

FRANCIS JAMPETERO

A GREAT AMERICAN,
A GREATER UNCLE



BY:

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Francis Jampetero

The Early Years

Francis's story stretches way back to Albania, long before he was even born. Having been a territory of the Ottoman Turks, on-and-off, since 1430, this little country had grown accustomed to warfare. Best estimates indicate that it was the early 1800's when the great-grand parents of Francis left Albania and moved to the hilly territory in Southern Italy granted to them by King Emanuel.

The town of Castroregio, in the region of Calabria was made up almost exclusively of Albanian immigrants. It was a closed community and all marriages were between Albanian residents.

Wars and conflict continued even after the move to Italy. In 1860, the Kingdom of two Sicilies, as the broader area of southern Italy was known, was conquered by the Kingdom of Sardinia. Calabria is located in the southern most part of the country. If one thinks of Italy as being shaped like a boot, it could be seen as the toe and arch of the Italian peninsula.



Calabria Region in the southern most point of Italy.

The late nineteenth century saw vast numbers of European immigrants moving to the United States. Among those numbers were an estimated 40,000 people from Italy between 1880 and 1900. Included in the 1880's group were Francis' maternal grand parents, (Giuseppi Rusciano) and his father, Giuseppi Giampietro, all arriving during the late 1880's. His father's name is on display to this day in the immigrant wall at the Ellis Island site.



Ellis Island (circa) 1880's

Most Albanian immigrants, indeed, most immigrants to this country in general shortened their names in an effort to show their desire to be Americanized. The Giampietro family became known as Peters up until 1933 when Francis' sister Grace graduated from high school and Francis was in the ninth grade.

Although the names were Americanized, the family customs remained true to the Old World, eastern European ways. The father, in this case, Francis' maternal grand father maintained strict control over the family. Francis recalled that when company was present for meals, the men were served first, and then the women ate when the men had finished. Arranged marriages were still common practice in the late nineteenth century. When the girls came of age (around 16 years) the father picked out an Albanian man for his daughter to marry. Factors such as compatibility and love made no difference. The girl had no say in the matter. Francis recalled his mother saying that she hid under the bed on their wedding night. For the most part though, life was simple but pretty good, in spite of the family strain caused by a miss-matched arranged marriage.

In the heart of anthracite coal country, Francis, his sister grace, and his brother John were all born in the small town of Minersville, Pennsylvania and grew up in nearby Forestville. Grace was the oldest, followed by John two years later. Francis was born one year after John.

Small-town life in north central Pennsylvania revolved around coal. There were two coal companies and no other industry in the area. As mentioned earlier, the coal mined in this area was, and still is, anthracite. Much more plentiful than its counterpart, bituminous coal, anthracite was cheaper, burned faster, and was not quite as hot as the harder bituminous product. Anthracite coal also has the reputation of producing more smoke and dirtier smoke than bituminous coal. The mining process was dirty and dangerous as we will see later.

There was just one store in the village and it housed the only radio in town. More about that later as well.

Once or twice a week the “rag man” rode through town on a horse-drawn wagon calling for old rags, bones, and iron. These items he would purchase from the towns people for a few cents. With about the same frequency, the meat wagon arrived, selling fresh cuts of meat.

Francis attended the first and second grades in a two-room building made of stone. After that, an elementary school house was built where he, Grace, and John studied up until they went to high school, about a mile away.

For a glimpse into his childhood, let’s see what Francis wrote about that time.

“We raised our own vegetables—as did everyone else. We drank milk from a cow and later a goat. Whew!! It took us about four months to get used to it. When the goat had little ones and after my dad left for work we would bring them in the kitchen and had a ball with them slipping and sliding on the linoleum floor. But before they were weaned my dad would butcher them. We wouldn’t speak to him for weeks.”

“He never raised a hand to us except for one time when Brother John got a math problem wrong. As you can imagine, the two fought all their lives. They were opposites. The word love was never heard in our house. It was a no-win situation with no one person to blame except for the type of marriage they were forced into.

“We had to go to church until we were christened, sixteen years I guess. None of that ever stuck with us. Every Saturday night we went into the confession box and told the priest what we did wrong. As a result we had to kneel up at the altar and say so many Hail Marys. While doing this once we

glanced aside and saw that all our friends had gone down town. Needless to say we never did admit too many wrong-doings after that. Come Sunday morning they would pass the tambourine for donations along the pews. We would hang on to our quarter—bang it down to make noise and kept it. Younger generation Mafia. Ha.”

“After church, most of the time we would change clothes and run off to a field to play tag football. Soon it became tackle as it got rougher. One kid broke his leg so we got a wheelbarrow and wheeled him home. Unfortunately he lost his life in the Bataan Death March during World War II.”

“There were no playgrounds at that time so in the summer we played baseball. The bases were stones and the poor baseball was just a mass of black tape. Sports was all our life. Lucky for us, our reading material was Sports Illustrated. We knew the records of all the big fighters from Dempsey to Joe Louis and the under cards. When Dempsey and Tunney fought in the late 1920’s the one radio in the village was brought out and there would be a gathering of people there to listen.”



