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**To:** draft  
**Subject:** Midway: Baptism of Fire

This part could be left off but it explains how "green I was" when in a few months I was aboard my first navy fighting ship in the Battle of Midway...with no real indoctrination..... so young, so ignorant and I guess too stupid to be afraid.

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How could a college kid, who in his senior year walked out of class with scores of fellow students, demonstrating that they didn't believe in fighting for their country in a war, How could that young fellow end up voluntarily in the middle of one of the most crucial sea battles in history, and certainly of the United States of America just seven years later?

Well, it happened in 1942 aboard the heavy cruiser, USS Astoria steaming alongside the Carrier USS Yorktown engaged against a huge Japanese attack force in what is now called "The Battle of Midway". By that time that kid had become a college and Seminary graduate, had married and was pastor of the First Baptist church of Carlisle Kentucky and had a Newborn baby son. All that and threats from East and West had changed a lot of minds.

Rev. Matthew John Bouterse, the youngest son of Dutch immigrants to America from Holland, grandson and nephew of at least 15 Salvation Army "soldiers" enlisted by Gen. Wm Booth and his daughter Evangeline Booth shortly before the dawning of the 20th century. Having entered 3 different colleges and a Northern and Southern Baptist Seminary in the "Depression Years" of the 1930's, Divine Providence gave him the Perfect Pastor's Mate, equipped with charm and musical ability and already, after enabling him to graduate by working for their support until they were called to a church in Bluegrass Kentucky, charming all of Carlisle as "The Little Preacher's wife", church organist, singer, and to top it all producing a baby in the second year. Today we might call it "A Grand Slam", but the congregation called it "Divine Providence"!

It was then that Adolf Hitler and Satanic Powers entered that new Garden of Eden.

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influenced by the calling of the Kentucky National Guard to active duty in 1940

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had volunteered to become a Chaplain in the Army or Navy. The Navy bit first. And this is his Story:

There was nothing romantic about my swearing into the Navy; It was accomplished before a Notary Public in Cleveland Tennessee, while we were saying "Goodbye" to our church family, to Virginia's parents and civilian life.

I was then a Lt.jg USN, had never had on any kind of uniform, had never saluted anybody in all my life, and had never been farther to sea than to the Gulf Stream from my "Home Port" then in a fishing boat from Miami, Florida, my home town, and, as I recall had gotten sea-sick and took up playing marbles!

So still, "out of uniform" I reported to Great Lakes Naval Station and found the senior Chaplain's office, who, resplendent in his 4 Gold stripes and High Episcopal grandeur, seemed rather puzzled about this country Southern Baptist in civies: "Welcome aboard, glad to have a Southern Bastard aboard- Har,Har,Har! I assume you have a Bible and I'll get my yeoman (??) to get you some Navy Regs" (**Some?:** I think he said?) Then he suggested I go to Montgomery Ward and BUY A UNIFORM. (That was a surprise). That was about all the indoctrination from him.

One person who did help me immeasurably was Lt George Rosso, a Roman Catholic priest chaplain; the first priest I had ever gotten to know personally. He explained Navy Regs to me and also encouraged me to "be myself as God's Man!" and he also explained that I should ask for one of his friends who worked in Montgomery Ward Dept. Store and would take care of the uniform for me, and would get the right price. Some years later he was Admiral Rosso and Chief of Chaplains and I ran into him at some military function and he saw me, called my name and asked how my wife and baby were!

I was at great Lakes long enough to learn how to salute, sorta, and then received orders to a heavy cruiser and became the envy of some Reserve

Chaplains. I think I was the last Regular Navy inductee until the end of WW2. I was put aboard a Military Railroad train and on my way to the West Coast where I met 2 Navy COMMANDERS of whom I was frightened until I discovered they too were just as new as I was in the Navy . I didn't figure that out for some time

Leaving San Francisco was on the USS Henderson a former German ship that was U.S.Booty from WW 1, my first ship. We arrived outside Pearl Harbor to the greeting of some Navy planes, showing off with their aerial greetings. It was Easter Sunday and the small group of women passengers I had been wondering about turned out to be wives (military wives) who were being allowed to return as government workers, nurses, secretary, etc who were fortunate to return to husbands or some such. Some of the husbands were Flyboys!

I wondered why the ocean had started turning black as we approached the entrance to Pearl Harbor, and as we proceeded and I could see the wrecked hangars and the water turning blacker and thicker and started taking on a nauseous odor, and then passing by hospital grounds to starboard with many patients being wheeled around the treeshaded yard and we came to Ford Island still just as fouled up in many ways as was everything else, I received word from someone that it was there on the Naval Air Station that I would be transferred to, and I would replace the chaplain there until my ship came in. He was in the hospital. My small room was in BOQ just a few hundred feet from the still smoking Arizona with Yard workers pumping garbage and corpses day and night to be carted away to be buried on a high "Red Hill". My room was screened on the lanai facing all that noisy constant activity....and I was "In The War!"

There were several activities that comprised my "Indoctrination", None of which I had received at Great Lakes. First I went into Honolulu and reported to the District Chaplain, Captain Razzie Truett, a Southerner and quite affable, but best of all in his office was a lovely Navy wife that had become a volunteer to Capt. Razzie, and wonder of wonders, she was the wife of an officer on MY SHIP! The USS ASTORIA CA 34 one of her Gunnery Officers. She became my teacher in all things Navy, none of which I had ever heard. Things like Acey Duecy equipment, cribbage stuff, Recreation parties, sewing kits, a new thing called V-Mail, on and on. She knew it all and told me that it was here I could be called "Padre" or ignored, Known as an enlisted man's friend and confessor and spiritual advisor, or " just another officer".

What I learned during those next few days as she took me around to meet some of her friends whose husbands were aboard "my ship" was the high point of my Navy Career!

A few months and Two Battles later it also became the heartbreak of my 22 years as a seasoned sailor: salty-- from the sea and from our shared tears.

I was told that I would have to remain in the chaplain's office on Ford Island and a Sunday was coming up and I would conduct the "Protestant Service". When I heard that word "Protestant" something said to my conscience what Father George Rosso had said to me at Great Lakes "Just be God's man, Bouterse" And I blurted out, "No, no, I can't conduct a protestanr service. It'll be "DIVINE WORSHIP FOR ALL HANDS". I never called it anything else in my entire ministry in the Navy: "For All Hands". And God honored that decision, Thank God!

One other experience became a vital part of my indoctrination, but it too was not a part of "Navy Regs". It was an invitation from a young CPO who after that first Divine Worship came to me after church and asked if I had ever heard of the "Navigators". I hadn't, but I was about to hear of the large group of Christian sailors, CPO's, officers and many enlisted men, including black sailors, who at that time in the Navy could only be cooks and servers at meals, and who were required to live in separate living compartments. I had been amazed when I entered the Navy that it was segregated. But the Navigators had insisted that they would not differentiate because they were "Born again Christians", and they believed and studied all the Bible, believed, practiced and lived it. A man in California named Daws Trotman and his wife had a home in a port town where any sailor was welcome and shared with one another the Glorious Gospel of the Word of God, and encouraged Memorization, and provided little verse cards for all hands. Their home was in existence before there was ever a USO!. As far as that was concerned this bit of news swept away any doubt that God had put me where I was

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USS Astoria CA-34