

Memories of an Officer and Gentleman – Final Chapter

This is the third and final chapter of a three part article written by Lt. Steve Anastasion USN Retired – the previous chapters have been published in the Spring and Summer Seaweeds.

Later, we did have opportunities for visits ashore in Italy. In particular I remember two brief stays on the Isle of Capri, where the larger hotels were used as Army Air Force rest centers. I was then a young non-drinker. One night, many of the Officers, including the Captain, went ashore for our own R&R. We wound up at a crowded and very nice Italian bistro- music, dancing, etc. Early in the evening, all the Officers (except me) ordered drinks-a total of about 6 or 8. As the drinks were being brought to our table, all the officers decided they wanted to dance and went down to the dance floor. I was left to guard the drinks. but, rather than guarding the drinks, I drank all of them. The next thing I remember was being on the stage, taking the violin away from the band leader, pushing him aside, playing the violin and leading the band. I really could play the violin in those days.

On another night, we partied at one of the Resort Hotels used by the Air Force Officers. The Commander, Cdr Melson, having been promoted to Division commander, joined with his former Champlin Officers. Again, it was a long beverage laden night with the pilots. Later the Captain and I called it a night. Since we were too far gone to walk, and since the slope of the road back to the pier where the Champlin was berthed was just right, we just lay down in the road and rolled all the way back, but fortunately not too close to our ship. So we got up, brushed off, and went aboard sort of smartly saluting the Quarterdeck.

The Seaweed

A Publication of the USS Champlin Reunion Group

A sadder note involves some of the Army Air Force pilots I met. Some, no older than me, were already full Colonels. The reason was the terribly high attrition of pilots and crews flying bombing missions over the Ploesti oil fields and other heavily defended targets. One Colonel with whom I became friendly during our first visit later went on several of these missions. I met him again on our second visit to Capri a few weeks later. Instead of a full head of brown hair, his hair had turned completely white and he no longer looked young. Something I have never forgotten.



Captain Steven Anastasion USN

Not forgotten during our reunions is the sinking of several ships during one of our Atlantic convoys. Each one occurred at the beginning of the evening meal during while we were hanging on to dishes and trays because of the heavy seas. One of these ships was the SS Wyoming ferrying aviators to the European theater. When it went down, the Champlin picked up many of the survivors who, as I recall were thereafter reluctant to go below decks remained topside. Dick Roseman, who has come to

Cable Television Gems

many of our reunions, was one of these pilots and can amplify or correct what I have recorded.

The standing-by for rescue was of concern to Captain Melson. The whereabouts of the attacking submarine was not known and lying-to for rescue too long could make Champlin an easy target. One extension of time was inadvertently created by one of Champlin's Officers, Ltjg Bill Fitzhugh. Bill dove into the relatively heavy sea to help in the rescue. It was a daring and brave thing to do but did not sit too well with the Captain since the Champlin now had to rescue him, as well, extending our time almost dead in the water.

Sometime during our scouting and convoy work in the Mediterranean we were given a short visit to Malta. However, our visit was extended to a few weeks. The concrete pier assigned to us at Malta was not vertical at its face. Instead, the lower portion extended out an angle toward the ship. As we were leaving, with large fenders over the side at the fantail, the starboard stern came up hard against the angled pier, damaging the starboard propeller. The Champlin was towed to a drydock to wait the arrival of a new propeller which eventually arrived and we were back at sea on duty. But it did give the Chiefs a chance to challenge the Wardroom to a softball game. We did the game but the Chiefs were no challenge. There is a picture of the Officer's Champion team which I sent to George Styles some years ago for the Reunion files.

In 1944 Captain Rydeen relieved Captain Fleck as CO and I relieved Bob Baughan as XO. About June 1945, we went through the Panama Canal and to the San Diego shipyard to ready Champlin for the Pacific war. The untested torpedo tubes were removed and replaced with 40mm anti-aircraft guns. During the yard period, I received orders for Post Graduate education. So, I wound up eventually at MIT grad school as one of the first four officers in a physics program sponsored by the Bureau of Ordnance. This eventually took me to Albuquerque, Los Alamos, and the Eniwetok Atoll and set me on a path in R&D, ordnance and special weapons during future shore duty assignments. But my Navy focus was always sea duty.

If you are anything like me and many other television viewers, you have probably found yourself at one time or another saying to yourself, "we have more than 150 stations, and there is nothing worth watching". One night a year or so ago, I found myself making that very same statement.