Gene Tunney and Joe Lewis battle it out in the late 1920's

“Movies were held at the school house. Tickets were ten cents. If it was a stinker we would throw a stone at the screen. It would rattle and the operator would turn on the lights and try to find out who did it. Ha.”

“Haircuts were twenty-five cents. We had one barber who used a hand clipper because there were no electric clippers at that time. The clippers would pull and we kids would just scream.”

During those grade-school years, Francis became increasingly aware of the coal industry and its effect on his friends and neighbors. In his own words, he described that part of his life as follows: “All the men and younger guys worked in the coal mines for \$5 a day. When they walked home at the end of the day all you could see were two eyes and the lips. The rest was all coal dust. The mules that pulled the coal cars out to a deep shaft were born and raised underground never seeing daylight.



Coal Mule at work



Stables built for coal mules

“Often down a quarter of a mile in the earth are stables kept as clean and as sanitary as a race-horse barn. The mule is brought down the shaft in the cage, or elevator, blindfolded, and he stays down below until he dies, or is rendered "hors de combat" by accident. If he is sick there is a "barnyard" covered with white sand—the only touch of white to be seen—where he can roll and rest to his heart's content.”

There was no electricity in the mines. All the miners wore carbide lamps on their hard hats. Open flames and methane gas often resulted in serious explosions. Some men died every year. There were many families with no fathers.”

“When we were small youngsters my dad was in an explosion and had to have his face held together with rods. We don't remember this, so we never did see him when he looked normal. Mother destroyed all pictures of those days. Bitter? Yes, you can imagine that kind of life.”

Francis described his father as a quiet man, assuming the reason to be childhood years spent tending sheep. Francis reported that life for the children was “controlled” but not abusive—even if their mother and a switch from the oak tree occasionally, “spoke for my dad.”

He wasn't fond of wearing the mandatory knickers as a boy.



A boy wearing knickers

The high-school years were good for Francis, even if discipline was strict. Students caught in a pool hall were suspended from school. Corporal punishment was administered by the principal alone in the boiler room. Unlike today, there were no complaints. No one, including faculty, was permitted to smoke on school property. As athletes Francis and John were convinced that smoking and drinking would diminish their prowess on the fields and in the arenas, so they just didn't use tobacco and alcohol, even if their sister Grace did take up smoking at one point.

The boys reportedly were disciplined enough to keep their minds off the girls; although it was said that a young attractive French teacher managed to recruit a good number of the boys to take her classes. Francis has forgotten most of his French lessons, but he does remember the teacher.

Francis and John fought amateur boxing matches in high school. John was the better of the two and continued to compete at Penn State University on scholarship and eventually graduated. Football was Francis' forte in high

school. Upon graduation in 1935 the fleet halfback accepted a scholarship offer at La Salle University in Philadelphia. He played one year for Coach Marty Brill who had once played for Knute Rockne's Notre Dame football team with the Four Horsemen. A mismatch in size, strength and skills led Francis to lament that he was a "boy among men" in that environment. His football career ended after his first spring practice season.

Besides sports, Francis and John enjoyed making music as well. They both sang in a boys' choir during high school. After he left La Salle, Francis played drums with a dance band for a year, tapping out rhythms for waltz, fox trot, and polka.

In 1937 his uncle persuaded him to enlist in the US Navy, a decision he never regretted.

The Military Years

USS Brooklyn
CL-40



And so it was that our young Francis Jampetero, freshly graduated from four months of boot camp, received his orders. The cruiser, USS Brooklyn was to be his place of work for the next three and one-half years. The Brooklyn was almost as new to the navel business as Francis was, having been launched on November 30, 1936. Not long after boarding, both the new sailor and the new ship were bound for the Panama Canal Zone in late 1938 to join the fleet there. Assigned to the Cruiser Division 8, ship and crew performed routine duties with the fleet in the Canal Zone until mid-April of 1939.

On the last day of that month, the USS Brooklyn participated in the opening of the New York World Fair. The fair was intended to be a bit of relief for the American People who had, for a decade, been dealing with the harshness of the great depression. Imagine how they must have felt seeing the new, shining cruiser, at 10,000 tons displacement. They must have marveled at a boat so large, 608'4" long, with a beam of 70.' That's the length of two football fields placed end-to-end, and the width of about 7 average sized cars lined up end-to-end.

