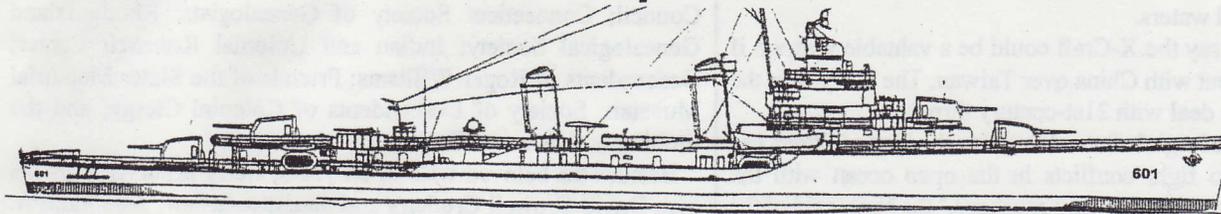


USS Champlin DD-601



Page 1

THE SEAWEED

Summer 2005

skivywaver@myrealbox.com

626 East Bluff Drive, Penn Yan, NY 14527-8924

www.usschamplin.com

DUES ARE DUE AGAIN, SO DO YOUR DUES AGAIN

Yup, it's that time of the year again. . . actually it's a bit earlier than usual, so send in your 2005-2006 dues to the USS Champlin Reunion Group. The annual dues, due at the time of the Annual Reunion, is still a bargain at only \$15.00. Please send your payment to Norman Prewitt, Sec. /Treas., 2049 Eastridge Drive, Excelsior Springs, MO 64024-2869. Thankee very kindly.

2005 USS CHAMPLIN REUNION, WASHINGTON, DC

Becky and Harold Medvedef, co-chairs of the 2005 Reunion to be held in Washington, DC have already completed the arrangements and the details follow. The reservation form will be found on the cover page of this issue. Detach, complete the form and mail it to Becky Medvedeff, 498 Cathy Ct., Odenton, MD, 21113, (410) 674-2217. If you have any questions, just write or call Becky. She will have the answer you need - or will get the answer for you.

Date: 21 September - 25 September, 2005

Place: Washington, DC

Hotel: Ramada Inn Laurel, 3400 Fort Meade Road, Laurel, Maryland, 20724, located across the street from a shopping area. The hotel rate is \$89.00 per night plus tax, and includes breakfast.

Reservations: Cutoff date is September 16, 2005. To reserve call 1-301-498-0900, ask for "Reservations" and identify yourself as part of the USS Champlin DD 601 Reunion Group. We suggest that you reserve your room now; do not wait until June, July or August as this is a busy hotel and space may not be available.

Thursday 22 September 2005: 9:30 a.m. We will attend the USS Champlin's Memorial presentation at the U. S. Navy Memorial Naval Heritage Center scheduled for 10:30 a.m. We will have some time to look around the facility, then depart to visit the renovated and energetic Union Station, now a shopping and dining facility in the heart of Washington where we will have lunch and shopping on our own. Go where you want, see what you want, do what you want. We will depart Union Station and return to the Ramada with a short bus trip around Washington. The cost will be \$25.00 per person.

Friday, 23 September 2005. A visit to the world famous Smithsonian Institution to view the incredible collections housed in this magnificent facility at your leisure. Again, go where you want, see what you want, do what you want.. Then, we return to the

Ramada, at a time to be determined.. Cost: \$25.00 per person.

All prices quoted above are based on an estimated 30 participants.

Saturday, 24 September, 2005 we will hold the **Annual Meeting** of the USS Champlin Reunion Group at 10:00 a.m. in the Hospitality Room. In the evening at 7:00 p.m, the annual **Banquet:** Choice of Chicken Jardiniere @ \$25.00, Prime Rib @ \$31.00 .All tax and gratuity included.

There will be a new feature this year. Each participant is asked to bring a gift, valued at \$5.00 or under, to exchange in some sort of a "door-prize" arrangement to be announced by Beck Medvedeff.

THANKS TO GEORGE STYLES

Yeah, yeah, I know. . . I resigned as editor of The Seaweed. The last time I resigned from an office of the Reunion Group, it took over a year for it to be effective. So, this time I saved some material anticipating the same sort of delay. However, George Styles agreed to take over The Seaweed following the Mini-Reunion. I asked him if he would be willing to allow me to publish one more issue and he agreed. So, thanks to George I can get some of this material out of my computer and on its way to you. Thanks George.

THE NAVY'S X-CRAFT

In previous issues of The Seaweed, I have related stories of the Navy's plans for developing a new type destroyer. See the Winter 2004 issue, page 4, entitled "Destroyers; Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" and especially the Spring 2005 issue, page 4, entitled "Sea Fighter (In the Navy's Future)". Well, Sea Fighter is now a reality according to a recent article in the Washington Times, in a column entitled "Inside the Ring, by Bill Gertz and Rowan Scarborough dated August 5, 2005

Under the headline "Navy's X-Craft" they report:

"The Navy this week added the first of a new type of high-technology, low-cost coastal patrol boat known as the Littoral Surface Craft-Experimental (LSC-X), or X-Craft.

The ship, known as the Sea Fighter, can move at speeds of up to 50 knots and has a range of some 4,000 nautical miles.

The ship joined the Navy's 3rd Fleet in San Diego and is the first of a series of low-cost weapons being promoted by Rep. Duncan

Hunter, California Republican and chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. The new catamaran-design hull is meant for high speed in coastal waters.

