

The SEAWEED

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

SPRING 2007

GREETINGS U.S.S. CHAMPLIN VETERANS & FAMILIES

My name is Ted Johnson and I'm happy to take a stab at editing *The Seaweed*. George Styles thinks just because he's 90 he has the right to retire. No amount of intense, persuasive logic convinced him otherwise. But you'll notice George contributed much to this issue, including the menu of the Champlin's first Christmas dinner and the story about Rocco Farina. George will continue to help the Seaweed stay afloat.

"Help" is the operative word! I'll need a lot of help from the Champlin veterans and family members. Please keep thinking about your Champlin experience and share your thoughts with me by letter, phone and or e-mail.

A little about me . . . I joined the U.S. Navy in February 1945, in part at least to avoid the army. I figured the Navy would provide clean linens and hot food most of the time and the Army wouldn't guarantee that.

In 1945, I lived twenty miles outside of Phoenix, AZ, at Litchfield Park. San Diego was about 350 miles away, an easy jaunt by train or bus. It seemed logical I'd be heading there for boot camp; obviously I didn't know much about the Navy; When my orders came I was off for Great Lakes training center outside of Chicago, a thousand miles, and two and a half days, away. The train wandered slowly around the southwest, stopping often, before reaching St. Louis; there I transferred to another train which went directly to Chicago and bus to Great Lakes.

At boot camp I was in a group scheduled to be radar technicians—RT's. But nobody called us radar trainees or RT's; it was rat t_rds, always rat t_rds. After boot camp I went to basic electricity training, then primary and secondary radio schools. We bunked and studied in an old Chicago high school

building, Hugh Manley school, in a neighborhood not far from Chicago's Loop. In late summer I started through primary radio a second time; I didn't make it the first time but they gave me a second chance.

I was a week into my second shot at primary radio when August 2nd dawned, VJ Day. Think about it! VJ Day. The Champlin was off in the Sea of Japan, or somewhere in the Pacific. I'm a few weeks out of boot camp, and I'm in the Chicago Loop, the noisy, crowded, mad house that was the loop on VJ Day, getting Chicago's thanks and congratulations for saving the world that really belonged to you guys. (to say nothing of the hugs and kisses and free drinks and meals and other perks). It was hard, embarrassing duty, but I endured and suffered through.

Shortly after VJ Day my buddy John Wiebelt and I dropped out of radio school and boarded the Illinois Central Railroad's *City of New Orleans* bound for a base in Gulfport, MS.

In Gulfport we had 3 jobs. First, in a dry dock; we hung over the side of a big ship, I don't remember what it was, chipping paint. The hull seemed endless and chipping hammer very small.

The second job was guarding a group of Italian war prisoners who gave up during the African campaign. The danger of them trying to escape was less than zero. Their main past time was figuring ways to stay in the U.S.

The base commander was proud of his landscaping, and the third job was policing the meticulously manicured grounds of the base, using a broomstick with a nail in the end to stab trash and put it in a burlap bag drug along behind. Wiebelt and I spent our free time trying to get out of Gulfport. New Orleans, a special liberty town, was just 80 miles down the road, but a weekend liberty there took several months pay.

A wave clerk in the commandant's office kept us informed of transfer possibilities. One day she said, "A destroyer in Charleston is about to leave for a Mediterranean cruise. "They need crewman."

"Mediterranean Cruise" was music to our ears. I'm sure she knew the Champlin was not heading for the Mediterranean or anywhere near it; more likely she wanted to get rid of us. Whatever her reason we got our orders, boarded a train and headed east.

The train was a rolling disaster, nothing like the *City of New Orleans*. In fact, the train got lost, at least our car did. We awoke one morning and our railcar was sitting all by itself on a rural siding somewhere in Georgia, as I recall. We sat there a long time, a day and a half at least, probably longer, before another train came along and retrieved us.

We finally arrived in Charleston late at night and bunked in a dormitory for transient personnel. The next morning a small boat took us to the Champlin anchored out in Charleston harbor. We climbed aboard, saluted and I launched the best part of my Navy experience.

