

# USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION SUMMER 2010 NEWSLETTER

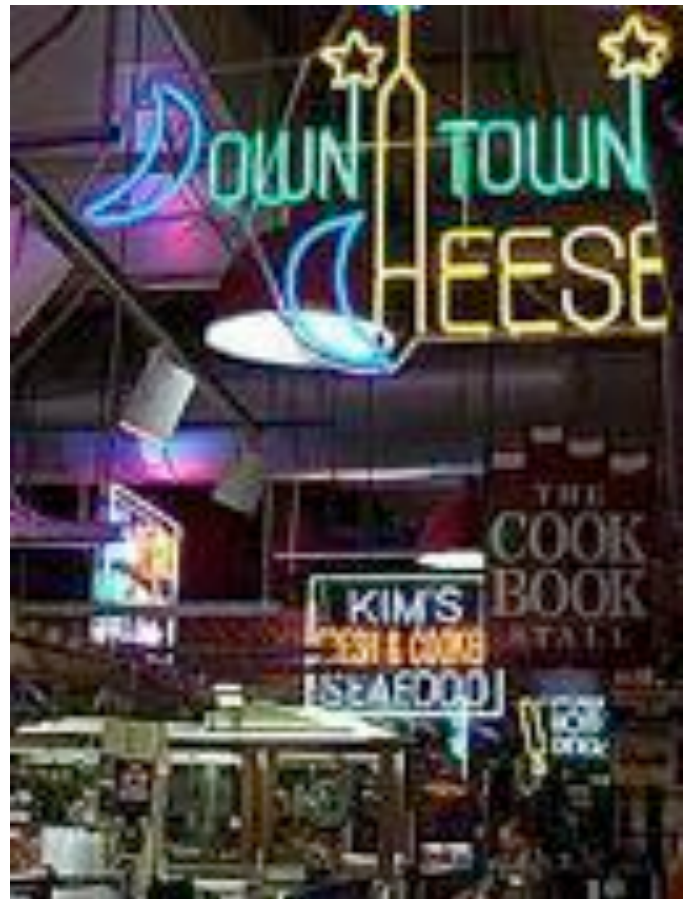
Reunion in Philadelphia

7 - 10 October 2010

**Betsy Ross House**



**Neon Signs, Reading Terminal Market**



Geno's Steaks is a Philadelphia restaurant specializing in cheesesteaks, founded in 1966 by Joe Vento. Geno's is located in the South Philadelphia neighborhood at the intersection of 9th Street and Passyunk Avenue, directly across the street from rival Pat's King of Steaks, which claims to have invented the steak sandwich in 1933. The cheesesteak has become a signature dish for the city of Philadelphia.

1219 South 9th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19147-5005  
(215) 389-0659

# SAILING

## **Bristol Shipmates:**

### **Important Info regarding our Philadelphia reunion. Please read.**

The following information details facts you might need to know about the 2010 Bristol Reunion in Philadelphia, October 7-10, 2010.

### **Our hotel is:**

**Crowne Plaza Hotel,  
Philadelphia West**  
4010 City Ave  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19131

Front Desk 215 477 0200

[http://www.ichotelsgroup.com/h/d/cp/1/en/hotel/phlci?  
rpb=hotel&crUrl=/h/d/6c/1/en/  
hotelsearchresults](http://www.ichotelsgroup.com/h/d/cp/1/en/hotel/phlci?rpb=hotel&crUrl=/h/d/6c/1/en/hotelsearchresults)

[http://www.ichotelsgroup.com/h/d/cp/1/en/hotel/PHLCI/  
transportation?  
start=1&rpb=hotel&crUrl=/h/d/6c/  
1/en/hotelsearchresults](http://www.ichotelsgroup.com/h/d/cp/1/en/hotel/PHLCI/transportation?start=1&rpb=hotel&crUrl=/h/d/6c/1/en/hotelsearchresults)

**\*\*\*\*\*The original Brat Informational Mailing showed the hotel address as 4100 Presidential Blvd.**

**\*\*\*\*\*USPS changed their address to 4010 City Ave. Same hotel, location, Zip Code, telephone, etc.**

## **Philadelphia Airport:**

[http://www.phl.org/pdf/PHL  
%20Flight%20Guide-SP10.pdf](http://www.phl.org/pdf/PHL%20Flight%20Guide-SP10.pdf)

[http://www.phl.org/  
terminal\\_map.html](http://www.phl.org/terminal_map.html)

[http://www.phl.org/pdf/PHL-  
map.pdf](http://www.phl.org/pdf/PHL-map.pdf)  
[http://www.phl.org/  
ground\\_transportation.html](http://www.phl.org/ground_transportation.html)

**Go to the following links for Philadelphia Area Information (see the link for FREE TRAVEL for Seniors)**

<http://visitpa.com/index.aspx>  
800 847 4872

<http://www.visitphilly.com/>  
<http://www.uwishunu.com/>  
<http://www.foreverindependent.org/>

[http://www.navyyard.org/visitor-  
information](http://www.navyyard.org/visitor-information)

[http://www.navyyard.org/uploads/  
files/content/  
Navy\\_Yard\\_Walking\\_Tour.pdf](http://www.navyyard.org/uploads/files/content/Navy_Yard_Walking_Tour.pdf)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/  
Philadelphia\\_Naval\\_Shipyard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philadelphia_Naval_Shipyard)

[http://www.destroyerhistory.org/  
destroyers/philadelphiany.html](http://www.destroyerhistory.org/destroyers/philadelphiany.html)

[http://philadelphia.citysearch.com/  
profile/map/41791853/  
philadelphia\\_pa/  
philadelphia\\_naval\\_yard.html](http://philadelphia.citysearch.com/profile/map/41791853/philadelphia_pa/philadelphia_naval_yard.html)

[http://www.battleshipnewjersey.org/  
visit/](http://www.battleshipnewjersey.org/visit/)

## **Senior Citizens Travel Free**

[http://www.septa.org/maps/system/  
http://www.septa.org/fares/  
discount/senior.html](http://www.septa.org/maps/system/)

The number 44 Bus runs from the Reunion Hotel Area to downtown Philly and is free to Seniors, Medicare Card accepted for ID. I sent for a system map and schedules and will have same on hand at the reunion.