Defense officials say the X-Craft could be a valuable weapon if any conflict breaks out with China over Taiwan. The Navy says the X-Craft is needed to deal with 21st-century threats.

"Today's absence of a global naval threat to the United States has replaced the need to fight conflicts in the open ocean with the requirement to project sea-based power ashore," the Navy said of the new boat.

The boat will be used for battle force protection, mine countermeasures, anti-submarine warfare, amphibious assault support and humanitarian support missions.

"This is the wave of the future," Mr. Hunter said. "We make a lot of speeches about military transformation, but this ship is real transformation."

Sound interesting? Go visit your local recruiting office and sign up!

GERALD MILTON CRUTHERS RDM3C

"Gerald Milton Cruthers, 79, of Land's End, 10 Weston Road, Groton Long Point, husband of Marilyn Crowell Cruthers, died Saturday (2 July 2005) after a long, courageous battle with cancer.

Gerry was born in Norwich on January 7, 1926, the son of C. Fred and Astrid (Swanson) Cruthers of Norwich. He attended Norwich Public Schools and graduated from the Norwich Free Academy in 1943. After graduating from NFA, he enrolled in the Navy V-12 program, attending Tufts and Harvard universities. He then was called to serve his country in the US Navy during World War II as Radarman 3/c on board the USS Champlin, which saw action in the Pacific Theater. His ship was one of the first to land in Hiroshima after the detonation of the atomic bomb.

Gerry returned to Connecticut and graduated with a B.S from the University of Connecticut in 1950, from which he later received his M.A. On September 23, 1950, he was united in marriage with Marilyn (Williams) Crowell at Park Congregational Church, Norwich, by the Rev. Malcolm Garland. He began his 28-year career as a teacher at Norwich Free Academy in 1952, teaching mathematics. He earned a 6th year certificate from the University of Hartford and an Academic Year from the National Science Foundation to study at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In 1969, Gerry was named one of the first four Housemasters at NFA. He returned to teaching in 1978, and retired from NFA in 1980.

After his retirement, Gerry sold real estate with A. Robert Schnip and Associates. He also received an A.A. as a Library Assistant from Mohegan Community College. The degree assisted him in pursuing a career as a professional genealogist. Gerry researched the family lines of many people as a Certified Genealogical Record Specialist.

He was a member of Park Congregational Church, Norwich, where he taught Sunday School, and was Director of Religious Education. He also served Park as a member of the Executive Board, the Board of Religious Education, and the Board of Deacons. Gerry was also a member of the Nathan Hale Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution; Society of the Founders of Norwich (Gerry

was a direct descendent of Deacon Thomas Adgate, one of the Founders of Norwich); Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council; Connecticut Society of Genealogists; Rhode Island Genealogical Society; Indian and Colonial Research Center; Descendants of Roger Williams; Friends of the Slater Memorial Museum; Society of Descendants of Colonial Clergy; and the Stonington Historical Society.

Besides his beloved wife of 54 years, Gerry is survived by his son, David Crowell Cruthers and daughter-in-law, Josephine A. Cruthers of Groton Long Point, and his two grandchildren, William MacMillan Cruthers and Elizabeth Cassidy Cruthers. He was predeceased by his brother, Charles F. Cruthers.

There will be no Calling Hours at the request of the family. A Memorial Service will be held on Wednesday, July 6, at 2 PM at Park Congregational Church, 283 Broadway, Norwich. Internment in Maplewood Cemetery, Norwich, will be at the convenience of the family. The Dinoto Funeral Home, Historic Downtown Mystic, is in charge of arrangements.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Society of the Founders of Norwich, P.O. Box 13, Norwich, CT 06360 or Hospice of Southeastern Connecticut, P.O. Box 902, Uncasville, CT 06382-0902"

(Ed.: Gerald Milton Cruthers died at the place of his choosing, the sun room of their cottage on Weston Road, Groton Long Point, CT, with his wife and son at his side. Shipmates who attended the 1996 Champlin Reunion at Mystic, CT will recall this location well. Gerry enlisted in the US Navy on 1 Nov 1943 at Hartford, CT. He came aboard Champlin at Pearl Harbor on 13 July 1945 and served as a RDM3/c. He then went aboard USS Stoddard DD 566 on 26 March 1946, and was discharged from the US Navy 7 May 1946 at Lido Beach, NY. His widow, Marilyn Crowell Cruthers, can be reached at PO Box 3729, Groton Long Point, CT 06340. His son, David Cruthers, can be reached at PO Box 3418, Groton Long Point, CT 06340)

A-BOMB OR INVASION ?

The following article will be of interest to Champlin shipmates, especially those aboard during the period discussed; April 1945 to August 15, 1945. To assist in your understanding of the importance of this information to Champlin shipmates, I have reviewed the Log Book of the USS Champlin DD601 for the key period in the article and find the following:

In *April 1945*, Champlin was operating out of Mers El Kebir, Algeria and departed on 23 April 1945 to USA, arriving at New York City area on 1 May 1945.

On *6 August 1945*, (Hiroshima bombing) Champlin departed Saipan Harbor en route to Okinawa.

On *7 August through 10 August 1945*, (Nagasaki bombing) Champlin was en route to Okinawa

On *15 August 1945*, Champlin was on anti-submarine patrol off Hagushi Anchorage, Okinawa.

Source: "Why Truman Dropped the Bomb", From the August 8, 2005 issue, Vol. 10, Issue 44, by Richard B. Frank.