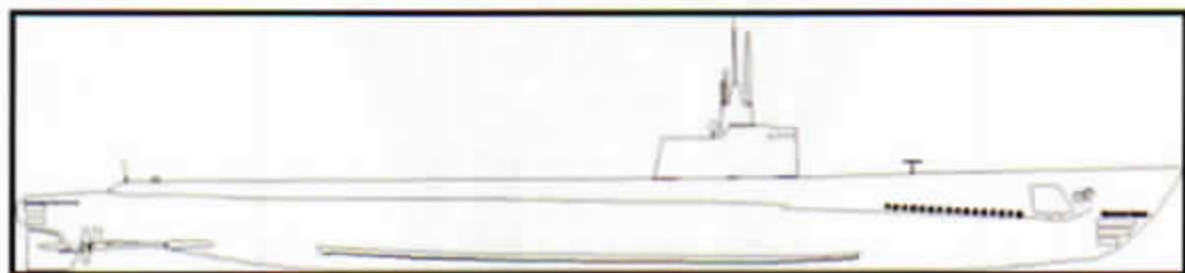
While dealing with the depression, the people also were faced with disturbing news about a German dictator named Adolf Hitler in the news papers and news reels at the movies. Whispers about Japan and its imperialistic designs on the Pacific region, had begun to grow in frequency and intensity. Along with its spellbinding enormity, in retrospect, the Brooklyn was an eerie foreshadowing of the war ahead. Armed with 50 caliber guns, four 5-inch guns, twenty-five antiaircraft guns, and the main battery consisting of nine 8-inch guns, the Brooklyn presented a great deal of fire power in those days.

The ship was also equipped with 5 Scout Observation Planes. These Small planes were launched from the ship using catapults, and then retrieved by crane after sea landing. The local fair-goers had to be immensely proud of this magnificent cruiser, built near by in the New York Navy Yard and named for one of their own boroughs. The compliment of sailors, some 868 strong, and their commanding officer, Captain William Ward Smith, Whom Francis admired greatly, were ready, just in case war was to erupt.

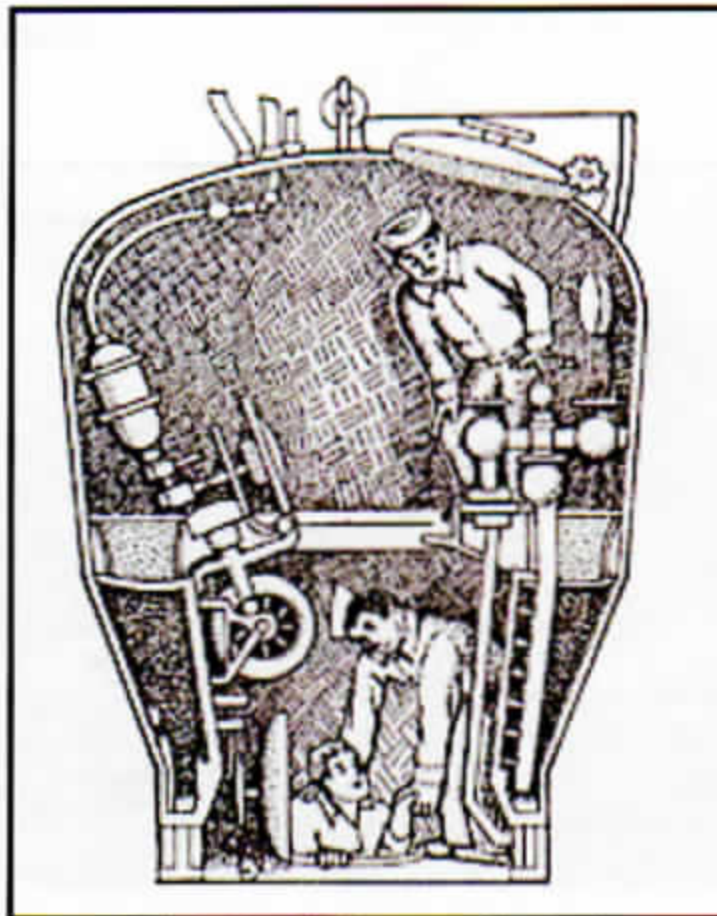




The Squalis Disaster SS-192



Serious duty, not war, but serious duty none the less, called when on May 23, the Brooklyn was sent to the scene of the Squalus disaster some six miles south of the Isles of Shoals, New Hampshire. A new submarine, the Squalus was undergoing a series of test dives in the Atlantic Ocean just off the coast of New England. The 19th and final test was to be a crash dive. While cruising the surface at 16 knots, the sub was to dive to a depth of 50 feet in sixty seconds. The main engine air valve failed and the three after compartments were completely flooded, killing 26 men. The two forward compartments were intact and the remaining 32 sailors waited 240 feet under water for 40 agonizing hours while crews above carried out one of the greatest submarine rescues ever.



Diving bell used in the rescue of the Squalis

The Brooklyn served as one of the base ships during that rescue and played a significant role in the salvage operation completed on June 3, 1939.

Next tour of duty was with the Pacific Fleet on the West Coast. On February 8, 1940, the Brooklyn participated in the opening of the Golden Gate Exposition and served along the coast until March when it left for a good-will and training tour of the South Pacific.

In May, the ship and crew left Pearl Harbor for the East coast and joined the Atlantic Squadron. From that point until the Japanese Bombing on December 7, 1941, the Brooklyn performed convoy escort and neutrality patrol—including the escort of a convoy carrying marines to Reykjavik, Iceland July 1-7.