I decided to 'click through' all of my available stations to see what all of those 229 cable stations actually were. I came across a couple of very pleasant surprises hidden in the higher numbered stations.

The first was "The Military Channel" usually designated on screen and in the programming guides as "MLTCH". This station is part of the Discovery Network, and produces a variety of excellent programming. I have had the opportunity to watch an Aegis Class Destroyer built, and in another segment, I was able to see that very same Destroyer taken out for "sea trials". Programming on this station provides coverage of all branches of military service. You can find programming here dating to the Roman Empire right up to the most recent Iraqi and Afghanistan actions.

The second gem you may find available from your cable provider is "The Military History Channel", usually designated on screen and in programming guides as "MHIST". This station is part of the "History Channel Network". Again, you will find excellent programming on this station covering a variety of service branches, coverage of individuals in history, weapon systems, coverage of world and US conflicts dating to the Roman Empire, and many other viewing opportunities that you might find worth viewing.

So...the next time you find yourself sitting in front of the television 'with nothing to watch' – get out your cable provider guide, or begin clicking through all those stations you receive and see if perhaps one or both of these stations are available for your viewing pleasure.

Today, I'm watching a program on applying 'Stealth Technology' to the modern warship.

Gary S Gustin - Editor

Dues are Due

With Labor Day here, and Fall rapidly approaching, it is once again time to collect USS Champlin Reunion Group dues, or "Seaweed" subscription fees for the year 2010.

USS Champlin Reunion Group dues, include membership in the reunion group, as well as a subscription to the "Seaweed Newsletter". Dues are \$15.00 per year and due in October at the time of the Reunion Group's Annual Business Meeting. If you are planning on attending this year's reunion, Norm Prewitt will be happy to accept your dues and issue your membership card at the reunion. If you are unable to attend this years reunion, then we ask that you send your Reunion Group dues to Norm at the address below.

Also available to interested parties (other destroyer squadron crew, families, and friends of the USS Champlin) are "Seaweed Newsletter" only subscriptions for an annual cost of \$5.00. To subscribe to the "Seaweed" - again, send your annual subscription fee of \$5.00 to Norm.

Norman Prewitt
2049 Eastridge Drive
Excelsior Springs, Missouri
64024-2869

USS Champlin Merchandise

Norm Prewitt has a small quantity of the following USS Champlin items available for sale. He can also arrange for ordering more where needed. To purchase any of the following, or for more information on the items – contact Norm Prewitt by phone at: 816-630-7272

Embroidered Hats - \$10.00 plus shipping
Colors: Navy, Light Blue, White

Polo Shirts - \$25.00 plus Shipping
Colors: Navy, Light Blue, White
Sizes: S-M-L-XL

Sweatshirts: \$20.00 plus shipping (XXL \$25.00)
Colors: Navy, White
Sizes: S-M-L-XL-XXL

Reunion 2009 – Philadelphia

The 2009 USS Champlin, USS Boyle, and USS Ordronaux Reunion is scheduled and booked for October 7, 2009 through October 11, 2009.

We are looking forward to another successful reunion with the USS Boyle. And, recently, we have invited the USS Ordronaux to join us as well.

Hotel Information:

Embassy Suites Hotel Valley Forge-Philadelphia
888 Chesterbrook Blvd.
Chesterbrook PA 19087
Telephone: (610) 647-6700

Room Rate: \$129.00 + Tax per night
An All Suite Hotel
Free Breakfast
Evening Manger's Reception

Reunion Schedule:

October 7
Arrival & Registration
7 PM Dinner Buffet

October 8, 2009
Trolley Tour of Philadelphia
Manager's Reception
Dinner Buffet
Entertainment

October 9, 2009
Luncheon Cruise
Manager's Reception
Dinner Buffet
Entertainment

October 10, 2009
Business Meeting
Raffle
Open Day
7 PM - Evening Banquet with Dancing

October 11, 2009 – Bon Voyage till next year

2009 Reunion Registration is \$200.00 per person

From the Mailbag...

Dear Members of the Champlin,

My name is Rich Angelini and I am the Assistant Curator of Battleship Cove in Fall River, MA and Historian for Destroyers of the Benson and Gleaves classes. Of direct interest, I am the webmaster for the Benson-Gleaves (or Livermore) class Destroyer website...

My grandfather served on MAYO DD422 and I have been working with members of these ships and creating websites for many years. One ship I have worked with and created a friendship with is the crew of USS Ordranax and their spokesmen, Ed Palen.

