

The Seaweed

USS Champlin DD-601

Fall 1999

USS Champlin On The Internet

The USS Champlin now has it's own web site on the World Wide Web. The recently revised site features a new, easy to remember address: www.usschamplin.com and has been expanded and improved by the addition of a page devoted to photographs taken during the period September 12, 1942 to January 31, 1947. Included in the photographs currently on the web are two photos of the torpedoed SS Wyoming as she sinks beneath the waves. These two photos were provided by one of the survivors and member of the Champlin Reunion Group, Richard **Roseman**, Major (Ret.) USAF. Other photos were provided by Gerald M. **Cruthers** RdM3/c, Robert G. **Nixon** and the widow of Walter M. **Johnson**, RM3/c.

Included in the photos are: **Blunt**, Albert E. SM3c; **Borman**, John F. BM2c; **Carpenter**, Max W. LTJG; **Cruthers**, Gerald M. RdM3c; **Cuthbert**, Harry W. Jr. RdM3c; **Di Giovanna**, Thomas J. S1c(RdM); **Dinklocker**, Raymond CQM; **Estes**, Gerald L. RdM2c; **Evans**, Jack R. RM3c; **Fagan**, Thomas F. SM3c; **Faulkner**, Gordon E. SM2c; **Ferrebee**, Donald J. SoM3c; **Forth**, George L. RM2c; **Gamber**, Blair W. SK3c; **Gustin**, William D. SM3c; **Harvey**, Kenneth A. Jr. S1c(RdM); **Hooker**, Howard A. FC1c; **Johnson**, Walter M. RM3c; **Jones**, Robert M. RM2c; **Lindauer**, Melvin A. RdM3c; **McGovern**, Edward J. Jr. Y2c; **McInerny**, James H. Jr. LTJG; **McMennemin**, James A. RM2c; **Murphy**, Richard H. RdM3c; **Newman**, Ivan L. RM3c; **Nixon**, Robert G. S1c; **O'Bryon**, Raymond R. MaM3c; **O'Connor**, Donald RdM3c; **Pott**, Leonard E. SM1c; **Pysh**, David S. RM3c; **Rathke**, John E. CMM; **Renfroe**, Clarence L. QM2c; **Riddle**, William I. S1c(RdM); **Rydeen**, Francis C. CDMR; **Schlicht**, Donald F. RdM3c; **Stephens**,

George E. CSF; **Stuart**, Wesley P. Y2c; **Tramonti**, Joseph F. Jr. RdM1c and **Williams**, Richard A. S1c(RdM)

The Champlin web site lists the names and ranks of all of the officers and crew known to have served on "The Champ", and also gives a brief history of her various voyages.

If you don't have a computer, find someone who does. Many libraries have computers available to the public. When you visit the web site, be certain to sign the Log. You can also read the entries in the Log written by other shipmates and visitors to the site.

We are always looking for photographs of the officers and crew. If you have one or more you would like to see on the web site, just send them to me. I will scan them and return them to you no worse for the wear. We hope to have enough photos so that we can have a revolving collection with pictures changing over time, so that the site always has something new to offer.

Lately, we have noticed several visitors to the site working on family genealogies. A niece of shipmate James E. Thrawl left a note on the log advising us of his address and telephone number. So, we gave him a call and sure enough, he was the shipmate we were looking for.

37°N Lat. - 68°W Long.

By Jack Brawdy

In Library, PA where I live, and in every other community of our nation we celebrate Memorial Day. We all know what that day is about and we pause and remember, at least we should remember. Unfortunately, the flag display on my block was conspicuous by its absence. Two houses on the entire block!

As we honor all fallen American heroes, most of us have family members and friends we remember as the guns volley and the sound of taps echo over the countryside. In my particular case, besides my dad, brothers and uncle, I always remember Eddie Miller.

Fifty-six years ago, Eddie Miller and I, along with about two hundred other sailors were serving aboard the USS Champlin, an American destroyer. It was

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1943 and the country was a war against Germany and Japan. At this particular time the Champlin was on duty escorting and protecting supply ships trying to make their way to Europe with their cargos of precious materials to aid in the war against the axis. German submarines were a deadly menace and they exacted a heavy toll on the supply ships. They were merciless and very efficient in their craft. American destroyers and all such escort vessels had to be constantly vigilant and possess the ability to strike back immediately when the U-boats attacked.

Aboard the Champlin, and I imagine it was standard procedure for convoy duty, we were at general quarters every morning as daylight broke on the horizon and the sun started to appear. It was called "dawn alert". The U-boats liked to attack at this particular time. Experience had showed them the convoys were most vulnerable at that time of the morning, and they would attack out of the sun.

