

Aboard the U.S.S. BALTIMORE

Auke Bay, Juneau, Alaska

9 August 1944.

The President of the United States Address to the Officers and Crew of the U.S.S. Baltimore.

Captain Calhoun, Officers and men of the U.S.S. BALTIMORE: -

"Shipmate's; I wanted to come up here this afternoon to say goodbye to you, but before I do that, I want to thank you for the wonderful cruise that we have had together. Before I came on board, I had followed the record of the Baltimore. You are a happy crew, well disciplined, and have a record that the U.S. Navy will be proud of. There are very few ships of the fleet that have had an opportunity that this ship has had for combat against the enemy."

"Yes I'm still making trips and every opportunity I have to get away from Washington, I do so. One of the reasons I enjoy making these trips, is that I always learn something new. In the past I have made my trips on the 10,000 ton type cruiser. This is my first trip on a post-treaty cruiser and I can say that a lot of improvements have been made."

"I am going back to Washington for work, and you, from what I gather, are going back to play. You are going back for leave which you justly deserve. I trust you will be back on time."

"We are joined together to win this war — the greatest of all wars and when it is over and you return to your families, you can say that the President of the United States said he was proud of you. I wish you all good health, happiness, and long life. I say now, good luck, good bye."

Franklin D. Roosevelt

(Editor Note: To our knowledge, no exact transcription of the President's speech was made at the time of delivery. This is the most accurate approximation we have seen, and are publishing it for all hands.)

AN HISTORIC VOYAGE WITH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,
FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

By
Douglas E. MacVane

The one event that topped the very extensive and impressive combat service of U.S.S. Baltimore (C.A.68) was its selection by President Roosevelt to take him to Pearl Harbor for his meeting with Admiral Chester Nimitz and General Douglas MacArthur.

As I can best recall (and assisted by some records), Baltimore, which was then assigned to Task Force (T.F.) 58, was doing air strikes against Iwo Jima and any other assigned targets.

For some time, the Task Force had been subjected to numerous air attacks, night surveillance and torpedo plane attacks. And on one particular night, I felt I needed some comfortable rest and after securing from General Quarters (Battle Stations), I decided to go below to my compartment on the armor deck and climb into my bunk rather than sleep on deck by my gun station, which was the usual practice in the combat area.

As was the war routine, General Quarters (Battle Stations) was sounded one-half hour before sun-rise. On arrival at my gun station and reporting in--my first glance out across the water, I realized the U.S.S. Baltimore was steaming all alone. Task Force 58 had disappeared.

It didn't take long to determine what direction we were heading in. When the sun began to rise, the Baltimore was steaming east at a high rate of speed. I was uncertain if a

destroyer was giving us anti-submarine cover but I felt we were travelling too fast for one to keep station with us.

Well, eventually Baltimore arrived at a small, isolated island lagoon. (A rumor on board was that we had entered Palmyra Island Lagoon.) Here, an ancient (1920's vintage) tanker was anchored and moored alongside her was a destroyer whose superstructure had been almost completely blown away--no mast, no bridge, no stacks, mangled deck structures. The story told was that she had been hit by three (3) kamikaze planes while doing picket patrol up north of the Iwo Jima operation.

It must be remembered that the U.S.S. Baltimore was travelling under the strictest clock of secrecy. The only thing the crew knew was that the Baltimore was heading east and Palmyra Island was a guess. Nobody had any idea what was happening except the Captain, those close to the Captain, and communications circuits--and they weren't talking.

It wasn't until Diamond Head came into view and we were off the entrance to Pearl Harbor when a section of the cloak of secrecy was lifted.

At Pearl Harbor Navy Yard none of the ship's company was permitted to leave the ship. The ship's Captain, as part of Naval custom, courtesy and procedure, is required to visit the Fleet Admiral, Chester Nimitz.

So, here we were in Pearl Harbor. No crew were permitted off, and no shipyard personnel were allowed on board.

If my memory serves correctly, Baltimore was underway out of Pearl Harbor the evening of the same day we'd arrived.

Secrecy, secrecy, Top Secret, Ultra Secret... Why had we been separated from the rest of the Task Force? Where were we bound? No one was talking.

As I hung around the division gear locker havin' a cup of W.W.II chickory coffee, it was theorized that if we held our present course and speed, we'd run aground on the coast of the United States--somewhere around San Francisco.

