

# George “Farren” Pace

as interviewed by Judy Hansen  
November 2014

I was born in Provo on May 6<sup>th</sup> 1932 to George Roland Pace and Elsie Marie Otterson. My family was large. There was Donna, Juanita, Larry, Delilah, Betty, Dorothy (who died at birth) and myself. I went to school in Eureka until I was eleven then we moved to 422 North 500 West in Lehi; just above the tracks. We moved our home here from Eureka. They ended up moving half of that town out of there. I attended school in Lehi from the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. I got a double promotion so I was a year ahead of the kids my age. My mother died in 1948 when I was 16 and my dad remarried. He had moved to 325 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street in American Fork so I went to live with him. When I was a Senior I ended up graduating from American Fork High after living there seven months. After I graduated I moved back to Lehi in a sheep camp on Mendenhall’s Ranch near Saratoga for about a year and a half.



I moved to Dugway and work at Dugway Proving Grounds as a laborer. My buddy out there, Stan Black from Delta talked me into joining the Navy. I wasn't even thinking about joining but Stan told me we could go in and see the world. On December 23, 1950 I quit Dugway and that same day we went to Salt Lake. Stan decided to go talk to his cousin who was a bellhop in the Hotel Utah and while he was gone I went to the recruiters, processed, and got all signed in. They took us through some kind of physical where three out of four men were rejected. I didn't think I would make it because I was this skinny little kid that only weighed around 150 pounds; but I got in. Stan came back and told me he had changed his mind. He didn't join and I never saw him again.

I was sworn into the Navy January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1951. We rode a train down to the Naval Training Center in San Diego and went through boot camp. We had nine weeks of training and one of those weeks was mess hall; scrubbing trays and cleaning. I had been offered five different schools but I turned them down. I wanted to be a gunner's mate on a destroyer.

After boot camp we loaded onto a troop transport; the USS General William A Mann and went to Treasure Island up by San Francisco. There were about 7,000 of us on that ship. They had a receiving center there.

Right after we landed everyone went home on leave except five of us. There was one guy from American Fork; Jay Singleton, a Japanese man from Salt Lake, another guy from Lehi; Jack Doyle, myself, and John Bryan from Payette, Idaho who ended up getting killed on the ship. We sat around the barrack wondering what was going on but then the next day we all went home on leave. I was there ten days. Us five guys all rode the same Greyhound bus home and back to Treasure Island.

When the five of us had come back we discovered everyone else had been back for a day. We were only there two hours and they passed word for us five guys to fall into the debarkation center. They took us over and loaded us onto a commercial airline; which is unheard of for an enlisted man. The aircraft was a little two motor job. The Navy nurses, doctors, officers, and us five sailors were the only ones on that flight. We landed on Hawaii, then Wake Island where we got off and had a meal. We got back on the plane and went to Tokyo where the Japanese guy from Salt Lake got off. I never saw him again. This was April 1951.

In Tokyo on the Japanese island of Honshu we got in a 6X6<sup>1</sup> and rode to the naval base in Yokosuka and stayed there one day. Then we got on a little train that had such little bunks in it we had to curl up to sleep. We traveled south across the entire length of Japan, went under a tunnel in the ocean to reach the southern Japanese Island of Kyushu and stopped in Sasebo. On our train ride, we had gone through Hiroshima where they had dropped the bomb five years earlier. They woke us up so we could see it. There was a little bit of cement and corrugated tin sticking up but no trees, no houses, no nothing; just desolation. I was surprised to see people walking around it to get where they were going. The radiation was probably still pretty hot there.

When we got to Sasebo we got on a tanker; an oiler, and rode it out to our ship. Jack Doyle got off onto his assigned ship, me and John Bryan got on the USS Brinkley Bass, Jay Singleton was still on board the oiler going to another ship. John and I rode the high-line<sup>2</sup> from the tanker to the USS Brinkley Bass in a little bosun chair. A high-line is a cable stretch over the water from ship to ship.

I never did find out why they flew us over. I was on the Brinkley Bass before all the other guys even left the States. They all ended up coming over on an ammunition ship. When I first got on ship the 1<sup>st</sup> Class from the fire room told me the Captain wanted to talk to me. They said he wanted to know why they flew me over and wondered why I had information about all the men

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<sup>1</sup> M35 2½-ton cargo truck also known as a "deuce and a half."