On the roster of the USS Champlin we had two Eddie Millers listed. This Eddie had no middle name and over the years I have always remembered him that way. On that particular morning at "dawn alert" the weather was bad with wind blowing and rain squalls. Fairly large waves would break over the ship and the sun certainly wasn't a factor. Eddie must have been a torpedoman striker because he was with me on the depth charges and had on the headphones in communication with the bridge. Out of nowhere a giant wave hit the ship and the two of us - head on. When it receded the phone line had been pulled out of the bulkhead jack and Eddie Miller had been swept overboard, never to be seen again. When that wave hit I remember grabbing a stanchion and holding on. It all happened in a split second and I'll never know how I was able to hold on and why Eddie disappeared right before my eyes. To this very day, I wonder about the sad circumstances of that terrible day on the Atlantic Ocean. Why Eddie and not me? Only the good Lord knows the answer to that question. The Champlin and crew turned back and we searched the area for a long time, but in vain.

Eddie was a young sailor and part of the Champlin crew, doing his duty in defense of his country like the rest of us. He probably had dreams and aspirations like the rest of us. Looking back on my own life and fulfillment after the war - his would have been similar I'm sure.

Eddie and my Memorial Days for the last 56 years always go together, because to my way of thinking, he gave his life for his country that stormy morning. So, to all former crew members of the DD-601, next Memorial Day, remember Eddie and his last known address: 37 degrees north latitude and 68 degrees west longitude.

The Hunt For U-856

(The following text was copied from the USS Champlin's log, pages 109, 110 and 111 for Friday 7 April and Saturday 8 April, 1944)

00 - 04 Steaming as a unit of Task Unit 27.6.2 proceeding to area of enemy submarine concentration. CTU 27.6.2 (CDD32) in USS BOYLE. In scouting line from left to right. USS BOYLE, USS CHAMPLIN, USS NIELDS, USS ORDRONAUX on course 000°T, speed 14.5 knots. Ship darkened, material condition Baker and condition of Readiness II Mike set. Steaming on boilers #1 and #4. Zig-zagging in accordance with plan 10(?). Maintaining continuous watch on SG, SC, TBS and sound gear. 0340 Changed course to 063°T. 0345 Changed course to 066°T. 0342 Changed speed to 24 knots. 0350 Changed speed to 25 knots. 0350 Ceased zig-zagging. (Signed: B. DOLAN)

04 - 08 Steaming as before. 0504 Changed course to 072°T. 0505 went to General Quarters. Sighted flare bearing 090°T. 0540 Sighted several planes ahead. Identified as planes from USS CROATAN. 0555 Flare dropped by plane bearing 083°T. 0603 Decreased speed to 20 knots. 0610 USS BOYLE reported sound contact. 0622 USS BOYLE dropped full pattern. Reported sighting periscope. 0623 CHAMPLIN joined USS BOYLE. 0630 decreased speed to 15 knots. 0639 Sound contact 215°T, 300 yards. 0640 Streamed Foxer Gear. Lost contact. 0700 Sound contact 155°T 1700 yards. 0702 Lost contact 140°T, 850 yards (Signed: S. N. ANASTASION)

08 - 12 Steaming as before. 0800 position: Lat. 40° 43'N; Long. 62° 19'W. Patrolling area of submarine contact. 0812 Resuming station in scouting line. 0835 Course 020°T, speed 15 knots. 0900 Changed course to 110°T. USS PARKER, USS LAUB, USS MC LANAHAN and two DE's joined formation. 0935 Sound contact 205°T - 1700 yards. 0941 Lost contact 210° - 450 yards. 1027 Changed course to 200°T. 1035 Changed course to 290°T 1147 Colored marker sighted 015°T - 2000 yards. 1159 Changed course to 020°T. (Signed: W. B. SCHNEIDAU)

12 - 16 Steaming as before. Noon Position: Lat. 40° 37.5'N; Long. 62° 22'W. 1205 had sound contact bearing 045° at 2000 yards. 1208 Lost contact, not regained. 1228 Altered course by successive ships turn to 110°T. 1248 Sighted TG21.1.5 on horizon

bearing 045° relative. 1345 Parted company with DesDiv 31 (less USS KENDRICK and USS Mac Kensie) to conduct separate search. Changed course to 180°T. 1348 Changed course to 200°T and take echelon formation to the right, distance 3000 yards. 1502 Changed course to 270°T. Took formation on line of bearing 044°T, from guide. 1528 Changed course by turning to the left to 134°T. 1542 Sound contact 070°T. 1545 Went to General Quarters and streamed Foxer Gear. 1548 Lost contact 045°T range 600 yards. Put over marker. 1557 USS HUSE standing in to assist. (Signed: N R. Glass)

