

John E Rigg

U.S. Navy USS Portland-Heavy Cruiser



John E. Rigg
U.S. Navy
USS Portland

John E. Rigg joined the United States Navy at the age of 24 on September 9, 1943. He received basic training at Farragut, Idaho and was assigned to the heavy cruiser, the U.S.S. Portland and sent to the Pacific Theater of War.

John registered at the Springfield, Illinois office to enter service. He applied and was accepted to attend a Naval Bakery school. However, the U.S.S. Portland, a heavy cruiser, needed a cook, so John was assigned to be one of the cooks on the ship. He talked of the huge kettles of oatmeal cooked for breakfast every morning. There were other foods too, but the huge kettles filled with boiling oatmeal were just too overwhelming to watch and stir.

Whenever the ship was in combat, John had to report to one of the gun turrets and his job was to stand and catch the hot casings as they came out of the large guns. He told how he received many burns

on his arms from the hot metal casings as he caught them.

Something else that John recalled was when injured military were brought on board the Portland, the men had to be fed and cared for until they could be transported to a hospital ship. John told how the men cried when they saw real food and some of them had to be fed. After the main meal, the injured were always fed ice cream that the cooks made on the ship. John said that there wasn't a dry eye in the room. The injured cried because they were getting real food and the men helping cried because they knew these men had lived on rations and now could have nourishing food and medical help.

The U.S.S. Portland was hit by an enemy plane and had to come back to the States for repairs the near the end of June, 1944. John decided to ask Emma Yuvan to marry him and they were married July 8, 1944. Upon John's return to the Portland, they returned to action in the Pacific. The Portland would fire at islands to help clear the beachheads for those who were landing from American ships.

John spoke of one of the luxuries sailors had. John was given one bucket of water to use to bathe in and had to save it so he could do his laundry in it. There were times when he and others could jump overboard and swim in the ocean. John recalls that it was a great treat to swim and take a bath in the ocean.

At the end of the war, a treaty was signed on the U. S. S. Missouri. The Portland was sent to the Island of Truk for a treaty signing because the enemy did not accept the one signed on the Missouri. John and other personnel stood with guns ready to fire if the occasion arose as the Japanese came aboard the Portland. After the signing and they had left the ship, the men on the Portland gave a big cheer and enjoyed the rest of the day off. Peace at last. The ship left the area, came through the Panama Canal, and docked at New York. John returned to Great lakes Naval Station and received an honorable discharge on the 9th day of November 1945. After a week's vacation, he returned to his job at

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the Kroger store in Springfield as a meat cutter. He worked there for 46 years and became the father of 3 sons, John Jr, Tom and Ed.

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Springfield, Illinois