

# The SEAWEED

Publication of the  
**U.S.S. CHAMPLIN REUNION GROUP**

**FALL EDITION**

**2008**

## GETTING FROM BOSTON TO PORTSMOUTH

If you are traveling to the 2008 Champlin Reunion by air you're probably going to Boston—at least that seems to be what the internet suggests. Boston to Portsmouth appears to be 55 to 60 miles according to my map. This leaves the problem of getting to Portsmouth.

We asked Betty Gagne of the New Hampshire Division of Travel and Tourism for her thoughts.

Hi Ted:

Airport service into New Hampshire is available at Manchester-Boston Regional Airport (MHT). For airport information, visit [www.flymanchester.com](http://www.flymanchester.com) or call 603-624-6539. Whenever I travel, I prefer to fly out of Manchester because it's much easier to get in and out of this airport. It's also about 1 hour and 15 minutes from Portsmouth. Unfortunately, there is no public transportation from this airport to Portsmouth, so you would have to rent a car.

I can't say I blame you for not wanting to drive in Boston; however, renting a car at the airport would be the best option for you, and it's easy to get out of Logan airport on your way to New Hampshire. You don't have to go downtown, it's just a matter of following a few easy routes to 95 and then it's a breeze. But if you prefer to take a bus from Logan airport, here are some options for you to consider:

AMTRAK offers train transportation serving northern New England. AMTRAK Downeaster makes four round trips daily between Portland, ME, and Boston, MA, with stops in Dover, Durham (weekends only) and Exeter. AMTRAK has a terminal in Boston's South Station, as does Concord Trailways bus service. For more information on Amtrak call: 800-872-7245. You can visit their website at <http://www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=Amtrak/HomePage>.

Concord Trailways provides daily service to Boston's South Station and Logan Airport from 18 communities in New Hampshire. Stops are primarily in the Merrimack Valley, Lakes Region and White Mountains. 800-639-3317 or 603-228-3300. [http://www.concordcoachlines.com/concord\\_trailways.htm](http://www.concordcoachlines.com/concord_trailways.htm).

C & J Transportation has buses that run from Logan airport to New Hampshire. For schedule information, please visit their website at <http://www.ridecj.com/service-boston.htm>.

You're going to love it here.

## See you in Portsmouth, NH—September 24 – 28

USS Champlin Reunion Group president Dick Berman and his wife Shirley look forward to seeing all Champlin veterans, wives and families in Portsmouth, NH, at our annual reunion. The reunion program appears elsewhere in this issue of The Seaweed.

The four-day get together is filled with a wide variety of activities to engage and entertain everyone.  
*Plus there is plenty of down time for R & R.*

If you need more information (or if, for some reason you didn't get a packet of reunion information) get in touch with Dick and Shirley in Red Hook, NY.

Telephone 845 758-1014

**See you at the reunion in Portsmouth in a few weeks**



**Sea-Fever** By John Masefield (1878-1967)

*John Masefield was born in 1878. He went to sea at age 14 and spent his early years as a seafaring vagabond. He was England's poet laureate from 1930 until his death in 1967. He wrote Sea-Fever in 1902. The Champlin wasn't a sailing vessel, but I always loved the sense and feel of the poem.*

I must down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,  
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,  
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,  
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.

I must down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide  
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;  
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,  
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

I must down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,  
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;  
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover  
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

**Lenny Palka**

FEED

YOUR

FAITH

YOUR

DOUBTS

WILL

STARVE

On May17th Butch Palka logged on to the Champlin website to write about his father, Leonard. Leonard Palka is listed in the crew as an F1C and as a BM1C. Butch Palka's E-mail address is [Oakhill98@yahoo.com](mailto:Oakhill98@yahoo.com), in case anyone wants to get in touch with him.

**Name:** Butch Palka

**E-Mail:** [oakhill98@yahoo.com](mailto:oakhill98@yahoo.com)

**Homepage Title:** **Homepage URL:** **Referred By:** Search Engine

**Location:** Lupton, Michigan

**Comments:** My dad was on the Champlin, I believe he was part of a twin 40 crew. His name is Leonard Leopold Palka and went by Lenny or Len. I have a picture of him bumping into his brother, my uncle Wally, on an island in the pacific. If anyone remembers Lenny, please write me. Also, from the time I can remember a friend came to our home once a year and I called him "uncle Harry" don't know his last name, but I remember he was in the Jesuit order. So uncle Harry if you are out there please say hello.