16 - 20 Steaming on various courses at 10 knots to regain contact. USS HUSE gained contact and made run, lost contact at 700 yards and did not drop. 1605 USS CHAMPLIN regained contact 115°T - 1100 yards. 1610 Lost contact 130°T and put over smoke float. 1615 Increased speed to 15 knots. 1620 Regained contact and closed to 900 yards. 1622 All engines "stop". Holding contact while USS HUSE makes run. 1630 USS HUSE makes run. 1630 USS HUSE fired hedgehog on bearing 227°T. 1634 Closed contact and dropped 11 charge pattern set very deep. 1640 Regained contact bearing 005°T at 980 yards. Closed contact and dropped pattern set for medium depth. 1652 Periscope sighted. 1653 Conning tower of submarine in sight, all batteries commenced firing. 1655 All engines ahead flank, 25 knots preparing to ram. 1656 Scored direct hits on conning tower of submarine setting fire on starboard side. Submarine personnel abandoning ship. 1706 Rammed submarine's stern and side with our port bow and side. 1708 Ceased firing, range fouled by USS HUSE preparing to ram a second time. 1708 Captain hit by shrapnel, Lieut. R. L. BAUGHAN, Executive Officer assumed command. 1712 Commenced firing with all guns. 1714 Ceased firing, submarine sank and several underwater explosions heard. 1725 Captain removed to Emergency Cabin. 1733 Changed speed to 10 knots, course 092°T. 1743 Changed course to 080°T. 1750 Repair parties reported two holes in port side of compartments A204L and A205L. Both compartments flooded, shoring and pumping in progress. 1830 USS ORDRONAU, and USS NIELDS report having picked up 28 survivors. 1845 Ship darkened, secured from General Quarters. Condition of Readiness set. Material condition affirm still set. 1925 Changed speed to 12 knots. 1925 oil tanks A4 reported ruptured, also C - 4F. 1926 Changed course to 075°T. 1940 USS BOYLE on station as screen for this vessel. 1941 Changed course to 080°T. 1955 Reported to Bridge that HOLLINGSWORTH, R. H., SM1c, USN, OKUN, J.A., SoM3c, USN, and Estes, S1c, USNR were treated for minor shrapnel wounds. (Signed: N. R. GLASS)

20 - 24 Steaming as before. 2000 Position: Lat. 40° 20'N; Long. 61° 33'W. 2037 Removed commanding officer from Emergency Cabin to Wardroom for operation. 2245 USS NIELDS and USS ORDRONAU joined USS BOYLE to form screen around USS CHAMPLIN. (Signed: S. N. ANASTASION)

Saturday, 8 April, 1944. 00 - 04 Steaming as a unit of Task Unit 27.6.2 on course 080°T, speed 12 knots. USS CHAMPLIN being screened by USS BOYLE; USS NIELDS; USS ORDRONAU. Ship darkened; modified condition affirm, and condition of Readiness II Mike set. Steaming on boilers #1 and #4. Unit proceeding to New York with prisoners of war from German submarine sunk on 7 April 1944 by USS CHAMPLIN. Damage to USS CHAMPLIN hull resulting from rake of submarine conning tower under control. Commanding Officer being operated on in wardroom for shrapnel wounds to abdomen received during action. 0240 Changed course 268°T. 0300 Minor shrapnel wounds on OKUN, J.A., SoM3c, USN; ESTES, S1c, USNR being treated. 0340 change speed to 13 knots. (Signed: S. N. ANASTASION)

04 - 08 Steaming as before. 0435 Formation changed speed to 14 knots. 0525 Formation changed speed to 15 knots. 0536 Sunrise. Lighted ship. 0630 Set condition Baker in after section of the ship. (Signed: N. R. GLASS)

08 - 12 Steaming as before. 0800 Position: Lat. 40° 30' N; Long. 61° 07'W. 0080 Mustered crew on station. No absentees. 0803 Commander J.J. SHAFFER, III, USN, Commanding Officer passed away as a result of shrapnel wounds received during attack and sinking of submarine on April 7, 1944. 0810 Colors at half-mast. 1020 Colors two - blocked. (Signed: W.B. SCHNEIDAU)

12 - 16 Steaming as before. 1200 Position; Lat. 40°. 33'N; Long 62 33'W. 1548 Changed course to 267°T. (Signed: B. DOLAN)