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Now it is time to write YOUR story and mail it to me!



GOD,
GIVE ME
HEALTH,
WEALTH
AND
HAPPINESS,
BUT MAKE
SURE THEY
DON'T
MAKE ME
SICK,
POOR
AND
MISERABLE.

2007 MINI-REUNION

The Champlin's 2007 mini-reunion

will be held Monday, May 14 to Friday May 18.

Headquarters: The OCEAN HOLIDAY MOTOR INN
6501 Ocean Avenue, Wildwood Crest, NJ, 08260.

For more information about accommodations contact Leon at the
Ocean Holiday Motor Inn 1-800-321-6232, be sure to mention
The USS Champlin Reunion Group..

COST \$230.00 per person Double: \$280 Single: \$215 Triple

Includes: All breakfasts and dinners, some with entertainment.
A trip to Atlantic City with perks, stopping at the Renault Winery
for a beautiful dinner, Wine tasting and Dancing.

A full program of activities is scheduled. For more specific information
contact our Organizer Larry Suter at 973-427-2797

"POLITICS
ARE MORE
DANGEROUS
THAN
WAR.
FOR IN
WAR YOU
ARE ONLY
KILLED
ONCE."

Winston Churchill

To George Styles from Marie Farina, wife and Ron the eldest son

Dear George,

Your letter came as a surprise to our family. Never the less it touched us deeply. I am Rocco's oldest son Ronald. What a remarkable event, renewing a connection after all these years! Staying connected, restoring a connection makes our separate lives more meaningful as we remember or discover how truly necessary we are to each other.

Dad was very proud of his ship, his shipmates and his service to our great country. In his later years he spoke briefly about his wartime and military experiences. We were very proud of him. War is a terrible thing. Veterans like you and my Dad made sacrifices that make our life here in the United States a life coveted by the rest of the world. We are proud and indebted to all of you.

Dad was a proud, strong man and although the disease whittled away his physical strength he maintained his spiritual and inner strength and courage in the face of the inevitable, right to the last days of his life. I suspect it was the same strength and courage he had as a young sailor fighting for his country.

I served in Vietnam in the Marines and there is a timeless bond between all veterans of all wars. You and I share that bond. It remains our goal that the world someday learns from war and how better to exist together in harmony. Until that day veterans will do their duty so that others may live free.

Thank you for remembering my mother's husband, my father.

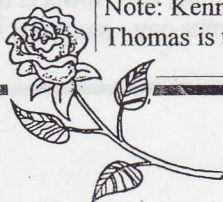
Warmest regards, Marie Farina, devoted wife to Rocco,
Ron Farina, oldest son.

*In
Sympathy*

From Nat Lerner:

"Received an E-mail from Thomas M. Kookan, informing me that Kenneth R. Kokken had passed away on Sept. 17th, 2006. He was a radioman 3rd class and attended some of our past reunions."

Note: Kenneth's wife is still alive in a retirement complex and Ken's son is still alive. Thomas is the grandson, we were in touch with him regarding a memorial. PBP



SPECIAL
PEOPLE
COME
INTO
YOUR
LIFE
AT
JUST
THE
RIGHT
TIME.

WHAT IS A VET?

Some veterans bear visible signs of their service: a missing limb, a jagged scar, certain look in the eye. Others may carry the evidence inside of them: a pin holding a bone together, a piece of shrapnel in the leg, or perhaps another sort of inner steel: the soul's ally forged in the refinery of adversity. Except in parades, however, the men and women who have kept America safe wear no badge or emblem. You can't tell a vet just by looking.

What is a Vet? He is the cop on the beat who spent six months in Saudi Arabia sweating two gallons a day making sure the armored personnel carriers didn't run out of fuel. He is the barroom loudmouth, dumber than five wooden planks, whose overgrown frat-boy behavior is outweighed a hundred times in the cosmic scales by four hours of exquisite bravery near the 38th parallel. She, or he, is a nurse who fought against futility and went to sleep sobbing every night for two solid years in Dan Nang. He is the POW who went away one person and came back another—or didn't come back at all.