## **Restaurants:**

[http://www.philadelphia.com/  
restaurants/](http://www.philadelphia.com/restaurants/)  
<http://philadelphia.menupages.com/>

Hope to see you in Philly in October

Marty Walsh  
Bristol Secretary

# USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION

## Highlighting Medal Of Honor Awardees



Ballard was born in [Kansas City, Missouri](#) and it was there that he enlisted in the United States Navy. Sent to Vietnam, Ballard served as a corpsman in the [Quang Tri](#) province with Company M, [3rd Battalion, 4th Marines](#) (Mike 3/4) of the [3rd Marine Division](#). On May 16, 1968, Ballard treated two Marines suffering from heat exhaustion, and when returning to his unit from the casualty evacuation helicopter pad he and his company were attacked by the [North Vietnamese Army](#). While under fire, Ballard directed aid to other wounded [US Marines](#) and when a grenade landed nearby, he lay on top of it to protect the wounded. The grenade failed to explode and Ballard was able to throw it away to explode harmlessly, and then continue to treat the wounded. For his actions, he received the United States of America's highest award, the [Medal of Honor](#). In 1970, Ballard received the Navy Medal of Honor from President [Richard M. Nixon](#) and [General Westmoreland](#). He then left the United States Navy and enlisted in Army officer candidate school. Westmoreland offered Ballard a direct commission, however Ballard turned it down for personal reasons. Ballard later joined the Kansas National Guard, and served as an ambulance platoon leader, company commander, and was tasked with creating the new 'Medical Detachment 5', a unit which performs medicals on Guard members in order to save the cost of contracting outside medical help, and of which he was the first member and commander.

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, March 3, 1863 has awarded in the name of the Congress the Medal of Honor to:

**HOSPITAL CORPSMAN SECOND CLASS U.S. NAVY  
DONALD E. BALLARD  
COMPANY M, 3<sup>RD</sup> BATTALION, 4<sup>TH</sup> MARINE REGIMENT,  
3<sup>RD</sup> MARINE DIVISION**

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life and beyond the call of duty while serving as a HC2c. with Company M, in connection with operations against enemy aggressor forces. During the afternoon hours, Company M was moving to join the remainder of the 3d Battalion in Quang Tri Province. After treating and evacuating 2 heat casualties, HC2c. Ballard was returning to his platoon from the evacuation landing zone when the company was ambushed by a North Vietnamese Army unit employing automatic weapons and mortars, and sustained numerous casualties. Observing a wounded marine, HC2c. Ballard unhesitatingly moved across the fire swept terrain to the injured man and swiftly rendered medical assistance to his comrade. HC2c. Ballard then directed 4 marines to carry the casualty to a position of relative safety. As the 4 men prepared to move the wounded marine, an enemy soldier suddenly left his concealed position and, after hurling a hand grenade which landed near the casualty, commenced firing upon the small group of men. Instantly shouting a warning to the marines, HC2c. Ballard fearlessly threw himself upon the lethal explosive device to protect his comrades from the deadly blast. When the grenade failed to detonate, he calmly arose from his dangerous position and resolutely continued his determined efforts in treating other marine casualties. HC2c. Ballard's heroic actions and selfless concern for the welfare of his companions served to inspire all who observed him and prevented possible injury or death to his fellow marines. His courage, daring initiative, and unwavering devotion to duty in the face of extreme personal danger, sustain and enhance the finest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service.

On April 5, 1998, Ballard was promoted to colonel by [Major General](#) James F. Reuger and served as Special Assistant to the Adjutant General until his retirement in 2000. Inducted into the National Guard Hall of Fame in November 2001, Ballard is the only living Kansas Guardsman to have received the Medal of Honor. He is also the subject of a memorial statue at the National Medical War Memorial in Kansas City, depicting Ballard during the action for which he received the Medal of Honor.

# USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION

## **“Doc” Aulls Reflections**

### **MY INTRODUCTION TO USS BRISTOL**

I was having a great day in the fine city of Charleston, South Carolina. I was assigned to the USS OBSERVER (MSO 461), an ocean going minesweeper as the medical department representative, also known as the “Doc”. Our crew of 65 had just returned from a 5 month Caribbean tour, which included a stop in Jamaica and several stops at GITMO. It was a beautiful September day with the anticipation of the birth of our first child. At five o’clock in the morning of September 1965, our daughter, Mary Frances was born at the Naval Hospital in Charleston and life was great.

I arrived that morning on the Observer with the news of the birth which resulted in the usual handshakes and congratulatory mentions. Word came down from the bridge that the Executive Officer wanted to see me and I figured he too wanted to offer his congratulations. “Doc, we have just received this message that you are to report aboard the USS BRISTOL (DD 857) at the Brooklyn Navy Yard in two weeks”. What a shock and comedown from my high of the birth of our daughter. In those days, women who gave birth were not allowed to travel for at least a couple of weeks. I explained the dilemma to the XO and he understood but he completed the rest of his message which stated the USS Bristol could not get underway with out my presence. That was ego-inflating, but what about my family? Through a phone call to Washington, the XO was able to get one more week out of the Navy detailer but the drop dead date of a Sunday in three weeks was final.

It was two weeks after our daughter’s birth when we moved from Charleston. Until I could find a place in the New York City area, I left my wife and daughter with my in-laws in upstate New York, Hornell to be exact. So, on the Sunday I was to be at the Bristol, I arrived about mid-day at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. It was hard to believe that anything was there. It was so barren and empty. But there she was, the USS Bristol. As I walked up the gangway, asked for permission to come aboard and stood on that quarterdeck, I knew I would have a great tour of duty. The crew was overwhelming cordial and helpful. I found the sickbay, my bunk, and the mess hall and that’s all I needed. We left Brooklyn for a two week cruise that evening for an unknown port or maybe just out to steam, which we were known to do. I spent the next year and a half on the Bristol and it was one of my more rewarding duties.

John G. Aulls, HM1  
USS Bristol, 9/65 to 5/67

## **WELCOME ABOARD**

By David Lincoln

My only regret joining the Bristol in June 1955, was that she had just returned from Korea ..I would have extended just to have been an active participant in that mission.

My reflections on the Skipper, Cdr Charlie Darrah, are limited in that he was relieved in late June, but he must have been effective, as “857” acquitted herself well with fire support off the Korean coast. ( In the two weeks before he left I didn’t spot a smile.. but then I wasn’t anxious to show my r/a face around the Skipper.

He must have been happy to leave, as the six senior Lieutenants who had been called back to active duty, were itching to muster out as soon as possible ..leaving behind a totally inexperienced, newly commissioned covey of Ensigns.

Lt. Jim Byrne, one of the call-backs, and Gunnery Officer, was lucky enough to get me in his department, having been previously blessed with one Art Coe ..king of the comshaw artists and First Lieutenant.

