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Woleai Atoll Surrender

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Japanese Surrender Woleai Atoll USS Sloat DE 245

USS SLOAT Sailor Remembers Woleai Surrender

By Walter Kukelhan, USS SLOAT DE 245

[View Photos From This Historic Event](#)

On August 19, 1944, I was drafted into the Navy and left for boot camp at The Great Lakes Naval Training Center. After a brief leave and a visit home, a group from my Company boarded a troop train for New York City.

I remember spending Thanksgiving Day, 1944, on this train and eating bologna sandwiches. I also remember riding on the back of an open truck, with all of our gear, through down town New York City. This was all very exciting for a farm boy who had never been very far from home.

We spent a week on board an old merchant ship waiting for the USS SLOAT DE 245 to arrive at Pier 92. Six or seven from our group were assigned to the SLOAT. The others were assigned to DEs 240, 241, 242, 243, and 244. These were all part of Task Group 22.4 operating with EVE Core, as a hunter killer group operating in the Atlantic Ocean.

I will not go into a lot of detail since Robert Weigel was on USS MOORE DE 240 and his articles in the DESANews covered the Atlantic operation of our group.

After the European War ended we were ordered to the Pacific and I understood we were to be in on the invasion of the Japanese mainland. The bomb was dropped on August 6, 1945, and we docked at Pearl Harbor on August 7, 1945. The second bomb was dropped on August 8th and Japan surrendered on August 14, 1945. The USS SLOAT was ordered further west. From August 20th to May 1st, 1946, we made runs to Saipan, Guam, Eniwetok, the Caroline Islands, Iwo Jima and Shanghai, China.

During this time all of the crewmembers who had accumulated enough points were sent back to the States for discharge. One bright spot about all of this was a number of us were advanced to Petty Officer third class.

We finally brought our ship back to the States via Pearl Harbor, Long Beach, CA, Panama Canal and Charleston, SC. From

Charleston some of the crew were sent to Great Lakes for discharge. I was one of those and was discharged on June 8, 1946, as a MoMM 3/c.

The USS SLOAT took part in the surrender of Woleai Atoll, Caroline Islands, and I am enclosing pictures and an article pertaining to this.

WOLEAI ATOLL, CAROLINE ISLAND, SEPTEMBER 17, 1945

By Walter Kukelhan, USS SLOAT DE 245

The living dead, carried on to a Japanese Hospital Ship here, gave mute testimony to the tightness with which the US Navy drew the blockade noose around the neck of Woleai Atoll, bypassed Caroline Island group that was surrendered by the Japanese today to an American force.

Cut off from all supplies since April of this year, Woleai's original reported garrison of 6,500 has been thinned down by death to starving 1,650. Driven by constant bombing to live in underground holes, comparatively few Japanese were killed in the actual attacks, but disease has cut down their forces relentlessly. Almost as though in retribution for the mistreated Americans who have died in Japanese prison camps, about 100 Nipponese have died every month, mostly from malnutrition, since diseases started to take their toll.

Pale ghosts of men stumbled about the scrubby Atoll, supporting themselves weakly by sticks. In some cases, sticks are of no avail and those who are clinging pathetically to life go wherever they are going by riding piggy-back on the slightly stancher shoulders of their comrades. Others seem to have lost all interest in movement and lie inertly along the side of the narrow dirt roads.

To these living skeletons, who knew that the road to war did not always lead to glory, the coming of the Conquerors, accompanied by an American-planned Jap Hospital Ship, was a deliverance.

Early this morning Japanese emissaries came out by launch for a surrender conference aboard the USS SLOAT DE 245, with American military and Naval officials, led by Marine Lieutenant Colonel Parker R. Colmer of Brookline, MA. Readily, the Japs agreed that surrender papers signed two weeks ago at Truk authorized them to proceed with the capitulation.

The Nipponese were given detailed instructions by Colonel Colmer, executive officer of the Ninth Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, for clearing the Atoll of all armaments and embarking the remaining members of the garrison on the hospital ship by Friday evening.

In the afternoon, Colonel Colmer led an inspecting party, including a detachment of Marines from his Battalion, on a check-up tour of bomb-devastated Woleai, main island of the group.

Evacuation of the Japanese to the Hospital Ship will continue tomorrow and Wednesday and the Stars and Stripes will fly over Woleai for the first time as soon as the last Nip quits this coral slice of the fast-dwindling Japanese Empire.

The USS SLOAT, a veteran of Atlantic warfare and recent arrival in the Pacific, is commanded by Lieutenant Arthur S. Lane of Trenton, NJ.

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Photos submitted by Walter Kukelhan, MoMM3/c, **USS SLOAT DE
245**