

A Port Call Fukuoka Japan

The first deployment

By Kevin Hurst

In this narrative I give a memoir of my first port of call in the US Navy, it was the first of many, and of all the experiences that followed, I will always remember this one fondly.

FIDDLER'S GREEN

(John Connelly)

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As I roved by the dockside on evening so rare
To view the still waters and take the salt air
I heard an old fisherman singing this song
O take me away boys my time is not long

Dress me up in rye ole skin and jumpet
No more on the docks I'll be seen
Just tell me old shipmates
I'm taking a trip, mates
And I'll see them someday in Fiddler's Green

Now Fiddler's Green is a place I've heard tell
Where fishermen go when they don't go to Hell
Where the weather is fair and the dolphins do play
And the cold coast of Greenland is far, far away

The sky's always clear and there's never a gale
And the fish jump on board with a flip of their tail
You can lie at your leisure, there's no work to do
And the skipper's below making tea for the crew

And when you're in dock and the long trip is thru
There's puts and there's clubs, and there's losses there too
Now the girls are all pretty and the beer is all free
And there's bottles of rum hanging from every tree

I don't want a harp or a helm, not me
Just give me a imbaze and a good rolling sea
And I'll play the old squeeze box as we sail along
When the wind's in the rigging to sing me this song

There was a time, before now, when I was still green before I had become a sailor proper, let alone a submariner a title I hold with pride. Though at the time I had never heard of Fiddler's Green, which is a sailor's version of Elysian Fields and is where fishermen go if they don't go to hell. When sailors hear the wind and tides, they must beware because chasing Fiddler's Green will cost you a wife along with years of your life. So, even though, I did not know what its tale would hold, I heard its call all the same. Ironically, more of the dire warnings and cautionary tales I heard came true

after I became a landsman true again. However, this tale begins in 2007, in the early fall time of the year.

My first deployment had me leaving the State of Hawaii, and traveling officially for the first time outside the United States of America. I was a Crypto-Tech-Reconnaissance, or as the Navy now calls it Crypto-Tech-Collection, (CTR) in the Navy. As for the other men I deployed

with, I had mostly only a cursory association with them. We were Type II deployers which means that for a variety reasons the Navy decided that instead of attaching us to one platform (think ship, plane, base, or submarine), which is the norm, crypto-techs in deployable positions are all centrally located in one direct-support shop, and flown to different platforms for specific missions. Which is why within 3 years of being in the fleet I amassed more than 411 days out to sea, not counting travel time. As a type II deployer I had never been on a submarine, well any platform, before and we were not to board her (in Naval tradition all vessels are referred to in the feminine) for another 2 days. In the meantime, we fell under ‘commonsense’ rules for our liberty time.

There were roughly 14 of us, this included a spectrum Cryptologic technician types. We had our linguists, mechanics, technician- technicians (redundant I know but CTT’s are officially referred to as that), our intelligence officers, and of course our R-branchers such as myself. Due to the nature of our missions, I am not allowed to talk about our actual mission; after-all loose lips sink ships. As such, neither can I name the vessel that we boarded. In part of our training when we receive our security clearances, for some reason we are taught to speak ambiguously about our jobs, but the port calls themselves and the places we went, I can talk about that.

Our orders were to travel to Sasebo Japan and board a US



Submarine, although we flew into Narita Japan and stayed in Fukuoka. At 19 years old, the Navy finally gainfully employed me on my first mission for our Great Nation indivisible under G-d. I was excited; I was finally able to join the Fleet. Being as I was not even 20 yet (the legal age for alcohol in Japan) I was not sure if I would be able to drink or not in port. Fortunately, for me, other areas of the world do not care as much about such things as we do here in America. There I was in Fukuoka Japan my first time out of the country, with a group of men I did not know particularly well, embarking on my first 'pub crawl'.

Now Fukuoka had a reputation as a bit of a party city. This is because it is one of the larger cities on the Japanese island of Kyushu, and is home to several universities. Fukuoka also sounds eerily similar to 'Fucky-oka', which is its unofficial nickname. Naturally this attracts a certain crowd, which combined with its larger shopping markets (malls really), younger demographics, and the worldwide renowned Japanese people's friendliness lends itself to being a hot spot for all sorts of customers. So when we were making our travel and lodging arrangements for the mission our officer, Ensign Barker, selected to Fukuoka to be our first port call.

So on what I recall to be a Wednesday night we went out walking the streets of this foreign city. Going up and down various streets, attempting to find some action, frequenting various bars, most of which I do not particularly recall, and therefore are not of any particular significance. However, traveling in our group from Leprechaun's Irish pub to Irish Pub Celts in downtown Fukuoka we passed a group of women traveling opposite of our direction. We paused walking down the street and looked at them, they of course likewise directed their attention towards us. They bunched together grouping themselves more tightly into a circle, no doubt surprised to see a group of Americans wondering about. We went into the Irish Pub Celts, and

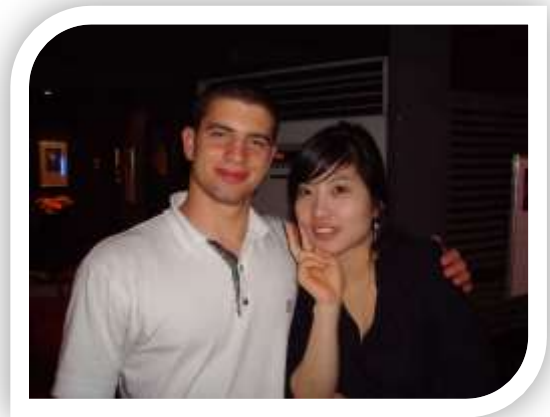
found out they had just left. From our conversations with various proprietors of establishments dedicated to the promotion of debauchery, we discovered that it was dead about town because of course it being a Wednesday.