"The sixtieth anniversary of Hiroshima seems to be shaping up as a subdued affair--though not for any lack of significance. A survey of news editors in 1999 ranked the

dropping of the atomic bomb on August 6, 1945, first among the top one hundred stories of the twentieth century. And any thoughtful list of controversies in American history would place it near the top again. It was not always so. In 1945, an overwhelming majority of Americans regarded as a matter of course that the United States had used atomic bombs to end the Pacific war. They further believed that those bombs had actually ended the war and saved countless lives. This set of beliefs is now sometimes labeled by academic historians the "traditionalist" view. One unkindly dubbed it the "patriotic orthodoxy."

"But in the 1960s, what were previously modest and scattered challenges of the decision to use the bombs began to crystallize into a rival canon. The challengers were branded "revisionists," but this is inapt. Any historian who gains possession of significant new evidence has a duty to revise his appreciation of the relevant events. These challengers are better termed critics.

"The critics share three fundamental premises. The first is that Japan's situation in 1945 was catastrophically hopeless. The second is that Japan's leaders recognized that fact and were seeking to surrender in the summer of 1945. The third is that thanks to decoded Japanese diplomatic messages, American leaders knew that Japan was about to surrender when they unleashed needless nuclear devastation.

"The critics divide over what prompted the decision to drop the bombs in spite of the impending surrender, with the most provocative arguments focusing on Washington's desire to intimidate the Kremlin. Among an important stratum of American society--and still more perhaps abroad--the critics' interpretation displaced the traditionalist view.

"These rival narratives clashed in a major battle over the exhibition of the *Enola Gay*, the airplane from which the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, at the Smithsonian Institution in 1995. That confrontation froze many people's understanding of the competing views. Since then, however, a sheaf of new archival discoveries and publications has expanded our understanding of the events of August 1945. This new evidence requires serious revision of the terms of the debate. What is perhaps the most interesting feature of the new findings is that they make a case President Harry S. Truman deliberately chose not to make publicly in defense of his decision to use the bomb.

"When scholars began to examine the archival records in the 1960s, some intuited quite correctly that the accounts of their decision-making that Truman and members of his administration had offered in 1945 were at least incomplete. And if Truman had refused to disclose fully his thinking, these scholars reasoned, it must be because the real basis for his choices would undermine or even delegitimize his decisions. It scarcely seemed plausible to such critics--or to almost anyone else--that there could be any legitimate reason that the U.S. government would have concealed at the time, and would continue to conceal, powerful evidence that supported and explained the president's decisions.

"But beginning in the 1970s, we have acquired an array of new evidence from Japan and the United States. By far the most important single body of this new evidence consists of secret radio intelligence material, and what it highlights is the painful dilemma faced by Truman and his administration. In explaining their

decisions to the public, they deliberately forfeited their best evidence. They did so because under the stringent security restrictions guarding radio intercepts, recipients of this intelligence up to and including the president were barred from retaining copies of briefing documents, from making any public reference to them whatsoever at the time or in their memoirs, and from retaining any record of what they had seen or what they had concluded from it. With a handful of exceptions, they obeyed these rules, both during the war and thereafter.

"Collectively, the missing information is known as The Ultra Secret of World War II (after the title of a breakthrough book by Frederick William Winterbotham published in 1974). Ultra was the name given to what became a vast and enormously efficient Allied radio intelligence organization, which secretly unveiled masses of information for senior policymakers. Careful listening posts snatched copies of millions of cryptograms from the air. Code breakers then extracted the true text. The extent of the effort is staggering. By the summer of 1945, Allied radio intelligence was breaking into a million messages a month from the Japanese Imperial Army alone, and many thousands from the Imperial Navy and Japanese diplomats.

"All of this effort and expertise would be squandered if the raw intercepts were not properly translated and analyzed and their disclosures distributed to those who needed to know. This is where Pearl Harbor played a role. In the aftermath of that disastrous surprise attack, Secretary of War Henry Stimson recognized that the fruits of radio intelligence were not being properly exploited. He set Alfred McCormack, a top-drawer lawyer with experience in handling complex cases, to the task of formulating a way to manage the distribution of information from Ultra. The system McCormack devised called for funneling all radio intelligence to a handful of extremely bright individuals who would evaluate the flood of messages, correlate them with all other sources, and then write daily summaries for policymakers.

"By mid-1942, McCormack's scheme had evolved into a daily ritual that continued to the end of the war--and is in essence the system still in effect today. Every day, analysts prepared three mimeographed newsletters. Official couriers toting locked pouches delivered one copy of each summary to a tiny list of authorized recipients around the Washington area. (They also retrieved the previous day's distribution, which was then destroyed except for a file copy.) Two copies of each summary went to the White House, for the president and his chief of staff. Other copies went to a very select group of officers and civilian officials in the War and Navy Departments, the British Staff Mission, and the State Department. What is almost as interesting is the list of those not entitled to these top-level summaries: the vice president, any cabinet official outside the select few in the War, Navy, and State Departments, anyone in the Office of Strategic Services or the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or anyone in the Manhattan Project building the atomic bomb, from Major General Leslie Groves on down.

