

**CPO SPARKS
SQUIRREL AND THE
USS ALBERT W
GRANT, DD 649**

BY

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March, is still a chilly month with the sun trying to get stronger, the tough plants sending out shoots, and the cold and penetrating rains that are often a part of the day to day existence as we await the warmth of Spring.

The daylilies are starting their shoots up

above the ground showing their bright green leaves and the redbuds are about to bloom, for one can see the swollen pink-red buds on the edges of each branch.

1 POTTING AND A VISIT

This is also the time I set my new seedlings to pots, the end of March, still with that chill reminder of winter, I work on my potting bench clothed as warmly as possible, filling pot after pot with the potting soil, spraying in water, an ice cold stream which no matter how careful you try to be gets

all over you. It then sets the cold in the air ever more deeply in your bones yet I must get over 400 pots set and seedlings in them.

It is critical to pay attention to detail when doing this for each pot holds a numbered set of seedlings, you must take them from the seed flats, check with your lab note book, place them in a pot, put a label on a white plastic tab and then insert that in the pot and then check off the seedlings in your lab book. Tedious but so subject to mistakes, a missed seed, and that sets them all off. So there I am paying attention, ignoring the world when in front of my face, on the deck, eye level to me, I hear:

"Watch ya doowen?"

I immediately looked up, knowing what I would find, and in front of my

nose, nose to nose, laying flat bellied on the deck in the sun, was the fat fur ball Antnee! His black wet nose almost touching mine and his whiskers flapping as he smiled at me, I replied:

"Antnee, I am trying to concentrate, you should know better, never interrupt a person when they are setting plants."

He sat up a bit distraught and replied:

"Well Sir, I am so deeply sorry Sir."

I looked at him and perhaps I had been a bit too harsh. I thought it best to reply:

"Sorry Antnee, but I m trying to get these seeds in pots, and I really have to focus. Why one year I messed up and got one seed off, and all 150 pots were mis-labelled. What a mess, it is

like assembling a Christmas toy without directions and having a few screws left over, you always wonder when it will collapse. Do you know?"

He replied now appearing more assuaged from the verbal assault:

"Sir, not really, you see we do not buy Christmas toys, we make them, from what we find Sir, it is easier that way. But I can see your concern, it is as if I were running from that scoundrel cat and up a tree I went and by not paying attention, just trying to elude the feline monster, went to the wrong nest, I see the problem, Sir, yes indeed I do!"

I continued:

"Well Antnee, Spring is almost here, so you must be happy, soon you can get as much food as you want."

He replied:

"Truly Sir, we have more than enough due to the true kindness, true kindness indeed, of the good Lady Sara. She is so good of a true friend to all of us, and Sir, the corn was just wonderful this winter, just wonderful. We all want to give you thanks. So what new things will you be up to this summer, your flowers Sir, there are thousands, so many, so much work Sir. Still writing, Sir, we do so enjoy the tales."

I answered:

"So you have been back in my office again, reading my books, as I write them!"

Antnee continued but in an almost professorial way:

"Indeed we have Sir, and the consensus is that your work s quite good, for the most part Sir, for the most part, but we all enjoy your tales about us Sir, we truly do, so well said Sir, and we greatly appreciate them."

He continued:

"Have you been going up to Harvard as usual Sir, and how are things going?"

I replied:

"Well we seem to have some progress, I told you about that, didn't I, we get a few steps forward and sometimes a few backward but in general we make progress. I find that Harvard Yard a bit shabby in winter, large trees but just shabby. Have you ever been there Antnee?"

He sat up into his story telling stance, and now I knew I had just opened a door for a tale, not knowing what I had said, but somehow it triggered him to tell a tale.

2 THE BEGINNING OF THE TALE

He started with his tale, on his haunches and his tail almost to the top of his head, and his two paws gesticulating as was his manner, he began:

"Well Sir, Harvard Yard, that reminds me Sir, of a distant but heroic cousin, Sir, one Sparks Squirrel. Yes indeed, a true hero of WWII Sir, a true hero, medals and all. You see Sir, Harvard Yard was the home of Sparks and his family, not that they ever took on airs Sir, no indeed, although they were true descendents of the squirrels that came over on the Mayflower, descendents of

Honesty Squirrel and his clan. Yes indeed Sir, true Mayflower descendents, which in Massachusetts I gather means something Sir, it truly means something. And in fact it is said Sir that it was Honesty who was the first ashore, the very first of the Pilgrim voyagers to set paw on land, yes indeed Sir, the very first."

I wondered if this were to be a Pilgrim tale or what. I probed a bit to see:

"So are you now to tell me all about Honesty Squirrel?"

He perked up and said with the intensity only Antnee can evoke:

"Sir, no Sir, the true hero is Sparks, Sparks Squirrel. Frankly we try at times to forget about Honesty, he was, well what can one call him, well "English", don't tell Lady Sara that Sir,

for I know how sensitive she was, but we now see ourselves as American squirrels, and well Honesty was truly a throwback Sir, truly a throwback. But Sparks Sir, a true hero, so let me explain."

I knew at this point that I had no recourse but to listen. I set my pots aside, found a warm spot in the sun and out of the wind, sat myself on a stool and listened.

3 SPARKS AND HARVARD

Antnee continued:

"You see Sir, Sparks grew up on the Harvard Common, in fact he was born there, just above the statue of Mr Harvard himself Sir, right above that famous statue. Sir, he was a real Harvard man, yes indeed, for he attended classes and his favorite club

was the radio club, from whence he got his name Sir, for his father was also a member. Why Sparks, Sir, was a wonder at Morse code and he could find problems in any electronic circuit, a wonderful talent Sir, truly wonderful."

"Sparks also was adopted as the mascot of the Harvard NROTC, the Navy officer's training group when just a mere child Sir, a mere child. Why Sir he went to all the exercises, all the training, he even went on a summer cruise, you see Sir the Navy always had mascots like Sparks on their ships, and Sparks Sir was more than just a mascot."

"And Sir, Sparks was not only good at the radio, but he studied radar down at MIT, the only one to become expert in that as well Sir, and he was also an expert in fire control, you see Sir it is

the squirrel eyes, we can see much better than you humans, for we can jump tree to tree, great eyes Sir, great aiming judgment! Do you not agree Sir!"

I knew that I had better. Now I suspected that this tale was to take me through the entire war.

Antnee then went on:

"Well Sir, it was now 1943, early in the year, perhaps May if I believe correct Sir, yes it was May, and the NROTC graduates were assigned to their ships. Sparks, Sir, was asked if he wanted to go to Charlestown and join a Destroyer for action in the Pacific. Well Sir you can imagine how proud he was to even be asked, and a Destroyer Sir, a true ship of War, and it was a Fletcher Class one at that Sir, a technological marvel."