During recent conversations,... Mr Palen mentioned that he had discussions with Mr. Gustin of the Champlin regarding the two ships working together over the years. Recently, we also noticed in a recent newsletter of the Champlin, that Boyle crewmembers were invited to receive and participate with sea stories in that newsletter.

Currently, the Ordranax does not have active reunions or a newsletter. Thus, the 617 crew would be interested in officially participating in the activities of the Champlin and Boyle. ...Would the Champlin Group:

... Allow us to officially mention on our DD617 website that Ordranax is holding reunions with the Boyle and Champlin. We would then begin to post that information and how to attend said reunion officially on our website.

... Allow Ordranax crewmembers and families to receive and contribute to the Champlin newsletter. We think it would be great to see the experiences of Boyle, Champlin, and Ordranax in one newsletter.

... I also must complement the Champlin for the amount of information, photos, and deck logs that appear on their website.

Shipmate Deaths

USS Champlin:

Hugh Dorsey Baker CMM – 01/29/09

USS Boyle:

No known deaths

Hugh Dorsey Remembered

Several years ago I stopped by to visit with Hugh at his home on Sefa Circle, on the western side of Jacksonville, Florida. He had left Champlin by the time I came aboard, so I did not have any knowledge of him prior to my visit. In a phone conversation, he had indicated that noon would be the best time for him to talk with me. So, Bev and I arrived at his home at high noon, and were warmly greeted by Hugh, who then excused himself and ask us to sit down until he could finish his duties. We noted that Hugh was wearing a very wide belt that we had seen on people doing heavy lifting. In a short while, a young lady came walking in the door, introducing herself as Hugh's daughter. A brief chat revealed there were two other daughters living in the area, who took turns relieving Hugh during the lunch your so he could do the family shopping.

Hugh came back into the room and we asked him about his special belt and the need to be relieved at noon to do the shopping.

As best as I can remember the story Hugh said he had been retired from the Navy for some time. However, he then went back to work for the Navy as a civilian employee at the Naval Air Station , Cecil Field, Jacksonville, FL. He then told us he had to retire from that job, because of his wife's health. Hugh's wife had rheumatoid arthritis, and had been under treatment for that condition for several years. She was, at that time, unable to get out of bed or care for herself in any way. Hence the special belt and the need for relief during the noon hour.

(...continued on next page)

(continued - Hugh Dorsey Remembered)

Hugh went on to tell us that he came from a rather large family, living in southern Georgia. During the depression the main income for the family came from his father who worked at a wood mill - a job he had held for many years. However, disaster struck the family when his father was killed by a boiler explosion at work. The part time income from the children was inadequate to maintain the family, so to reduce the number in the family, in 1937 he left home and enlisted in the Navy. He was assigned to Champlin as a plankholder and rode Champlin until 21 December 1944.

When his wife became unable to care for herself, Hugh took over and provided her with full-time nursing home care. At one point, his wife had suggested they try a regular nursing home. They did, for about a month, then Hugh and his wife agreed that she was getting better care at home, so he brought her back home and took care of her until she died many years later.

We stopped to visit Hugh a couple of times after that. He was still providing his wife with full time nursing care. He had purchased some equipment to assist in getting her in/out of bed, but he, along with his daughters, provided for her care.

Whenever Bev and I get discouraged over some damn thing, We always think of Hugh Baker - what an inspiration he was, and is. - *Bill Gustin*



USS Champlin Crew - Hard at Work

Recollections

Editors note: I sent Steve Anastasion the following photo after receiving and processing Lt Fred Weber's photo collection - I quickly received back the following recollection from Steve...

Gary S Gustin -Editor



Steve Anastasion with Mandolin in Quarters

"This Champlin Photo was probably taken in 1943, when I was an Ensign or newly caught LTJG. The mandolin is one my mother bought for me in Greece when we were visiting for six months in 1930. The room behind me is my cabin, just forward of the wardroom. My bunk was the upper one. My roommate was the Chief Engineer, Emmet Simmons. In his group was a Chief Petty Officer who had something against Lt. Simmons and came after him several times with a knife. The CPO was taken off and sent for Psychiatric treatment for a period of several months.

Incredulously, he was then returned to the Champlin! But, he was rather subdued on his return and nothing more happened. He was later transferred to another ship - getting to sleep then became much easier."

This month in Navy History

September

1776 - David Bushnell attempts to destroy a British Ship of the Line, HMS Asia, in New York harbor with his submarine *Turtle*.