USS Pennsylvania BB-38



Late in the 1930's, Admiral Husband Kimmel was appointed Commander in Chief of the US Fleet (CINCUS). Francis's commanding officer, Captain Smith, was selected to be Kimmel's Chief of Staff. In turn, Captain Smith asked the Boat and Crew (four men) from the Brooklyn to join the admiral's staff with him. Accepting both the honor and the challenge, [rank] Francis Jampetero boarded the admiral's flag ship, USS Pennsylvania, in 1940.

Considerably larger than the Brooklyn, the Pennsylvania boasted a length of 608 feet and a beam of 106 feet 3 inches. She had fire power of over 149 guns from ranging from 50 caliber to 14 inch shells. The Pennsylvania's compliment was in excess of 2,500 sailors.

For a decade before 1941, the Pennsylvania had trained in Fleet tactics and battle practice, mostly along the west coast. (hazegray.org) Occasionally, she participated in Fleet Problems near Hawaii and in the Caribbean Sea. (hazegray.org)

After overhaul in the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, she sailed on January 7, 1941 for Hawaii for operations with Task Forces 1 and 5, and making one voyage to the west coast with Task Force 18.

Late 1941, the Pennsylvania was in Dry Dock #1 in the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard for repairs. Three of her screws (three blades, 12 feet 7 inches in diameter) were removed and were resting on the bottom of the dock. The destroyers, Cassin and Downes were also in Dock # 1 just ahead of the Pennsylvania. She had been scheduled to leave dry dock on December 6, and berth at Ten Ten Dock, adjacent to #1. The move was delayed, which probably saved the ship. (usspennsylvania.com/warHistory.htm)

December 7, 1941

The following is Francis Jampetero's personal account of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Dec. 7 about 7:55 AM, Sunday Morning some of us were eating breakfast in the chow hall on the base. Suddenly we could hear and felt concussion and gun fire. We thought the Army had set up guns on the dock and were conducting maneuvers. Soon the master at arms came in shouting, "Man your battle stations we are at war!"

The [Japanese] had attacked us. We ran up on the dock and the planes were bombing and strafing the battleships. They really were after the carriers. But none were in the harbor. The battle ships were tied up at North Island – about 1200 yards from the submarine base. Suddenly the torpedo planes came screaming low over the sub base. We could see the expressions on the pilots as they had to come in low in order for them to drop the torpedoes and arm themselves before they hit the battleships. They were accurate. Couldn't miss.

Meantime the planes continued to bomb and strafe. Soon the Battleship Okalahoma took a couple of torpedoes and rolled over bottom side up. Sailors were crawling out of port holes and coming to the surface up into burning oil. There was a call for small craft to come out and rescue the sailors. I got permission to go out and help rescue. Scared? You better believe it. Planes were still active. They were all [Japanese]. Most of our

planes were destroyed on the ground. For the next couple of hours we hauled aboard people covered with oil and most were burned. Those that moved we picked up. The rest we left floating.

Meantime the Arizona took some armor piercing shells that penetrated the decks and exploded the magazines that held the 16" shells for their main batteries. All ships were on fire as the decks were covered with oak planking. All [the battle ships] were on the bottom.

The fire control systems were out. No power. Some sailors activated the 50 Caliber machine guns on their own. We didn't have 20 and 40 millimeters as we have today. We picked up sailors and dropped them off at the piers on the submarine docks. They put them in trucks and transported them to the Hospital about 3 miles away.

Along about 10 AM the high level bombers came in and started dropping bombs again. You could see the clusters of shiny bombs as they released them. We had no defense against them. Rumors were flying around that the [Japanese] were going to land troops and invade the Islands, etc.

About noon I was called up and told to change clothes, given a 45 cal. Pistol and ammunition and was taken down town to the house where Capt. Smith's wife was and stayed there until the following Thursday. At night there were as many as 19 wives and children staying there. I suppose I was to secure any material that Capt Smith had if any. None of the Officers in the CINCUS ever left the base for at least 5 days.

As a side line – one of my boat crew refused to come out with us. He went and hid in a storm drain. I picked a volunteer without any trouble. I later had him transferred from the crew.



In dry dock 1, USS Downes on the left, USS Cassin on the right and the USS Pennsylvania in the back.



USS Pennsylvania after Pearl Harbor

The following six photos were taken by Francis during the attack





USS Pennsylvania continued

After feverish efforts to repair the Pennsylvania, she set sail for San Francisco, just two weeks later on December 20, 1941. She arrived on the 29th and repairs were completed March 30, 1942. From April to August, the Ship and crew underwent extensive training operations and patrol along the coast of California. The ship was also overhauled during this time period.

On August 14th, the Pennsylvania arrived in Pearl Harbor to take part in carrier Task Force 1 guard tactics near Hawaii. Back to San Francisco on October 4th for a four-month overhaul completed February 3, 1943. More training followed along with air defense patrol off the west coast—for two and one-half months. Maneuvers became tedious and the crew began to complain that the ship was destined to serve as a training ship for the remainder of the war.

However, that was not to be the case, as the Pennsylvania shoved--off for Alaska on April 23, 1943. Its mission was to help drive the Japanese forces from the islands of Attu and Kiska two strategically key locations in the Aleutians.