I wish my dad was alive so he could see this wonderful site. He didn't talk much about the war but he carried a framed photo of his ship to each of several homes we lived in. He really loved her. I'm a Viet Nam vet, but I will always be in awe of you guys.

COMMON

SENSE

IS

JUST

ABOUT

THE

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UNCOMMON

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## USN Abandons New Ship Designs

July 21, 2008: The U.S. Navy is working out the details on how to abandon plans to replace current destroyers and cruisers with the new DDG-1000 class ships. It's a matter of cost. The new destroyers (and slightly larger versions designated as cruisers) will cost \$3-4 billion each, and that seems likely to climb even higher because of the new technologies planned for them.

The alternative is to buy some time (about a decade) by upgrading dozens of existing destroyers and cruisers. This is a bitter pill to swallow, as only seven years ago, the navy was so sure about the new ships, that it accelerated the retirement of a dozen of the 31 Spruance class destroyers, in order to save the \$28 million a year it would cost to keep them in service. These ships were not just retired, they were all either broken up, or sunk in training exercises. The dozen that entered service between 1979-83 could have been refurbished and been available until 2019. That's a lost opportunity. But what can now be done is refurb the Burke class destroyers (which began entering service in the 1990s). Most of the Ticonderoga class cruisers (which entered service in the 1980s and 90s) can use the refurb as well, which could boost their service into the 2030s. More Burke class destroyers will be built, even though these now cost about a billion dollars each.

The new destroyer (DDG-1000/Zumwalt Class/DD-21/DD-X) design has a stealthy superstructure, and is as big as a battleship, at least a battleship of a century ago. The new destroyer is a 14,000 ton ship, 600 feet long and 79 feet wide. A crew of 150 sailors operate a variety of weapons, including two 155mm guns, two 40mm automatic cannon for close in defense, 80 Vertical Launch Tubes (containing either anti-ship, cruise or anti-aircraft missiles), six torpedo tubes, a helicopter and three helicopter UAVs. The cruiser version (CGN, as Congress has mandated that these be nuclear powered) would drop one of the 155mm guns, as well as the torpedo tubes, but carry more vertical cells for missiles (especially anti-ballistic missile missiles). This would be a 20-25,000 ton ship.

For comparison purposes, consider a modern ship of a century ago. Not a support ship like a destroyer, but a "capital ship." Back then, a Mississippi class battleship displaced 14,400 tons, was 382 feet long and 77 feet wide. A crew of 800 operated a variety of weapons, including four 12 inch, eight 8 inch, eight 7 inch, twelve 3 inch, twelve 47mm and four 37mm guns, plus four 7.62mm machine-guns. There were also four torpedo tubes. The Mississippi had a top speed of 31 kilometers an hour, versus 54 for DDG-1000. But the Mississippi had one thing DD-21 lacked, armor. Along the side there was a belt of 9 inch armor, and the main turrets had 12 inch thick armor. The Mississippi had radio, but the DDG-1000 has radio, GPS, sonar, Aegis radar, electronic warfare equipment and the ability to shoot down ballistic missiles.

The century old Mississippi class ships cost about half a billion dollars (adjusted for inflation). The DDG-1000 class destroyers will cost about \$3 billion each, thus possessing the price, and size, the firepower, if not the name, of a battleship.

The refurb policy will cost about \$200 million per destroyer (and 20-25 percent more for the cruisers). Normally, these ships get one refurb during their 30 year lives. This not only fixes lots of things that have broken down or worn out (and been patched up), but installs lots of new technology. A second refurb is expected to add another 5-10 years. But this special refurb will do more than that. The navy wants to add some of the DDG-1000 technology to these older ships. In particular, the navy wants to install the "smart ship" type automation (found in civilian ships for decades) that will enable crew size to be reduced. The "smart ship" gear also includes better networking and power distribution. In effect, the ship would be rewired. This could reduce the crew size by 20-30 percent (current destroyers have a crew of 320, with the cruisers carrying 350). In addition to considerable cost savings (over \$100,000 a year per sailor), a smaller crew takes up less space, enabling the smaller crew to have more comfortable living quarters. This is a big deal as far as morale and retention (getting people to stay in the navy) goes.

Most other new items are not space dependent, except for some of the power based ones (like the rail gun). But these technologies are receding farther into the future. Right now the navy has to find a way to live within its budget, and refurbishing existing warships shows more promise than trying build affordable new ones.