16 - 20 Steaming as before. 1740 Condition modified affirm set aft. 1850 Sunset, darkened ship. Set modified condition affirm throughout the ship. (Signed: W. B. SCHNEIDAU)

20 - 24 Steaming as before 2000 Position: Lat. 40°. 27'N; Long. 65° 00'W. All departments reported secure. Sea and wind increasing. Damage still under control. 2005 Reduced speed to 14 knots. 2215 Completed pumping from C-2 and C-4 to relieve

pressure on manhole covers. (Signed: S. N. ANASTASION)

(Note: At the request of his widow, Commander J. J. Shaffer, III, was buried at sea the following day, Easter Sunday, 9 April, 1944)

U-856: Another Viewpoint

The following is excerpted from the recently published work of Clay Blair and can be found in greater detail in his book "Hitler's U-Boat War, The Hunted 1942-1945" published by Random House. It is a companion piece to the first volume, "Hitler's U-Boat War, The Hunters". I urge all of you to acquire these books. They are fascinating reading.

Page 561: "After duty as a weather boat, the new IXC40 U-856, commanded by Friedrich Wittenberg, age twenty-five, followed U-550 into Canadian waters. Forewarned by Allied codebreakers Canadian ASW forces hunted for Wittenberg, but they had no immediate luck.

"Upon learning from the codebreakers that U-856 intended to follow U-550 into the area off New York, American authorities mounted an all-out hunt for her by the "jeep" carrier Croatan and her five destroyer escorts plus two American hunter-killer groups comprising a total of seven destroyers.

"In the early hours of April 7, one of two Avengers from Croatan, piloted by Wilburt A. Lyons, got U-856 on radar but could see nothing by eye. As the Avenger approached, Wittenberg made the mistake of firing at it with flak guns, giving away his position. In excited response, Lyons dropped a Fido rather than a flare, but U-856 was moving too fast for the Fido to home and Wittenberg escaped and went deep.

"Other aircraft from Croatan and the armada of destroyers and destroyer escorts mounted a U-boat hunt to exhaustion. The destroyer Boyle got a sonar contact on U-856 and attacked with thirteen depth charges, but Wittenberg escaped again. Ten hours later, the veteran destroyer Champlin, which had sunk the IXC U-130 a year earlier, again found U-856. Assisted by the destroyer escort Huse, commanded by R. H. Wanless, who attacked with Hedgehogs, Champlin dropped twenty-one depth charges. These savaged U-856 and forced her to the surface.

"Wittenberg ordered his crew to abandon ship and scuttle, but the conning-tower hatch was jammed shut and had to be pried open with a crowbar. While the Germans coped with this blockage, Champlin and Huse opened up with 6" and 3"/50 caliber guns. The Captain of the Champlin, John J. Shafer III, then rammed U-856 solidly in the stern. Not to be outdone, Huse also steamed in to ram, but she missed. Presently, U-856 upended and sank. Tragically, an errant 20mm on Champlin wounded four of her own men, Skipper Shaffer mortally. The

destroyers Niels, and Ordranax fished out eleven and seventeen Germans, respectively. The twenty-eight survivors of the U-856 included Wittenberg and his first watch officer."

U-Boat War: Final Score

From the book "U-Boat Commander, a Periscope View of the Battle of the Atlantic" by Peter Cremer, published by Naval Institute Press: "Out of 820 U-boats that participated in the Battle of the Atlantic, 781 were destroyed in action; out of 40,000 men, more than 30,000 lost their lives."

U-856: Your Story

Well, there you have it. The story of the U-856 encounter as described in the Ship's Log and by the author, Clay Blair. Now, it's your turn. I have often said to our shipmates "If we don't write the history of the USS Champlin, then someone who wasn't there will write it for us". Unfortunately, the world is full of revisionist authors and pundits. Many of the members of the Champlin Reunion Group participated in this event. Please take a few minutes, yes even a few hours, and tell me what you remember about this event. I would like to put your collective stories together, weave them into the story outlined in the articles above, and then publish OUR story of the U-856 encounter in a future issue of the Seaweed. Tell me your battle station, age and rank/rating at the time, your recollection of events, and yes, your opinion.

And, while your at it, let me know what Champlin stories you would like to have presented in future issues of the Seaweed. Here's some ideas:

The commissioning, the decommissioning, the U-130 encounter, convoy duty, the invasion of Southern France, the rescue of the SS Wyoming survivors, the rescue of Lt. Cole, operations off Italy, Sicily and southern France, bombardment of Wake Island, the typhoon off Okinawa . . . you name it and we will consider your selections. Thanks for your help.