<sup>2</sup> High line is a nickname for Underway replenishment (UNREP), a broad term applied to all methods of transferring fuel, munitions, supplies, and personnel from one ship to another while the vessels are underway.

coming onto the ship. They said, "He thinks you're CID<sup>3</sup>". The Captain of the ship called me in and questioned me about it. He asked me, "How come they flew you over." I told him I didn't know. He said, "You're telling everybody about all these guys that are coming here and I don't have no word on anybody being assigned to this ship." He asked, "How do you know all this?" I told him I had read the bulletin board on Treasure Island that said who was coming here.

When we got on board I was supposed to have been the gunner's mate but they were short-handed and put me down in the fire room. I was a Fireman Apprentice. This was where the boilers made the steam to propel the ship. I thought they would eventually move me back to gunner's mate but they never did. I didn't mind because in the winter when it got 20 below, the deck was frozen with ice, the life-line was frozen, the gun barrels had four inches of ice on them; everything was covered with ice. I was glad to be down in a nice warm environment. I started at the bottom as a messenger and then advanced to operating the burners. I had to be pretty fast to get the burners off and on. There were four barrels; each with different size orifices to regulate the amount of oil for the burners. We'd have to answer bells that came from the Captain or whoever was running the bridge letting us know how fast to go, when to stop, or whatever. We'd have to raise the burner up to increase the speed of the ship. If it wasn't enough we'd have to click in another burner until we got all four burners going. We could get going up to 33 knots which is about 37-40 miles an hour. Normally we traveled at about 18 knots. The ship was about 390 feet long and 40 feet 10 inches wide. It had approximately 300 people on it.

When we first got there the operation of our ship was Task Force 77. It was a group of carriers, battleships, and cruisers that were circled by destroyers. We were the screen for submarines or airplanes coming in. The U.S. was always launching airplanes. We did this about two months then we left and went to the coast of Korea. The USS Brinkley Bass was a gearing class destroyer.

This was about the time the US got pushed out of Korea from the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel almost back to the south end of the Korean peninsula. The U.S. started bringing troops in so one of the first things we did after we left Task Force 77 was to be assigned to escort three troop transports taking men into Korea.

Our next assignment was in the Wonsan Harbor. Three sides were surrounded by enemy gun placements and it was heavily mined. We had sweepers in there getting rid of the mines all the time. A minesweeper is a small boat and usually made of wood. This is because metal ships build up magnetism when they go through the water and it will pull the mines into the ship. Every time we went back to the States we had to go get degaussed or demagnetized. We encountered a lot of mines and at times had to use fire hoses to keep the mines from bumping into the ship. Our radar worked and could pick up on them fairly well. The USS Small was hit by a mine and it blasted 1/3 of the front end off. It had to back up all the way to Japan where

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<sup>3</sup> Center for Information Dominance

they put a little hull on it so it could steam back to the States to be rebuilt. We had two minesweepers that hit mines and sank while we were there.

Anyway, when we went into Wonsan the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 1951 we came under fire almost every day. It was almost like being in the movie; bullets were splashing in the water and bursting in the air. Most of the guys weren't scared but a few was. There was one guy named Langford that would get a five gallon can, take it over to the corner, get his bible out, and read it all the time. Us young kids we just didn't know to be afraid.

For the first six to eight months on ship I was also assigned to a damage control party. We often were top side of the ship and during that time would stand out on deck watching the airbursts. One day me and the Chief were standing there after he told us to come out of general quarters to get some fresh air after being in the superstructure of the ship for five or six hours. The USS Brinkley Bass was a pretty armored ship; it had six barrels or guns of 5 inch, the 105's, the 40's and the 20 millimeter guns, torpedo tubes, and hedgehogs<sup>4</sup>. The Chief let me take the glasses and I watched. On that day we fired seventeen 5 inch rounds of white phosphorus set as airbursts to go off at tree top level and killed 6,500 Koreans; at least that is what the Koreans radioed out. The Koreans radioed that they were going to get our ship and sink it and God help anybody they got ahold of. At least that was the rumor that was going around.