## **A LETTER TO HOME from GLENN DETRO**

Letters from mom and dad were important to young service men away from home and family, often for the first time. But letters to the folks back at home were equally important to families hungry for news of loved ones. Glenn Detro, Carpenter's mate 2c on the Champlin, was a good letter writer. His daughter, Nancy Anders, has shared some of them with us. Here is one.

**March 3, 1943**

**Dear Folks:**

Am going to write you a few lines to let you know what happens on this trip.

We left N.Y. today, had 48 cargo ships and 7 other destroyers. It has been awfully foggy and colder than the devil. Couldn't hardly get the ships lined up; took nearly all day. But I finally went to bed and let them worry about it.

**Mar 7**

We have been going south and east the last 3 days and are getting into warm weather. Put on my summer shorts today and took winter under wear off. The weather has been just fine. We got a contact with a submarine today but lost it.

**Mar 10**

Had two contacts with subs again. They think there is a couple following us, but hope not. We have been running in and out of convoy all day at 30 knots. It is pretty fast to dodge in and out but they think there is a sub inside.

**Mar 11**

Well, we got one of the subs today and one of the other destroyers got another. Some action. It looks like this trip is going to be different than the last one.

**Mar 12**

Two of the ships (cargo) turned in for Bermuda today. Guess they had engine trouble. The weather has been real nice and not much to do. So I've been catching up on some sleep.

**Mar 14**

Two of the cargo ships rammed each other last night about midnight; both of them sunk. They were on the other side of the convoy so didn't hear about it till this morn. They said they picked up nearly all of the people though.

We saw the Azores today; we are going just north of them; looked like a couple big rocks. Haven't had any more contact with subs. But everybody is on the lookout. It seems we are in pretty dangerous waters. Everybody is pretty jumpy.

**Mar 15**

Well it finally happened: One of the cargo ships got a torpedo last nite and blew up and sank; don't know how many they sank as one of the other destroyers picked the people up. Looked like a couple of boat loads. It went down in about 5 minutes. We were at battle stations till midnight but couldn't find sub.

**Mar 16**

Another one got hit tonight but before dark we picked up the people, 4 boat loads, 115 people. This one got two torpedoes. They said one went right across our bow. The ship wasn't over 500 yards from us. They can't seem to pick up the sub with the sound gear. We dropped 30 depth charges. Don't know whether we got him or not though. This is getting to be a wild ride. There were 33 army pilots on this ship, the rest were Frenchmen. What a crowd; we got around 400 on board now. Nobody was hurt though and nobody lost. So we're pretty lucky.

**Mar 17**



Mar 17

Christ, another one got a torpedo tonight just before dark. This one was a tanker. We saved two men, picked them up out of the water. It was rougher than hell. I grabbed one as he went by. It seemed like an act of God or something. He washed up on a wave right where I was standing and I should not have been there. Water was covering all over the deck of our ship. But I had to see it all. I just happened to look down and there he was. I grabbed for him with one hand and a line with the other. I thought it was going to pull an arm off. But I sure held on. He was all covered with oil just like a greased pig. He was so weak he couldn't help me. But I hollered for help and a couple other guys came and we got him aboard. They said they could hear me (yelling) up on the bridge. I hurt my left arm but I think it is just strain. Am not going to tell you any more about this one, too hard.

Mar 19

My arm is a lot better, can use it a little today. They think one of the other destroyers got the sub. Haven't heard from him the last two nites anyway. We expect to get in tomorrow or the next day.

Mar 20

Another destroyer and us left the convoy today and we are going right on in to Casablanca. They were afraid we would run short of food again. The other ship had a bunch on they picked up too. Two other cans came out to relieve us so we are making a bee line for port.

Mar 21

Got in this morning about 8:00. Gee, it sure does look different here. So many more ships than there were before. And they have raised nearly all of them that were sunk here.

Went ashore this afternoon and saw in the paper where the Germans were planning a big sub warfare. I guess we ran right into it. I heard today the convoy lost another ship the night we left. So that made 7 ships lost altogether. Which is quite a lot. It sure will take a lot of stamps to pay for them. There an awful lot of WAACs and Nurses over here now and they sure are having a time for themselves. They're having as much fun as the Soldiers and Sailors.

There isn't hardly anything to buy here now, not near as much as when we were here before.