Refit in the Boston Navy Yard is not the most dynamic afloat assignments for a raw ensign, but there were some interesting moments.

Lt. Muldoon, Ops Officer, requested my assistance the second week aboard. “Mr Lincoln, go to the Gunnery Office and draw a .45, ammo, belt and holster”. “Meet me on the quarterdeck at 1130 hours”. “Now” he said as we met. “Let’s go up to the radio shack and get the crypto wheels, they need to go over to the Fargo Building into a secure space there.” So Muldoon and I lug the boxes out to the pier-side jeep he had requisitioned, and off we go... sunny day, temps in the 70’s !!

Proceeding to Scollay Square, Muldoon pulls over in front of the Old Union Oyster House, parks the jeep by a hydrant and says, “Let’s have a beer and some oysters !” (Crypto wheels ‘secure ‘ in the back seat)

“Well” , I sez to meself , “ I’m going to enjoy the Navy life !!”

**Editor’s note:** Dave Lincoln later served as Weapons Officer fondly known in the wardroom as “Guns”.

## **Beware of Phone Scam Week of April 19, 2010**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is warning veterans not to give credit card numbers, bank routing information or any personal and financial information over the phone to callers claiming to update, confirm, or verify VA-related information. VA does not call veterans and ask them to disclose personal financial information over the phone. A veteran targeted by scammers alerted VA, saying that someone called claiming to be with the VA pharmacy and asking a lot of questions. VA has not changed its process for dispensing prescriptions or for enrollment. Veterans with questions about VA services should call (877) 222-8387 or the nearest VA medical center.

# USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION

Chuck Corbin, FT2, USS Knapp DD 653 sent me these photos of hurricanes or in his case, typhoons. These are part of a Powerpoint presentation. Do you see that the "Deck Apes" dismantled the life line stanchions? Chuck told me that he hit a typhoon leaving Midway on their way to Sasebo, Japan, and lost all of the life lines.



**Does anyone have any photos from the hurricane that we survived in 1965 on our way to San Juan, Puerto Rico? See the photos that I took after our encounter with a hurricane in 1965. The "Snipes" were pretty busy cleaning out the boilers after that storm.**

Dick Szulczewski (RIP) submitted the newspaper clipping below. I guess the Skippers of the DesDiv 122 had to haul down the Dixie flag or kiss their naval careers goodbye. For you new members, Dick Szulczewski (Bristol Ski) was our Treasurer Emeritus until his untimely death a few years ago.

## NAVY HAULS DOWN DIXIE SHIP FLAGS

NEWPORT, R. I. (AP)—The Navy has ordered the Destroyer Division 122—known as the Dixie Division because all its skippers come from the South — to cease flying the Confederate flag.

Charles E. Crocker, retired investment broker who had written Navy Secretary Kimball suggesting some disciplinary action, said he had been advised instructions had been issued the division commander to discontinue the display of unauthorized flags.

Crocker said he read a story saying the division displayed the Confederate flag in Hong Kong. His letter of complaint said:

"I can imagine the feeling of the northerners and really patri-

otic members of the crew of the ships involved."

He received a reply today from Captain R. S. Benson who said:

"On checking we discovered that as all our commanding officers of the division were born in the South the division became known informally as the Dixie division. On departing from Hong Kong two of the ships displayed small southern flags at signal halyards. Each destroyer of course flew the national ensign at the gaff, the regularly assigned display vantage point where all men-of-war show their national colors. Instructions have been issued to the division commander

to discontinue the display of unauthorized flags."

The destroyers involved are due back at Newport, April 30. They are the Bristol, Beattie, Purdy and Hyman.

Captain William Groverman of Covington, Ky., commands the division. His flagship is the Hyman of which Com. J. C. Spitzer of Lufkin, Tex., is the skipper.

Com. James P. Coleman of Columbus, S. C., commands the Purdy. Com. Meane Johnston, Jr., of Greenwood, Miss., commands the Beattie and Lt. Com. Charles A. Darrar of Decatur, Ala., the Bristol.

# USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION



Photo left: Taken the morning after our night surviving a hurricane on our way to San Juan, Puerto Rico. The 26' motor whaleboat had been ripped from the davits and crashed into the aluminum deck house. Water poured into the little space that was the post office.

The Snipes had an even harder job. We lost a couple of boilers due to infiltration of salt water coming down the stacks. Members of the crew had to bail water out of the Chief Petty Officers berthing space into the Chief's head. Sea water flooded in from Mount 51.

Once we arrived in San Juan, the Captain ordered a complete zone inspection to make sure that there was no hidden damage. All of the lower storerooms were dry. Thank God!



Photo above: The fort San Felipe del Morro  
Photo left: Taken at the entrance to port at San Juan, Puerto Rico. A steamer partially sunk on the breakwater at the entrance to San Juan Harbor. I took the photos on this page with a Kodak Instamatic 110 camera.

Our Captain, Cdr William S Butler, had the Fire Control Director team (Pointer, Trainer, and, Radar Operator) man the Fire Control Director during the Special Sea and Anchoring Detail to "shoot" ranges to specific "targets" while entering or leaving port.

When I took this photo, Bristol was departing San Juan Harbor, and just to our starboard is the famous El Morro Castle (Castillo del Morro). I visited San Juan again with my wife in February 2008. Anne and I traversed every street (including Luna St). There were no bars or brothels. There were quaint restaurants with open air interior courtyards. You would not recognize it today. It's simply beautiful these days. The government there had the old city refurbished to look like it did over 500 years ago.

# USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION



Photo left: Bristol at anchor, Hiroshima, Japan, 1945 submitted by John Duncan. Below: Lt (jg) John Duncan in Hiroshima, Japan 1945.



Photo left: November 30, 1945, Kure, Japan: Ed Cundiff, W.D. Clarke, O.G. Brown, Walter Brozynski, Leon (Pee Wee) Dantzler, Oresta Celorie, Mel Hess (from Mel Hess)

Photo below: March 1947, chipping paint while on fleet maneuvers.



Photo left: Nemo, Allen, Celorie, Kisselburgh, Kenny, Fischer Oct. 1945 (from Leland Phillips)



Photo left: Tony Molnar, Willie Saunders, & Howard Walker from Tony Molnar

# USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION

## Open letter to the USS Bristol Shipmates

As almost all of you know, I have been dealing with a very serious vision problem since June 2009. As of today, the Doctor says that I am holding my own, but anytime I could lose my vision. To be very honest with you, that is a bad feeling to have every day of my life. I pray every day that if it is God's will, He will allow me to retain the vision that I now have. I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to all of you wonderful shipmates and friends. Many of you have e-mailed me, sent cards, notes, and made telephone calls to me. You have shared your concern for me. I do not have the words to express how deeply that has touched my heart.

