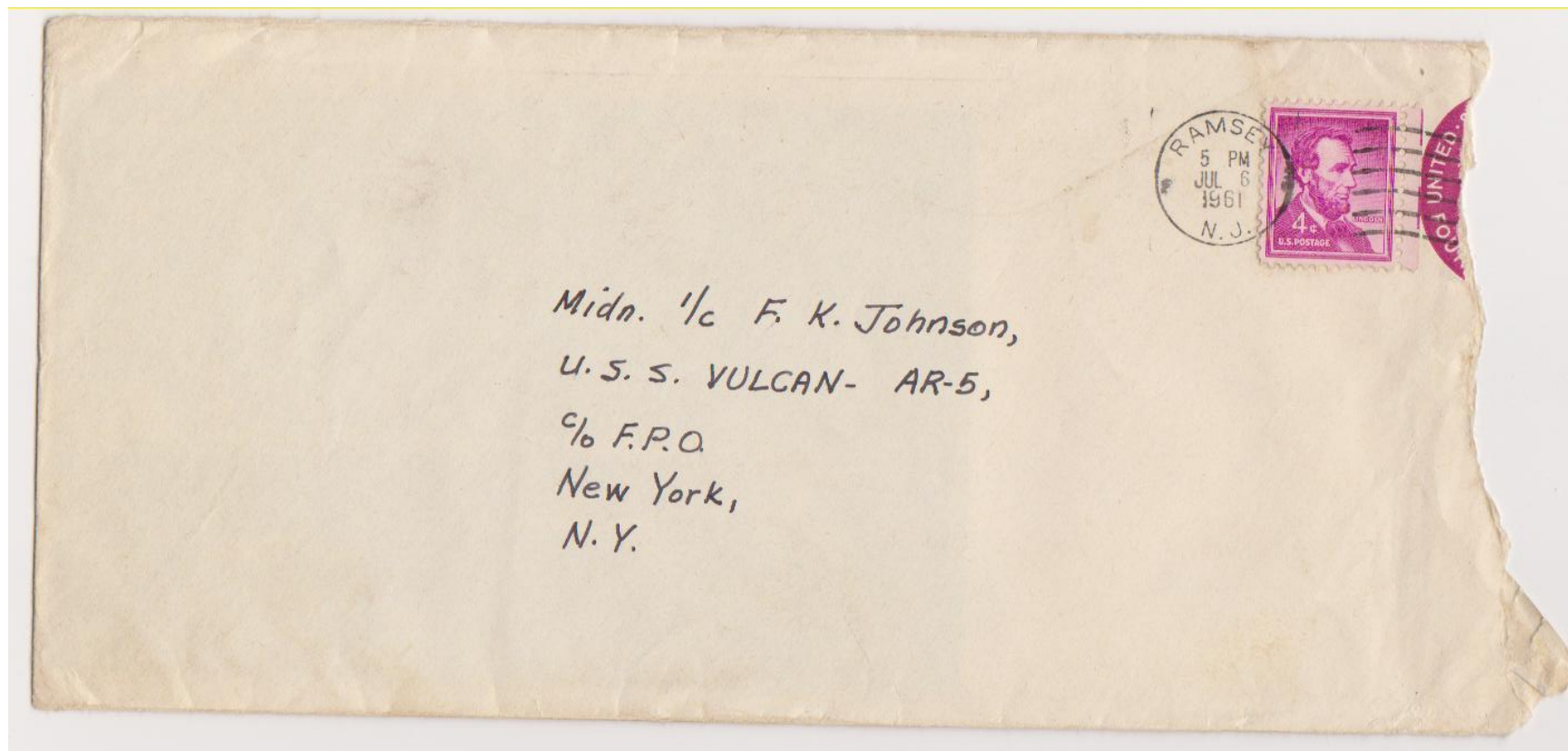


Letter From Captain F.K. Johnson, USCG to his son Describing Action Aboard
USCGC Taney on December 7, 1941
Pearl Harbor



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P. I. am sending a check for
you Cape phone bill. Don't forget to
indorse it. July 5, 1961.

Dear Buzz -

We called Georgia this evening but
got the answer that she was still at the office
studying - and that you had her car - Hope
you picked her up on time.

I am enclosing a letter which came in the
mail today -

Not much else going on around town. The
Fourth was quiet and we saw nobody and heard
nothing from anybody - so I suppose everyone
was doing just what he wanted to do. T's were
most likely over at Andy's place - and the Sisters
probably had a big day at the Brookside Park -

In the first of July, I was appointed
Director of Civil Defense and Disaster Control for
Ramsey - and also the District Director for Franklin Lakes,
Oakland, Wychoff, Upper Saddle River, Allendale
and Waldwick - so it appears that I will have
more to do in the future with Civil Defense.