For a couple of days (maybe it was three?), Baltimore continued steaming East at a higher that usual speed. And soon, the radar picked up a large land mass, which became larger and larger as time passed.

The "scuttle-butt" (Rumors) at the Division gear lockers had been correct. The good ol' United States of America lay before us. The coast of California was straight ahead. This was a sight to behold--the U.S.S. Baltimore and her crew had been away for a long time.

But, why were we here? Why had we returned state-side when there was a war to fight?

It wasn't long before the large ground swells, which were usually present on approaching San Francisco Bay, made their presence known. Some of these very seasoned sailors (old salts) fell victim to minor cases of unaccustomed "mal de mer" (sea sickness).

Soon, Baltimore cruised in under the Golden Gate Bridge. Within a matter of a few hours, she was moored in the Mare Island Navy Yard for what was described as "Limited Availability": No liberty, no leave, ship's crew restricted to the immediate area of the shipyard- no telephones or telephone calls, no communications outside the Navy Yard. And, we still had not one clue as to why we were there.

In time, shipyard workers began coming aboard and commenced a strange and different line of work from what was normally done during stays in a Navy yard. Many experienced sailors had never witnessed anything like it. But this would prove to be but the beginning of firsts for the Baltimore and its crew during this cruise.

There were female workers who for some reason were laboring in the Admiral's cabin. (We later learned that his cabin was not only altered, but completely refurbished.) And the day came when ramp-like structures began to appear on either side of certain watertight doors. It wasn't until that day when an unusual structure appeared on the starboard side of the forward superstructure and extended all the way up to the Navigation Bridge that some sailors, in quiet conversation, began putting the mysterious and challenging puzzle together. Apparently, the curious structure had arrived on a train flatbed and set aboard during the night. (As it turned out, the curious, square structure was the President's elevator to the Navigation Bridge.)

No time was wasted in the Navy Yard--Baltimore did not linger. Just as soon as additions, modifications and minor repairs were completed, Baltimore departed. She left quietly, without fanfare, and, if my memory is correct, at night.

But why all this? The speculation and rumors continued....

Underway again and heading out of San Francisco Bay to sea. Where next?

By the next morning, it was easy to determine that Baltimore was heading south. I don't now recall how long it took, but I believe that by the following morning Point Loma came into view. San Diego was to be Baltimore's next port of call. What were we doing in San Diego?

Rumors and more rumors--nothing confirmed.

So Baltimore steams into San Diego Bay and is moored at the State Pier, which is located at the foot of Broad Street. Once again orders are issued: no liberty, no telephones, and nobody--nobody--is or will be permitted to leave the ship. The visit is secret--top secret.

And so we wait and go about the business of completing ship's work, waiting, working... The day gets late--and later still. Finally, there is some activity and we note vehicles coming and going to the office building structure on the pier. And then we see people on roof tops--it appears the surrounding areas and buildings have come alive with activity and most of the people belong to the Secret Service!

A short time later off in the distance, sounds can be

heard--the sounds of motors and excited people--closer and closer and louder. The event lasts several minutes, seven or eight, maybe longer. Then suddenly, at the head of the pier there are bright headlights. That which was responsible for the sounds and the noise had arrived.

Word was passed over the ship's public address systems, 1 and 7 M.C., for: "All hands lay below decks. All hands lay below."

I have no recollection of the moment when the crew on Baltimore was notified that the President of the United States was coming on board for a cruise out in the Pacific. But I do know that when the disturbance and noise arrived on the State Pier, the crew was by then well aware it was President Franklin D. Roosevelt himself who was making an appearance.

On hearing the words, "All hands lay below decks", I and a couple of my fellow crew mates did a careless and potentially dangerous thing. We scurried through the hatch and into the Lower Ammunition Handling Room of the closest 40MM gun quad mount. From our location in the Handling Room, we could open the hatch door and peek out onto the pier--and of course we did just this.

As a matter of military ceremony, recognition and respect, whenever a ranking officer or prominent civilian, head of state, etc., etc., arrives on board, the title of that person (or persons) is passed over the ship's interior communication

system. Again, my memory is not certain, but I don't recall the words, "President of the United States. President of the United States", being communicated via the communications system.

Possibly this "oversight" was intentional, an attempt to maintain whatever degree of secrecy remained.