Hoagie and I are dealing with this problem in the best way that we know how to do so. We know that many of you have said prayers for us, and we thank you so much for your kindness.

The Bristol People are so very special. Thank you so much for caring about us. We ask that you will continue to keep us in your prayers.

May God bless each of you.

Shirley Clark  
USS Bristol Historian

## USS BRISTOL DD 857 Visit to Denmark, May 1960

### Newspaper stuff thanks to Paul (Alby) Kallfelz, RDSN, '58-'60



How did that cook get into this picture?

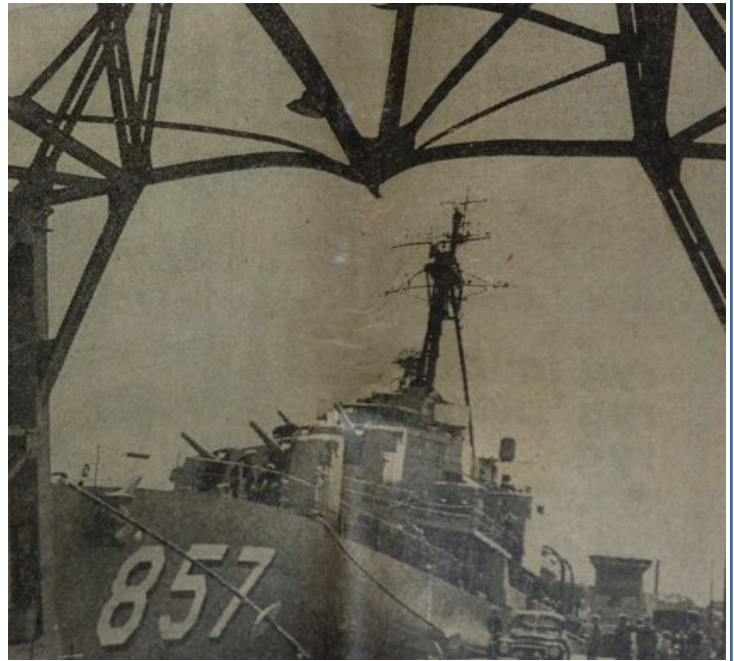


Photo above: USS Salvager ARSD-3, USS Constitution IX-21, Bunker Hill Monument, USS Bristol DD-857 BNSY Charlestown MA Aug 1961

# USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION



We had a RM2 who looked a little like this guy.



**MILITARY HISTORY:** Joshua Williams was the first African-American Veteran ever admitted to the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, which is now the Dayton, Ohio, VA Medical Center. Joshua Williams was admitted to the home in March of 1867. He lived out the remainder of his life—three more years—there. The cemetery where Joshua Williams lies is now known as the Dayton National Cemetery. Abraham Lincoln authorized the creation of National Homes to care for disabled, injured, and sick soldiers who fought to preserve the union, including those who served with U.S. Colored Troop (USCT) regiments. The National Homes was the precursor to today's Department of Veterans Affairs, with 153 medical centers and nearly 300,000 employees who care for all Veterans. Joshua Williams served as a private for the Union forces in the Civil War and received a serious leg wound. His military service records described him as 6 feet 1 inches tall, "copper" complexion, brown eyes, and curly hair. By 1869, his wound affected the entire left side of his body and doctors at the National Home classified him as totally disabled for pension purposes—which was \$8.00 per month. Approximately 180,000 African Americans served as volunteer soldiers in 163 US Colored Troops units, comprising roughly 10% of the Union Army during the Civil War. Of the 198,000 African Americans that served in the Union forces, 36,847 died. Approximately 21,000 Union veterans were admitted to four 'homes' between 1866 and 1881, and of that number, 195 were US 'Colored' Troops. [Source: Military.com 22 Feb 2010 ++]



# USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## Why "Get Into" MOVE!

If you are overweight or obese you are at increased risk for a number of health conditions including heart disease, diabetes, some cancers, sleep apnea and gallstones. The best way to manage your weight is to keep a balance between what you eat and drink and how active you are.

The MOVE! Program has been tailored to meet the individual needs of each veteran. MOVE! provides guidance on nutrition and physical activity and allows you to set the pace through goal setting and a stepped level approach. Your MOVE! healthcare team at your local VA medical center will provide you with lots of support and follow-up.

### The Basics of Weight Control

Your weight is controlled by a number of things, including family history, what you eat and drink (energy intake), and the energy you use to live and be active (energy output).

To lose weight you need to:

- Eat and drink fewer calories
- Become more physically active
- For best results, do both

The food you eat and the beverages you drink provide energy and nutrients. The basic required nutrients are: water, carbohydrate, protein, fat, dietary fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Three of these nutrients (carbohydrate, protein and fat) along with alcohol provide energy in the form of calories.

When you take in more calories than you use, you gain weight.

Most of the calories you do not use are stored as body fat. This is true regardless of whether this energy came from fat, carbohydrate, protein or alcohol. You can use more calories by being more active.

You can manage your weight by keeping a balance between what you eat and drink and how active you are.

**M O V E** (Motivating Obese Veterans Everywhere) is a national weight management program designed by the [VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention \(NCP\)](#), a part of the Office of Patient Care Services, to help veterans lose weight, keep it off and improve their health.

### Set Your Weight Loss Goals

Putting goals on paper helps keep you on track. You can revise or add to your goals at any time.

1. Set a goal for weight loss.  
Start with a goal of no more than 10% of your current weight.

I currently weigh \_\_\_\_\_ pounds. My initial goal is to lose \_\_\_\_\_ pounds.  
Example: If you weigh 250 pounds, your goal might be to lose 25 pounds, or you could decide to make 10 pound goals. When you lose 10 pounds, set a new 10 pound goal. Choose a realistic, achievable goal.