"You see Sir, the Fletcher would have radar, advanced radio systems and of course what Sparks like the most, the fire control computer. You see Sir Sparks was a fire control man at heart!"

"Thus Sparks went off to the Boston Navy Yard, you know where that is Sir, do you not, and there he got a ride on another Fletcher, the Cassin Young, Sir, for she is back there now, and they were going down to Charleston, South Carolina. Sparks had been at sea with the NROTC Sir, but never too far ashore, no Sir, not too far. The trip hit weather and it was Sparks first time on a ship, at sea, in weather, a mighty rough ride Sir, might rough. In a week he made it to Charleston and then sought out his ship. You see Sir he was assigned to the USS Albert W Grant, DD649, yes indeed Sir the very ship that your father, the great Terrence I,

was on, the very same. You see Sir, that is why this tale is so important!"

I was almost thrown back. How did Antnee know this, did he make this up, was this another tale, possibly true possibly just fiction, or did all these tale have truth behind them. I was shocked, I was now more interested than ever before. And Antnee could see it in my face.

He replied:

"You see Sir, these are true tales, now just sit back Sir, and you will hear what happened."

4 CHARLESTOWN AND THE CRUISE

Sparks arrived at Charleston on the Cassin Young and went directly to the pier where the Grant was being outfitted. It was a crowded area of

steel and weapons being moved and assembled into a fighting ship. The workers looked to Sparks like hundreds of squirrels hopping up and down tree branches and the cranes were in an almost continuous motion moving the steel and guns into place.

Sparks was to report to Petty Officer First Class Ralph Natali, for he was assigned to Natali's crew, the sailors who were highly trained on the weapons systems. He suspected that Natali would not necessarily take well to a Harvard educated squirrel also trained at the MIT Rad Lab but that is what he was told to do and as every good squirrel knows, orders are orders.

Up the plank to the 5" gun on the stern of the ship, and there was Natali, a young man from the Pittsburgh area, who was watching the gun mounted

and then was watching for the integration of the fire control system back to the fire control room which was amid ships.

Sparks went up to Natali and said:

"Petty Officer Natali, I am Sparks from Boston, assigned to the Grant."

As was usually the case of such initial introductions, Natali turned and saw nothing and Sparks had to speak twice, and then Natali looked down, growled and shouted:

"Who the hell brought this rodent on board!"

Sparks was patient and then said:

"Petty Officer, here are my papers, I was assigned to assist in the new fire control system, and integrating the

radar into it. My name is Sparks, Sparks Squirrel, I am from Boston, just came down on the Cassin Young from the Navy yard. Where should I store my gear."

Natali was now truly frustrated. They had deadlines, and now he had a talking squirrel, and one of the smart ass types who thought they knew everything. Well Natali thought, might just store him away and perhaps he can deal with it later.

Sparks went below and to the crew quarters. On the way he passed the chow area and he wanted a bit to eat. As he scrambled about, Randolph, one of the cooks, came out and looked at Sparks and said:

"What you doin here, y'all better get off afore Mr Chief sees y'all."

Sparks decided to be nice and not too formal and told Randolph:

"I am part of crew, my name is Sparks, Sparks Squirrel, I am assigned to the fire control team, I will work with Petty Officer Natali, we are in Lt Marsh's team. Is he on board?"

Randolph smiled and said:

"Well I be damned, a talking squirrel, I guess we won't have y'all for dinner tonight."

Sparks had a shudder of abject terror go down his spine. This was the first time he knew he was in the south. Imagine the cruelty, eating a squirrel, how barbaric, and he thought that they thought the Japs were bad! He better get through this war quickly.

He ran up to the Combat Information Center, the IC, where the fire control equipment was, and there was Lt Marsh. He saw him bent over the targeting board and computer and he tapped on the door.

Marsh turned around and did not see him at first but in a second he notices the little grey fur ball at the door. He immediately recognized him and said:

"Sparks, welcome aboard, good to see you got here in one piece, no rebel squirrel hunters along the way?"

Sparks had heard that Marsh was a salty character having worked his way up from enlisted even being a Chief Petty Officer at a young age. But Sparks liked Marsh, and it appeared that the feeling was mutual. Marsh said:

"Sparks, hop up here, tell me about this radar we are installing, I hear you worked with the wiz kids up there in Boston, MIT I hear."

Sparks jumped up and Marsh and Sparks spent a few hours going over the details. Sparks had a lot of experience since he had done a few dozen installs and also had tested them at sea. It was clear that he and Marsh had bonded, not like the relationship with Natali, who was more interested in just getting the job done. Sparks could understand.

At the end of the talk, Marsh turned to Sparks and said:

"Well Sparks, we might as well make you a Petty Officer as well, you have the training and you need a pecking order on the ship. So Sparks, you are now Petty Officer Third Class, Fire

Controlman, Sparks Squirrel, welcome aboard."

5 PEARL HARBOR

The ship set sail from Charleston escorting a carrier through the Panama Canal. On route they hit a massive Atlantic storm, and the ship tossed and turned as it pitched and rolled in the waves trying to keep up with the carrier. The men were getting terribly ill for the first time, there was no place to hide or ride it out, they just had to get through it. Sparks was atop a bunk with the crew but he kept getting thrown to the top or slammed to the deck.

Sparks finally thought it best to go back to his station atop the radar, just behind the antenna, so up he scurried, and sat there, tail curled safely atop his head, like any good squirrel, in the

weather, but safe from the storm. The view of the waves help calm him and the sight of the carrier at a distance was a sight to behold. He felt he was a true sailor for the first time.

In less than a week they made Panama, the east entry to the canal. Sparks was atop the Director, the fire control spotting system atop the ship, and it gave him a great view of the canal and its environs. He watched the vegetation, Palm trees and other tropical plants, of the types he had never seen before. He wondered what these tropical nuts were like. They passed through the canal and started north to San Diego to refuel and get the remainder of the crew.

In San Diego Sparks found a tremendous Naval Base, and outside of that it was a desert which went well up to the mountains. This was a hostile

place, except the water, and he wondered why anyone would live here. They spent minimal time replenishing and getting the new men aboard. He was now a seasoned seaman, having gone through the canal and weathered the Atlantic storm. Yet now they were to sail west into harm's way.

But first they set out to Pearl Harbor, one final stop before battle. The trip from San Diego to Pearl was uneventful, for on a ship there is always work, from running drills, to testing equipment, firing guns, to just chipping paint. Four hours on and four off, day after day, no breaks, no place to go, just sleep, eat, work, and do it again. Sparks was getting better atop the Director, Mr Marsh was getting the entire team at top level, they could hit a fly with the 5" gun at 5,000 yards! Sparks could always double check and redirect if necessary.

Then they arrived in Pearl. Sparks was atop the mast, trying to get the first view, and when he did, he called below, "Pearl ahead!"

