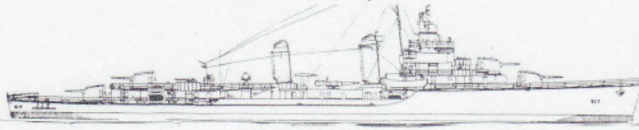


USS Champlin DD-601



The Seaweed

Spring 2009 William D & Gary S Gustin - Editors

A Publication of the USS Champlin Reunion Group

Reunion 2009 Plans In Progress

Plans for a combined USS Champlin/USS Boyle reunion continue to develop. The reunion is being planned for September or October 2009 in the Valley Forge – Greater Philadelphia, PA area.

Reunion details will be published in the Summer 2009 Seaweed. They will also be published on the USS Champlin Website when available.

The reunion is being hosted/planned by USS Boyle relative Audrey Woodard.

Help Wanted!

We need the assistance of all of you to continue to publish the Seaweed. Take a little time and send us your memories of times aboard the USS Champlin or USS Boyle.

Seaweed contributions may be sent to:

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11751 Tradewinds Blvd
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626 East Bluff Drive
Penn Yan, New York 14527

Recollections of an Officer and Gentlemen – Lt Steve Anastasion

[Editors note: June 1942 – Annapolis, Maryland. Steven N. Anastasion graduated from the US Naval Academy. LT Anastasion was assigned to the USS Champlin, and was onboard during her commissioning – making him a ‘plank holder’. Steve spent the next 30 years in Naval Service – eventually reaching the rank of Captain. He later commanded the USS Melvin R. Nawman DE-416, the USS Hawkins DD-873, and the Guided Missile Cruiser USS Leahy CG-16.]

We begin a series of articles written by LT Steven Nicholas Anastasion of his recollections of his time aboard the USS Champlin – 9/12/1942 through 7/3/1945...

“Just before graduation, each of us was given a priority number which would determine our place in line for the selection of his preferred duty assignment. My number was pretty high and I signed up for a Cruiser in the Pacific Fleet. Then I was quickly indoctrinated in the Navy way. No cruiser for me anywhere. My first assignment was a Destroyer in the Atlantic Fleet. I can say now that as it turned out there were never any regrets.

I reported aboard the Champlin in September 1942 at the Fore River shipyard where she was being built. A few weeks later, we moved to the Boston Navy Yard for outfitting all the items

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("Recollections" - continued from page1)

which converted Champlin from a steel hulk to a fleet ready combat vessel.

Most of us were new and reaching for our first time at sea on a new fleet combat destroyer. Our equipment was also new and many of the crew had not had time yet for all training needed. Specifically, I mean the new surface radar and the new sonar. So, Captain Melson called me and said, in effect, pick out six seamen, and work with them to hone up their skills, three as radar operators and three as sonar operators. So we worked to get the proficiency needed to make Champlin, in these areas, ready for its missions..

But I have one bit of recall working with the three radar recruits in the small, cramped and seemingly unventilated (secret) radar room at rear of the Bridge level. We were all new to sea-going and soon, with characteristic nausea of new seamen, the radar room operation was a breather's challenge. But eventually, it all came out well. The sonarmen were in a more open space near the chart house, and were not affected by the radarmen's shut-in compartment problem. That's the way it was on our new ship.

The first cruise I recall was a convoy to Casco Bay Maine. I have a very distinct recollection of being seasick nearly all the way up and back, it was a rough voyage. I can still see our XO, Charles Smith, moving his legs smartly to keep his balance. I am convinced the Champlin was rolling 45°, heaving and yawing, the XO often with one foot on the bridge bulkhead. I heard him say "yes, she's well built, she can take it" while many of the rest of us on bridge were just hanging on to stay erect. Apparently, I looked as if I could not. The XO then said, looking at me (a JOOD ready to heave what I had in me), "Steve, you need to shape up and be more alert." I could barely hold back what was really trying to come up.

But it eventually passed. One day I was on watch as OOD weaving as he had done and it dawned on me that I was no longer, nor ever again, seasick. But one of our officers, I believe he was our First Lieutenant, E. Hayward, never did get over seasickness and was transferred to a larger ship. Later, I was able to connect with young seamen on their first trip out. I remember standing at the platform by the galley at the ladder leading down to the crew's mess hall. The new comers, standing in line to go down for their meals, were greeted by several Chiefs and older hands holding and waving pork chops at them as they walked by. One by one, many of our new shipmates deserted the chow line for the nearest rail.