Mar 24

Well we got under way tonight. It sure seemed good to be starting out for the good old USA again. I was up-town this afternoon and met a couple of the French men we picked up, sure had a good time with them. You ought to see me trying to talk French and them talk English after a couple of quarts of wine. I'll bet people had to laugh. I had a good time anyway.

Mar 27

We passed a big Red Cross ship today; it looked like it was loaded with supplies. It has been rougher than hell ever since we left. Couldn't go out on the main deck. All I have done is eat and sleep. Can't even run the laundry. It is getting a lot calmer tonight though. It seems like we are going a lot farther south this time; sure hope we don't go by the Azores this time again.

Well, got here ok and will mail as soon as we get in. I guess we are going to New York again.

CHAMPLIN DUES ARE DUE IN SEPTEMBER

It is time to send in your Champlin dues \$15.00, includes the SEAWEED

Write Checks to: CHAMPLIN REUNION GROUP

Mail to: NORMAN PREWITT—2049 Eastridge Drive, Excelsior Springs, Mo. 64024

If you are a Subscriber to the Seaweed only, send in your \$5.00





## **FRANK FERRELL MM 2/c**

There is a lot to know and remember about Frank Ferrell. Dipping in to his extensive and invaluable files, Bill Gustin reports some things even Frank may have forgotten

Benjamin Franklin Ferrell, Jr. was born 12/21/1921, near Nashville, TN. His ID # was 640-18-95. He came aboard Champlin 9/12/1942 (a plank holder). He left Champlin 5/17/1945, serving a total of 978 days, one of the longest serving shipmates. He was discharged 8/31/1945 at Camp Perry, VA, with the rating of MM 2/c.

Hope this helps.

Bill

### **Fresh Water**

If you enjoyed a cup of fresh coffee aboard the Champlin, and fresh water showers, thank Frank Ferrell. He's the machinist mate who managed the DD601 evaporator; he "cooked the sea water" and turned it into potable water for drinking, cooking and other necessary and valuable uses.

Benjamin Franklin Ferrell Jr. was born in a hospital in Clarksville, TN a small city 30 miles outside of Nashville. And Nashville is where he joined the Navy in early 1942. "I wanted to see the world, and I did."

The Navy sent him first to boot camp in San Diego and then to machinist school. After machinist school he hopped a cross-country train, ending up on the east coast and the USS Champlin.

His first view of DD601: "I thought she was a good looking ship. And I adjusted easily to living aboard ship. No problems at all. It was a serious time, no time for jokes, but we had a ball."

Like all the Champlin plank holders he vividly and sadly remembers the death of the Champlin's captain early in the war, and his burial at sea.

After discharge, Frank first went back to Tennessee but later moved to Massachusetts. He stuck with his machinist-mate skills through a long and productive career. This included running a small machine shop out of his garage.

While living in Boston, Frank and his wife, June, were active in organizations helping women veterans of WWII. Frank and June! That's a special story all its own

### **Finding Love in the Penny Arcade**

What hath charms to soothe the sailor's savage ardor? The penny arcade, that's what hath?

In early 1945 June Simonson was a WAVE with a yeoman's rating working the 4:00 p.m. to midnight shift in Manhattan's ITT building on Wall Street. There were 10 children in June's family, five of whom were in the service in WW II including one other WAVE.

One night, their midnight shift ended, June and two other WAVES decided to mosey down to Times Square for a bite to eat. They also wanted to stop by the penny arcade to get their photos taken in one of those little booths that gave you four pictures for 25 cents.

Whilst they were in the penny arcade three sailors from the USS Champlin approached—no doubt still walking a little funny having just arrived in New York City after a long voyage across the Atlantic. They asked if they could escort the three young women back to their barracks where they faced a 2:00 a.m. curfew. One of the sailors was Benjamin Franklin Ferrell, who operated the Champlin's desalinization operation.

Being sailors, they arranged to meet the three women for breakfast the following morning, in a Jewish delicatessen. At breakfast the next morning Frank Ferrell proposed. Today he says, "I didn't want her to get away." June accepted.

They got a wedding license, and on the third day they were married by Father Green in Manhattan's huge St. Patrick's cathedral. James Ropog stood up for them.

They called Frank's family in Tennessee with their news. Frank's sister greeted them with: "Frank, you married a damn Yankee."

When discharged they first moved back to Frank's home in Tennessee but later moved to Massachusetts where June Ferrell was active for 25 years in organizations helping women veterans. Today they live in Littleton, CO, near their daughter, Rosemary, a nurse. Their son, Kenneth, lives in Arizona.