When they arrived at Pearl they had a few days of leave and they took advantage of it. One of the seamen, Homer Burns of Tennessee had befriended Sparks, they both loved the woods and traded stories about life back home, and Homer and his other mates took Sparks with them to see the town.

At this point I stopped the tale and asked Antnee:

"You mean to tell me that Homer and the crew took Sparks with them to well, you know, see Pearl?"

Antnee replied:

"Sir, you seem to miss the point entirely. These were young men, never before lose on the town, and they needed something to, well Sir, stand out amongst the locals."

I interjected:

"You mean the used Sparks to hit upon the ladies?"

Antnee paused not really knowing how best to answer, and then he said:

"Well, you are correct Sir, Sparks, well how do we say it Sir, Sparks is cute, is that the word, a cute squirrel. Yes indeed Sir, a cute squirrel is a way to again how do you say it Sir, the way to a woman's heart."

I paused and replied:

"So what you are telling me is that Sparks was a "Chick Magnet" and Homer and the boys took whatever advantage they could of their crew mate."

Antnee was now boxed in a metaphorical corner and he said:

"Indeed, Sir, perhaps your choice of words could be a bit more elegant yet I believe Sir that it reflects the facts at the time, yes indeed, it does."

Antnee went on to tell how the crew went through Pearl, danced their nights away, especially good old Harold Olson, who seemed to have no need for sleep, and whenever they needed a new batch of dance partners they shoved Sparks to the fore and he did his stuff.

After three days of leave they headed back to the ship and when Mister Marsh saw Sparks slowly limping up the plank he burst out laughing. He said to Sparks:

"Well where is my little sprite, my jumping little friend, Sparks, you look worse than the rest of the crew, you are a mess, go aloft and get some sleep!

Sparks dragged himself atop the Director and slept for what felt like three days. For when he awoke they were at sea and Pearl was nowhere to be seen.

6 SPARKS THE POLLYWOG

The ceremony of “crossing the equator” most likely dated back to the British Navy. In the US Navy it had become a sometimes brutal ceremony

and at times led to men being severely injured. There are several characters in this drama. Those who have already crossed the equator are nicknamed Shellbacks, and are often referred to as Sons of Neptune, the ones who have not yet crossed the Equator are nicknamed Pollywogs.

The collection of masters of ceremonies include King Neptune and his Court (usually including his first assistant, Davy Jones and other similar dignitaries, who are all represented by the highest ranking seamen) who officiate at the ceremony. In this ceremony the Pollywogs undergo a number of tests, ordeals, and initiation steps (wearing clothing inside out and backwards; crawling on hands and knees on nonskid-coated decks; being swatted with short lengths of fire hose; being locked in stocks and pillories and pelted with mushy fruit; crawling

through chutes and large tubs of rotting garbage; kissing the Royal Baby's belly coated with axle grease, hair chopping, etc), largely for the entertainment of the Shellbacks. Once the ceremony is complete, the new Pollywog receives a certificate declaring this new status.

The Grant was no exception. For many of the men this was another step in their Navy introduction and frankly was a day off from the tedium of their daily tasks, many of which involved the chipping of paint and the swabbing of decks. However, this was an egalitarian ceremony and included all, and that meant all officers as well. On the Grant all officers except one participated freely, and that one apparently had to be dragged down to meet Davy Jones.

Then Antnee said in almost total horror:

"Then, Sir, as part of this barbaric human festival, they shaved the men's heads, totally Sir, and then it came to Sparks, you see Sir he was at the end of this head shaving line. Then Sir, horror just to think, they, well I almost cannot bring myself to say it Sir, they shaved his tail! The thought of such an act."

I interjected:

"You mean he looked like a rat?"

Never before has Antnee scowled at me to such a degree. I immediately responded:

"I mean Antnee, not that he was, or you were, or in fact any squirrel could ever be mixed up as a , well you know,

Oh forget I said that, tell me what happened next."

Antnee continued:

"Well Sir, the ceremony passed, and Sparks was now admitted to that most honored society, and I believe Sir, the first American squirrel ever so admitted to the Domain of King Neptune."

7 HOLLANDIA AND TRUK

They set sail south west towards New Guinea, north of Australia, where the Japs had taken hold. General MacArthur wanted to moved his forces and take control of the jungle infested island. No man could go there it was so thick with vegetation.

The Grant was to assist in what was called picket duty, just sailing around as the battleships did their firing.

New Guinea is a large island just north of Australia. New Guinea is a mass of mountains and forests, tropical rain forests, wet, hot, humid, dense vegetation, impenetrable by anything but human legs, and then only slowly. Strategically it provided little long term, yet short term it would be MacArthur's proving ground, a territory to commence his redemption.

The Japanese had occupied its northern coast and had entrenched themselves in there in a secure manner. It was defended by both land and air and it represented a gateway to Australia. MacArthur saw this as a way to step to the Philippines. New Guinea is shown in the map below. The Japanese presence represented a knife

aimed at the heart of Australia and a path back to Manila. It was essential for MacArthur to connect all of New Guinea.

Hollandia is a port in west central New Guinea on the northern coast. It is now in Indonesia. The entire island of New Guinea is a thick jungle and the crew of the Grant recall almost to a man the thickness of the vegetation and often wondered how the Army would ever hack their way through that growth.

Captain Nisewaner had gotten a message that there was an American pilot shot down and was in need of help. The Skipper called Marsh, who suggested sending Sparks ashore, for he alone could get through the jungle, for as they say he had been born in it.

So the Skipper brought the ship so close to shore that he almost scraped

the bottom, and then Sparks took a leap from the starboard side down to the water and swam ashore about thirty yards. The Skipper and Mr Marsh watched his progress as he ran for the trees and scampered up the huge palms, then he disappeared. They gave Sparks a small signaling light so he could get back to them.

Quartermaster Gilbert was watching for the signal as the three men stayed motionless on the starboard side, exposing themselves to enemy fire, but seeking the airman.

In the mass jungle, Sparks found it humid but he could jump from tree to tree just as his father had done at home, all the old instincts came back immediately. He could see some Japs below but they were hiding, and they did not have the pilot. He must have

covered more than five acres and no sign of the man.

He scampered back to the palm at the edge of the beach and relayed his lack of progress. The Skipper was getting pressure to get away from the shore so Sparks was ordered back.

His first time on enemy territory was not that bad, yet he felt empty that he did not find the pilot.

Antnee then said:

"Sir, the men were so proud of Sparks when he came back. You see Sir, he had risked his life for some other American, and that was considered a heroic feat. The officers invited him that night to dine with them. Why the cook even made him his favorite, peanut butter crackers and cashews, a

true feast Sir, verily a true feast for an Squirrel."

They spent a few more weeks just sailing around.

