

KEN McGinley, chairman of the British Nuclear Tests Veterans Association tells us about his recent trip to Japan.

One of the most interesting people I met on my recent tour of Japan was Dr. Glenn Van Warebey, he is an internationally recognised Psychological Researcher and Lecturer of Upsala College, East Orange, New Jersey.

He left his card and a copy of the book he had just written "Looking Up, Looking Down" in the reception of the Hiroshima City Hotel where I was staying.

We arranged to meet for breakfast and were joined by Jacob Beser, who incidentally was the only person who flew the two missions, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Jacob was a Lt. in the US Air Force and responsibility rested on him to set the fuses for both bombs.

I found Jacob a very straightforward, honest man whose sense of humour was very limited.

When I asked him if he had any regrets after the two bomb drops he stated, "I'm sorry, very sorry that we didn't have the Atomic Bombs a few months earlier, I would have preferred to have dropped them on Germany". Maybe he had given me the most constructive answer on the Japanese tour, of course Jacob was a Jew.

Going back to Glenn, when he found out that not only was I a Scot, but that I came from Dunoon, he immediately asked me about the pubs and the Cowal Games.

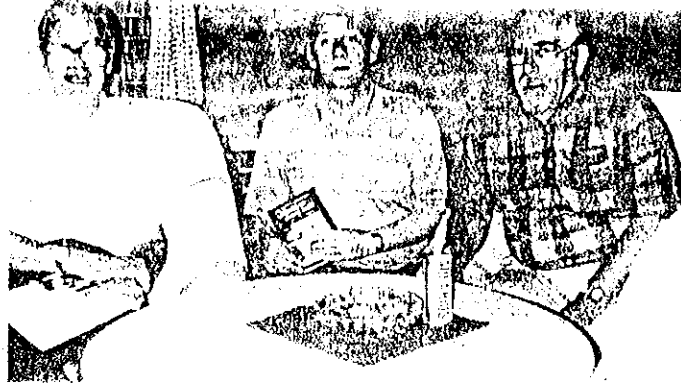
He had served at the Holy Loch and in this part of the book he laughed and joked about his crazy experience aboard a nuclear submarine.

So whilst eating raw fish, rice and Japanese whisky he went on to say:

Many people are not aware of the real chance that the world lives with of a nuclear bomb going off accidentally. A certain event in my life gave me an idea of the odds.

Let me tell you a secret. When in the nuclear submarine service, they used to say, one FBM submarine had the destructive capacity of all the shots fired and bombs dropped in wars throughout the history of the world, including the Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bombs.

I was stationed most of the time out of Holy Loch, Scotland, aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt (SSBN 600). The submarine carried 16 polaris missiles and a few nuclear torpedoes. I was awarded the submarine service's Silver Dolphins aboard this submarine and the least amount of time I ever spent under



Left to right: Gordon ex-C.I.A., Ken McGinley, chairman of the British Nuclear Tests Veterans Association holding a copy of Looking Up, Looking Down and Flight Lt. Jacob Beser who flew both missions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

was 62 days. That's a long time to be stuck inside a grey coffin-like tube at 21 years old. Everything is just bland and mechanical — but, you all go a little crazy at relatively the same speed in that tubular world of pipes and pipe-dreams.

I joined because I was being drafted into the Army with sighs on the war in Vietnam and I thought this was a better alternative. We were on this one patrol covering Russian targets in the Mediterranean. It was 1971 and the submarine commander's name was Lewis — Dewey T. Lewis. While at sea my duty was steersman/helmsman. I piloted the submarine maintaining its course and depth. This is something not altogether different from flying a large airplane.

I was getting near the end of the patrol and the crew was anxious and as hungry for Eros and the world up there as cats in heat. We called it "channel fever". We were approaching the Straits of Gibraltar. The navigator wanted to shoot some stars and see if he could make any land identifications. The idea was to check if our onboard computerised navigation system was exactly accurate.

Capt. Lewis was sleeping; he had a long day before. Everything was normal. I was just coming off the watch as helmsman when I decided to have a coffee and "shoot the breeze" with the next watch section. By this time in the patrol we all had a kind of detached tunnel vision. Everything just seems to go mechanically — automatically — even ourselves.

The navigator wanted to bring the sub up to periscope depth to make his cross-checks and to get a little "periscope liberty". I always looked forward to periscope liberty, it was like being able to watch TV. It was quite another world up there, nothing less than beautiful — the stars, the planets and shorelines with their disappearing mountains. You gain incredible appreciation of life on a nuclear submarine. It is ironic.

We were coming up to 120 feet. The duty officer signaled all the different watch stations to prepare. We were coming up to periscope depth. Not in the Mediterranean but in the North Atlantic, where we usually steamed, this term meant 'Hold only your hat, she's a gonna be rockin'. The North Atlantic often had heavy seas with 15 to 20 foot waves, and they'd test your stomach sometimes. But the Mediterranean is smooth like a bonnie Scottish girl's skin in the spring.

I was resting against one end of the ballast control panel passing time and listening to the usual sea stories and fairy tales — by this time in the patrol you know everything about everybody and have heard the same jokes said over so many times that you'd end up gritting your teeth when you hear another beginning. However, it was better than staring into space or returning to the 24 hour perpetual darkness of the crew's sleeping area.

Nothing from sonar. "Let's take'r up. Come to periscope depth", the duty officer signaled. All of a sudden my cup of coffee began to tremble in my hand. The whole boat started to tremble and a heavy low sound echoed throughout the submarine. We began to look at each other in silence, waiting for the other one to identify what was going on. I began to feel very insecure.

Totally uncharacteristic of him, the captain came storming out of his ward room with nothing on except his undershorts and in a flash he was in contact back aft to the reactor compartment. I guessed they told him 'nothing here', because he

was right on the line talking to another compartment. Panic was concealed, nervousness was obvious. The boat was shaking as though some dark monster from the sea was playing roughly with it.

I felt afraid. Nobody knew what was going on! Seconds passed like hours. Finally she started to cool off. The low, deep revving sound began to disappear. The trembling began to dissipate. But we were all still alarmed.

The captain was on the line with sonar. I think the sonar man was asleep on watch! He reported that a tanker had just passed right over us — it was a supertanker probably with at least a 60 foot draft — 60 foot or more of it was underwater! He was supposed to warn us of its presence ahead of time, so we wouldn't come up but, he was sleeping while on duty.

We were at about 90 feet when the tanker passed right over us with its churning propellers the size of two-storey buildings. That's what shook us — the giant propellers and the rotating low sound was its huge engines we could hear more distinctly than the ship's own engine!

About 30 foot, that's the difference between what happened and a catastrophe that could have literally shook the world. If that ship had ever cut into the missile compartment and caused a chain reaction — Southern Spain and North Africa (Morocco) would have disappeared into the new ocean. We might have cause a Mediterranean tidal wave. We might have caused an even greater chain reaction — this one with the USSR.

Secord Vertical Blinds Ltd.

New agent in Dunoon

For further details and free estimate

Tel. 4955 for details