Eighty years ago crooner Rudy Vallee sang: "I found a million dollar baby in a five and ten cent store." Sixty-three years ago Frank Ferrell found his million dollar WAVE in a penny arcade.



## CAESAR DI SANTO

**Earlier this year we received a note from George Styles:**

Just a quick note with some sad news. Another one of our shipmates has crossed the bar. Caesar Di Santo passed away on April 18<sup>th</sup>. He is now with his beloved wife Doris. His daughter Carol told me the news. Her address is

Carol Di Santo  
5031 Secretariat Run  
Spring Hill, FL 34609 ~~phone 352-754-4556~~ /s/George

**Caesar Di Santo  
Seaman First Class - USS Champlin DD-601  
9/28/1925 -- 4/18/2008**

There were the good times and the bad times, yet even through the bad times during WW II Caesar always said "the best times of my life was when I was in the Navy serving our country on the USS Champlin DD-601."

**CAESAR LIED ABOUT HIS AGE AS A YOUNG MAN SO HE COULD  
ENLIST IN THE NAVY.**

He was the youngest sailor among his crew. He made many friends during his tour, lost his best friend during a typhoon and never got over it.

Many years later, Caesar and his wife Doris were at a bowling alley where they belonged to a league. He spotted a car in the parking lot which had a license plate frame on it that said: "USS Champlin."

He went to the front desk and asked them to page the owner of the car, when they did, a gentleman approached the front desk and asked if there was a problem, when Caesar saw the man, he almost passed out; it was his long lost friend George Styles whom he served with in the Navy upon the USS Champlin.

Ironically, they lived in the same town for years, never knowing how close to each other they were. Both residing in Smithtown, N.Y. for many years and never knowing how close they lived to one another. Both men were shocked after all these years and happy to be reunited once again.

They began going to reunions together, on vacations with their wives and while the women were talking, the men were reminiscing about their service years together and watching videos about the war.

Caesar loved the sea, he would sit on the Port Jefferson ferry, breathing in the salt air, watching the seagulls fly overhead and taking a deep sigh. He was at peace again and reminiscing about his military time about the USS Champlin.

Now that he is at rest, he took the sea with him, for on his urn are engraved four seagulls encasing a man who loved the sea.

**Also serving our country** is his son "Col. Louis Di Santo, U.S. Army"  
and his granddaughter "Jennifer Di Santo" who is on active duty with the U.S. Air Force  
serving her country at Lackland Air Force base in San Antonio TX.  
Jennifer just graduated college on the base with honors and might be attending officers school.

(This was an interesting story, please take time to share 'YOUR' story, contact Ted Johnson)



29 AUG 2008 PM 1 1  
**FIRST CLASS****TED JOHNSON – Editor**

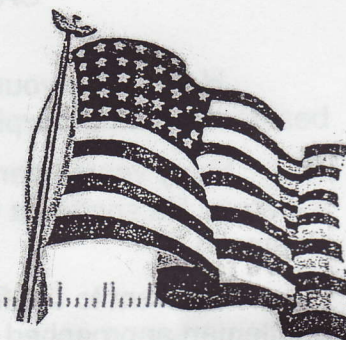
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**FALL 2008****SEAWEED**

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**PROGRAM IN PORTSMOUTH—CHAMPLIN DD601**

- Wednesday, September 24, 2008**

3-5:00 pm Arrival &amp; Registration

6:00 pm Reception in the Hospitality Suite

- Thursday, September 25, 2008**

7-8:30 am Breakfast

Gathering of the Troops

11:30 am-2:30 pm Harbor Cruise &amp; Lunch

Open afternoon for shopping, sightseeing

6:00 P.M. Dinner &amp; Evening Entertainment

9:00 pm Hospitality Suites

- Friday, September 26, 2008**

7-8:30 am Breakfast

9-11:30 am Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Historic  
Tour & Museum

Lunch

Open Afternoon

6:00 pm Dinner

7:30-9:00 pm Entertainment

- Saturday, September 27, 2008**

7-8:30 am Breakfast

9:00 am Memorial Service

10:00am Business Meeting &amp; Raffle

Lunch

Open Afternoon

5:30 pm Pictures

6:00 pm Banquet

7-10:00 pm Entertainment &amp; Dancing

- Sunday, September 28, 2008**

8-10:00 am Breakfast **BON VOYAGE**  
Good Bye, See You Next Year!