Antnee recalled:

"Sir, Picket duty was a lousy assignment and as a "junior can" they assisted in dropping off MacArthur personal belongings when he moved from Australia In Hollandia and there were natives, Sir, who came up to ship and sold shells and sandals. The Crew bought some for coins. And Sparks wanted to get some pretty shells to wear around his neck, but alas Sir they were too heavy."

8 SAIPAN, TINIAN AND PALAU

Antnee then moved to their next destination, Saipan. He prefaced this with a sense of doom. He began:

"Sir, Hollandia and its surroundings were just a support effort Sir, they tried to shoot off the guns but the jungles were too dense. But now Sir, they were off to Saipan, a truly deadly encounter Sir, truly deadly. There would be many Marines there attacking, and this time Sir, the Grant would have to show her best. And indeed she did."

Antnee now became somewhat a military historian for he said:

"The Saipan invasion, Sir, was scheduled for June 15, 1944 and that was just a week after D Day in Europe, Sir, just a mere week. Although not as all encompassing as the invasion in Normandy, Sir, the invasion of Saipan

was critical to the US ability to strike the Japanese at their home targets. It created a secure base to bring the threat of a strike directly to the homeland of Japan Sir, right to their very homeland. For Sir, they had just started deploying the long range B 29s and they could make Japan from Saipan."

The Grant was just one of the many players in that action but for most of the crew it would be their first true war action. Half the officers had seen some form of combat and men like Hamill had been at Guadalcanal and prior battles where both landings and attacks from the Japanese fleet were dual threats.

Antnee continued:

"The Grant, Sir, well it played a much larger part in the seizure of Saipan and

Tinian, much larger Sir, much larger indeed. In this operation it provided gunfire support for the landing forces. The Grant achieved some distinction in this affair because the accuracy of its 5" gun support. Well Sir, you know who did that, Sir, indeed you do. It was Sparks, atop the Director, that squirrel eyed fire control man, he was now petty officer second class, he was on the move Sir, on the move.

"Well Sir they also had on board a war correspondent named Jim Bishop who wrote an interesting feature entitled Sniper Ship on our part in the affair for the Saturday Evening Post. The Grant was known for the accuracy of our gun fire indeed Sir, but no one wanted to leak the secret weapon, no indeed, that was truly top secret, squirrel aiming support, "SAS", as they called it, it gave the guns almost pin point accuracy. They kept Sparks out

of the way of Mr Bishop, for that would give too much away to the enemy, indeed it would Sir."

"In fact, Sir, it was during the Saipan and Tinian actions when the Grant managed to develop and perfect its gunnery prowess. It also obtained publicity for its prowess as a sniper ship, firing precisely at enemy locations which were significant distances away. This battle showed how effectively the destroyer could be a precision long range firing platform. The use of the director, the stable element and the computer allowed the Grant and other similarly equipped destroyers to aim at and hit targets with amazing accuracy. In the Saipan and Tinian engagement the Grant had extensive opportunities to demonstrate its expertise and to fine tune it to the highest level."

Antnee also continued to detail some of the events:

"Sir, when off Saipan they spotted two LCI boats coming their way. When they within hailing distance we were asked if we had a Doctor and, if so, could we help as they had a number of wounded Marines on board and only one medic who could not cope with all the horrendous wounds of his men."

"Well Sir, the whole crew turned to with a will, carrying the wounded men on board, setting up accommodations, running the Marines' filthy uniforms through our laundry, preparing as fine a meal as we could put together for them and all the while our Doctor and our Pharmacist Mates took over the medical chores. "

"Well Sir, once the wounded were patched up, they were all re-embarked

in their LCIs and off they went. We were left to once again contemplate our good fortune in having Grant to call our home and our haven. Also we wondered briefly just how our beaten up Marines really felt about us. We knew that they envied us our life style though they did say they'd be glad to once again be on dry land."

"Then Sir, on a bright morning, as we more or less drifted by, Mr. Marsh called from his gun director that he had a "target of opportunity" and could he "test" his gunnery with one five inch shell. You see Sir Sparks had sighted a collection of the enemy who were firing on the Marines from a shack on a hill on the island. When given the location the Captain put his binoculars on the hill side as did I. There, racing up toward the shack were three Jap soldiers with guns slung over their shoulders. Without

giving the matter too much thought Andy sent word back to Jerry. "OK Jerry, but just one."

"Well Sir, that's all they needed. Sparks heard Mr Marsh's order, "Number five gun, prepare to fire." and he knew he better hold on to the Director for he was in for it. The number five gun turret, located on the fan-tail at the stem of the ship, was far enough away from the bridge so that there was no muzzle smoke nor anything to interfere with our line of sight. Controlled by Sparks atop the Director, #5 gun fired just as the three enemy were opening the shack door. We could see our shell's tracer as it went through the door a second or two after the door had slammed shut. The shack and its contents disintegrated. Sparks was shocked, for this was the first time Sir, that he saw what he was really doing. You see, Sir, we squirrels

are not a predatory species by nature Sir, we have our fights, but they never end in any harm, and here Sparks and Mr Marsh had sent one of their shells right slap in the middle of the front door of an enemy shack. It sent Sparks thinking."

9 SURIGAO STRAITS

The ship did other duty over the remainder of the summer and through the early fall but they were now focused on the return to the Philippines. This would be a massive attack by General MacArthur and his forces.

In mid October 1944 a massive number of ships approached the Philippines for the invasion. MacArthur wanted to land at Leyte and then go north. The Grant was to be part of Admiral Oldendorf's group

protecting the southern passage in the Surigao Strait. The Grant was part of DESRON 56, a three ship Destroyer attack group.

Sparks took his battle position atop the Director. The radars were turning and the SG and Mark Radars were sending out their pulses and the returns being watched. The CIC was in full readiness, and Nisewaner was at the helm. Hamill was there also as the XO and going back and forth to the CIC.

At 3:35 in the morning is total darkness, DESRON 56 started its run, this was to be a torpedo run and Sparks was communicating with Lt Pfeiffer in charge of the torpedoes. Sparks, with his infrared vision and long range and great sense of motion could sense the Japs at a distance. He

kept in communications with both Hamill and Pfeiffer.

Pfeiffer kept adjusting the torpedo ranging system since they needed to launch as many as possible in a spread so that if they were properly timed they could hit their target.

Nisewaner had brought the Grant to full speed following in the last position of DESRON 56, and Sparks at the top of the Director could feel the power of the Grant's engines as they churned up the water moving at top speed towards the Jap fleet. The ship rolled ever so slightly but he was being thrown about by the pitching due to the speed.

At 3:46 they reached the firing range and they followed the other two ships like a flea on a dog. Sparks knew they were in for it now. He could see the Japs at a few miles range, his vision

was almost perfect and he kept communicating to Lt Pfeiffer who kept adjusting the torpedo range system.