"The three daily summaries were called the "Magic" Diplomatic Summary, the "Magic" Far East Summary, and the European Summary. ("Magic" was a code word coined by the U.S. Army's chief signal officer, who called his code breakers "magicians"

and their product "Magic." The term "Ultra" came from the British and has generally prevailed as the preferred term among historians, but in 1945 "Magic" remained the American designation for radio intelligence, particularly that concerning the Japanese.) The "Magic" Diplomatic Summary covered intercepts from foreign diplomats all over the world. The "Magic" Far East Summary presented information on Japan's military, naval, and air situation. The European Summary paralleled the Far East summary in coverage and need not detain us. Each summary read like a newsmagazine. There were headlines and brief articles usually containing extended quotations from intercepts and commentary. The commentary was critical: Since no recipient retained any back issues, it was up to the editors to explain how each day's developments fitted into the broader picture.

"When a complete set of the "Magic" Diplomatic Summary for the war years was first made public in 1978, the text contained a large number of redacted (literally whited out) passages. The critics reasonably asked whether the blanks concealed devastating revelations. Release of a nonredacted complete set in 1995 disclosed that the redacted areas had indeed contained a devastating revelation--but not about the use of the atomic bombs. Instead, the redacted areas concealed the embarrassing fact that Allied radio intelligence was reading the codes not just of the Axis powers, but also of some 30 other governments, including allies like France.

"The diplomatic intercepts included, for example, those of neutral diplomats or attachés stationed in Japan. Critics highlighted a few nuggets from this trove in the 1978 releases, but with the complete release, we learned that there were only 3 or 4 messages suggesting the possibility of a compromise peace, while no fewer than 13 affirmed that Japan fully intended to fight to the bitter end. Another page in the critics' canon emphasized a squad of Japanese diplomats in Europe, from Sweden to the Vatican, who attempted to become peace entrepreneurs in their contacts with American officials. As the editors of the "Magic" Diplomatic Summary correctly made clear to American policymakers during the war, however, not a single one of these men (save one we will address shortly) possessed actual authority to act for the Japanese government.

"An inner cabinet in Tokyo authorized Japan's only officially sanctioned diplomatic initiative. The Japanese dubbed this inner cabinet the Big Six because it comprised just six men: Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki, Foreign Minister Shigenori Togo, Army Minister Korechika Anami, Navy Minister Mitsumasa Yonai, and the chiefs of staff of the Imperial Army (General Yoshijiro Umezu) and Imperial Navy (Admiral Soemu Toyoda). In complete secrecy, the Big Six agreed on an approach to the Soviet Union in June 1945. This was not to ask the Soviets to deliver a "We surrender" note; rather, it aimed to enlist the Soviets as mediators to negotiate an end to the war satisfactory to the Big Six--in other words, a peace on terms satisfactory to the dominant militarists. Their minimal goal was not confined to guaranteed retention of the Imperial Institution; they also insisted on preservation of the old militaristic order in Japan, the one in which they ruled.

"The conduit for this initiative was Japan's ambassador in Moscow, Naotake Sato. He communicated with Foreign Minister Togo--and, thanks to code breaking, with American policymakers. Ambassador Sato emerges in the intercepts as a devastating cross-

examiner ruthlessly unmasking for history the feebleness of the whole enterprise. Sato immediately told Togo that the Soviets would never bestir themselves on behalf of Japan. The foreign minister could only insist that Sato follow his instructions. Sato demanded to know whether the government and the military supported the overture and what its legal basis was--after all, the official Japanese position, adopted in an Imperial Conference in June 1945 with the emperor's sanction, was a fight to the finish. The ambassador also demanded that Japan state concrete terms to end the war, otherwise the effort could not be taken seriously. Togo responded evasively that the "directing powers" and the government had authorized the effort--he did not and could not claim that the military in general supported it or that the fight-to-the-end policy had been replaced. Indeed, Togo added: "Please bear particularly in mind, however, that we are not seeking the Russians' mediation for anything like an unconditional surrender."

"This last comment triggered a fateful exchange. Critics have pointed out correctly that both Under Secretary of State Joseph Grew (the former U.S. ambassador to Japan and the leading expert on that nation within the government) and Secretary of War Henry Stimson advised Truman that a guarantee that the Imperial Institution would not be eliminated could prove essential to obtaining Japan's surrender. The critics further have argued that if only the United States had made such a guarantee, Japan would have surrendered. But when Foreign Minister Togo informed Ambassador Sato that Japan was not looking for anything like unconditional surrender, Sato promptly wired back a cable that the editors of the "Magic" Diplomatic Summary made clear to American policymakers "advocate[s] unconditional surrender provided the Imperial House is preserved." Togo's reply, quoted in the "Magic" Diplomatic Summary of July 22, 1945, was adamant: American policymakers could read for themselves Togo's rejection of Sato's proposal--with not even a hint that a guarantee of the Imperial House would be a step in the right direction. Any rational person following this exchange would conclude that modifying the demand for unconditional surrender to include a promise to preserve the Imperial House would not secure Japan's surrender.

Togo's initial messages--indicating that the emperor himself endorsed the effort to secure Soviet mediation and was prepared to send his own special envoy--elicited immediate attention from the editors of the "Magic" Diplomatic Summary, as well as Under Secretary of State Grew. Because of Grew's documented advice to Truman on the importance of the Imperial Institution, critics feature him in the role of the sage counsel. What the intercept evidence discloses is that Grew reviewed the Japanese effort and concurred with the U.S. Army's chief of intelligence, Major General Clayton Bissell, that the effort most likely represented a ploy to play on American war weariness. They deemed the possibility that it manifested a serious effort by the emperor to end the war "remote." Lest there be any doubt about Grew's mindset, as late as August 7, the day after Hiroshima, Grew drafted a memorandum with an oblique reference to radio intelligence again affirming his view that Tokyo still was not close to peace.