Never in my young life had I ever seen or witnessed the activities of such an entourage as that which attended President Roosevelt. There were politicians, military officers of every rank imaginable, and various others in attendance. One woman in particular caught my attention. She stood beside the open vehicle and in contrast to all the rest. But at no time did sight or sound of a dog present itself.

There was a lot of hurrying, hustling back-and-forth from pier to ship and activity within the group standing on the pier.

Eventually, maybe less than an hour or maybe more, word was passed to, "Make preparations to get underway," and, "Station the Special Sea Detail".

My co-conspirators and I unobtrusively left our off-limits position and went about our duties. (But looking back on this impulsive act of my youth, there are times when I wonder what might have happened to us if the Secret Service men had observed that hatch door opening ever so slightly in order for us to sneak a look at the forbidden scene....)

Mooring lines were "singled-up" then cast off from the pier as the U.S.S. Baltimore (C.A. 68) got underway with the President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, safely on board.

Baltimore stood out to sea from San Diego Bay and it wasn't very long after that when we learned our destination was to be Pearl Harbor. That was near mid-night (very late evening) on July 22, 1944.

The Plan of Day (P.O.D.) for July 23rd gave the crew a hint of how the cruise may be conducted as far as ship evolutions and work was concerned. I think it would generally be agreed by the crew that the Executive Officer (X.O.) and his Heads of Department did cut back on the daily work activities and work details so as not to disturb or cause concern to the President.

As we sailed west, and as time approached to get in the chow line, to eat and relieve the watch, I thought and considered with pleasure that the usual powdered milk and powdered eggs would not be on the menu. I looked forward with great anticipation to the fresh, cold milk served from a coffee-brewing steam kettle and a variety of fresh fruit from which to pick. Anyone observing this scene could almost believe the war had ceased. And, in fact it had for Baltimore, but just temporarily.

U.S.S. Baltimore was steaming west on a cruise that most sailors could only dream about. And once we approached Oahu

and made our way toward the channel entrance to Pearl Harbor, the crew would be assured to witness activities and scenes that would make up part of the whole historical event.

The weather cruising west was very cooperative, ideal actually. And on arrival in the islands area, it was typically Hawaiian.

"God, what a pretty scene!"

I wonder what it must have looked like when Captain James Cook of the H.M.S. Resolution discovered this place...". I can imagine, but will just have to leave that description to the poets and skilled writers.

Enroute to the islands to the west, while working beneath one of the seaplane catapults, a noise caught my attention. I looked over to the port side and there was an officer walking a little black dog on a leash. It had to be none other than "Fala", the President's famous pet!

As Baltimore approached the entrance channel to Pearl Harbor, airplanes were evident in the distance. It was obvious they were heading for Baltimore: the start of an aircraft salute to President Roosevelt.

The fly-over lasted for quite some time. I believe that every aircraft stationed in the Hawaiian Military Command that could fly, flew over Baltimore that day. It was an impressive sight--aircraft of every size, shape, description paying respects to "FDR".

I recall that the uniform of the day for arrival at Pearl

Harbor was undress whites. The sights and scenes, events that were to unfold before our eyes in the channel past Ford Island and the mooring pier (quay) were unforgettable and to a young man of 19 or 20 were utterly inspiring.

Everywhere one looked, the sight was remarkable. From the low buildings, high buildings, big ships down to the smallest working tugboats to the military personnel standing abreast of one another, "manning the rail", large groups of Navy Yard workers looking, waving, calling out. The elaborate display sent shivers through me.

Now comes the big moment when Baltimore breasts into the main pier, which one knowledgeable sailor called the Fleet Landing. At this time, I was "manning the rail" starboard side aft, just forward of the catapult. Out on the pier was a spectacle that, I venture to say, was unseen by any sailor before or since President Roosevelt's visit.

One couldn't help but wonder who was running the war. It seemed as though every Admiral and General in the entire Pacific Theater of War was standing in formation on the pier. This sight lingers in my mind to this day and I am sure I will never forget it.

The day's activities were not over with the arrival of the President. But a significant amount of the usual business ceased in and around the Naval Base. During a normal day's activities there is a lot of noise generated at most Navy bases. Today, the atmosphere was subdued, like the calm

before a storm or the stillness in the air before a typhoon.

Another important visitor was due to arrive and that person was none other than General Douglas MacArthur. Apparently the General was running late.