It appears likely that the Dept. of Defense is
going to have a great deal more to say about Civil Defense
in the future and possibly exercise more
control over CD also. Perhaps that could lead to
a full time job somewhere along the line.

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I am glad that you are having a good time and learning something. Of course, the repair ships are not combat ships and do not have the armament that even the destroyers have. Anti aircraft defense against a modern plane is nil - except for a lucky hit. Things move so rapidly that computers are a necessity - and radar control of gun fire necessary to even have a remote chance of hitting a combat plane. The new fighters and light bombers the carriers have on board move at the approximate velocity of the 3" guns - 1200 mph = about 660 yds/sec - or close to 2000'/sec. Your target practice ammunition for the 3" gun probably has about the same muzzle velocity as the service ammo is only about 2600'/sec, if I remember correctly -

The 3" guns are a re-bash of the old 3" we had during WWI, and the mounts have been revised to permit high angle fire. They were pretty effective against the comparatively slow 200 mph bombers and dive bombers at the start of WWI, but were not so hot as plane speeds went up.

At Honolulu on Dec 7, 1941, we had 5-3" anti-aircraft guns bearing on a squadron of Jap planes and turned them away from Honolulu and the

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electric plant, but it was done by throwing up a barrage ahead of them. We put up about 200 rounds of fused projectiles ahead of them and they did penetrate the barrage about 2000 yards out, but lost their nerve when they got into range of the 20 mm guns which really were hitting them. We had six or seven 20 mm's bearing on them and at 2000 yards rapid fire and tracers got too hot and they turned away before they got into range of the 50 caliber guns. That squadron of planes were approaching at about 500 foot altitude and we sitting ducks for us because they approached the Taney on the port quarter where all but one bridge 3" would bear on them.

At that time no one had thought of using shrapnel in the larger guns against planes, so we really had little effective fire power. The Taney had 3- 5 inch 51 calibre guns which were wicked because their muzzle velocity was 3150' / sec., but they were powder bag guns and could only be elevated about 20° - and we did not use any of them.

Nowadays you have only a few ^{seconds -} ~~minutes~~ - about 20 seconds after the planes come within

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range to get them - and that means 2 or 3 rounds from any hand operated gun. During that time the planes would be firing 5" rockets at you, so - - .

Primarily, the guns are for anti submarine use - just to keep the old subs down and restrict their maneuverability to 6 or 7 knots. Today, a nuclear sub could run circles about an AR and most of the escort vessels, particularly with a moderate sea running.

Sonar has been improved greatly, but as the speed of the screen vessel increases, much about 15 kts the effective range of sonar falls off rapidly, especially in northern waters. Out in the Pacific we ~~used~~ ~~to~~ get excellent results with the old gear up to about 3000 yards at 12 knots - but at 20 knots the sonar was all but useless. Our attacks were made at 12 knots, usually, and, with the 300 and 600 pound depth charges, we got one sub about two weeks after the war started - the first sub sunk in Hawaiian waters. It took about 35 depth charges from racks, ^{and} K guns to accomplish the job. We know we got the sub because we got lots of oil, passing through a heavy diesel oil slick. We did not pick any of it up because we were

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still searching after subsidence of the blasts calmed down, but we did have oil coming up for ten days or so afterward from the same position some 3 1/2 miles south of Diamond Head - in 200 fathoms of water.

We never stopped during the war to investigate anything. To do so made your ship a sitting duck and an alert sub commander could have really clobbered a ship dead in the water.

After a depth charge attack there is so much turbulence in the water that the sonar is useless until all of the turbulence has subsided in the vicinity of an attack.

In those days we made the attacks with a stop watch in one hand and did some good head work. It was before the days of CIC, plotting rooms, etc. The conning officer listened to the pings from the sonar, and by Doppler effect estimated the sub speed and course. and then trailed the sub, closing at a rate of 100 yards a minute, or so slow that ^{the} sub did not realize the closing rate - and we never speeded up for the attack after contact was lost - just holding the course and speed. By estimating the probable depth of the sub and the time it would take the depth charges to sink to his level, we just waited and

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counted time until we estimated that we were ahead of the sub - then used the rocks and K guns to lay a pattern with alternate shallow and deep charges.

The Taney was a tough ship and we did not always wait for one charge to go off before dropping another, especially if the ship's speed was 12 knots or better. We dropped charges at a rate of 5 knots once with no damage to the ship.

There is always a danger of counter-mining a charge, but when you are in an attack, density of the charges pattern is what counts and one takes calculated risks.

The hedge-hog of today is probably much more effective than the old depth charges - because they are contact weapons, and they can be fired while you still have contact with the sub.

Well, see if my deductions are correct. One thing the gun's crew - and CTR - must do is to lead the target. Learn to figure out the relative motion in your mind and apply corrections to the ranges and see how closely you can resolve the problem.

Well, have a good time - Let us hear from you.

Yours,
Dad.