"Starting with the publication of excerpts from the diaries of James Forrestal in 1951, the contents of a few of the diplomatic intercepts were revealed, and for decades the critics focused on

these. But the release of the complete (unredacted) "Magic" Far East Summary, supplementing the Diplomatic Summary, in the 1990s revealed that the diplomatic messages amounted to a mere trickle by comparison with the torrent of military intercepts. The intercepts of Japanese Imperial Army and Navy messages disclosed without exception that Japan's armed forces were determined to fight a final Armageddon battle in the homeland against an Allied invasion. The Japanese called this strategy Ketsu Go (Operation Decisive). It was founded on the premise that American morale was brittle and could be shattered by heavy losses in the initial invasion. American politicians would then gladly negotiate an end to the war far more generous than unconditional surrender. Ultra was even more alarming in what it revealed about Japanese knowledge of American military plans. Intercepts demonstrated that the Japanese had correctly anticipated precisely where U.S. forces intended to land on Southern Kyushu in November 1945 (Operation Olympic). American planning for the Kyushu assault reflected adherence to the military rule of thumb that the attacker should outnumber the defender at least three to one to assure success at a reasonable cost. American estimates projected that on the date of the landings, the Japanese would have only three of their six field divisions on all of Kyushu in the southern target area where nine American divisions would push ashore. The estimates allowed that the Japanese would possess just 2,500 to 3,000 planes total throughout Japan to face Olympic. American aerial strength would be over four times greater.

"From mid-July onwards, Ultra intercepts exposed a huge military buildup on Kyushu. Japanese ground forces exceeded prior estimates by a factor of four. Instead of 3 Japanese field divisions deployed in southern Kyushu to meet the 9 U.S. divisions, there were 10 Imperial Army divisions plus additional brigades. Japanese air forces exceeded prior estimates by a factor of two to four. Instead of 2,500 to 3,000 Japanese aircraft, estimates varied between about 6,000 and 10,000. One intelligence officer commented that the Japanese defenses threatened "to grow to [the] point where we attack on a ratio of one (1) to one (1) which is not the recipe for victory."

"Concurrent with the publication of the radio intelligence material, additional papers of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have been released in the last decade. From these, it is clear that there was no true consensus among the Joint Chiefs of Staff about an invasion of Japan. The Army, led by General George C. Marshall, believed that the critical factor in achieving American war aims was time. Thus, Marshall and the Army advocated an invasion of the Home Islands as the fastest way to end the war. But the long-held Navy view was that the critical factor in achieving American war aims was casualties. The Navy was convinced that an invasion would be far too costly to sustain the support of the American people, and hence believed that blockade and bombardment were the sound course.

"The picture becomes even more complex than previously understood because it emerged that the Navy chose to postpone a final showdown over these two strategies. The commander in chief of the U.S. fleet, Admiral Ernest King, informed his colleagues on the Joint Chiefs of Staff in April 1945 that he did not agree that Japan should be invaded. He concurred only that the Joint Chiefs must issue an invasion order immediately to create that option for the fall. But King predicted that the Joint Chiefs would revisit the

issue of whether an invasion was wise in August or September. Meanwhile, two months of horrendous fighting ashore on Okinawa under skies filled with kamikazes convinced the commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet, Admiral Chester Nimitz, that he should withdraw his prior support for at least the invasion of Kyushu. Nimitz informed King of this change in his views in strict confidence.

"In August, the Ultra revelations propelled the Army and Navy towards a showdown over the invasion. On August 7 (the day after Hiroshima, which no one expected to prompt a quick surrender), General Marshall reacted to weeks of gathering gloom in the Ultra evidence by asking General Douglas MacArthur, who was to command what promised to be the greatest invasion in history, whether invading Kyushu in November as planned still looked sensible. MacArthur replied, amazingly, that he did not believe the radio intelligence! He vehemently urged the invasion should go forward as planned. (This, incidentally, demolishes later claims that MacArthur thought the Japanese were about to surrender at the time of Hiroshima.) On August 9 (the day the second bomb was dropped, on Nagasaki), King gathered the two messages in the exchange between Marshall and MacArthur and sent them to Nimitz. King told Nimitz to provide his views on the viability of invading Kyushu, with a copy to MacArthur. Clearly, nothing that had transpired since May would have altered Nimitz's view that Olympic was unwise. Ultra now made the invasion appear foolhardy to everyone but MacArthur. But King had not placed a deadline on Nimitz's response, and the Japanese surrender on August 15 allowed Nimitz to avoid starting what was certain to be one of the most tumultuous interservice battles of the whole war.