As I continued with ship's work, I could pick up the sounds and sirens occurring in the distance--Honolulu-- or more likely, Hickam Field.

The sirens became louder and louder. The motorcade was approaching, with a crescendo of people noises--shouting, yelling and cheering. The mood was infectious and Naval Base workers and military personnel hurried and ran toward Baltimore in order to witness the arrival of the legendary General MacArthur.

Shortly, the motorcade, which was escorted by motorcycles, pulled up alongside Baltimore. And there was General MacArthur waving to the very loud, excited crowd. When he stood up and acknowledged them, there was an explosive roar which exceeded that given to President Roosevelt.

The General had on what appeared to be an aviator's flight jacket and his well-worn trademark hat--the "I shall return" General's cap covered with braid. On alighting from his open vehicle, he strode around to the ship's gangway (brow). His posture was erect, his stride confident. I remember thinking his whole manner was one of arrogance. It was as if the entire affair was a play and this man an actor taking to the stage to play his part.

Halfway up the brow, the General made a dramatic stop. He paused, turned, took off his cap, waved it to the exuberant crowd. Then, he returned the cap to his head and saluted before continuing up the brow to the quarter deck. The awestruck crowd went wild.

I couldn't see the quarter deck from where I worked. My view was obstructed by gun mounts. But, I believe that President Roosevelt must have been there to greet the General.

This was a busy day with work details and division work, as well as assorted ship's work and the pace now increased in preparation for our return to sea. The crew was directed to stay clear of the Quarter Deck.

In the buzz of commotion, I was sufficiently distracted not to notice the President and General MacArthur leave the ship. However, sometime later, I did notice the President in his vehicle as he visited with some very senior officers. Upon the departure of these officers, President Roosevelt re-boarded the Baltimore.

Late that night, Baltimore got underway and stood out to sea from Pearl Harbor. The destination was unknown to the crew. But in the morning sunrise, it was easy to deduce we were heading north. The uniform of the day was undress blues.

High authority must have given permission to leak some information for the cloak of secrecy was lifted slightly. The ship's grapevine learned our destination: the Aleutian

Islands. And with that, the word, "Kodiak", was heard frequently.

In those days between 22 and 29 July, 1944, the Baltimore and its crew were witness to activities of historical import: the planning of and for the conduct and conclusion of war in the Pacific--and the final end to World War II.

As I looked out across the water, there was Baltimore's escorting destroyer--out ahead 3-4 miles, like a well-trained greyhound. The destroyer had resumed its usual job, which was searching for any stray and unwelcome submarines.

It is during this part of the cruise that my recollections become hazy.

I recall Kodiak and being 20 years old. I was not old enough to drink in bars but I did manage to pick up a souvenir or two. I still have an ivory letter opener which has a gold nugget implanted in its handle.

I also recall Dutch Harbor out on Unalaska Island. But I can't be positive that I was serving on Baltimore when I put in there. I don't remember Adak at all, but do have memory of being moored to a well-constructed steel and concrete pier--and possibly there was a small ship's store nearby....

Some of my confusion is very likely intertwined with visits made by the submarine (U.S.S. Rasher, S.S.R.269) I served on during the peace time/cold war era in the mid and late 1950's. The Rasher visited these ports I just mentioned.

I have little or no recollection of what may have been

taking place at higher levels during the time Baltimore was visiting Adak and Kodiak. Maybe this is because activity had slacked off and the secrecy and excitement of the past few days gave way to a dull and uninteresting daily routine aboard ship. My only distraction during this time was occasionally sighting the President's dog, Fala. It was he who was causing the stir and getting all the attention now.

At any rate, Baltimore stood out to sea, from one of the ports, with the President onboard. Our destination, if it were known to the crew, did not reach my ears. Here again, memory fails when it comes to how many days passed during this part of the voyage. Due to watch standing, division work schedules or simply inattention on my part, I can't remember for certain, but possibly 2, maybe 3 day's after leaving port, we sailed into one of the most majestic and beautiful scenic places in North America!

I was informed by a knowledgeable sailor in the chow line that we had just entered Alaska's Inland Waterway. Another place, this one wild and primitive, that any attempt at description is best left to writers and poets.

Steaming most of the day on the Waterway (possibly Chatham Strait), Baltimore arrived at a place near the face of a glacier which could be clearly viewed by the crew. This place near Juneau was Auke Bay. The glacier could have been Mendenhall Glacier.

