

...tion at the UW  
...a quarter, it supple-  
...education.  
...young men were be-  
...into the armed services  
...summer he was ordered  
...week screening cruise  
...the battleship USS Illi-  
...sulted in a commission  
...the ensign on active duty  
...the battleship USS Cali-  
...the gunboat was operat-  
...the Pacific when Pearl  
...was attacked.

...er remembers being  
...by planes flying over  
...ship. Feeling grumpy,  
...d out the porthole and  
...red circle on the fuse-  
...-oh," he said to him-  
...see it but don't be-  
...Japanese planes began  
...and strafing. The ship  
...from several torpedoes  
...bombs, setting it on

fire. Japanese pilots kept strafing wounded as they struggled to get everyone off the sinking ship. Dropping the lead covered code book into the sea, Hoepfner made his escape by jumping off the bow, clutching his regulation pistol.

Hoepfner next skippered an XYP161 (experimental yard patrol craft). "It was *McHale's Navy* over and over," he recalled.

They patrolled local islands for seven or eight months. They rigged the P161 like a Northwest trawler and when the captain couldn't see them, they caught fish, providing them to locals who weren't allowed out in their boats during the war. "It was so good I nearly cried when I left," Hoepfner said.

His next assignment was aboard the USS Denver, a light cruiser also based in the Pacific. After being in the South Pacific for a long time, he returned to the States to attend Annapolis, completing a postgraduate course in communications before returning to another cruiser, the USS Little Rock.

By then the war was nearly over, so they cruised South America as goodwill ambassadors. At age 30, he became the youngest navigator in the Atlantic fleet.

He was later deployed in the Mediterranean but also traveled up the Labrador Strait, North of the Arctic Circle to test equipment in frigid weather. As part of the experiment, the doctor aboard allowed no heating on the ship. Sure enough, they didn't suffer with flu or colds, "so the experiment must have succeeded," he said with a shiver.

Against his will, Hoepfner was called to work in the Pentagon in 1951 as head of visual

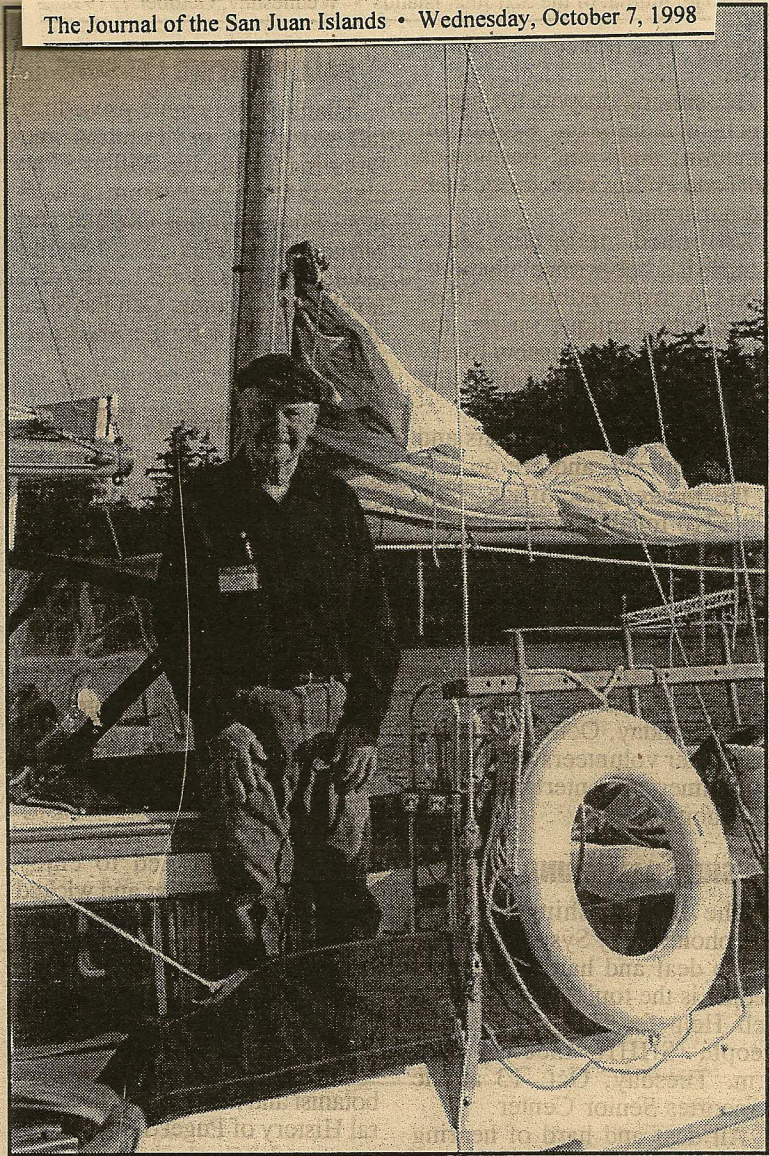
command. NATO needed a signal book, so he was assigned to co-author it with his counterpart in the British Navy. "Working at the Pentagon was cruel and unusual punishment," Hoepfner said, "because you're not your own boss. I was used to commanders of ships but people there are in command of LSDs, i.e. large steel desks."

His plea for sea duty paid off when he became executive officer on the USS Duncan. A year later he took command of H.W. Tucker, another destroyer. "It was the best job, the most fun,

just the greatest experience that can ever happen to a naval officer," he recounted. "It is pretty close to being god."

Back on land, he returned to Seattle as District Communications Officer, responsible for the 13th Naval District for three years. Later he became Head of Naval Communication Systems in Washington, D.C.

Never far from the sea, he commanded the Markab, a heavy repair ship used to repair large Navy vessels at sea. Then it was



ANGELINA DI FAZIO PHOTO  
Fred Hoepfner spent his professional life at sea and still loves sailing in local waters.

## Commander

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back to shore duty in Anchorage, Alaska as Head of Defense Communications for the entire U.S. Navy. "Four years of hunting and fishing up there was great," recalls Hoepfner.

In 1969, he retired from the Navy, returning to San Juan Island with his wife Grace, who died in 1970. Later, he met Peg, a widow and family friend, and they decided to make a life together. They married in 1973, building a house on property he owned since 1947. "Waterfront property sold for \$20 a foot in those days," recalled Hoepfner, "but we bought two lots in de Haro, side by side."

Since retirement, Hoepfner remains busy. He was treasurer of the Medical Center in 1976 and later president of the Medical Center board. He was one of

the founding members of the Power Squadron. He continues to share his vast nautical experience with other enthusiastic boaters, and remains a keen advocate of safe boating.

Hoepfner was commodore of the San Juan Yacht Club in 1981, and is a member of the Blue Gavel and the Friday Harbor Sailing Club. He continues to compete in local sailboat races.

After work on the yacht is complete, the Hoepfners plan to cruise the Alaskan Coast. Meanwhile, there are crabs to catch, potlucks with friends to enjoy, the garden to harvest, and numerous projects requiring urgent attention in the workshop.

Looking back over the years, Hoepfner said: "I've been lucky. I'm in good health, we have real good friends here, and my yacht has her own dock. I've been all over the world and in a nutshell, this is the best place of all."