At 3:50 Sparks yelled down to the CIC, and Hamill got the message with a sense of dread, he yelled:

"Incoming, Yamashiro firing, incoming, Mogami firing...incoming, Shigure firing."

Sparks started giving out the range and angles, and no sooner had he finished than a 16" shell went over his head, and he could feel his fur burning with the heat, then it exploded, almost knocking him off the mast. He hung on ever so tightly and re-sent the coordinates to Lt Pfeiffer who set the torpedoes for firing. Then a shell hit the ship, a great explosion, and fragments went up and sliced Sparks

tail almost off. Not too much pain and he hung on again.

At 3:57 they started firing the torpedoes, they are sent loose and Pfeiffer tries to get the torpedoes which were hit also away so they do not explode and sink the ship.

At 4:04 all torpedoes are sent loose and the ship has now completed its mission.

At 4:06 the cruiser Denver, under the command of one Capt Bledsoe, disregards his own CIC and orders firing on the Grant. The first shell goes over Sparks head and this time he knows it is not a Jap, he snaps his head around and can actually read USS Denver on the projectile as it just misses the Grant. He snaps his head around to tell the CIC but then another shell smashed the radar and the

communications antenna totally off. The ship is now unable to communicate. Sparks calls Quartermaster Gilbert using his flash. Gilbert is on the bridge and Sparks tells Gilbert it is the Denver firing and they are continuing to fire.

As he is telling Gilbert two Denver shell hit the Grant amidships, and the a third Sparks watches as it literally goes under the CIC, in one side and out the other. Sparks knows they are using armor piercing shells and that is good since they work on Battleships but not on the foil thin walls of the Destroyer.

At 4:07 shells hit the Grant. He tells Gilbert to reach the Oldendorf by lamp on the Pennsylvania, which Gilbert immediately does. Oldendorf orders Denver to cease fire, but just before doing it the Denver sends another

volley which slams into the side of the Grant and one of the shells explodes in the forward engine room, and the explosion throws up metal which cuts right through Sparks' leg and side. Now he is tail-less and he is bleeding from the other two wounds but he holds his position.

4:10 Sparks holds his position as Gilbert continues to communicate. Sparks is providing updated information on the position of the enemy ships but he is getting weaker by the minute from the blood loss and shock.

At 4:20 the Grant is now dead in the water. Sparks cannot hold any longer and he drops down to the top of the Director and manages to crawl to secure himself.

The other Destroyers came along side to assist the Grant. Nisewaner maintained the ship afloat and by dawn she was being towed. She would live to fight another day.

Sparks was brought down to the Officer's Mess and laid with the other wounded crew. He saw the other men and drew himself up and went to the coffee table and sat there. He was getting better and the bleeding stopped. He told the crew to work on the truly wounded, for frankly he would get better or not and frankly it was not as if there was a great deal of squirrel blood aboard anyhow.

At about 7:00 he fell asleep and when he awoke he felt much better. He ate and drank a bit, someone had bandaged his wounds while he slept, so he now walked around comforting the men. They enjoyed that.

The men killed in action were to be buried on Leyte. Their bodies were assembled on the bow of the ship. The fantail had been hit. They were to be transferred by boat to the shore and from there slightly inland to a cemetery prepared by the Army. It was there that they were to be buried.

Lt. Pfeifer led the crew members on the detail ashore and up to the cemetery. The heat and humidity were oppressive and the Army had facilities to bring the bodies to the cemetery. Sparks wanted to go with them and despite his wounds he did. He would scout out since he could move quickly through the trees.

The way up to the burial ground was one sinking path in mud after another. The Army were somewhat prepared with combat boots but sailors were

less prepared, mud just oozed everywhere, and there path up to the cemetery was a slippery slope. Looking at the graveyard one saw a temporary and hastily made plot of land filling rapidly with the dead. Sparks fortunately could jump from tree to tree, many of which were split from the bombardment, but he hated the mud as much as all the others.

There were more dead coming from the battle off Samar as well. This graveyard was nothing more than a cleared part of the jungle, with quickly prepared grave markers. There was a strong sense of added sadness to have to leave the men here, and many thought that burial at sea, as all sailors understand, would have been more dignified.

Sparks looked about at the death and destruction and he recalled the

moment on Saipan when they shelled the Japs. This was many times worse. War is hell he thought.

10BACK TO MARE ISLAND

Antnee was now in full serious mood and I was fascinated by the detail he was bringing to this tale:

"The Grant was now a patched quilt of metal and men, Sir, but it was to make it. The Navy Tug the Chickasaw had managed to repair the sides and keep the ship afloat. There was one engine working and there was limited room aboard to do anything. Men had been transferred to the Hospital Ship USS Mercy and the ship's crew was now almost half of its prior contingent, but Sparks insisted on staying aboard. Between the holes, the loss of the crew, the space on the ship still inaccessible, and the fact that the Japanese Fleet

had just come down from the North and almost destroyed the remainder of Kinkaid's resources in the 7th Fleet, this had not been a good few days for the Grant."

"You see Sir, after the battle, the Grant was afloat but it needed serious repairs Sir, serious repairs. Well Sparks, despite his wounds helped out with the lookout as they sailed back to Mare Island. You see Sir they had no radar, it was blown off as you remember Sir, along with parts of Sparks. Yet for the entire trip, day and night. Sparks sat atop the mast and surveyed the horizon, day after day, mile after mile, his eyes Sir seeing both in daylight and in the darkest hours of the moonless nights Sir, a true sentry to protect the men and his friends. It was his duty Sir to see that nothing more would befall this valiant ship. The Captain trusted him up there,

hour after hour and it was Mr Marsh Sir who had him come down for food and water. For he would only follow Mr Marsh, who he respected and trusted."

Antnee continued:

"The Grant made it to Manus, where it could be repaired. When it arrived at Manus they anchored near the USS Mount Hood, an ammunition ship. The Grant was soon ordered to the floating dry dock which had been brought to Manus. The Grant took our position in the dry dock alongside the USS Honolulu. Tokyo Rose then announced that the Japanese would sink the dry-dock and the Honolulu and the destroyer that was in the company with her. "

"Can you imagine that Sir, Tokyo Rose, a truly evil person she was Sir, truly evil. This didn't happen Sir, but we had

one more burial service to attend. This happened because we left Leyte with one man unaccounted for. This man was a Chief Watertender whom we called Pop. Sparks remembered him and Sparks would from time to time go below decks to the engine room and to the steam room. Sparks never really liked that Sir, he enjoyed being up high, even if he became a target Sir, for then he was back in his own territory."

You see Sir, the Chief, old PoPs, he was a small wiry man whom we all respected. He was older than most of the other crew members. But he had sons in the war and felt he should be in it too, regardless of age and draft status. Sir, he was a true patriot Sir, a man devoted to his country. The fire room, his battle station, had been flooded during our troubles and Pop was found at Manus when the compartment was pumped out. Pop

was to be buried in the American cemetery at Manus along with the men who had fallen to take the island."