USS Florikan ASR-9

Freshly launched in April of 1943, the Florikan became Francis' next tour of duty. At 251 feet in length and 42 feet wide, the Florikan was considerably smaller than both the Brooklyn and the Pennsylvania. Not only was it smaller but this ship had an entirely different function. As a submarine rescue ship the Florikan was equipped to support deep sea diving and carried a diving bell capable of going down some 300 feet for rescue. When one considers that the water is completely dark at feet, 300 feet is a very deep dive. It was while serving on the Florikan that Francis became a Second Class



Deep Sea Diver. He loved diving and went out into the water every chance he got. In port, muddy water made it difficult to see anything. Out in the islands, though, that was a different story. Clear water, small fish swimming up and pecking at his diving suit; that was enjoyable to the young sailor.

The skipper of the Ship, a man Francis greatly respected, was a Midlife Mustang who had trained at the First Class Diving School in Washington, DC.

The Florikan in the Aleutians Task Force VII

Initially, duty on the Florikan was fairly routine. Most of July and August was spent assisting in the training of submarine crews at Pearl Harbor and Midway. Then, ship and crew sailed for Kiska, Alaska, to participate in the Task Force VII—assigned to liberate the Aleutian Islands, particularly the islands of Attu and Kiska.

Japanese forces occupied the islands in Aleutian Chain for the purpose of establishing bases from which they could control the Northern Pacific. This part of the strategy became virtually mute with the decisive Allied victory at Midway. Non-the-less, American leaders were determined to take back the Aleutians and eliminate the psychological if not military threat to American soil in Alaska.

A small, but significant part of the occupation force was Imperial Japanese Imperial Navy Submarine J-7. On May 1, 1943, J-7 made its first of three runs to Kiska carrying in food and ammunition, then evacuating army personnel back to friendly territory. Ten days later, the Americans began Operation Sand Crab—the invasion of Attu. Through a series of hard fought battles, in bitterly cold temperatures, across rugged terrain, and through dense fog, American soldiers slugged their way back in control of Attu. The battle was essentially over by May 29.

Meanwhile at nearby Kiska, Japanese leaders launched Operation “KE-GO,” the evacuation off Kiska on May 21, 1943. Six days later, I-7 entered Kiska Harbor, delivered food, ammunition, and a radio beacon. Upon departure, she took aboard 49 sailors, seven soldiers and four construction workers. In

the cargo area were 28 boxes of ashes of Japanese soldiers who were killed in action and four tons of spent shell cartridges.

In a second run on June 9, 1943, the I-7 delivered 19 tons of ammunition and 15 tons of food. A total of 101 men were evacuated (42 navy, 18 army, and 41 civilians) from Kiska.

On the third and final run, the I-7 drew heavy fire from the American destroyer, Monaghan and required emergency repairs. Her cargo was unloaded and water pumped out on June 22. Unable to submerge, the I-7 set out to return to Japan on the surface. Suddenly, she was attacked by three US ships. At eleven o'clock at night, I-7's commander ran the submarine aground on Twin Rocks. Broken in two, fifty feet of the bow stuck out of the water while the stern was in tact 100 feet below the surface. The bow was scuttled using demolition charges.

For about a month, starting September 7, 1943, Francis and his fellow crew members carried out diving operations just south of Kiska Harbor. Officially, seven divers recovered documents that proved valuable to the war effort. (Only the first class divers were allowed to enter the submarine. Second Class divers were needed to tend the air hoses outside.) High weeds surrounding the I-7 made the mission uncertain and dangerous. Besides the written material on board, the divers also discovered a number of dead Japanese soldiers who were being evacuated from the islands at the time of the attack. Naval officials learned that the Japanese, perhaps with help from Germany were in possession of the Allied codes.

Shortly after that mission was accomplished, the Florikan returned to train submarine crews at Midway and Pearl Harbor until Francis received his next assignment in December of 1943. In the mean-time, he had been promoted to Boatswain Mate 1st Class (BM1) while serving on the Florikan.

The First Class Deep Sea Diving School Washington, DC

Francis's much coveted appointment to the Deep Sea Diving School in Washington, D.C. was short lived. As part of the physical examination and initial screening, a doctor would click a couple of coins behind the

candidates' ears. Men who reacted to the metallic sound, as Francis did were not allowed to proceed with training.

Shore Duty San Bruno, CA CUB15

In February of 1944, it was on to San Bruno, California to CUB15. With a crew of 21, Francis trained the men to serve as stevedores to load and unload cargo ships. Their destination was to work in a ship repair base over-seas. He was promoted to Chief Boatswain Mate while in San Bruno and CUB15 became CUB16.

Philippines Island of Samar

By early 1945, General Douglas Mac Arthur had developed and was carrying out the strategy of island hopping. The United States selectively attached some islands in the Pacific while passing others. Francis had boarded a transport and was destined for the Palau Islands. Enroute, orders were changed and the ship by-passed Palau, sailing on to the Island of Samar in the Philippines. It's a good thing those orders were changed. After World War I the Japanese took military control of Palau, and much of Micronesia. One unit of Marines tried to land on the island of Peleliu, an area more heavily fortified than the Allies realized. In Francis' words, "the unit was decimated."