We were hit two days later; May 20, 1951. We laid a smoke screen; if you cut down on the air going to your boilers it kicks out black smoke. Then we had a smoke generator that run off a diesel that kicked out white smoke that was on the fan tail in the back end of the ship. We made the smoke and steamed around. In the Hong Kong paper it said we had been sunk but we hadn't.

It was a 100 mm round air burst that blew holes in a small area of the ship. It didn't do as much damage as the next time we got hit. There were eight of us guys wounded. John Bryan from Payette, Idaho; the one that came on board with me was hit in the stomach; it went through the lower part of his life jacket and he was killed. John was transferred to the USS Manchester where they had a surgeon on board but he died about three to six hours later. He was too hurt; he had a split in him about eight inches long. We were at the same duty station together; we done everything together really. I was hit and injured. I really wasn't aware of it at the time. Shrapnel went into the bone of my arm. There was a guy above on the 40 mm that got hit in the eye and nose; they transferred him off ship. Another guy was hit in the left arm. He came back to the ship after about a week. We weren't shot at everyday but we were probably shot at 100 days during the three cruises we were over there.

We stayed mostly at Wonsan but we would do what they called shore bombardment. We would go up the coast of Korea on what they called the bomb line and bombard there. When we would go up there, the USS Helena, USS Manchester, or USS New Jersey cruiser or battleship would

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<sup>4</sup> Depth charge projector (hedgehog-type)

be with us. We finished that cruise out and in August 1951 we came back to the States into San Diego. I took a 20 day leave.

When I had been hit by shrapnel my dad got a telegram from the Navy saying I had been wounded. Then it came out on the radio and TV that I had been killed in action because the newspaper writers misinterpreted the information as three people being killed, not one. It took my dad thirteen days to finally get the clearance that I was alright. The Navy held our mail up for almost two months on the ship. When our mail started going through my folks was still writing asking me to have someone else write them if I couldn't write myself. Three days after I came home on leave, twenty-seven letters that I had written home during that time I had been wounded were delivered.

After leave I went back to the USS Brinkley Bass where we completed a few months of training and then in January 1952 we set off to report back to Task Force 77 and Wonsan.

While I was home on leave I had talked to Boyd Wilkin's from Lehi. When I went back to the ship here this new guy shows up. I looked at him and he looked at me and I couldn't believe it; he looked just like Boyd Wilkins. I thought, "It can't be ol' Boyd, I just seen him two weeks ago back in Lehi. He couldn't have got into the Navy that fast." He came over and talked to me and sure enough it was ol' Boyd Wilkins. He cut my hair many time on the USS Brinkley Bass.

In March 1952 we were hit again. It done quite a bit of damage to the ship and five guys were wounded. We had to go into dry dock to get some of the damage taken care of. We went back to the US one more time after that and again returned to Wonsan.

Wonsan was a big city. They had troop concentrations there and estimated 100,000 North Korean men would be there at times. They would come there for their rest and relaxation. The United States would come in and get real active so the North Koreans would think we were going to make another landing at Wonsan. They would bring all these troops in case we were going to bring in the LST's<sup>5</sup> and land our troops on their beach like we had done one other time in Wonsan before I was there.

They had roads and railroads that run along the coast. There were quite a few mountains and rocky islands with North Korean gun placements but we could see the roads and railroad tracks. One of the main purposes of the ship was to keep the railroads and bridges knocked out so they couldn't transport stuff. As soon as we'd knock them out they would rebuild them. Our planes would also come in making their runs blowing up the railroads, bridges, and stuff like that.

We were Destroyer Division 52 which were four ships. We was the flag ship. The Commodore was stationed on our ship so we got special privileges; we were allowed to wear tailor made bell bottom trousers, gabardine made in Hong Kong where most ships weren't allowed that. If we

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<sup>5</sup> Landing Ship, Tank; a vessel to support amphibious operations by carrying vehicles, cargo, and troops onto an unimproved shore.

crossed the USS Duncan, their officer on the deck wouldn't allow us to go ashore because of our tailor made dungarees. For this reason, the skipper on our ship would have the liberty boats from other ships tie on the end of our fantail and they would have to come across our ship to get on the liberty boats from there. We rarely wore our hats. We wasn't really in uniform and we talked to officers just like we talked to anyone else; even the Captain was almost, but not quite; just like one of the boys.