2. Decide on 1 or 2 food/beverage choice changes.  
What can you do to take in fewer calories and less fat? Example: "I will have low-fat milk with my cereal every day this week." Write them down:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Decide on 1 or 2 ways to increase your activity level.  
Make them simple and realistic. As your fitness improves, add to these goals. Example: "I will take the stairs to the second floor at work this week." Write them down:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Weigh yourself at least once a week. Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION

Apr 7, 1776:

## U.S. Navy captures first British warship...contributed by Shirley Clark

On this day in 1776, Navy Captain John Barry, commander of the American warship *Lexington*, makes the first American naval capture of a British vessel when he takes command of the British warship HMS *Edward* off the coast of Virginia. The capture of the *Edward* and its cargo turned Captain Barry into a national hero and boosted the morale of the Continental forces.

Barry was born in the seaboard county of Wexford, Ireland, in 1745 and offered his services to the Continental Congress upon the outbreak of the American Revolution. Congress purchased Barry's ship, *Black Prince*, which it renamed *Alfred* and placed under the command of Commodore Esek Hopkins. It was the first ship to fly the American flag, raised by John Paul Jones.

Barry served with distinction throughout the American Revolution. At sea, he had continued success with the *Lexington*. On land, he raised a volunteer force to assist General Washington in the surprisingly successful Trenton, New Jersey, campaign of 1776-77. On May 29, 1781, Barry was wounded while successfully capturing the HMS *Atlanta* and the HMS *Trepassy* while in command of a new ship, *Alliance*. He recovered and successfully concluded the final naval battle of the Revolutionary War with a victory over the HMS *Sybylle* in March 1783.

Barry's outstanding career has been memorialized on both sides of the Atlantic. A bridge bearing his name crosses the Delaware River, and Brooklyn, New York, is home to a park named for him. In addition, four U.S. Navy ships and a building at Villanova University carry his name, and statues in his honor stand in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and his birthplace, Wexford, Ireland. On September 13, 1981, President Ronald Reagan declared "Commodore John Barry Day" to honor a man he called "one of the earliest and greatest American patriots, a man of great insight who perceived very early the need for American power on the sea."

Go Big Blue!



Heavy weather in the North Atlantic.



Preparing for an underway replenishment evolution.

# USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION

## **Doug Hegdahl was interviewed as part of a show on POWs on the Discovery or Military Channel**

“THE INCREDIBLY STUPID ONE”

(SEAMAN HEGDAHL, USS CANBERRA – PRISONER OF WAR)

By Dick “Beak” Stratton, Captain, USN (Ret.)

It was a warmer than usual summer day in Clark, South Dakota, when a rather large and ungainly young man, a recent high school graduate, set about finding his way in the world. The salivating Navy recruiter asked the youngster what it would take to have him sign up: “why, I’d like to go to Australia.” It was as good as done. After all, in 1966, if you were lucky enough to ship out on the USS Canberra, more likely than not, during the course of your hitch, there will be a port call to the ship’s namesake—Canberra, Australia.

This young man came from a solid, patriotic Norwegian Lutheran stock who believed that when your country called, you answered. You did not go to the bus station but to the recruiting station. You did not go to Oxford, you went to Vietnam. So Douglas Brent Hegdahl III shipped out to boot camp at San Diego, where he slept through the Code of Conduct lectures since he would not be fighting in the trenches. Lo and behold, he did get orders to the USS Canberra. At that time Canberra, with 8-inch guns mounted on the pointy end and missiles on the round end, was assigned to steam with the Gulf of Tonkin Yacht Club in the South China Sea off the coast of Vietnam. (And, yes, she did have Canberra, Australia, on her Port of Call list.)

Doug’s battle station was the aft ammunition handling room for the 5-inch guns, located aft in the bowels of the ship. One morning he had the 0100 watch while the Canberra was steaming down the coast of North Vietnam firing its 8-inch guns against targets of opportunity (bicycles, water buffalo and occasional trucks) on Highway 1. At about 0330 he rolled out of the rack. Being a prudent farm boy, he locked all his valuables in his locker and then proceeded to go out on deck for a breath of fresh air before manning his battle station.

Now there is a non-repetitive exercise in the surface Navy called “going out on deck when big guns are firing.” If the concussion does not blow you over the side, it will at least blow out your eardrums. But Doug must have slept through that safety lecture. He doesn’t know what happened. Either not being night-adapted, or being without his glasses, or concussion did it, he ended up going arse over teakettle into the South China Sea about three miles offshore with no life preserver, no identification, no nothing. Meanwhile he watched the Love Boat merrily steaming over the horizon, firing at the coastline and never missing him for two days.

There is not much to do in the South China Sea at 0345. He took off his boon dockers and hung them around his neck in case he needed them when he reached shore. He stripped off his dungarees, zipped up the fly, tie off the cuffs and popped them over his head, as he was taught, to make a life preserver. He reports back to you that it doesn’t work. (He missed the part about old dungarees, with holes, out of the Lucky Bag would have to be kept wet if they were to hold any air at all.) So he put on his trousers, socks and shoes. (Sharks? Sea snakes?)

Somewhere along the line he had heard that drowning was a “nice way to die;” so he thought he would try it out. He put his hands over his head and down he went—bloop, bloop, bloop. Now both he and I had heard the myth that when drowning you would get cuddly, warm, all the nice things in your life would flash by in your mind and you would go to your eternal reward to the sound of music (harp?). Doug resurfaced and reports back to us that it is all malarkey: there are no movies, there is no music and it’s colder than Hell!

As dawn came he started swimming away from the sun, hopefully towards shore. He could see the haze of land, but the harder he tried, the further back it receded. So he just rolled on his back, playing like a whale, humming a few tunes and saying a few prayers. Notice he never gave up. How many people have we been exposed to in the course of our lives, in a situation like that would have just plain given up? About 1800 that same day, a Vietnamese fishing boat came by and hauled him out of the water—some twelve hours later.

Even those peasant fishermen could figure out that this moose would never fit in the cockpit of an A4 Skylark. They turned him upside down and inside out which garnered them absolutely nothing. Remember, he had prudently left everything back on the ship in his locker. Picture yourself being tortured to admit you were a CIA agent who entered the water in Coronado, California to swim ten thousand miles across the Pacific to infiltrate their shores!

When the authorities got him ashore, they showed Doug piles of materials allegedly written by Yankee Air Pirates who had been captured before him. (95% of those captured in North Vietnam had been tortured, were not offered the option of death, and were made to give more than Name, Rank, Serial Number and Date of Birth sequence permitted by the Military Code of Conduct and required by International Law.) Doug recognized that something was amiss, but, as he said later, “Geeze, they’re officers, they must know what they are doing.” So he decided his best ploy was to pretend to be stupid. He got them off target by comparing farms in North Vietnam and South Dakota. He didn’t realize that even then the Communists were categorizing him to gauge his usefulness to their cause. His dad had about ten motel units, numberless vehicles and all kinds of land—but no water buffalo. No water buffalo meant in Vietnamese parlance that he was a “poor peasant.” This is just as well, as Communists had murdered over 20 million “rich peasants” in their various revolutions, because those folks are unreconstructed capitalists.