"Samar was nothing but jungle," Francis reported. The sailors had to keep light bulbs burning in their footlockers to keep the dampness under control.

Eventually the CB's built a Quonset hut for the chiefs. Three miles away, they constructed a small landing strip for the bombers to land. The strip was primitive—no lights or control tower. At the time, Mac Arthur was liberating the Philippines from Japanese control. Meanwhile, regular bombing raids were carried out over Japan, using the Samar air strip as one of the bases.





"I have returned."

Remember that Francis' crew had been trained to be part of a Ship repair base. While ship repair facilities were being constructed, the crew ran the motor pool not far from the makeshift air strip. Occasionally a plane would return from a bombing raid after dark. The Marine Colonel would call Francis and ask him to send some of his men in military vehicles to the strip and light the runway with their head lights. After several successful lighting missions, one of the sailors fell asleep at the wheel of his vehicle and ran in to a bomber, breaking it in half. As the chief in charge, Francis received word that he was to be court marshaled. Fortunately, the Colonel intervened on his behalf, explaining how the motor pool crew had helped during the emergency landings. The charges were dropped.

Not only did the sailors cope with the hot, humid conditions of the



A descendant of the chicken
Francis and his crew ate?

Philippine jungle, but it was four or five months before the first supply ship arrived. The only food available was spam. Three times a day Francis, his crew, and all the other men stationed there opened and consumed cans of the ham based morsels. The men grew sick of spam. At some point, a one-legged chicken was found to be hanging around the chief's hut. That lone fowl became a welcomed change in the chief's menu.

Life at Samar went on. Finally, by executive order from President Harry S. Truman, two atomic bombs were dropped on Japan—one on Hiroshima and one on Nagasaki.

It was Francis' belief that the lives of many American soldiers were spared as a result of Truman's courageous, yet controversial decision. Francis recalled a presidential quote that advised, "If you want a friend in Washington, DC—get a dog."

In fact, written orders were later found instructing Japanese leaders to kill all American prisoners of war in the event the allies invaded the Japanese islands, as many critics of the bombing thought should be done. In stead, the atomic bombs were so dramatic that an invasion of the islands was ultimately unnecessary. The Kamikaze attacks on American ships and the stout fight to the death attitude displayed on the Aleutians confirmed that the enemy was determined to inflict the maximum amount of damage on the Americans and the Allies.

After the atomic bombs were detonated, all work on the island of Samar was stopped and previous plans for the ship repair site and other projects were cancelled. Soon, on August 15, 2007 the war in the pacific was over.

Several months after VJ day, Francis' ship pulled into Nagasaki. The sailors put together a softball game there. He reported that the town and the surrounding forests were leveled. Everything was destroyed, flattened to the ground. Everything that is, except at ground zero where a small church remained standing. It was a calm image, like the eye of a menacing storm.



Possibly the church Francis mentions at Nagasaki

USS Haynsworth DD-700

In January of 1946, Francis returned to the states; assigned to the USS Haynsworth. Sailing from Pearl Harbor on January 14 the Haynsworth reached Boston on the 26th of April and was in the Reserve fleet for a year.

The Haynsworth returned to active service in March 1947, and was based in Algiers, LA. From there, ship and crew conducted reserve training cruises in the Gulf and in the Caribbean. During those early post World War II months, men were leaving the service and ships were being decommissioned. Missions were carried out by shifting men back and forth among the remaining ships. While on the Haynsworth, Francis reports having made bi-weekly runs to the islands.

USS Wallace L. Lind
DD-703



At one point the crew was transferred to the USS Lind. This change may have occurred shortly after the Lind was moved from Charleston, SC to New Orleans on July 12, 1947. From there, they conducted Naval Reserve training cruises as they had done on the Haynsworth.

It is noteworthy, that this noble ship was one of the Allied vessels present in Tokyo Bay during the surrender of Japan on September 2, 1945.

Shore Duty
Norfolk, VA
NOB

In November of 1948, shore duty began at the Naval Operating Base in Norfolk, VA. There he was in charge of the athletic facilities—gymnasium, fall fields, tennis courts and golf course. His life-long love affair with sports was very much fulfilled in Norfolk. Adding to the joy of this time there was the birth of his youngest daughter, Francine.

The base was yet another example of the changes taking place during that early post-war period. At first, inactive aircraft carriers, reserve vessels,

submarines and destroyers were stored there. Personnel took on fire fighting and salvage control duties. Earlier in 1948, the Atlantic Fleet Command established its headquarters there. An abandoned hospital became home to 165 officers and 315 enlisted sailors. The base began to accommodate scientific pursuits about this time as well.

Two notable athletics related events took place there under Francis's watch. Fleet personnel stationed in Norfolk frequently worked out in the base gym and Francis was happy to comply with the basketball coach's request that he watch for tall men who had potential. In his words, "I could usually spot people that had talent."

