under my dad's command and was so honored to see him again; the respect and admiration in his eyes said it all. I saw my dad as other's saw him, 10 feet tall, not just as his daughter!



[Thanks to Deborah Bingley, Herb's daughter, for sharing his story and her tribute to him for the rest of us who also knew him to be "10 feet tall."]