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## USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION

A little miffed at first, Doug caught on right away—he is a quick study—it was to his advantage to play out the poor peasant act to the bitter end. Tired of the verbal jousting, the Communist cadres told him that he would have to write an anti-war statement for them. He joyously agreed. The interrogators were dumbfounded. This was the first Yankee to agree to do anything without being tortured first. They brought out the paper, ink and pens. He admired them all and then stated: “But one small thing, I can’t read or write. I’m a poor peasant.” This was quite credible to the Vietnamese since their poor peasants could neither read nor write. So they assigned a Vietnamese to teach him penmanship, spelling, grammar and sentence structure.

Immediately his learning curve went flat. Eventually, the interrogators gave up in disgust, writing a confession for him and having him sign it in an illegible scrawl. He admitted to the war crime of shelling the presidential birthplace of Ho Chi Minh and signed it as Seaman Apprentice Douglas Brent Hegdahl III, United States Navy Reserve, Commanding Officer, USS Canberra. No one has ever seen this piece of paper.

Doug was shuffled around from pillar to post, since his captors didn’t know where he would fit into their propaganda plans. One mistake they made was to put him in for a while with Joe Crecca, an Air Force officer who had developed a method of creating the most organized memory bank we possessed to record the names of pilots shot down and imprisoned in Vietnam. Joe took this young Seaman and, recognizing the potential, painstakingly taught Doug not only 256 names, but also, the method of memorizing, cross-referencing and retrieving those names. It was no easy task that Joe set for himself for it was not intuitively obvious to Doug the value of such mental gymnastics.

It was a hot summer day when I first met Doug. I was in solitary confinement again. The Communists did not care for me, which was OK because I didn’t like them either. My cell door opened and here was this big moose standing in his skivvie shorts (prison uniform of the day). “My name is Seaman Douglas Brent Hegdahl, Sir. What’s yours?” It is awful hard to look dignified when you are standing in your underwear, knock-kneed, ding-toed, pot-bellied, unwashed and unshaven for 100 days. I automatically recited, “Dick Stratton, Lieutenant Commander, USS Ticonderoga.” Immediately I saw that I probably made a mistake as his eyes rolled back in his head and you could see what he was thinking: “Cripes, another officer!” But notice that instinctively he asked the critical and most important question for survival: “Who is your senior?” The rule we lived by was: “If I am senior, I will take charge; if junior, I will obey.”

The Communists took a siesta for two hours every afternoon which was a good deal for us as we were free from torture and harassment. I was lying on the floor on my bed board and Doug was skipping, yes, skipping around the room. I asked: “Doug, what are you doing?” He paused for a moment, looked me in the eye and cryptically said: “Skipping, Sir” and continued to skip. A stupid question, a stupid answer. After a moment, I again queried: “What ya doin’ that for?” This stopped him for a moment. He paused and cocked his head thoughtfully, smiled and replied: “You got anything better to do, Sir?” I didn’t. He continued skipping. I guess he did learn one thing from boot camp. You can say anything you want to an officer as long as you smile and say “sir.” One siesta period he said: “Hey, Beak, you went to college and studied government; do you know the Gettysburg Address?” We got a brick (no paper or pencils for the criminals) and started to write it out on the tile floor until we got it correct. Then he stopped me with the question: “Can you say it backwards?” Well, who would want to say the Gettysburg Address backwards? Certainly not the Jesuits at Georgetown and especially not me. Doug could say it backwards, verbatim, rapidly. I know because I could track him from the written version we had on the floor. “So what?” you might say. The so what is that when they threw him out of Vietnam, and throw him out they did, he came out with 256 names that Joe Crecca had taught him memorized by service, by rank and alphabetically; next to each name he had a dog’s name, kid’s name or social security number to verify the quality of the name which we had picked up by tap code, deaf spelling code or secret notes. He still has those names memorized today and sings them to the tune of “Old MacDonald Has a Farm.” One of our intelligence officers asked him if he could slow the recitation down to make for easier copying. Doug replied “No” that it was like riding a bike, you had to keep moving or you would fall off. If it weren’t for Joe Crecca, Doug and our government would not have had those names until the end of war five years later.

In trying to get people to accept early propaganda releases, the Communists would have some “good cop” interrogator like the ones we called the “Soft Soap Fairy” talk to the prospect and sound him out for pliability. They got Doug one day and asked what we eventually learned to be the lead question: “What do you want more than anything else in the world?” The answer of the weak and willing was: “To go home to my family.” Doug thought for a long time, then cocked his head with a smile and said “Why, I’d like a pillow, Sir.” This was not an unreasonable response since we had no pillows on our cement pads or bed boards. However, the response sure confounded the enemy. They eventually came up with a name for Doug amongst the guards and interrogators: “The Incredibly Stupid One.” His original resistance ploy had paid off. Because they thought him stupid, they would let him go out in the cell block courtyard during the siesta to sweep up the grounds period monitored by only one sleepy, peasant guard. I thought that was great since it kept him from skipping and I could get some rest. However, curiosity got the better of me and I started to watch him through a peephole we had bored in the cell door. He’d go sweeping and humming until the guard was lulled to sleep.

Then Doug would back up to a truck, spin the gas cap off the standpipe, stoop down and put a small amount (“Small, because it’s going to be a long war, Sir.”) of dirt in the gas tank and replace the cap. I watched him over a period of time do this to five trucks. Now, I’m a liberal arts major who shot himself down, so all I can do is report what I saw. There were five trucks working in the prison; I saw Doug work on five trucks; I saw five trucks towed disabled out of the prison camp. Doug Hegdahl, a high school graduate from the mess decks fell off a ship and has five enemy trucks to his credit. I am a World Famous Golden Dragon (VA 192) with two college degrees, 2000 jet hours, 300 carrier landings and 22 combat missions. How many enemy trucks do I have to my credit? Zero. Zip. Nada. De Rien. 0.

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# USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION

Who's the better man? Douglas Brent Hegdahl, one of two men I know of who destroyed enemy military equipment while a prisoner of war.