Well, two men showed up who were over six feet tall (good height in those days). Francis reported that one, Don Lange, while tall was rather clumsy. The coach asked Francis to encourage and work with him. Don Lange eventually made the base team while the other man did not. What's more, after one season, Don was given an appointment at the Naval Academy at Annapolis. While at Navy, he scored 33 points in a 110-75 victory against Georgetown University during the 1953-54 season. The following year he hit a career high of 42 points against Johns Hopkins. The official Annapolis basketball web site offered these observations.

"In just his second season with the Midshipmen varsity, Lange had set school records for free throws (111), highest scoring average (22), total rebounds in a season (361), most points in a single game (39), most field goals (16) and most rebounds in a game (35)."



"Lange was a fine all-around player, but it was his patented hook shot that made him unstoppable. 'Don has developed a good jump shot, and he has an accurate set shot from the outside,' [Head Coach] Carnevale told The Evening Capital. 'He also leads the team in rebounds. But that hook shot is the greatest I've ever seen, anywhere!'"

Later Francis laughingly concluded he wasn't as good a judge of talent as he thought he was. He declared Don to be "a good kid," and described how they occasionally shared a laugh over the whole sequence of events.

Tony Trabert, a basketball and tennis standout at the University of Cincinnati occasionally worked out at Norfolk early in his career. Francis and another sailor would go to the tennis court with him. Even then, the future NCAA singles champion (1951) was over-powering, not giving the two service men much chance to return his hits. There is nothing to be ashamed of though. Trabert would go on to win three of the four Grand Slam singles championships—the French Open, Wimbledon, and the US Open, all in one year, 1955.



Tony Trabert in action

USS Whetstone
LSD-27

After a short time on the Whetstone, a dock landing ship in San Diego, California, Francis was transferred to the USS Montrose (APA 212).



USS Montrose
APA-212



An Amphibious Attack Transport ship, the Montrose measured 455 feet long with a beam of 62 feet. Her crew consisted of 56 officers and 480 enlisted

men. As for transport capabilities, she carried 86 additional officers and 1,475 enlisted personnel. Early in his time on the *Montrose*, Francis assisted in the transport of a division of US Marines to Inchon, South Korea. While there, the *Montrose* patrolled the coast line in the vicinity of Sokcho in mid-winter. In Francis's words, "Terrible duty." In its support role in the operations of Task Force 90 off the coast of South Korea, the *Montrose* kept a watchful eye for enemy vessels and occasionally moved in closer to land to shell selected targets.

It was during this time that a ghost-like mystery involving the ship's radar occurred. An object was picked up about fifteen miles away from the *Montrose*. Radar readings indicated that the object was closing in. No one could spot any ships, but the radar showed something was on a collision course. When the readings placed the object eight miles away, the ship went to general quarters. The radar continued to track the target until it, according to the radar, virtually passed through the ship. It seems the radar technology at that time misread distant objects and repeated signals were interpreted to be closer than they really were.

The Captain of the *Montrose* was not among Francis's favorite commanders. In contrast to Captain Smith on the *Brooklyn*, this man lost his temper often and, when he did, "he would literally burst a blood vessel," as Francis put it. Francis was serving as Master at Arms (Police Chief) at the time and was responsible for bringing sailors up on charges to the Captain's Mast. The captain, in his bad moods occasionally overstepped his bounds when dispensing punishment to the sailors. On one such case, the captain was called on the carpet. Francis courageously stood up to him and testified against the tyrant. The captain's decision was reversed and the sailor got his rate back.

On one occasion, the ship was making a landing and the captain wanted to leave with the last boat load of marines. Francis was lowering the boats at the time and informed the captain that the final boat was prepared for him to board. The captain climbed aboard and Francis started to lower away. The sheave at the top of the boom shattered and metal rained over everyone, including the captain. Oddly enough, all the captain did was ask, "Chief, can you get it fixed in time to backload?" Francis replied that he could and that was the end of it.

Emergency leave for 30 days called Francis home to San Diego. In the meantime, the Montrose was sent to Vietnam. Francis caught back up with the ship in time to participate in the next mission.

Humanitarian Rescue

Vietnam

Operation Safe Passage

In early August of 1954, Francis and the Montrose participated in amphibious operations with the Korean Marines in Chinhae, Korea. The R & R that was to follow in Kobe, Japan was suddenly cut short. Soon in Pusan, Korea, the crew loaded thousands of life jackets. Then it was off to Sasebo, Japan where the crew loaded thousands of sacks of rice from a Navy stores supply ship. Rumors were rampant as men speculate about what was going on. All they knew for sure is that they were heading south and that the weather was getting much warmer.

Finally, on the evening of August 15 Captain J. D. Andrews announced over the P. A. system that the ship's destination was Tourane, Vietnam (now known as Da Nang) where the crew would be part of Operation Passage to Freedom.