"What this evidence illuminates is that one central tenet of the traditionalist view is wrong--but with a twist. Even with the full ration of caution that any historian should apply anytime he ventures comments on paths history did not take, in this instance it is now clear that the long-held belief that Operation Olympic loomed as a certainty is mistaken. Truman's reluctant endorsement of the Olympic invasion at a meeting in June 1945 was based in key part on the fact that the Joint Chiefs had presented it as their unanimous recommendation. (King went along with Marshall at the meeting, presumably because he deemed it premature to wage a showdown fight. He did comment to Truman that, of course, any invasion authorized then could be canceled later.) With the Navy's withdrawal of support, the terrible casualties in Okinawa, and the appalling radio-intelligence picture of the Japanese buildup on Kyushu, Olympic was not going forward as planned and authorized--period. But this evidence also shows that the demise of Olympic came not because it was deemed unnecessary, but because it had become unthinkable. It is hard to imagine anyone who could have been president at the time (a spectrum that includes FDR, Henry Wallace, William O. Douglas, Harry Truman, and Thomas Dewey) failing to authorize use of the atomic bombs in this circumstance. Japanese historians uncovered another key element of the story. After Hiroshima (August 6), Soviet entry into the war against Japan (August 8), and Nagasaki (August 9), the emperor intervened to break a deadlock within the government and decide that Japan must surrender in the early

hours of August 10. The Japanese Foreign Ministry dispatched a message to the United States that day stating that Japan would accept the Potsdam Declaration, "with the understanding that the said declaration does not comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler." This was not, as critics later asserted, merely a humble request that the emperor retain a modest figurehead role. As Japanese historians writing decades after the war emphasized, the demand that there be no compromise of the "prerogatives of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler" as a precondition for the surrender was a demand that the United States grant the emperor veto power over occupation reforms and continue the rule of the old order in Japan. Fortunately, Japan specialists in the State Department immediately realized the actual purpose of this language and briefed Secretary of State James Byrnes, who insisted properly that this maneuver must be defeated. The maneuver further underscores the fact that right to the very end, the Japanese pursued twin goals: not only the preservation of the imperial system, but also preservation of the old order in Japan that had launched a war of aggression that killed 17 million.

"This brings us to another aspect of history that now very belatedly has entered the controversy. Several American historians led by Robert Newman have insisted vigorously that any assessment of the end of the Pacific war must include the horrifying consequences of each continued day of the war for the Asian populations trapped within Japan's conquests. Newman calculates that between a quarter million and 400,000 Asians, overwhelmingly noncombatants, were dying each month the war continued. Newman et al. challenge whether an assessment of Truman's decision can highlight only the deaths of noncombatant civilians in the aggressor nation while ignoring much larger death tolls among noncombatant civilians in the victim nations.

"There are a good many more points that now extend our understanding beyond the debates of 1995. But it is clear that all three of the critics' central premises are wrong. The Japanese did not see their situation as catastrophically hopeless. They were not seeking to surrender, but pursuing a negotiated end to the war that preserved the old order in Japan, not just a figurehead emperor. Finally, thanks to radio intelligence, American leaders, far from knowing that peace was at hand, understood—as one analytical piece in the "Magic" Far East Summary stated in July 1945, after a review of both the military and diplomatic intercepts—that "until the Japanese leaders realize that an invasion can not be repelled, there is little likelihood that they will accept any peace terms satisfactory to the Allies." This cannot be improved upon as a succinct and accurate summary of the military and diplomatic realities of the summer of 1945.

The displacement of the so-called traditionalist view within important segments of American opinion took several decades to accomplish. It will take a similar span of time to displace the critical orthodoxy that arose in the 1960s and prevailed roughly through the 1980s, and replace it with a richer appreciation for the realities of 1945. But the clock is ticking."

Richard B. Frank, a historian of World War II, is the author of "Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire."

Okay, that's it. For this rapidly aging signalman 3/c, I'm damn glad they dropped the A-bomb. At the time, all I knew about the

Hiroshima bomb was that the Air Force had dropped a BIG bomb on some Japanese city I couldn't pronounce, and a few days later the Japanese surrendered.

CAESAR DI SANTO

George Styles writes that our shipmate Caesar Di Santo is now in a nursing home and asks that our readers send him a card or a note. George says, "I have been to see him. He is treated well and seems to be as happy as one can be in a nursing home." Caesar's address is Caesar Di Santo, Smithtown Health Care Facility, 391 North Country Road, Smithtown, NY 11787.

2005 MINI-REUNION

George Styles also reports "The 2005 Mini-Reunion in New Jersey was good. The people who were there are Tricaricos, Valentines, Styles, Mortons, Sutters, Higgins, Medvedeffs, Bermans, and Gilbert. We also had Larry's Irish friends, Feeney, Murphy, Quigley, Sullivans, O'Briens and Bob and Flo Van Winkle. A great time was had by all."

HELOISE HOTARD

Lou Gilbert advises that Heloise Hotard, wife of Sidney Hotard, died recently in Louisiana. Sidney Hotard can be reached at 379 Maryland Avenue, Port Allen, LA 70767 or by phone at (225) 344-8294.

FRED L. PEABODY RECALLS

Here is an update from Fred L. Peabody regarding his brief and involuntary absence from his battle station.

"We were on patrol in the Western Mediterranean area taking over for the Scott and a Polish can that had recently been hit by torpedoes. During our patrol, we had an oil spill casualty in # 1 fire room. That used up all the cleaning rags. I volunteered to get some more rags from the engineer's spare parts locker. The locker was under the carpenter's shop, through a bolt-down hatch. While getting supplies I had to lie on the top of spare part boxes, reach in a corner, and push the rags behind me to the hatch area. I was so busy that I didn't hear the GQ sound or the hatch being dogged down by someone.

"As I lied there, I began bouncing up and down between the deck overhead and the boxes as 600 pound depth charges rolled off and exploded.