"The men walked up to the cemetery on Manus and Sparks went with them. His wounds were now starting to heal. He was happy he was still a young squirrel. The cemetery was a beautiful place. It was on a hill overlooking the harbor and the ships at anchor there. When we had buried our shipmates at Leyte I had hated the mud and thought that burying them at sea where they had died would have been preferable. But the cemetery at Manus was a beautiful place."

"The grave markers were placed in perfect order and the view was beautiful. Yet as we went about our work an explosion occurred in the harbor, it was the ammunition ship, and Sparks and the other men just hit

the dirt, Sparks splayed out next to Hamill and Pfeiffer. Sparks just looked at Mr Pfeiffer and blinked his eyes in disbelief, it was if they were back in battle."

Antnee then went on:

"They left Manus Sir and sailed back to Mare Island just inland a bit from San Francisco. They just about made it Sir, the water ran out, the fresh water, just at the entry to the harbor, so the Captain, Higgle Sir, told BB Lyons the engineering officer to run salt water and burn out the boilers but it would get them to Mare, and it did."

"Sparks and the other crew were let on leave. So Sparks went down to Berkeley and that is where he met you, yes Sir, you met old Sparks, right there in Berkeley."

I stood up and was totally amazed wondering if this was totally made up or perhaps this teller of squirrel tales had managed to intertwine all humanity and squirreldom! I said:

"Antnee there are times when I wonder of you are shall we say stretching the truth."

He replied with a strident manner:

"Sir, I tell only the facts, as have been recorded, and yes indeed Sir, perhaps you were too young to remember by Sparks met you while you loved in Berkeley. You see he had befriended your dad and one day when he was in the park there just off the main road, Sparks was sitting eating some peanuts, enjoying the weather when he saw your dad with you in a stroller. The three of you spent the afternoon together, yes indeed Sir you were very

much liked by Sparks, why Sir you fed him cashews!"

He continued:

"Sir, it was also then that they were awarded their medals. The Captain and Mr Marsh had recommended Sparks for the Navy Cross, for his gallant work protecting the ship during the battle, he just stayed up where the radar was as the shells went by and directed the ship so as to avoid as many as possible and to tell the other ships where they were. He totally disregarded his safety for the sake of saving the men on the ship. It was a nice ceremony, and Sparks was speechless, for it was allegedly the first time a squirrel had been given such a medal since the famous Major Nathaniel Squirrel under George Washington himself, a great honor Sir, a very great honor."

Antnee finished:

"And Sir, for Sparks, the best part was that they made him a Chief, Chief Petty Officer, Sparks Squirrel,"

11 THE PHILIPPINES AND MACARTHUR

Antnee then moved on to another venue. This time the Philippines and MacArthur. He said:

"They soon returned to battle Sir, quite soon. And Sparks was on board. They were to return to the Philippines and there they were to support MacArthur as he did his victory lap, called the MacArthur Cruise."

The MacArthur cruise started June 6, 1945 and ended July 7, 1945. There would be the new captain and the new

XO. Higgie was the new Captain and was by now somewhat well known and Slater was brand new as XO.

Elkert had known Slater as the Gunnery Officer, he had replaced Jerry Marsh, and now he was promoted to XO replacing Hamill. The Navy always moved the people around, and this even included the enlisted men as well. Replacements for the men lost, dead and injured from Leyte, had been replaced and were now integrating into the crew.

MacArthur actually went ashore in Brunei leaving the Boise and Grant like sitting ducks in the midst of a raging battle. His Tour was a wandering with intermittent stops where he went to meet the troops, wanting to see the front personally. MacArthur was on and off the Boise with the Grant

carefully playing picket, and a local protector.

The Grant crew were to be “on” at all time, this was not typical destroyer duty. To many of the crew there was a sense of wasting time while others had fought. This tour duty was not what a fighting ship was for. MacArthur was never one to see the Navy as anything more than a means to an end...and in fact he disapproved of Nimitz and the Marine approach of attacking so aggressively, despite his own approach to the retaking of the Philippines.

Higginbotham recalls many of the details of the cruise:

“We received the operation order for the invasion of Borneo at Brunei Bay, and proceeded to Manila to escort the cruiser U.S.S. Cleveland (CL-55) in which General Douglas MacArthur was

embarked. Cleveland's other escort was the destroyer U.S.S. Killen (DD-593), commanded by Jamie Semmes, class of 1936.

As many of the troops taking part in the invasion were Australian, we embarked an Australian Army major to serve as liaison officer during gunfire support of the troops ashore. After sailing from Manila, we joined the rest of the invasion task force and steamed south to Borneo. We entered Brunei Bay just before dawn, and soon thereafter a lone Japanese plane was sighted heading our way, but he turned away before he came within range of gunfire. The landing went smoothly with very little resistance. We fired several gunfire support missions against enemy targets in response to requests from the troops during the day.

At night we took station very close to the beach and fired star shells at intervals to illuminate areas in front of our troops to guard against a surprise counter attack. It had been a long day. By midnight I had been on the bridge for 40 hours, and I told the Officer of the Deck, Lt. B.B. Lyon, that I was going to get a couple of hours sleep and to call me only in emergencies.

We remained in the area for a day or so, and then escorted the Cleveland back to Manila. The next operation was the invasion of Balikpapan on the east coast of Borneo.

Once again we were assigned to escort the Cleveland with General MacArthur embarked. Upon joining the task force, we were headed for our position in the screen when we lost feed water pressure to the forward fireroom boiler which was supplying steam to

the turbines driving the starboard shaft. The boiler had to be secured and, as steam pressure was lost, the lubricating pumps supplying oil to the turbine bearings stopped.

12 BORNEO AND MORE ANIMALS

During this period the ship picked up some new passengers. No one remembers where or when but they all remember it was on Higginbotham's watch. The friends were the monkey, the dog, and the goat.

Sniper, the dog, was given a home on deck. He had a house, was sheltered from the sun, had food and water, was looked after, walked, talked to, and had a large extended family. Sniper's home was further glorified with an official Navy stencil of his name and his home was airy so he was comfortable no matter what the

weather Then there was the monkey. No one recalls exactly where this guy came from. However they do remember that it with Higgie in command and that it frequently caused one racket after another. It drank, smoke, spit, screamed, and other functions one would most commonly expect out of a monkey, or a five year old!

Antnee then said:

"Sir, Sparks and Sniper got along quite well Sir. You see Sir, in reality dogs and squirrels just like to play, and frankly dogs are rather dumb but they can be good playmates. So Sparks would spend time with Sparks, as the sailed from place to place."