Vietnam was divided at the 17th parallel as a result of the Geneva Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities. The French government had, for years, battled in the jungles of Vietnam to keep control of the country from growing communist movement in China. Ho Chi Minh and his forces concentrated north of the Ben Hai River, while the French troops and native Vietnamese people who sided with the French regrouped in the south. All Vietnamese citizens were permitted to emigrate to which ever region they preferred. The US Navy, including the Montrose, mounted a massive evacuation that resulted in the safe transport of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese from the north to predominately non-communist area south of the 17th parallel.



Representative scene taken on the USS Sagit

For ten months from August 1954 to May 1955 more than 75 US Navy vessels shuttled back and forth between the ports of Haiphong and Saigon in the South China Sea.

Shore Duty Coronado, CA Naval Beach Group School

At the end of March, 1955, Francis began shore duty at the Naval Beach Group School in Coronado, California. His task there was to instruct civilian reserves in the Amphibious section (ACB). For two weeks the men would train in the construction of cause ways used to support trucks and tanks from the transport ship to shore.

One of Francis' counterparts was a famous African American frogman named Morrison who had served in the Korean War. In fact, he led a group of men who blew up a dam at the Yalu River. His prowess in underwater demolition was so well known that he was called the King of the Frogmen. Francis admired the man, enjoying his humble sense of humor and remarking that he later wrote a book about his experiences in the war.

After Two years at Coronado, shore duty came to an end. Rather than return to Subic Bay and take over a dry dock, Francis decided to end his twenty-year career. He retired in 1957.

Afterward

Not long after his retirement, Francis met my aunt, Luella Knutson, who was at that time running a motel outside of Colorado Springs. They married in 1963 and enjoyed a very close, loving life together until Aunt Lue passed away in November 2006.

Francis loves to work on his crafts. Two projects that stand out are an oversized scrapbook large enough to hold entire newspaper pages. The other was a scale model of St. Thomas Catholic Church that was razed around 1969 in Poynette, Wisconsin. He made both for my mother—Lue's sister—DeVota Schliesman. Mother kept both until her death. I have the scrapbook and the church resides in the Poynette Historical Society on Main Street.

So, what do we really know about Francis Jampetero, the man? Well, we know he is brave and that he is a patriot. We know he was good at his various jobs in the Navy moving his way up the ranks for enlisted men. He took pride in his work as evidenced by his stating that after the one test he failed, he never failed another. He is an avid reader. We know that he stands up for what is right. He is an avid sports fan and a pretty good athlete himself. He is compassionate and he is disciplined.

Francis claims that his early religious training never stuck with him. Maybe that's true. Maybe it's just his nature to help people under dangerous circumstances. Or maybe it was the combination of his father's quiet manner and his mother's strict rule that caused him to stand up to the captain who had punished an innocent man. It could have been his school teachings that lead him to spend time playing tennis with his young nephew. Or, perhaps it was his navy training that made him one of the family favorites among all my relatives.

Maybe.... But this nephew has studied Francis' life and read a great deal about the many events and circumstances he experienced. My hunch is that at least some of his religious teaching stuck—even if our brave hero may not be aware of it.

Today
Colorado Springs, Colorado
Retirement

On December 7, 2006 several Pearl Harbor survivors were awarded citations by a number of Pikes Peak area seventh grade students. Following is a story that appeared in the *Rocky Mountain News*.

Rocky Mountain News

URL: http://www.rockymountainnews.com/drmn/local/article/0,1299,DRMN_15_5198481,00.html

Seven Pearl Harbor vets feted at Colorado Capitol

Lakewood kids give handmade medals

By Rocky Mountain News
December 8, 2006

The seven World War II veterans who were honored at the state Capitol Thursday for their service at Pearl Harbor have plenty of medals among them.

But during the ceremony, they received another, one that meant something because it came from the hearts of schoolchildren.

A group of youngsters from O'Connell Middle School in Lakewood presented the handmade medals to the veterans during the gathering that marked the 65th anniversary of the Japanese attack.

"These kids were really interested in what's going on," said Jim Doyle, 83, who was a Navy pilot and aerial photographer back then. "When they said thank you, I could really feel it. They really loved us."

Many of Colorado's Pearl Harbor survivors were in Hawaii on Thursday for the observance there, Doyle said. Others are getting too old and frail to come out for such events.

Retired Air Force Gen. Sal Villano hailed them for their service and patriotism. "These are the guys who came back because they picked themselves off the ground after that devastating attack," Villano said. "They went on to serve our country four more years and they came back home and became great American citizens."

The daughter of a Pearl Harbor veteran played *Taps* on a flute and a Hawaiian musician played a song with the word "Aloha."

Doyle said the song brought tears to his eyes.

"I remembered a lot of my buddies that didn't come back," he said.



Judy DeHaas ©
News

Pearl Harbor survivors Francis Jampetero, left, and John Eck get emotional Thursday at the Air Force Academy cemetery while the names of the men who are left in the small Colorado Springs Pearl Harbor survivors group are read during the 65th annual memorial ceremony.

Photographs taken at Minersville, PA, the birth place of Francis Jampetero.



Once a grocery store, perhaps the site of towns people listening to boxing matches on the radio.