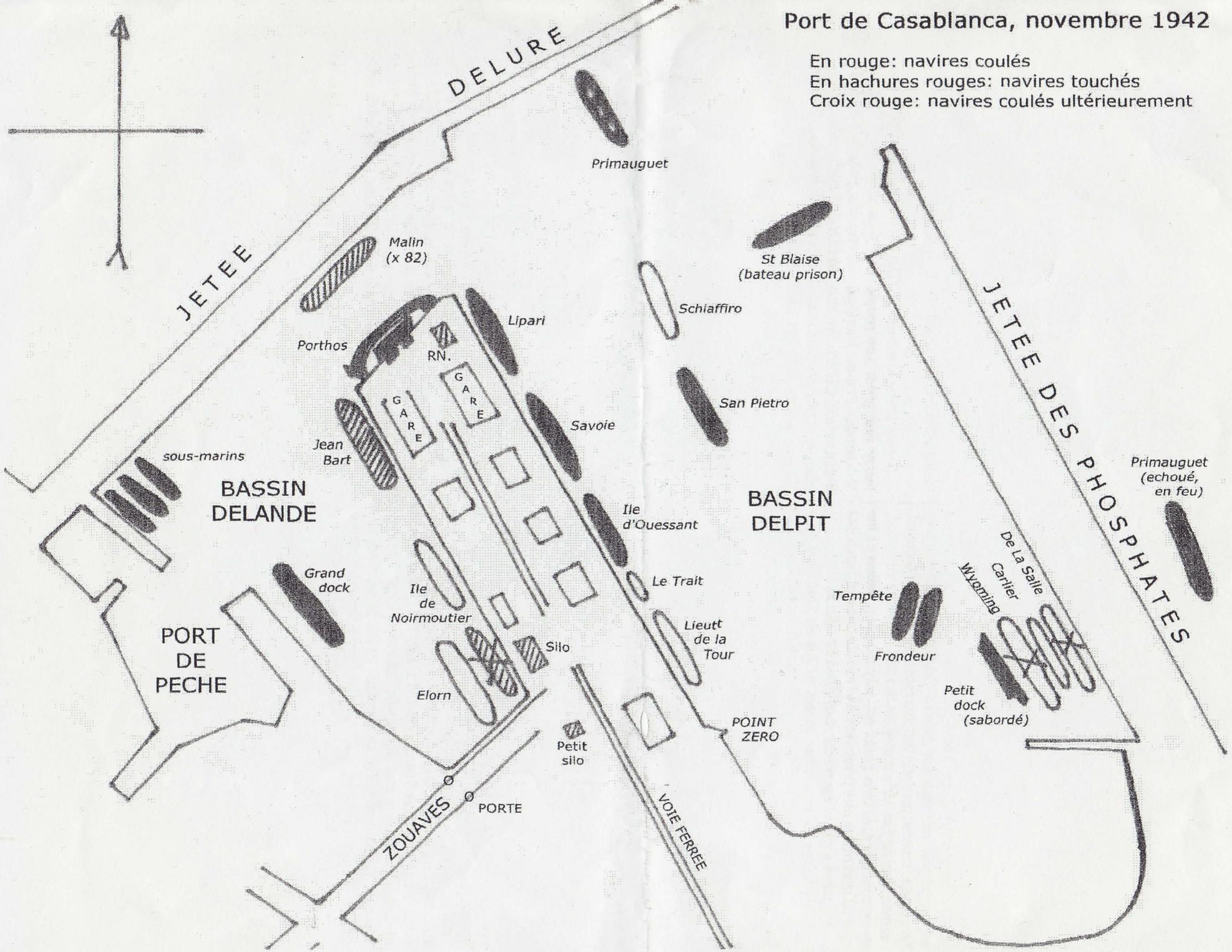
Then, during the lull, I heard the PA system calling me because I was not at my GQ station. Thank God Louie Gilbert remembered where I had gone. He came through about 10 watertight hatches and doors to get me out. Thank you Louie!"

EUGENE LA GALL DIARY

From the Fall 2000 issue of the Seaweed we reported that, "Eugene La Gall served as Third Lieutenant aboard the SS

Port de Casablanca, novembre 1942

En rouge: navires coulés
En hachures rouges: navires touchés
Croix rouge: navires coulés ultérieurement



Wyoming, a merchantman assigned the tail position in the starboard column of convoy UGS-6, which departed New York March 4, 1943, was torpedoed with all survivors rescued by USS Champlin. Eugene La Gall's, daughter, Anne La Gall, is in possession of her father's wartime diary from which the details of the Fall 2000 issue were taken. The following data comes from that same diary and covers events prior to the sinking of the SS Wyoming. Please keep in mind that the diary was written in French. My skill with that language is largely limited to oui, non and adieu. The translation from French to English was handled by long-time friend, Jody Warner Farnsworth, who is highly skilled in French to English translation, but is almost totally alien to the nautical terms contained in the diary. Therefore, I am certain that the original would read a great deal more smoothly to a French person than it will to you. Be patient with our efforts. By the way, a big thanks to Fred L. Peabody for reminding me of this story. In a phone conversation a few months ago, he mentioned the 'Jean Bart', and that triggered my recollection of this article 'saved for future use'.

This portion of La Gall's diary deals with his experiences during the battle of Casablanca and was entitled "The Odyssey of a torpedoed transport ship from November 1 through December 22, 1942. I hope to be able to include Eugene La Gall's map of Casablanca in this mailing to assist you in understanding the places/ships mentioned. Here we go:

"So it is that all the sacrifice have been in vain, Hundreds of dead, an entire flotilla wiped out, ports seriously damaged, all this to wind up with a last about-face. Once again France was going to be actively engaged in a conflict. No one however, asked us or opinion! There was just a small note from the admiral at Casablanca which gave an idea of the sudden change and it made us smile.