Antnee then said:

"But Sparks also does have a memory of the monkey, actually two monkeys, Sir, and monkeys are not really nice Sir, they think they are smart, but they act like children Sir, nasty children at that, and with two, Sir, it was chaos and the crew just thought it was fun."

"At one of our stops at Zamboango, while we were anchored off shore, some natives rowed out to the ship in a dugout canoe and traded two monkeys to one of our crew for a couple of cotton mattress covers. I knew nothing of this until the boat had left the ship and the monkeys were brought to the bridge to get my permission to keep them."

"Since the alternative to keeping them was to throw them overboard, the monkeys remained. They loved to climb the mast and ride around on the rotating radar antenna with their tails

swinging in the wind. We later lost one of the monkeys when we went alongside a tanker at sea for underway fueling. He scampered across the fuel hose between ships and the last I saw of him he was riding around on the tanker's radar."

Antnee got rather specific:

"Sparks got real mad at this point Sir, imagine a dumb and nasty monkey taking up residence at a key lookout point, a key point Sir. And why, well Sir because the men gave it alcohol, yes Sir, a drunk monkey!"

"The Monkey sat on top of radar, the SG rotating radar. He especially liked this when he had been drinking, the "pink lady juice". The Monkey was also given cigarettes the crew would smoke them down and give the monkey the short hot burning cigarette. The

monkey would never learn, he would always try to eat the cigarette, and then get his tongue burned and run around screaming his head off."

Antnee finished:

"Well Sir, you can see things had gotten a little lax here, the Japs well Sir they were retreating and the battles were closer in, and this really was a good break for the men Sir, a good break indeed, for the next step was invasion."

13 VICTORY

The Grant was on its way north in anticipation of the invasion of Japan. It was August, 1945 and the heat on the surface was intense for many weeks but they were heading north to the Aleutians for preparation. In a strange way they had the tropic heat of August

and the anticipation of the chill of the Alaskan islands in anticipation. Sparks was a bit concerned since he had shed all of his winter fur and most likely could not grow back a coat in time. The crew had gotten together to make him a winter jacket, just in case.

He was so proud because it was made from a real Navy winter gear coat, with sheep skin inside and they had painted his name and rank on the coat, CPO Sparks! He was now a fully accepted member of the crew. He even had a bunk in the Chief's quarters, not an officer, but almost!

It was August 6th, they were heading north at 20 knots, and the sun was just rising in the east. Sparks was restless and he went to the CIC, and he saw Lt Pfeiffer there as well. They smiled and looked at the rising sun, another day.

Sparks went to the helm and there was Capt Higginbotham sitting next to the yeoman watching the due north course, and from time to time looking at the sun slowly rise.

The Captain turned and said to Parks:

"You are up early Chief, what is the problem, just nervous?"

Sparks replied:

"No Captain, just thinking what else we have to do. I have checked out the new radar, seems to work well, they boys back in Cambridge seem to have gotten the ghosts out of it. I met with Mister Slater, he is in the CIC as well. I just wanted to be certain we can detect any enemy aircraft, no problems, just to be certain."

Higgle responded:

"Chief, we are all on edge, just hang in there, keep the men happy and working."

Sparks replied:

"Aye aye Captain, I am back to the CIC."

Sparks jumped off the edge of the window in front of the helm and ran backwards behind the helm to the CIC, that inner sanctum where all elements of the ship were connected.

When he got there he saw the radio man, and he had just handed the XO, Mr Slater a decoded message. Slater turned white as a ghost! Sparks was terrified, he wondered what may have happened. He jumped atop the CIC command table and said:

"Excuse me Mr Slater, Sir, but may I be of assistance, it appears that we may have a problem, Sir."

Slater turned to Sparks and said:

"No Chief, we may have no more problems. It seems we just dropped an atomic bomb, whatever that is on Hiroshima, and one bomb took out the whole goddamned city!"

Sparks was taken aback. He never thought that such destruction was possible, but he had heard rumors back at Harvard, just rumors, but it appears that they came true.

Slater turned and ran to the Helm to tell the Captain. The war was still on but they all thought that there was a chance that the Japs would surrender. At least the prayed for it.

The word spread around the ship, and as usual rumors accompanied it. Sparks as one of the Chiefs was to keep the crew from getting too lax and placing the ship in harm's way.

The scene repeated itself on August 9th when they heard of a second bomb dropped on Nagasaki. Sparks wondered just how much punishment it would take to get the Japs to surrender, they were acting as if they were rabid raccoons, fighting beyond all chance of success.

At this point they were well on their way to the Aleutians and they were now in the northerly currents, the blasting heat of the equator was decreasing and the air would cool somewhat at night.

Then at about 3 PM local time, they were at the edge of the dateline on the western side, on August 15th, 1945, Sparks was again in the CIC with Slater, the XO. He had just come down from the mast checking the three radar units, when the radio man came in with a decoded flash message, and it was clear from his face what was on the decode.

Slater took the message, looked at it, smiled, rubbed Spark's furry head, said:

"Chief, we are all going home!"

He then went forward to give it to Higgle.

Higgle then immediately made an all hands call:

"TO ALL HANDS, ALL HANDS, NOW HEAR THIS, NOW HEAR THIS, AS OF NOON TODAY, AUGUST 15, 1945, THE EMPIRE OF JAPAN HAS SURRENDERED UNCONDITIONALLY. MEN THE WAR IS OVER."

There were a few shouts, but many of the men just sat and cried, they went from anticipating endless bloody war to seeing their families again.

Sparks went back with his men in the fire control area and they were just in dead silence. He saw some just crying, as if a great burden had been taken from them, and in some cases remembering the men who would not be coming home. Sparks thought that this was a moment that they would have in their memories, but deep in their memories.

Antnee paused for a moment and then looked to me and said:

"Sir, you know that your father was in Sparks team, Sir, you know that?"

I replied:

"I guess I do now Antnee. So tell me what did they do."

Antnee replied:

"Well as was said, at first many just sat and wept, you father and his friend Baldy, the Torpedo man did just that, sitting on the bulk head, just rent of emotion from the past few years, but after a few minutes, well Sir, Sparks came as any good Chief would do, and rallied then, and soon that were all patting Sparks on the head, telling him he will never need that winter gear

again, and then Sir, then what do you think they did?"

At this point I could imagine anything. I replied:

"So tell me Antnee."

He continued as if anyone could ever stop him:

"Well Sir, the broke out the juice, the pink juice, the torpedo alcohol. And all around the drank a toast, even Sparks, sitting atop the torpedoes they drank a toast to all going home. But then after that Sparks got a bit serious and said:

"Men, another toast, to our crew members who will not be returning, that they stay in our memory always."

There was a moment of silence and then a hearty toast to all. They hoisted

Sparks on their shoulders and did a dance about the fan tail, all now a bit shaky from the juice!"