He is the Quantico drill instructor who has never seen combat, but has saved countless lives by turning slouchy, no account rednecks and gang members into Marines, and teaching them to watch each other's backs. He is the parade riding Legionnaire who pins on his ribbons and medals with a prosthetic

hand. He is the career Quartermaster who watches the ribbons and medals pass him by.

He is the three anonymous heroes in The Tomb of the Unknowns, whose presence at the Arlington National Cemetery must forever preserve the memory of all the anonymous heroes whose valor dies unrecognized with them on the battlefield or in the ocean's sunless deep. He is the old guy bagging groceries at the supermarket, palsied now, and aggravatingly slow, who helped liberate a Nazi death camp and who wishes all day long that his wife were still alive to hold him when the nightmares come.

He is an ordinary and yet an extraordinary human being, a person who offered some of his life's most vital years in the service of his country, and who sacrificed his ambitions so others would not have to sacrifice theirs. He is a soldier and a savior and a sword against the darkness, and he is nothing more than the finest, greatest testimony on behalf of the finest, greatest nation ever known.

So remember, each time you see someone who has served our country, just lean over and say "thank you." That's all most people need, and in most cases



it will mean more than any medals they could have been awarded or were awarded. Two little words that mean a lot, "thank you." It is the soldier, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press. It is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.

It is the soldier, not the campus organizer, who has given us the freedom to demonstrate. It is the soldier, who salutes the flag, who serves beneath the flag, and whose coffin is draped by the flag, who allows the protester to burn the flag.

Suggested by Dick Berman, from the Hudson River Sampler— author unknown

Spring!

From George Styles

To all my shipmates:

It's been a great run and I had lots of fun.
You read my last *Seaweed*, it's over, I'm done.

Changes
CHANGES

If you missed the last reunion and the last *Seaweed*, we have a new editor starting with this issue. I have never met Ted Johnson, but spoke with him by telephone. I just know that he will do a great job. But, he will need your help. Please send him any ship story you may have. I know we all have a story to tell.

I am so sorry that I missed getting to meet Howard Cole's son, and all my shipmates at the last reunion. Hope to see you all at the next reunion in Charleston, S.C. Good Luck and God Bless

EACH DAY
WARM HANDS
OF THE SUN
REACH DOWN
AND TOUCH
YOU. MAKING
YOU WARM AND
LETTING YOU
KNOW THAT
SOMEONE IS
ALWAYS THERE
LOVING YOU.



CHRISTMAS 1942

The Champlin's Christmas dinner 1942 was special, that was the Champlin's first Christmas as a commissioned US destroyer.

George Styles generously loaned us his copy of the menu of that Champlin Christmas dinner. Then we asked Bob Baughan for his recollections of that meal. Lt. Baughan's main, was gunnery officer but he also was assigned the commissary officer responsibility. We also asked him where the ship was that Christmas day.

The menu cover is a pair of perplexed Santas. One appears to be a petty officer first class, the other a petty officer second class. It also includes a roster of the crew. Dinner concludes with coffee, cigars and cigarettes. It's hard to imagine a mess deck full of crewman smoking cigars and cigarettes.

Bob Baughan's recollections of the Champlin's first Christmas dinner

It was good of you to call last night and discuss the Christmas dinner of 1942. I couldn't recall at the moment whether that was at sea or in New York. Looking at the chronology booklet, I can surmise that it was at sea just before arriving in Casablanca on our first convoy run.

We departed Brooklyn Dec. 12th and arrived December 30th. We were escorting supply ships carrying the first reload for the Army after the invasion of North Africa. The trip over, took 17 days, and we expected to get some of those supplies to last us thru our return trip. But the Army said "No Way!" We were on our own.