We stayed there a while before leaving deciding we would like to try to meet up with the group of girls we had passed earlier. Eventually we wound up back at one of the Irish bars.

Where we again bumped into the same group of the girls, who as it turned out had been also looking for us. We had both returned to the same bar trying to meet with each other asking the bartender if he knew where the other group had gone. Of the group, only one girl

spoke what I would consider passable

English, and even though she was not the prettiest in the group I decided to pair off with her. At this time in my life, I did not have any considerable experience drinking so I decided to take it easy and stick with rum and cokes plus the occasional odd cocktail or mixed drink.



Since it was loud, and a little bit crowded in the bar, I led the girl outside through a door that led to the roof. The evening being both cool and warm, still had a distinctive smell of Japan, salt from ocean, but was absent the typical overcast smell born from atmospheric pressures of a nearly omnipresent grey overcast that presides over Japan (no doubt a courtesy of the Chinese city of Beijing). As it was a clear and pretty evening, we sipped our drinks, stared at the stars, and attempted to communicate. I found out her name was Saiyuki, she worked at the mall in a

sunglass hut, and her Myspace (that was still a thing in 2007) was under the name Saiyuki King where she had some Marilyn Monroe Andy Warhol art piece as her profile picture.

Since High School was still fresh in my mind, I decided to try asking her about the various constellations. I remembered that we had learned that every constellation had a story in Greco-Roman mythology and I wondered if the same was true in Japan. At the time I still remembered all of the various stories and which constellations were associated with them. We started petting and kissing, after which I do not remember much of any conversation. I do know that of all the veteran sailors there that night, only I was able to make a connection that evening.

When it was time to leave we all walked towards some town square, where there was a taxi cab or two waiting on the girls. Who all got in them except, of course, for Saiyuki. Who proceeded to go to the hotel with me. I distinctly remember one of our Californian-Mexican team members, a bigger man named Ortiz, mumbling beginners luck, as this had been my first time in a bar. I really had no plan at this time; I was still a virgin and, at the time at least, intended to stay so until marriage. Of course that did not mean I was not willing to play, romp and have all sorts of 'naughty' fun right up to that point however.

At the hotel, we had all been assigned two per room except of course for our officer, a soon to be promoted, Ensign Barker. So naturally, we booted him out of his room and rendered it to me. This was my first time fooling around with a Japanese girl, and the first girl I had met in a foreign port. We went about as far as I was comfortable with, and naturally, the rest of the team teased me later, because I had not sealed the 'deal', but honestly, that was just fine by me. I had undergone one rite of passage of being a sailor; I brought a girl back from the bar, kicked out a guy from his room and spent the night with her.

I learned, that evening, that even though the Japanese look exotic for us Americans we are all the same. The next morning we woke up slightly before 9, and I took her down to breakfast. There I learned that even though the menu typically had both a Japanese hiragana and katakana texts, it also surprisingly had some English text as well. This led to the discovery that in Japan pancakes are referred to as sweet cakes, and have no butter. Another thing apparently the customs in Japan are different for syrup usage. Putting Saiyuki in a taxicab, I went back up to the rooms where the rest of the team had been staying. I knocked on all their doors, and no one answered. I knew that some of them would have gotten up and traveled down to Sasebo to deposit some equipment that we had brought with us to the boat, in order for the said equipment to be installed aboard, before we made way out to sea. I had not been expecting everyone to be gone, or to be left behind.



I knew, however, that they would be back that afternoon, and I had realized that I had left my shampoo and toothpaste back in the barracks in Hawaii. Therefore, I began to walk around Fukuoka by myself in the broad daylight in search of these items. Now this in and of itself was quite an adventure, as the word toothpaste is not a word commonly taught to Japanese students when they study English. I began walking in wider and wider circles around the city using the hotel as a central landmark, and carrying a business card from the front desk in my pocket in

case I became lost. That way I would have an address in case I needed directions back to the hotel. I explored the many shops, and accidentally walked through a Shinto shrine during what I assume was a type of prayer ceremony. After exploring the city all day, I returned to the hotel around 3 in the afternoon. Once there I found that indeed not everyone had left, but had simply been too hung over to move in the morning.

I naturally talked about what had happened the night before, embellishing a little, and getting teased some that I had only gotten my, “PP sucked” by various different team members. When I found CTR2 Hughes, my Sea-Dad, a mentor of sorts who had been assigned to me by our shop to provide instruction while underway as to how to perform our job on the submarine. He was sitting in bed in his underwear swaying while holding his head. After speaking with him, Hughes chuckled. He looked at me and said, “So you kicked Ensign Barker out of his room last night, so you could fool around with that girl last night. Well, your closer to being a real sailor now anyways.” Saiyuki and I stayed in touch for about another year, contacting each other when I was going to be in Japan again, but eventually lost touch when she moved to Kyoto.

The full implications of this port call and my transition into the naval culture did not begin to done on me, until once our mission was completed, and we made port again in Korea. While there I found myself in a café one morning eating breakfast, thinking about all that had occurred when a live tiger walked by me. It was then I realized that my life choices had taken far from what was familiar, and I had begun a new chapter in my life.