I then asked:

"Then what happened Antnee, did they just sail home, because I remember that my father did not get back till Christmas of 1945."

14 HOMEWARD BOUND

Antnee began:

"Well Sir, after the short time in Japan, they sailed back to Seattle, the Navy Base at Bremerton. From there, the men who were eligible to leave, almost all Sir, including your father, Sir, got on a train. Yes indeed, a train back home. You see Sir, this was the first train that Sparks ever took. He was a sea faring squirrel, Sir, from fine

Yankee stock, fine Yankee stock indeed, Sir, like Lady Sara and her family, sea farers, and accomplished at that Sir. Well, with the crew they boarded a train heading first to Chicago. It was December, and as they crossed the Rockies it got awfully cold Sir, awfully cold."

"Sparks sat on the edge of the iced up window on one of those big trains, looking out and watching the land go by, trees, mountains, lakes, snow, all bringing back memories of home. No longer a bleaching sun, the heat, the salt spray, the fear of an enemy attack. The slow roll of the train and the repeating noise as the steel wheels went round and round on lengths of track, making that rick-tick noise."

"On the third day out, men sitting and sleeping in the same seats, a group of

Marines came through and one saw Sparks, and said:

"Hey y'all, what all do we have here, looks like lunch!"

He took a swipe at Sparks, who had his Aleutian foul weather coat on, proud to be a Navy man. His crew mates all sat there, still in Navy uniforms, now attired with gold eagles showing they had been discharged, and then to a man jumped up to break the attack by the Marine. Needless to say this started a fight between the crew and the collection of jar heads.

At that moment an Admiral appeared at the door, on his way to the dining care, and the men slammed to attention, breaking the fight.

Antnee now became serious. He said:

"Sir, now what do you think happened next Sir, you will never believe it. Guess who the Admiral was? Why it was Admiral Oldendorf, from Leyte, the Surigao, Sir, the very same Oldendorf!"

The Admiral walked down and there was Sparks, his winter jack now ruffled, but his name quite clear, and the Admiral saw Sparks and said:

"Chief Sparks, I believe, good to see you Chief."

Antnee continued:

"Sir, well Sir, the foolhardy Marines were taken aback, for Sir you know Marines, they never retreat, but this time they had no idea what to do."

Oldendorf turned to the Marines and said;

"Men, this is Chief Sparks Squirrel, and I personally awarded him the Navy Cross and two Purple Hearts for his bravery at Surigao. He single handedly directed fire from atop the mast of his ship while enemy fire went off all about him and with total disregard for his own safety and until his ship was out of harm's way, He also assisted in fire direction which lead directly to the sinking of three Jap ships again while sustaining continued enemy fire."

The Marines stood back, for never had they heard anything like this. They just saluted the Admiral and walked away. Sparks said:

"Thank you Admiral. And Sir it is good to see you again."

Oldendorf invited Sparks to join him for dinner. The two of them bounced

off together to the dining car and were good buddies for the remaining trip to Chicago. And from that point on Sparks had no fear of any assaults from Marines or anyone else.

Antnee then spoke to me in a rather personal manner:

"They changed trains in Chicago, Sir, and Sparks went to Boston with your father's friend Baldy, and they all said farewell at the train station there. Your father, Sir, patted Sparks on the head, always a good luck token, and said if he was ever in New York to drop by. They were good friends Sir, as men are in war, good friends. Sparks and Baldy got on the train to Boston, along with Lt Pfeiffer, who would go to Burlington, Vermont, from Boston, and they all arrived just less than a day later. It was Christmas Eve Sir, when the train arrived at South

Station. Baldy then took a train to Worcester, Sir, Lt Pfeiffer to Burlington, and Sparks, well he was home, so he decided to walk back to Cambridge."

"It was snowing, Sir, you know that Boston snow, I gather is it worse than here, but it was snowing and Sparks, well, he managed to cross the snow swept Boston Common, he saw some old friends, and they waved, but he was intent, Sir, on getting back to the Yard, and to his family. You know Sir, he may very well have met Lady Sara in those days, she lived close by, did she not Sir, perhaps you should ask her. I truly think he did, for he had mentioned a nice young girl who was out in the snow, feeding squirrels that day, little peanut butter on crackers, just as Lady Sara does today, Sir, just as she does this very day."

I paused for a moment and looked at this rather rotund squirrel and saw that indeed Lady Sara was still stuffing these characters, and I thought that obesity was now a trans-species problem!

Antnee as is he would, continued:

"Well Sir, down Marlborough Street and over the Mass Avenue Bridge, Sir, then past MIT, and on Christmas Eve Sir, it was empty. Up to Central Square and for a moment Sir, Sparks stopped and looked in the lighted store windows, he saw a Lionel train set, just like yours Sir, and he watched it go round and round. He thought that looking here there appeared to have been no war at all, things just seemed to return to normal."

"He then went up Mass Ave, the snow getting deeper, but as any good

squirrel Sir, he knew how to jump along the walls and bricks, to keep his feet dry, Sir, we are quite good at that, and then he was there, the door to the Yard, he scampered through it, around the back of the Library and there he was Sir, there he was, home!"

At this point I knew Antnee was almost at the end, he was exhausted and my chance of filling these pots was nearing zero, yet I loved this tale, for it was truly a personal adventure, the first one where I could see myself, young as I was, and at least an observer.

He continued:

"Well Sir the family was so happy to see him back and so proud. They were amazed of his Aleutian foul weather jacket and his name on the jacket, for Sir they had never seen such a thing

before. Well Sir, Sparks was also happy for the jacket because he had not yet fully grown his winter coat, and of course Sir, there was that lost tail of his. Well Sir they had a wonderful Christmas eve and on Christmas Day Sir they had a feast of acorns, some corn, and pine nuts, a feast fit for a King Sir, indeed for a King."

Antnee went on just a bit more:

"Well Sir, late on Christmas day Antnee was again thinking of the many men who had not been so lucky. The many men from Harvard, the very men he had seen in this Yard, not make it home, and here he was with a medal and they did not even get home in any way. He went down to the John Harvard statue and at its base, he dug through the snow, he dug through the frozen earth, and there at the foot at the statue, in memory of these heroic

men, he buried his tiny Navy Cross, given him by Admiral Oldendorf, in appreciation for the many true patriots from Harvard Yard."

I found this very touching but I did want to tell Antnee of what the situation is now. I said:

"Antnee, that was wonderful but you know that Harvard banned the NROTC years ago, they will not allow men or women to do that on the Campus any longer. Perhaps his Navy Cross should have been placed elsewhere."

Antnee replied:

"Sir, I disagree Sir, for in any true land of freedom, with men like those on the Grant, and that Sir includes Sparks, well Sir, we always have hope that they will do the right thing when the time comes Sir, for the memory of Sparks

and his crew mates will always live on!"

I replied:

"Well said Antnee, well said."