While Baltimore lay anchored off the glacier, I took

numerous opportunities to marvel at the magnificent wild scenery--not much interested in what might happen next. This was the President's cruise, after all.

It wasn't long before the ship's grapevine was active once more. Word got around that President Roosevelt was going on a fishing trip. The next morning, activity around the port-side whale boat area began to pick up considerably.

It must be remembered that my memories have been dormant, slumbering contentedly in the recesses of my mind for the past 51 years. Now that I summon these dormant seeds, life and its events during this time are often vague and confused. I require lengthy periods of time to think and try and reconstruct the events as they occurred.

I was assigned to the 8th Division during this cruise. We were responsible for catapulting and retrieving Baltimore's two OSTU-Kingfisher scout seaplanes.

One day, I ventured forward on the starboard side toward the Quarter Deck and, to my surprise, observed the 4th Division had rigged-out and lowered the port-side whale boat level to the main deck. I remember wondering just how they expected FDR to enjoy a comfortable fishing trip in that whale boat.

Well, anyway, I got on with my work and never gave it another thought. The fact is I don't recall when the President left to go fishing and I don't remember when he returned.

It was either on the following day or the day after that when word was passed over the ship's public address system that President Roosevelt wanted to address Baltimore's crew. This turn of events did indeed take me and the rest of the crew by surprise. What could the President of the United States want to say to the crew? The President spoke to us on August 9, 1944, at Auke Bay, Juneau, Alaska. On that point, I'm quite clear.

A copy of the speech (not exact) was made and distributed to the crew. I still have mine and although the paper is old, worn and tattered, I treasure it.

Soon after Baltimore weighed anchor and got underway, we steamed off down whatever body of water we were in until (I think the next day) we stopped.

After awhile the escorting destroyer came alongside Baltimore. There was much preparation, but it was done quickly, and President Roosevelt transferred over to the destroyer for the last leg of his cruise. And into, as we later learned, Bremerton Navy Yard, Washington (state).

There is one more remembrance. Any crew members of the 4th or 5th Divisions should be able to relate more detailed information. But at some point in time, the President's faithful pet and companion, Fala, the Scots Terrier, became separated from its walking officer. This most likely was done using diversion tactics, such as extending the offer of a cup of gear locker coffee, conversation or an outright offer

to walk the dog. However it was done, Fala appeared to have been "dognapped".

He was missing for some period of time when the walking officer became curious as to his absence. Very soon after that, Fala was located at one of the deck division's gear lockers. He was missing numerous, curly fur ringlets, of which he fortunately had an abundance. Souvenir-takers had abducted Fala to a place where they sheared off many of his shiny black locks!

The culprits were never found and no crew members were punished.

And, as President Roosevelt himself said in his address, 'You are going back to play. You are going back for leave which you justly deserve.' In spite of Fala's mishap, he was a man of his word.

U.S.S. Baltimore entered the Mare Island Navy Yard on August 14, 1944 for repairs and crew leave.

****THE END****

ADDENDUM NO.1

V.J. DAY
END OF THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC
U.S.S. BALTIMORE
(C.A. 68)
Heavy Cruiser

1. Participated in nine (9) major Naval engagements:

ENGAGEMENTS	BATTLE STARS
Gilbert and Marshall Islands (photo and reconnaissance)	1
Gilbert and Marshall Islands Makin-Tarawa Islands (bombardment, invasion, occupation)	1
Marianas, Truk, Yap, etc. (raids)	1
Hollandia, New Guinea (occupation-invasion)	1
Mariana-Siapan-Tinian (operation-raids)	1
"The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot- June 18 & 19, 1944	
Luzon (raids)	1
Luzon (operations)	1
Iwo Jima (operations)	1
Okinawa (operations)	1

NOTE: After the battle of the Phillipine Sea (aka "The Great Turkey Shoot"), and at war's end, Baltimore was officially credited with shooting down twelve (12) enemy planes.

2. Survived two (2) typhoons (Halsey's Typhoons):

Dec. 17/22, 1944 Ident. Code: COBRA
June 4/6, 1945 Ident. Code: VIPER
Halsey's Task Force 38

3. Was President Franklin Roosevelt's choice of ship to take him on his cruise in the Pacific when he met with Admiral Chester Nimitz and General Douglas MacArthur.