The Korean War ended while we were there. All these North Korean's started coming out and fishing alongside us. We were shooting the day before and the next day; the day it ended the North Koreans were all over the place. They had been confined by our ships and couldn't bring their boats out or we would sink them.

After the war, when we got back to the receiving station if a man had less than three months to serve they would discharge them so they could cut down on the Navy. They were mothballing ships and getting rid of them. After making me wait for two days until I only had three months left I was discharged in Oct 1954. I was supposed to have gotten out Jan 3<sup>rd</sup> of 1955. I actually got out 2 months and 28 days early. I served 3 years, 9 months, and 2 days – of my four year enlistment. There were about twenty-eight of us that got off the ship that were discharged at the same time.

It was a different life in the Navy. I wouldn't have traded it for anything and I'm glad that I joined up. I was awarded the Purple Heart, Korean Service Medal with seven bronze battle stars, Good Conduct Medal, Japanese Occupation Medal, China Service Medal, United Nations Service Medal for Korea, and the ship was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation.

After I got out of the Navy my folks had moved back to Lehi on 500 North and about 420 West. I went looking for jobs but couldn't find anything. I went back out to Dugway Proving Grounds as a laborer. They gave me my raises and within three years I was a Senior Operator running graters, caterpillars, and cranes.

I had married Darlene Faucett in 1951 but we divorced in 1952. After I got out of the Navy I married Mildred Ileen Jackson on January 11, 1955. She died during childbirth in 1961. Curtis Beverly introduced me to his niece, Darlene Greenwood. I had six children and she had three when we were married on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1966. After we got married we bought the Julius Banks house in Lehi across the street from Crandall's and Drapers. Julius Banks had been a school teacher in Lehi all his life.

After almost 20 years of working at Dugway, I quit, took out my retirement, and bought in 1/3<sup>rd</sup> interest with the Greenwood Carpet Company in Lehi because my wife was a sister to Dennis and Ken Greenwood. After a year I quit that.

My sister's husband, Pete Campbell asked me to come and work with him. We decided to start up our own business, Bell Construction. He had been a General Contractor but his license

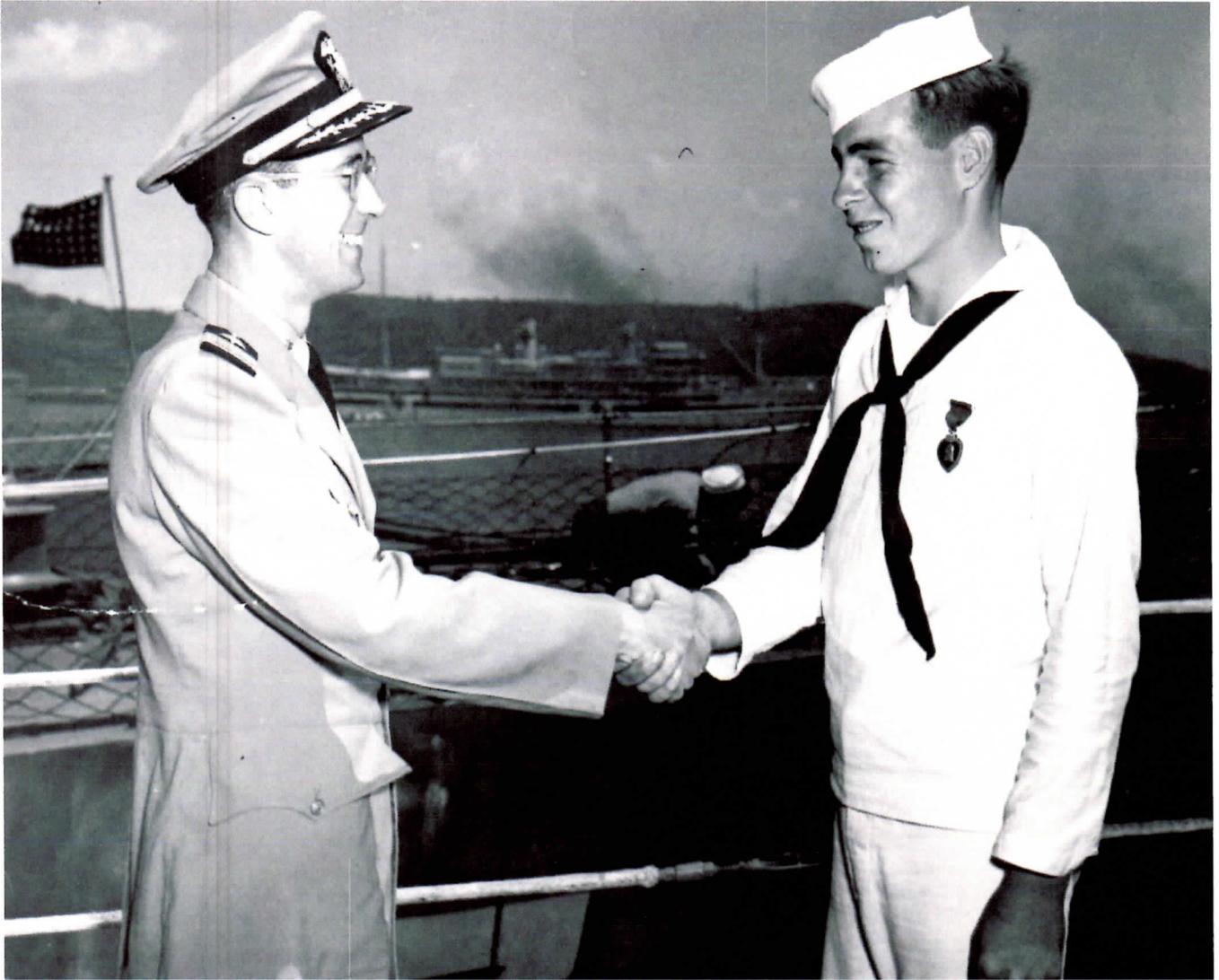
expired so I took the test and became a General Contractor. We put up steel buildings for a year but things were slow so I walked out of that. He stayed in and eventually became a multi-millionaire.