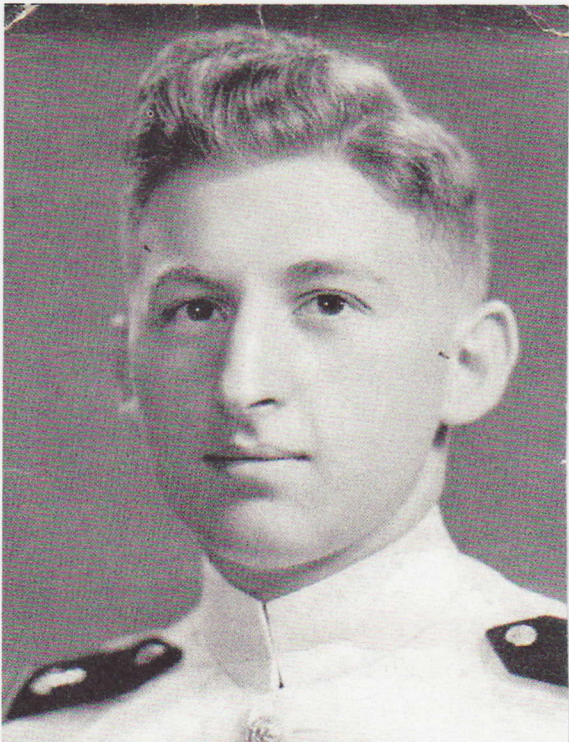
When I reported aboard, I was initially assigned to the Communications Department headed by Lt Gauldin. It wasn't too long before I was shifted to Bob Baughan's Gunnery Department as Torpedo Officer. The Torpedo gang was led by Chief Smith (later Warrant Officer). It was a great group that knew what they were doing and from whom I learned a great deal.

Aside from the depth charges we dropped over the years during anti-submarine actions, we had only one occasion to fire torpedoes. On one of our convoys, we were ordered to destroy a derelict merchantman which was dead in the water. Captain Melson turned the ship so we had a clear shot off the Starboard beam and gave the order to fire a torpedo. Our first shot was programmed to pass under the vessel and be detonated by the vessel's magnetic field. I was at the Torpedo mount with Chief Smith. We reported hot running and saw the torpedoes wake head directly for the vessel and pass under it. Nothing happened. So a second torpedo was readied and programmed to detonate by direct impact. This torpedo hit the side of the vessel; we saw sparks, but again no explosion. You can imagine how we torpedo men felt. What could we have done wrong?

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("Recollections" - continued from page 2)

It became worse when the Captain ordered us along side to give Bob Baughan's 5"/38 gun batteries have their chance. While we put several holes into the derelict, I don't remember it sinking before we had to move on. And the Torpedo gang eventually got their deserved respect. When we returned home after that convoy trip, the Captain sent me to Newport, Rhode Island to review our experience with the engineers at the Torpedo Factory on Goat Island. After several meetings, the response at the Factory was, in essence, "get in line; for that mark and mod torpedo exploder we're getting the same message from both ships and submarines, and we're working on the problem." So, Torpedo heads held high again.



Steven Nicholas Anastasion – US Naval Academy

I remember one other non-combat event during that time. One night I got an emergency call from the watch astern that one of our depth charges had broken loose and was rolling around the fantail. The torpedo gang was already there when I arrived. The depth charge rolled around with the ships' motion. At one point it came up against something, perhaps gun mount #4. I stuck my foot behind it to keep it still while the men corralled it and returned it to its place.

Then I went up and reported to Captain Melson and the Exec who were in the charthouse behind the bridge. I can still hear the Captain saying to me: "Steve, go below and have the Doc look at your leg. That's not an order, it's a request," sort of getting his phrasing a little out of sync.

A sad note. At sea, regardless of weather and sea conditions, we would be called for General Quarters just before dawn and at dusk, the time when enemy submarines would most likely try to slip into the convoy. On one dawn, miserable weather and very rough seas, we were called to GQ as usual. Later, when a muster was taken of the crew, one of our shipmates, Edward Miller S2c was missing. A search of the topside was made and we found, at the bulkhead near the K-gun depth charge station to which he was assigned, a part of the telephone cable for the headphone he would have been wearing. A thorough search was conducted of the entire ship, but he was not located. Others may remember more details.

[Editor's note: S2c Edward Miller was lost at sea February 5, 1943. The USS Champlin's deck log details the incident, and can be found on the USS Champlin website.]

The second in the series of Steve's recollections will be published in the Summer 2009 Seaweed.