Reunion Group News

The 20th Anniversary reunion is now history - but what a reunion it was. Congratulations to George and Gal Styles for all of their work in making this reunion another memorable one. Attendees included: **Allen**, Robert and Elsie; **Berman**, Richard, **Black**, Joe and guest Helen Miller; **Brawdy**, John and Ruth; **Carpenter**, Max and Wynelle; **Connors**, Charles and Wanda; **Cowen**, John and Virgie; **DiSanto**, Caesar and Doris; **Dolsen**, Warren and Doris, **Faaland**, Halvdan and Barbara; **Gilbert**, Louis; **Glass**, Norman and Barbara; **Gustin**, William and Beverly; **Higgins**, Donald and Doris, **Horjus**, Marvin and Ruth; **Hotard**, Sidney and Heloise; **Knowlton**, Archa and Aline; **Koster**, Frank and Julia; **Medvedeff**, Harold and Becky; **Meehan**, Charles; **Miadock**, William and Agnes; **Morton**, Thomas and Honey; **Olson**, Carl and June; **Porter**, Ray and Janet; **Prewitt**, Norman and Phyllis; **Robertson**, James and Lena; **Staller**, Leroy and Ruth; **Styles**, George and Gal; **Suter**, Larry and Margaret; **Tricarico**, Joseph and Marie; **Valentine**, Richard; **Vecchione**, Joseph and Helen and **Wahle**, Francis and guest Marge Shine.

The facilities were more than adequate, the food good, the Hospitality Room active and the special events of the Dixie Stampede and the Carolina Oprey were outstanding. Oh yes, the bus drivers and their trusty steeds were magnificent - always on time and a smile for everyone. Again, George and Gal, thank you for all your efforts.

The next reunion will be held in the Virginia Beach/Norfolk area under the leadership of Bud **Wahle**. Bud arranged for his brother-in-law, a resident of that area, to make a presentation regarding the facilities available and answered questions from the membership. Under consideration for future reunions are Colorado Springs and Kansas City.

A special plaque was presented to George **Styles** for twenty years of service to the Reunion Group, including many years as Historian. George did an excellent job as Historian but his efforts were not limited to that responsibility. He was the "go-to" guy whenever a job needed to be done. George and Gal, we salute you and give you the Navy's highest praise: *Well Done*.

George Styles resigned from the position of Historian. Bill Gustin was appointed to fill this vacancy, and Jack Brawdy was appointed Assistant Historian, a new position. Doesn't that sound like the Navy; appoint two people to do the job previously handled by one. It's what you always suspected George, you were doing the work of many.

The members approved the purchase of copies of the ship's log from the National Archives to add to our historical collection. This data will be helpful to the Historian in completing rosters, and hopefully, assist in locating former

shipmates. Many of the members attending contributed to this purchase. We thank you all.

Marvin and Ruth **Horjus** attended their first reunion - less than a year after they were located. We welcome you both. Max and Wynelle **Carpenter**, Warren and Doris **Dolsen** and Norman and Phyllis **Prewitt** attended for the second year in a row. It was great seeing them get into the routine of attending reunions. Glenn **Ecklund** and Nat **Lerner** were missing for the first time. We missed you both. Hopefully you will be able to be with us at Virginia Beach.

Dues are due! Please send your dues of \$15.00 to Carl Olson. Dues become due (dew, do, do, dew) at the Annual Meeting each year. Those members unable to attend the Annual Meeting should send their dues to Carl just as soon as possible at the following address: Mr. Carl H. Olson, 4520 18 Avenue, Rock Island, IL 61201. Thanks for your support.

Champlin References

Books:

Hitler's U-boat War, The Hunted 1942-1945, Clay Blair, Random House, pg. 56

The Two-Ocean War, Samuel Eliot Morison, Little-Brown, pg. 362

U-Boats Offshore, Hoyt, pg. 220

Magazine:

Sea Classics, Challenge Publications, Vol. 32 # 9, March 1999, "Red Anzio" by Irwin J. Kappes

Internet:

<http://uboaat.net/boats/u130.htm>

<http://uboaat.net/boats/u856.htm>

www.usschamplin.com

Note: Please submit any additional references for inclusion on this list. Thank you.

Questions In Search Of An Answer

Please submit any questions that you have regarding the USS Champlin for inclusion in this column. And, please provide answers to any questions appearing here. Thank you.

1. What was a "Fido" used by the aircraft operating off of the USS Croatan?
2. What is meant by a "Scouting line" and an "Echelon Formation"?
3. What was Foxer gear and how was it used?