1941 - Launch of first Liberty ship, SS *Patrick Henry*, in Baltimore, MD

1944 - First combat employment of a missile guided by radio and television takes place when Navy drone Liberator, controlled by Ensign James M. Simpson in a PV, flew to attack German submarine pens on Helgoland Island.

1944 - USS *West Virginia* (BB-48) reaches Pearl Harbor and rejoins the Pacific Fleet, marking the end of the salvage and reconstruction of 18 ships damaged at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941.

1945 - A "computer bug" is first identified and named by LT Grace Murray Hopper while she was on Navy active duty in 1945. It was found in the Mark II Aiken Relay Calculator at Harvard University. The operators affixed the moth to the computer log, where it still resides, with the entry: "First actual case of bug being found." They "debugged" the computer, first introducing the term.

1945 - Japan signs surrender documents on board USS *Missouri* (BB-63) at anchor in Tokyo Bay. FADM Chester W. Nimitz, USN, signs for the U.S. In different ceremonies,



(Japan signs surrender documents- Sept. 1945)

Letters Home

Editors note: this article is another in a collection of letters home... written by a new recruit to his parents while stationed at Sampson Naval Training Station.

"The Navy offers many worth-while opportunities for specialized training. Not only will this training fit us to perform our duties more efficiently, but it will prepare us to take up well-paying work once we return to civilian life.

Among the many Service Schools scattered throughout the country are those offering training which will lead to ratings as Radio Operators, Machinist's Mates, Yeomen, Aviation Machinist's Mates, Cooks and Bakers, Dental Technicians, Parachute Riggers and Storekeepers.

Here, at Sampson, we are given a number of aptitude tests to determine our ability to handle any of these jobs. These tests are in mathematics, English, spelling, radio ability, mechanical ability and general intelligence.

After the tests, a squad of forty interviewer's, gave work lectures in which the various jobs, and the requirements for each are described. Men with a background in music, we are told, will make out well at sound school because they have an acute sense of hearing which will help them to distinguish between various signals.

Following the lectures, we are given an opportunity to talk to a vocational guidance expert who, taking into consideration our educational and occupational background, assigns us as nearly as possible to the type of duty we most desire.

It's not all work and sweat here, though, for we have a very fine entertainment program which is conducted by the Welfare and Recreation Department.

With Sullivan Auditorium, a theatre of modern design boasting a seating capacity of 2,000, as the point from which emanate most of our recreational activities, we are offered diversion for nearly every evening of the week.

While Sullivan is the spot where all feature attractions, such as the latest movies, USO and road shows are given, a great deal of fun is provided within our own areas. "Happy Hours", which take place at least one night each week within our own unit, provide a novel form of

amusement. During these affairs amateur entertainers from our own companies take a hand and provide us with trumpet solos, piano solos, and other acts, while a portion of the Station Band provides proper atmosphere.

Until you've attended a "Happy Hour", you haven't seen anything, for here is as good a place as any to see how quickly we have acquired a true sense of loyalty.

When a performer from Company 301, for example, mounts the stage in the center of the Drill Hall, members of his own company give him a good hand.

If he's a good performer, the applause accorded his act is tremendous. If he's nervous or if his act isn't quite up to par, the roof comes off the building and the applause lasts until he returns to render an encore. The applause is genuinely friendly with a total absence of jeering. We really try to put the fellow at ease and give him another chance.

If you are looking for morale—here's where you'll find it to the nth degree—for each of us takes extreme pride in our own company, our own battalion and our own unit. In addition to "Happy Hours", Welfare and Recreation sponsor smokers and such athletic activities as boxing and wrestling—so that none of us ever has to suffer an idle moment. Welfare and Recreation are indebted, though, to Ship's Service, for it is this department that provides a large portion of the funds that make possible the facilities for these activities.

Ship's Service, incidentally, operates the tailor shop, cobbler shop, laundry, and other services that are made available to us here at Sampson, services that are as numerous as any found in our largest cities. Ship's Service Stores, of which there are nine, dot the 2000-acre tract that is Sampson.

All of them are of modern design and house, in addition to the stores, themselves, bowling alleys, the equal of which are hard to find anywhere, cafeterias, barber shops, libraries and other facilities.

Stocked, and sold to us at very moderate prices, are candy, jewelry, tobacco products, stationery, toilet articles, and many goods that are handled by the biggest and best department stores.