Lessons Learned. . . or What Goes Up Must Come Down. . . Somehow

Signalmen are expected to be proficient in three general areas of visual communications: semaphore, Morse code and flag hoist. The latter, flag hoist, became a bit of a problem for me. Let me explain. Flag hoist signals involve the signalman in running up to the yardarm a series of flags that (usually) provide instructions from the Squadron Commander to all ships in the squadron regarding course changes, ship positions and the like. And, again, in most cases, the instructions are to be executed upon the swift down hauling of the flags starting with those on board the Squadron Commanders ship. The usual situation would be for the Squadron Commander's vessel to initiate the communications by having the instructive flags run up on his yardarm. When the flags are seen by other squadron vessels the same flags are duplicated on each vessel involved, starting with the vessel nearest to the Squadron Commander and then repeated on every vessel in the order of their position from the Squadron Commander. Squadron Commanders simply do not like signals to be fouled up, so the vessel commanders reporting to that Squadron Commander do not like to have their signals fouled up either. In turn, signalmen do not like to foul up communications, particularly those that can be seen by every damn ship in the squadron. You get the picture?

Now then, the flags were quite large, perhaps 4' by 4', each of a unique color pattern and style, with a metal ring on one corner and a metal clip on another corner so that the flags could be hooked one to another as they came out of the storage container, the flag bag. Above each flag bag were two or more lines running vertically from near the flag bag up, up, way the heck up, to a pulley attached to a horizontal spar which, in turn, was attached to the vertical mast. Now, each of those lines had a ring on one end, then ran vertically up to that pulley on the spar, through the pulley, then back down vertically

ending up near the flag bag where there was a clip attached.

The process involved a signalman clipping the first flag to that vertical line, then clipping each flag onto another flag in the proper order while simultaneously another signalman was hauling on the line, pulling the flags up, out of the flag bags, up, up, way up toward the spar on the mast, and then as the last flag in the message came out of the flag bag, the first signalman would clip the other end of the line running through the pulley, so there was now a continuous line, or loop, running up from the flag bag area to the pulley on the spar and back down to the flag bag area. The portion of that loop from the pulley back down to the flag bag area was kept taut by the second signalman, so that the flags would fly as near vertical as possible. When the command was given to execute the order, the flags were brought down smartly and replaced in the flag bag. Complicated? Maybe. Just remember the line:

"the first signalman would clip the other end of the line running to the pulley, so there was now a continuous line, or loop, running up from the flag bag area to the pulley on the spar and back down to the flag bag area." OK, you still get the picture?

We were in the Pacific, had left Pearl Harbor and were headed for Okinawa. I was the first signalman – unfortunately. As I finished bringing the flags out of the flag bag in the proper order, I grabbed for the line to make the loop complete, missed - and all hell broke loose. The second signalman was hauling the flags up smartly, but there was no line hooked to them to bring them back down. As we were underway, the wind and speed of the ship took the flags back from the pulley into a horizontal position toward the forward smoke stack. Not good. . . not good at all. A nice display, but not a proper one, not shipshape at all. I did not know any way to bring the flags down. . .

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then my fellow signalman gleefully told me to request permission to climb the mast and bring them down.

Permission was granted of course, what other options were there? So, sensing that my fellow signalman might have more information for me than I had been told, I asked, "How?" I was told to get on top of one of the flag bags, and start climbing up the narrow ladder attached to the fore part of the mast. I started. . . he said, "Wait, you may need a knife to cut them loose." I told him, "I don't have a knife". He smiled, then handed me a knife. I asked for the sheath to carry the knife. He smiled again, then gave me the news that there was no sheath, so, "Put in between your teeth and act like a pirate." I did. Up the mast I climbed, any feeling of seasickness disappeared, replaced by sheer terror. It was amazing how far from port to starboard one goes, the higher you got up the mast! I made it up to the spar where I located a loose line (likely a thin cable) hanging about 3 feet below the spar. I edged out on that by sliding my shoes oh so very carefully toward the line with the flags trailing out toward the stern, holding onto the spar for dear life. When I got out far enough to handle the flags, I began disassembling one from the other, hanging the flags from a belt loop on my pants, then winding the whole bunch around and tucked them into the front of my pants. Then I clipped the line that held the flags to a belt loop and stared sliding my feet along the line back toward the mast. I had no more than started back toward the mast when a line brushed against my face, knocking the knife from my mouth and then gravity took over as the knife began its long fall downward. It was like watching a slow-motion film as the knife descended toward the deck aimed directly at a hatch to the engine rooms. . . and I could see a white hat coming up toward the hatch from below. I damned near died just watching. The knife fell on the deck, near the hatch; the white hat turned to see the cause of the noise, and then quietly and slowly went back down the ladder into the engine room without a word. .

or at least a word I could hear. The rest was easy, just climbing very slowly down that damn ladder until my feet were safely on the bridge area. There was, of course, some extra duty to be performed – neither my first nor my last. But, I had learned my lesson and never had another flag hoist line get away from me.