"In substance, this is what the little note said: 'The Allied forces will enter the port today. We beg you to observe a benevolent neutrality.'

"One must recognize that the Americans did a remarkable job. Even at Casablanca the bombardment had been centered on the port. In fact, they only had one goal, to neutralize the 'Jean Bart'. It wasn't their fault that this ship was surrounded by harmless merchants ships. On the other hand, one knows that the firing of big guns is not precise, so it takes numerous salvos to obtain the results.

"The city itself did not suffer. Only one 406 got lost in the basement of the Justin Restaurant, on the Boulevard de la Gare. It did not explode and there weren't any victims. Beside, it stayed there a long time and didn't prevent customers from coming there to eat.

"On this subject, it is noted that many of the American large caliber shells did not explode. At the port many were found lying on the quay. One of them, after passing through the big silo, came to rest at the foot of the small silo. That one also stayed there a long time and everyone passed by it on the way to the city without paying it any attention.

"In particular, on the 'Jean Bart', one found nine unexploded 406s. The Yankees couldn't believe their eyes. This opened new horizons on certain of their failures during the naval battles with the Japanese in the Solomon Islands. Defect or sabotage?

"The only consolation concerning the affair of November 8th is that the Wyoming, as well as several other ships untouched by the

bombardment, had not been scuttled as happened in other ports. Kenitra amongst them. There certainly existed orders of this kind, but the order to sabotage did not come. Should it have been executed? That's another story. Personally, I don't believe it.

"The evening of the eleventh, the American squadron entered Casablanca, and following her came the big transport ships of troops and materiel. The Commercial Pier was unusable, the wharf's were now only a series of chutes, with enormous gaping holes or hanging railroad rails. The most important traffic concentrated on the Pier de Phosphates, still intact.

"Near us, two destroyers were moored together. The one on the outside had a large rip in the hull, no doubt due to a torpedo, probably German. I was surprised to see that they were very much like our 'Indomptable'. Besides it is one of these ships which must have picked me up with all the crew of the 'Wyoming', four months later.

"The unloading began immediately, feverishly. War materiel, destined for Tunisia, trucks, airplanes, munitions, all this flew in the air at an infernal pace. Once in a while, a plank fell in the water, but no one bothered to retrieve it.

"Several days later, the American officers came on board to take note of the condition of the ship and its possibilities. Starting the next day, teams of painters began their work, and the ship soon disappeared under a uniform coat of grey.

"By the end of November we had some somber news; that of the scuttling of the French fleet in Toulon. The brave 'Indomptable' had finished her career as the man-made loading bridge of the Noel wharf.

"By the beginning of December, we began to load the ship. Oh, a modest load, because the cargo was rare. The holds were loaded with cork and in the deep-tank of Hold # 3, were barrels of wine, so we thought our destination was Fort de France (Martinique). Toward the 20th, the 'Wyoming' left the post that she had occupied for such a long time and maneuvered herself at the Delure jetty. At this sign we knew that the departure was near and that we would take part in the next convoy. Actually an American officer came on board; Reserve Ensign Larson. With him was a radioman, Weber; a helmsman, Murph O'Bryan, an Irishman from Bayonne, New Jersey with the most impossible American accent, worse than that of the Texan.

"At the same time a crew from the AMBC (Armement Militaire des Batiments de Commerce) including about ten sailors, joined us under the direction of my friend Giraud, Active Ensign, whom I knew on the 'Bretagne'. He was on the 'Fougueux' when the torpedo boat sank in front of Casablanca on November 8th; he spent several hours in the water before being picked up.

"Thus we approach the date of December 22nd, the first two days of the crossing. That day at noon, the 'Wyoming' got under way and following her about forty ships which formed the convoy. Slowly, the ships took on the formation of departure, one after the other, in order to pass the fire curtain. As soon as we reached the ocean, we took on the formation of the sea, in line abreast. There were about ten columns with an average of 4 ships per column. We were in the 4th column, the 3rd ship of this column. We were therefore number 43. The head of our column was a small steamer. In front of us was a heavy cargo ship carrying the most

common material. Finally, behind us came a beautiful Norwegian oil tanker named 'Harald Brovig', like the 'Rousillon.

"The first days were favored by beautiful weather. The route taken seemed to confirm our destination to be the Antilles (Caribbean), passing between Madeira and the Canary Islands, course to the west southwest. However, passing the Canary Islands, we put the bow to the west toward Cape Hatteras.

"The great worry of the Commodores was the smoke. Smoke permits submarines to detect the convoys from a distance of 60 to 80 miles. They were constantly issuing us orders because we had terrible fuel oil. We were in danger of revealing ourselves! We ended up by burning the worst fuel oil at night.

"To sum up, this crossing appeared to be a bit like a cruise, and we began to forget about the submarines which roamed the Atlantic in wait for prey at this time."

SEAWEED WORLD HEADQUARTERS MOVES

Well, that about winds things up. The Seaweed World Headquarters moves from 626 East Bluff Drive, Penn Yan, NY to 45 Oak Avenue, Smithtown, NY 11787-3513

Thanks to all of you for all of your help over the past several years, especially those who contributed their stories for publication.

Finally, Cruthers, this one's for you.. Sorry you couldn't hang around long enough to read it. You were the Best Man at our wedding and, in any crowd, anywhere, you were always the best man there. Wadda guy. We will all miss you. . . a lot!