That wouldn't have been too bad except for the fact that the harbor unloading facilities had been shot up during invasion. There were a lot of French ships, merchant and naval, sunk at many of the piers. It took 21 days to offload the convoy which we had to escort back to New York, a trip of 18 days, for a total round trip of 55 days.

There was a Navy Oiler with us which had the only supply officer among the seven USN ships (oiler+six DDs). The other five DDs were old hands, having convoyed since before Pearl Harbor. They had learned how to stow their food lockers and refrigerators with good stuff to last them a long while. When the convoy commodore (their squadron commander) told the supply officer to have all ships bring inventories to a conference to deter-

mine who could share what with whom (mostly greenhorn Champlin), they balked. Many of them had butter and egg lockers stuffed with beef (some excess). The main excess Champlin had was several gross cartons of black pepper! Give up beef for black pepper? Not willingly.

Champlin sailors soon learned that the Christmas dinner didn't hold up very long. We had to ration food on the way back, and for the last two weeks we subsisted on two meals a day with pretty thin soup for lunch. The situation arose because we were loaded according to the standard load plan for our new class of DD and the first Chief Commissary man had no DD experience. The poor guy was overwhelmed at the task of supply and I was busy as Gun Boss (primary duty) during pre-commissioning check out of the ship's ordnance. We learned the hard way.

But the climax to the story came when we arrived back in Brooklyn. The convoy commodore allowed us to break radio silence the day before arrival to order food. The first night in port hardly anyone went ashore until after dinner. The menu that evening outdid the Christmas one and no one wanted to miss it. With rationing ashore they couldn't have matched it anywhere.

Bob Baughan





CHRISTMAS DINNER
1942

C.L. MELSON
Lt. Comdr. USN
Commanding

C.H. SMITH
Lt. Comdr. USN
Executive Officer

Cream of Tomato Soup
Oyster Crackers

Stuffed Olives

Green Olives

New Honey

Cranberry Sauce

Roast Young Turkey
Baked Spice Ham

Candied Sweet Potatoes
Oyster Dressing

Mashed Potatoes
Giblet Gravy

Buttered Asparagus
Green Peas

Stuffed Celery Hearts

Quartered Lettuce

Russian Dressing

Pickled Relish

Sweet Pickles

Paradise Fruit Cake
Fruit Ambrosia

Chadwyck Chocolates
Apples

Mixed Nuts
Oranges

Bread

Butter

Coffee

Cigars

Cigarettes

-30-

R. L. BAUGHAN
Lieutenant USN
Commissary Officer

C.T. BAIN
CCStd USN



Bits and Pieces

Have YOU paid your 2007 DUES?

Dues are \$15.00—Subscriptions only, \$5.00

Many of you have failed to pay dues for 2007 which were due October 2006.

Mail dues to Norman Prewitt 2049 Eastridge Drive
Excelsior Springs, Missouri 64024-2869.

You should have a 2007 membership card if you have paid your dues paid for 2007.

Do you and your family know that when a Shipmate passes away a Memorial is sent in HIS name?

Your Treasurer sends a check to The NAVY-MARINE CORPS RELIEF SOCIETY. We advise the Society of the next of kin and they should advise you of the donation.

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SENIOR ALAPHET

- A for arthritis
- B for bad back
- C is for chest pains, Perhaps cardiac.
- D is for dental replacements & decline.
- E is eyesight can't read that top line.
- F for fissures and fluid retention.
- G for gas (which I rather not mention.)
- H high blood pressure, (I'd rather have low.)
- I for incisions with scars you show.
- J is for joints that now fail to flex.
- L for libido, what happened to sex. Wait! I forgot about K!
- K is for my knees that crack when they're bent
(Please for give me, my
- M Memory ain't worth a cent.)
- N for neurosis, pinched nerves and stiff neck.
- O is for osteo and all bones that crack.
- P for prescriptions, I have quite a few, give me another pill, and
I'll be good as new
- Q is for queasiness. Wine or flu?
- R is for reflux—one meal turns into two.
- S is for sleepless nights, counting my fears.
- T for tinnitus, I hear bells in my ears.
- U if for urinary; difficulties with flow.
- V is for vertigo, that's "dizzy" you know.
- W is worry, now what's going 'round?
- X is for Xray, and what might be found.
- Y for another year I've left behind.
- Z is for zest that I still have my mind!