We spend a good deal of our off time at Ship's Service. In a sense, it plays the same role in our

lives that the old-time country store did in the lives of rural folk of a bygone era, for here we gather to discuss events of the day, bowl a few strings, play the "Juke Box" and, at times, jive with one another."



Telephone Center – US Naval Training Station Sampson

In the Next Issue

In the next issue of the Seaweed we will update everyone on the 2009 Reunion in Valley Forge/Philadelphia. We'll also focus on the Pacific Deployment of the Champlin, Boyle, and Ordranax.

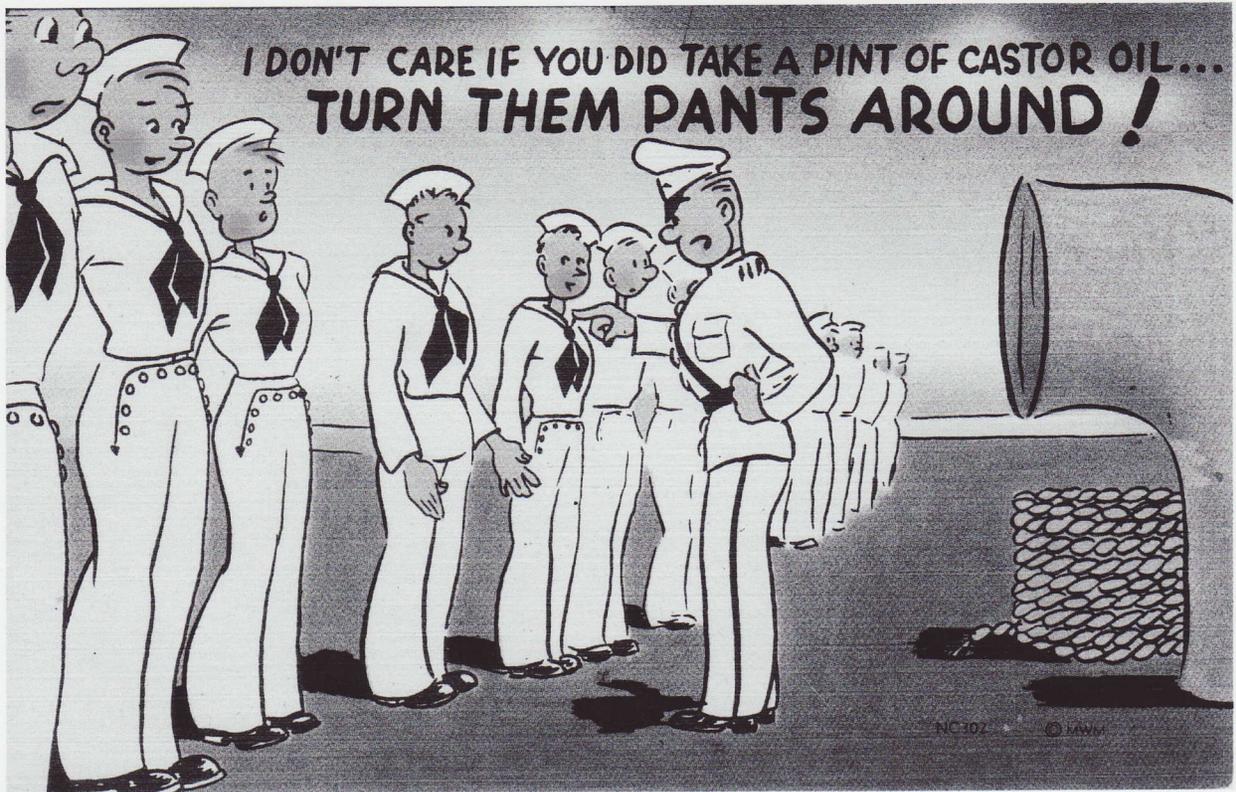
So, get ready to send me your memories of the Panama Canal, refitting of the ship, San Diego, Pearl Harbor, Wake Island, Buckner Bay, the last days or the war, and Typhoon Louise.

This is your newsletter, and I need your help to make it meaningful to all of you. The best stories (and series of stories) have always been written by the officers and crew aboard ship. So please take a bit of time and write down you memories and stories (you've told them to others – so share them with us), and mail them or email them to me at:

Gary S Gustin – Seaweed Editor
11751 Tradewinds Blvd
Largo, Florida 33773

Email: photos@usschamplin.com

I'm particularly interested in hearing from the USS Boyle and USS Ordranax group!



William D Gustin – Editor
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