We left Lehi and bought a motel up in Lava Hot Springs in Idaho. It was rough up there so I started working with the National Forest Service. Darlene went to work managing the Maverick gas station. We stayed there eight years and then sold out.

We had some investors so we took \$500,000.00 and went Gold Mining out at Osceola, Nevada. We lived in Baker, Nevada during this time. We bought the claim and rented the heavy equipment. This was when the price of gold was up to \$600 an ounce. We didn't make it but it was fun. We lived out there for a little over a year.

Because of my purple heart I am a 10 point veteran so when I put in for a job they put me right up to the top. Darlene wanted to stay in Utah so I went to work for the BLM in Salt Lake. My duty station was in Vernon, Utah so after renting in Tooele for a year we bought a home in Vernon. My work took in all of Tooele County, out to the Nevada State Line, up to Idaho across over to Bear Lake. I had to blade all the B.L.M. road, care for the springs, and wild life. We lived in Vernon for twenty-seven years.

When we started getting older we decided it would be best to get a home that didn't have stairs so we moved back here to Lehi. Ilene and I are the parents of four children; Laura, Dennis, Nancy, and Joy (died at birth). Reah and I had three children; George, Clayton, and Annette; I am also the step-father to Darlene's three children Craig, Mark, and Rebecca.



George F Pace receiving the Purple Heart by Commander A. F. Beyer, Jr.

DATE DELIVERED 9 June 1951 DATE 11 June 1951  
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AMERICAN FORK SAILOR AWARDED PURPLE HEART-----George F. Pace, fireman apprentice, USN, son of Mr. & Mrs. George R. Pace of 325 East 4th st., American Fork, Utah, is pictured being congratulated by his commanding officer, Comdr. A.F. Beyer, Jr., after being awarded the Purple Heart Medal aboard the destroyer USS BRINKLEY BASS in a southern Japanese seaport recently. The Purple Heart Medal, one of the nations oldest awards, is presented to men wounded by enemy action. Pace was wounded in the harbor of Wonsan, North Korea by Communist shore batteries which slightly damaged the destroyer as it was laying siege to the important transportation facilities of the Red city. The battleship NEW JERSEY was in similar action the following day. Pace, fully recovered from his wounds, has returned to active duty aboard the BRINKLEY BASS. The destroyer is a unit of Task Force 95 commanded by Rear Admiral Allan E. Smith, USN.

U.S. NAVY PHOTO BY: Young, PH2, USN

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