Have survived all the symptoms my body's deployed,
and kept twenty-six doctors gainfully employed!!

Isn't being a Senior Citizen Great? ? ?

OLD AGE, I DECIDED, IS A GIFT!

Whose business is it if I choose to read or play on the computer until 4 a.m. and sleep until noon? I am now, probably for the first time in my life, the person I have always wanted to be.

Oh, not my body! I sometimes despair over my body, the wrinkles, the baggy eyes, and the sagging butt. And often I am taken aback by that old person that lives in my mirror, but I don't agonize over those things for long.

I would never trade my amazing friends, my wonderful life, my loving family for less gray hair or flatter belly. As I've aged, I've become more kind to myself, and less critical of myself. I've become my own friend. I don't chide myself for eating that extra cookie, or for not making my bed, or for buying that silly cement gecko that I didn't need but looks so avante garde on my patio. I am entitled to overeat, to be messy, to be extravagant. I have seen too many dear friends leave this world too soon; before they understood the great freedom that comes with aging.

I will dance with myself to those wonderful tunes of the 30's 40's 50's 60's and if I at the same time, wish to weep over a lost love...I will. I will walk the beach in a swim suit that is stretched over a bulging body, and will dive into the waves with abandon if I choose to, despite the pitying glances from the bikini set. They, too, will get old!

I know I am sometimes forgetful. But there again, some of life is just as well forgotten and I eventually remember the important things.

Sure over the years my heart has been broken. How can your heart not break when you lose a loved one, or when a child suffers, or even when a beloved pet gets hit by a car? But broken hearts are what give us strength and understanding and compassion. A heart never broken is pristine and sterile and will never know the joy of being imperfect.

I am so blessed to have lived long enough to have my hair turn gray, and to have my youthful laughs be forever etched into deep grooves on my face. So many have never laughed, and so many have died before their hair could turn silver. I can say "no" and mean it. I can say "yes" and mean it. As you get older, it is easier to be positive. You can care less about what other people think. I don't question myself anymore. I've even earned the right to be wrong.

So, to answer your question, I like being old. It has set me free. I like the person I have become. I am not going to live forever, but while I am still here, I will not waste time lamenting what could have been, or worrying about what will be.

And I shall eat dessert every single day.

Copied

I will laugh and enjoy my life, join me!

*I'd get my hair done,
but my hair was
finished years ago.*



*I've been named an
honorary archaeologist.
I think it's because
of all the fossils
I've dated.*



NEXT ISSUE OF THE SEAWEED

Please send in your thoughts on story ideas. Getting out this first issue of the Seaweed was a major hurdle for me. I've read and reread all the Seaweed issues I have and I enjoyed each and every one of them. The editors before me did well. And Phyllis Prewitt who handled the December issue, stepped in to handle production of the Spring 2007 issue.

Continuing the Seaweed quality will require even more of your input in issues ahead, because of my time on the Champlin was after VJ Day. I don't mind if material you submit comes in as an idea or thought, I can research and expand it.

On to Japan! Do you remember the last convoy from the Mediterranean to New York City and a brief liberty in the Big Apple (which wasn't yet the Big Apple); then south, through the Canal and on to Japan by way of San Diego? Some of us think that would be a good story for the next Seaweed.

So sift through your memory for recollections of that long voyage from the European Theater of Operations to the Far East. We've sort of got the big picture but often the interest is in the little human details.

The Wives Among Us. I enjoyed hearing from Virginia Rendel Russell about what service aboard the Champlin meant to her Gunner's Mate husband, John. We hope more wives will share their thoughts, even if their Champlin sailors are gone.