Later on, Doug, having left his eyeglasses on board Canberra, discovered that he had difficulty linking up isolated cell blocks throughout the prison compound with his defective distance vision. So he went to the authorities and asked if he could read some of their propaganda. They were delighted. Here was a prisoner, without being tortured, volunteering to read their swill. But then Doug cautioned them with his: "Small thing [They never learn]; I cannot read without glasses." So they trolled out a dime store clerk who fitted him with glasses by trying one on after the other until Doug said he could see. His near vision was OK. Unbeknownst to the clerk, he was fitting Doug for distance vision. Now, in between sweeps and gas tanks he was able to link up cell blocks not only by sweeping in code but now also using the deaf spelling code. The Vietnamese were big on token propaganda releases of prisoners to make various peace groups look good and our government look impotent. They would try to pick people who had not been tortured or in jail long enough to look emaciated. Usually they were volunteers, violators of direct orders from their Seniors and traitors to our cause of resistance. These releases always were of three at a time. The magic of the number three was always a mystery to us. As our leaders exercised greater internal communications and controls, it became harder for the Communists to make up a propaganda release party. Seeking to round out the number they finally turned to "The Incredibly Stupid One" who, although not volunteering, was certainly too dumb to do them any harm. As part of this conditioning they had both Doug and I examined by "the Doctor." This was a female soldier we saw through a peephole we had in the door get briefed up and then dolled up like a physician. The physician made a grand entrance worthy of a world-famous brain surgeon. The effect was somewhat spoiled by the face mask protecting her chin rather than covering her mouth; she really had no ideas what the face mask was for. The exam, after looking in all the holes in your head and listening your heart, consisted of "feeling you up" under the guise of palpating your internal organs while the translator asked, "The Doctor wants to know if you miss your wife (girlfriend)? Wouldn't you like to be with her now?" Then they would pull Doug out for interrogations sounding him out for an early release. They told him not to tell me as I was an officer who did not care about his welfare like they did. They informed him: "Stratton would never even speak to you if you were in America." Doug would come back from each go around and immediately tell me everything that was said. One time he plaintively asked: "Beak, you'd speak to me if we're home now, wouldn't you?"

They started to try to fatten us up with large bowls of potatoes laced with canned meat. No one else in the prison was getting it. As a result I told Doug we couldn't take it. We could either not touch it and turn it back in; in which case the guards would eat it. Or we could dump it in the slop bucket so that no one could eat it without getting sick. Doug thought this was a bit on the scrupulous side, but went along with it. I told the Camp Commander that under no condition would I accept an early release even if offered and if they threw me out I'd have to be dragged feet first all the way from Hanoi to Hawaii screaming bloody murder all the way. It was time to cut to the chase. Doug would have to go. Doug did not want to go. We finally told Doug that as long as he did not have to commit treason, he was to permit himself to be thrown out of the country. He was the most junior. He had the names. He knew firsthand the torture stories behind many of the propaganda pictures and news releases. He knew the locations of many of the prisons. It was a direct order; he had no choice. I know, because I personally relayed that order to him as his immediate senior in the chain of command. Well throw him out they did. The 256 names he had memorized contained many names that our government did not have. He ended up being sent to Paris by Ross Perot to confront the North Vietnamese Peace Talk Delegation about the fate of the Missing in Action. He entered the Civil Service and is today a Survival School instructor for the U.S. Navy and the James B. Stockdale Survival, Evasion, Resistance, And Escape Center (SERE), naval Air Station, North Island, Coronado, California. And yes, he can still recite those names! You can watch him do it on the Discovery Channel special on Vietnam POWs—Stories of Survival.

A while after Doug had been released, I was called over to an interrogation. It was to be a Soft Soap Fairy kind of gig since there were quality cigarettes, sugared tea in china cups, cookies and candy laid out on the interrogation table. A dapper, handsome Vietnamese, dressed in an expensive, tailored suit and wearing real, spit-shined wingtip shoes, came into the room with a serious look on his face—all business. "Do you know Douglas Hegdahl?" "You know I do." "Hegdahl says that you were tortured." "This is true." "You lie." Rolling up the sleeves to my striped pajamas (prison mess dress uniform), I pointed to the scars on my wrists and elbows and challenged: "Ask your people how these marks got on my body; they certainly are neither birth defects or the result of an aircraft accident." He examined the scars closely, sat back, stared and stated: "You are indeed the most unfortunate of the unfortunate." With that he left the interrogation leaving me with all the goodies. Upon release I compared notes with Doug and we determined that time frame was the same time he accused the Vietnamese in Paris of murdering me [I had not written home once writing became voluntary] for embarrassing them in a Life magazine bowing picture. Thanks to Doug, despite the scars on my body, the Communists had to produce me alive at the end of the war.

"The Incredibly Stupid One," my personal hero, is the archetype of the innovative, resourceful and courageous American Sailor. These sailors are the products of the neighborhoods, churches, schools and families working together to produce individuals blessed with a sense of humor and the gift of freedom who can overcome any kind of odds. These sailors are tremendously loyal and devoted to their units and their leaders in their own private and personal ways. As long as we have the Doug's of this world, our country will retain its freedom

**Editor's Note:** Thank you Gary Hults for this article.

# USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION

## A TRIP TO COSTCO

Yesterday I was at my local COSTCO buying a large bag of Purina dog chow for my loyal pet, Biscuit, the Wonder Dog and was in the checkout line when woman behind me asked if I had a dog. What did she think I had, an elephant? So since I'm retired and have little to do, on impulse I told her that no, I didn't have a dog, I was starting the Purina Diet again. I added that I probably shouldn't, because I ended up in the hospital last time, but that I'd lost 50 pounds before I awakened in an intensive care ward with tubes coming out of most of my orifices and IVs in both arms.

I told her that it was essentially a perfect diet and that the way that it works is to load your pants pockets with Purina nuggets and simply eat one or two every time you feel hungry. The food is nutritionally complete so it works well and I was going to try it again. (I have to mention here that practically everyone in line was now enthralled with my story.) Horrified, she asked if I ended up in intensive care because the dog food poisoned me. I told her no, I stepped off a curb to sniff an Irish Setter's butt and a car hit us both.

I thought the guy behind her was going to have a heart attack he was laughing so hard. Costco won't let me shop there anymore. Better watch what you ask retired people. They have all the time in the world to think of crazy things to say.