As remembered by William D Gustin SM3c

Destroyers: "Then and Now"

USS Champlin DD-601

Displacement:	2515 tons (full load)
Accommodations:	276 Personnel
Speed:	33 Knots

USS Roosevelt DDG-80

Displacement:	9,600 long tons
Accommodations:	362 Personnel
Speed:	30+ Knots

Did You Know?

Cdr John Jackson Shaffer III – Skipper of the USS Champlin who lost his life during the U-856 sinking – survived the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941- as an officer of the **USS Arizona**. His name appears on the Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor, Hi.

Reliving the Good Old Days

Miss your former Navy life afloat? Here are some ideas to simulate that life, and relive the 'good old days':

1. Every time there's a violent thunderstorm night or day, grab a wobbly rocking chair, take it outdoors, sit in it and rock as hard as you can until you get nauseous.
2. Once a year blow compressed air up through the chimney making sure the wind carries the soot across onto your neighbors laundry, then explain - 'Just blowing' tubes'
3. Set your alarm clock to go off at midnight. Get up and have a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and wash it down with green Koolaid.
4. Set your alarm clock to go off at random times during the night, When it goes off- jump out of bed, get at least partially dressed before running out to the front yard to break out the garden hose. After fifteen minutes, secure it and return to bed.
5. When preparing coffee, use 18 scoops of coffee per pot and allow it to sit for 5 or 6 hours before drinking.
6. Raise the thresholds and lower the top sills on your front and back doors, so that you either trip over the threshold or hit your head on the sill every time you pass through one of them.
7. Put on head phones from your stereo, but don't plug them in to anything. Then go and stand in front of your stove. Say to nobody in particular "Stove manned and ready". Stand there for 3 or 4 hours then say to nobody in particular - "Stove Secured"

There! – Feel better now? Nostalgia gone?

Mission accomplished!

Shipmate Death Notices

USS Champlin DD-601

Robert William Lowery F1c – 1/24/2009

USS Boyle DD-600

Andrew H. Ingro – 3/30/2008

Neal Fox – 11/22/2007

Carmen B Pruitt – date unknown

Thomas G Scott – date unknown



Radio Room

USS Champlin Merchandise

Norm Pruitt 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 Pruitt 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 Group Dues are Due!

If you haven't yet paid your 2008-2009 Reunion Group Dues, they are due now. We need your continued support in order to continue to publish the newsletter, maintain the USS Champlin Website, and to support other Reunion Group initiatives.

Dues are still just \$15.00 per year. I would encourage not only Champlin Crew members to join the organization, but I would also encourage any interested family of USS Champlin Crew members to join the organization as well.

Seaweed (newsletter only) subscriptions are also available for an annual fee of \$5.00.

Dues or subscription fees should be sent to:

Norman Prewitt
2049 Eastridge Drive
Excelsior Springs, Mo 64024

Why not get out that checkbook and pay those dues today?



Penthouse Suite
Aboard a Benson Class Destroyer

Army versus Navy

Congratulations to the US Naval Academy Football team on their 7th consecutive victory over Army with a 34-0 shutout - GO NAVY!

Here is a little real life story of another Army versus Navy confrontation....

A Navy man and an Army man are driving opposite directions on a curvy mountain road. The army man hits a patch of sand, swerves, and nails the Navy man's truck. They both exit their cars with no injuries, but their vehicles are ruined.

Now, the rivalry between Army and Navy is well known, so needless to say a heated argument followed. Then suddenly the Navy man changed heart and said, "Hold on, this is dumb. It was an accident. Let's put this rivalry behind us."

The Army man agreed this was a good idea. So the Navy man offered, "Why don't we celebrate our new friendship over a fifth of vodka? I have a bottle in the truck."

The Army man thought this was an excellent idea. So the Navy man, being a gentleman, offered the Army man the first drink, and told the Army man to drink as much as he wanted. Soon half the bottle was gone and he offered the bottle back to the Navy man who said, "Thanks, but I'll wait till after the cops get here!"



*Bags
Laid
Out*

U.S. NAVAL
TRAINING
STATION

SAMPSON,
NEW YORK

