

LELAND VOTH'S TRIP TO POLAND

A "Seagoing Cowboy" on Chick Detail

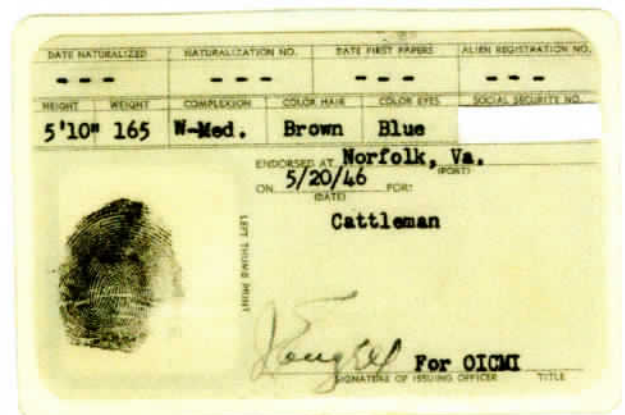
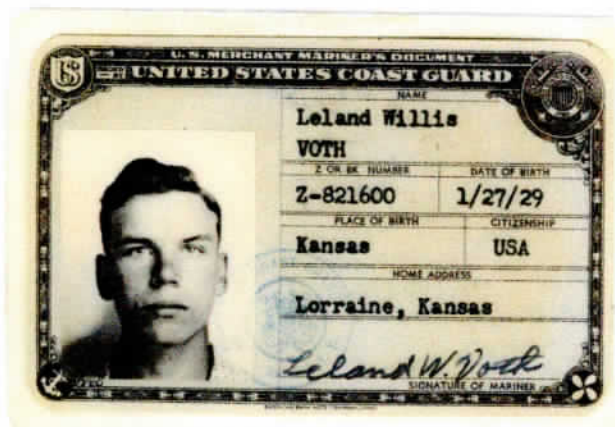
During the spring of 1946 Leland's brother Stanley, who was nearing the end of his Civilian Public Service (CPS) assignment as a Conscientious Objector to war, was given the opportunity to volunteer on cattle boat trips to Europe, while awaiting his discharge papers. These ships carried cattle or horses to countries in Europe which had been devastated by World War II. Stanley mentioned in a letter to Leland that Brethren Service Committee (BSC) in cooperation with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was organizing some "cowboys" or crewmen to accompany cows (pregnant heifers) or pregnant horses to countries devastated by World War 2. They were accepting volunteers.

Leland wrote and applied for permission to participate in this program, and was accepted. Leland had just completed his sophomore year in high school, Lorraine, Kansas.

Soon after school was out that year in May, he hitch hiked to the East Coast, Newport News, VA. The first night he slept in a YMCA in Kansas City. After getting public transportation to the edge of town he started hitch hiking again with good success. However, along the way he waited for hours for a ride, to no avail. Finally a bread delivery truck picked him up and the driver informed him that the previous week a lady had been killed by a hitch hiker. When the bread truck driver reached his destination of Lexington KY, Leland had the driver drop him off at the bus stop to go by public transportation the rest of the way.

When he arrived in Norfolk, VA he went to a Catholic Maritime Club to meet Stanley. There he found a note from Stan saying he had signed on for his second trip with heifers instead of horses, again to Poland and that they could meet after they both returned. Both of his trips were on the PLYMOUTH VICTORY.

Going to the Brethren Relief Services office Leland was asked to volunteer on the dock preparing ships for their relief voyages. So each day he went by ferry across to Newport News to help assemble chicken batteries (cages) for baby chicks for the next ship. The day BRS was assembling the crew for THE MORGANTOWN VICTORY ship, he inquired whether they had enough volunteers and was able to sign on as a crewman. Everyone had to have an identification card, which were issued by the U. S. Coast Guard, so Leland's ID indicated he was a "Cattleman" with the Coast Guard.



His trip began on a chick detail rather than working with the 640 cows on THE MORGANTOWN VICTORY so he helped fill the chick cages with 18,700 baby chicks and load them on the ship. After one day the responsibilities were divided among the crewmen and Leland got the night shift. He was then assigned to mid-ship sleeping quarters (for night shift people) which were better than those quartered in the fan tail of the ship.

The first night while working in the hold he crawled up the ladder to get fresh air and discovered the ship wasn't moving yet even though down in the hold he could hear the rumbling of the engines which made him think they were moving. The ship finally left port May 23.

After several days on the ocean some cows died and Leland watched as they were lifted by crane over the side and dropped into the ocean.

The chick batteries were about 5 tiers high and each tier had a wide spool of brown paper which was threaded in a narrow space under each tier to catch the chick droppings and was normally changed once a day. When the sea was really rough the wide rolls of paper under the chick cages would fall off their racks and rip out the litter which made a mess that he had to clean up. To prevent such happenings he made regular rounds to check whether the rolls of paper were centered on their hooks. Each night he helped feed and water all the chicks and extract dead baby chicks.

The enjoyable time was to climb up the rungs of the ladder to breath in the fresh ocean air. It also was a chance to go to the galley, cut slices of freshly baked bread and smear it with a thick layer of orange marmalade. Orange marmalade became his favorite spread to this day.

When the ship passed through the straits between England and France Leland saw with delight the White Cliffs of Dover. As they entered the Kiel Canal in Germany they passed through canal locks where children were begging for food. Some of the crewmen threw cigarettes to them. Leland threw apples and oranges. These same crewmen were rough and one was so desperate for alcohol he drank rubbing alcohol, which caused him to spit up blood. He was left off at a hospital near the Kiel Canal in Germany.

The ship arrived in Poland, docking at Nowyport near Gdynia. That area was under Russian occupation so Russian soldiers came on board and patrolled the ship while it was docked so it wouldn't be looted. They enjoyed their assignment since they could get American snacks on the ship.

The cattle were unloaded first, along with calves newly born since all the cows were pregnant. One cow jumped out of its crate as it was being unloaded and broke its back on the dock. After several days the chicks were unloaded so Leland was free to tour the area for the 2 days remaining. The first evening he went with several guys to deliver food that they had brought from Newport News to give to the hungry people -- prunes and other fruit.

The next day they went by streetcar to Gdansk (Danzig) where they saw heavily damaged areas with piles and piles of bricks and rubble of buildings which had been bombed. They