**Contributed by Gary Hults**

**SSA COLA 2010 Update 04:** Fifty-two percent of seniors responding to The Senior Citizens League's (TSCL) 2010 Senior Survey say they are receiving lower Social Security checks this year than they did in 2009. With no annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in 2010, deductions for rising Medicare premiums reduced benefit checks. Not only are large numbers of seniors reporting lower benefit payments, the reductions are comparatively steep, given the average Social Security benefit in 2010 is only \$1,064 per month. Of those getting a reduced check, about one-third say their monthly checks are at least \$31 less than they got last year. Seventeen percent said their checks had been reduced by more than \$50 a month. The benefit reductions follow two back-to-back years in which seniors report cutting down on visits to doctors, dentist, opticians, and filling fewer prescriptions. The survey found that in 2009:

- 46% said they cut back on visits to doctor or hospital outpatient services.
- 54% said they cut back on trips to the dentist, optician or hearing specialists, the costs of which are not covered under traditional Medicare.
- 38% said they postponed filling a prescription or took less than prescribed.
- 68% reported real estate taxes went up, (even as home values continued to plummet).

All told, about 29% of the seniors who took the survey said their monthly expenses in 2009 increased from \$80 to \$119, and another 37% said their monthly expenses increased more than \$119. TSCL recently released the findings to the national media and continues the effort in Congress to enact an emergency COLA for both 2010 and 2011. Says TSCL's Executive Director, Shannon Benton, "Thanks to all of you who took the time to respond to the 2010 Senior Survey and those of you who are sending letters to Members of Congress, and letters to the editor of your local papers! The overwhelming response makes a compelling case to Congress for the need to help seniors now." TSCL is lobbying for legislation that would provide an emergency 3% COLA for 2010, H.R. 3557, introduced by U.S. Representative Walter Jones (R-NC-03), and H.R. 4193, introduced by U.S. Representative Eliot Engel (D-NY-17), which would guarantee a minimum COLA of 3% in years in which the CPI would be lower. To learn more on this issue refer the TSCL website at [www.seniorsleague.org](http://www.seniorsleague.org). [Source: Your Social Security and Medicare Advisor, Vol. 15, No. 4 dtd 13 Apr 2010 ++]

**VA PRESUMPTIVE VN VET DISEASES Update 03:** On 25 MAR 2010, VA published long awaited proposed regulations which, when finalized, will allow presumptive service connection for three new conditions under the Agent Orange Act of 1991. The new disabilities are B-cell leukemias, Parkinson's Disease (PD) and Ischemic Heart Disease (IHD). While the proposed rule runs to 10 pages in the Federal Register, the actual amendment to the regulations is brief and reads: Sec. 3.309 [Amended]

2. In Sec. 3.309(e) the listing of diseases is amended as follows:

a. By removing "Chronic lymphocytic leukemia" and adding, in its place, "All chronic B-cell leukemias (including, but not limited to, hairy-cell leukemia and chronic lymphocytic leukemia)".

b. By adding "Parkinson's disease" immediately preceding "Acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy".

c. By adding "Ischemic heart disease (including, but not limited to, acute, subacute, and old myocardial infarction; atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease including coronary artery disease (including coronary spasm) and coronary bypass surgery; and stable, unstable and Prinzmetal's angina)" immediately following "Hodgkin's disease".

Note that IHD is defined by examples. Other similar conditions may be granted service connection under this presumption; however, since VA raters tend towards literalism, if a condition isn't listed, the veteran will need to submit either a medical opinion or medical treatise showing that his diagnosed condition is considered either one of the listed conditions or is considered IHD. Further, VA has gone to great lengths to explain that its definition of IHD does not include hypertension. However, it does note that about 25% of veterans who have been denied service connection for hypertension in the past also have one of the listed IHD conditions.

Service officers should carefully review medical records of those with hypertension to see if they also have symptoms of, or have been diagnosed with, one of the listed conditions. If so, file a claim for service connection. The comment period for this proposed regulation has been cut to 30 days so it is anticipated that a final regulation will be published this summer. In the meantime, service officers should search their records and file claims for any Vietnam veteran who has one of these new conditions. VA will begin development which should reduce the waiting time once the regulation becomes final. The effective date will be set when the final regulation is published. Caution all claimants that it may be quite some time before VA can rate their claim. VA has about 90,000 cases it must review under Nehmer and since this is supervised by a Federal court, they will be done first. Also, VA expects over 150,000 claims to be submitted in the first year based on these new disabilities alone. Even though VA is seeking a new IT system and contractor support to help develop and process these claims, expect everything to slow down. [Source: VFW Senior State Service Officer - Department of California 5 Apr 2010 ++]

**HONOR FLIGHT NETWORK UPDATE 01:** Myrtle Beach organizer Bert Cassels announced 25 FEB that a flight to the National WWII Memorial in Washington D.C. has been scheduled for 10 NOV. Columbia-based Honor Flight South Carolina is working with Cassels to fly WWII veterans for a no charge day-trip to Washington, D.C. Cassels said, "This is a way to honor local veterans. A lot have not been to Washington, D.C., or seen the memorial they fought for or built." The Honor Flight Grand Strand/Myrtle Beach is the fourth region in South Carolina to be added to the national program. Flights have left from Columbia, Charleston and Kershaw, officials said. Cassels, who will be a guardian on the Columbia flight in April, said some of the vets may be in wheelchairs or disabled and need help traveling. To help with Myrtle Beach's fundraising efforts, Honor Flight South Carolina has split a \$10,000 donation from Verizon Wireless with the Grand Strand/Myrtle Beach chapter.

Fund raising efforts began in December for Honor Flight Southwest Minnesota. The first flight to Washington DC will be in the Spring of this year. It is anticipated that 110 to 120 WWII veterans and 50-60 guardians will fly on a chartered 737 for the two-day trip. Throughout the four most southwestern counties of Minnesota, fund raisers are being conducted in an attempt to raise \$136,000 to help provide a two-day trip at no charge to the vets for World War II Veterans who might wish to make a trip to Washington, D.C. to visit the World War II Memorial and the Korean War Memorial. The contingent would also attend ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery.

Honor Flight works on trips for World War II veterans who want to visit their national memorial in Washington, D.C., but don't have the means to get there. Each trip costs about \$60,000, which covers the chartered flight, meals and a tour bus for veterans. About 100 people go on each flight. The trips are funded through donations and guardians, who pay \$500 to go and assist vets on the trips. For more information about the Myrtle Beach Honor Flight, contact Bert Cassels at (843) 957-8212. For more information or to participate in Honor Flight Southwest Minnesota, call (507) 220-0848. For further information on the Honor Flight Network program, call (937) 521-2400 or go to [www.honorflight.org](http://www.honorflight.org). [Source: SunNews.com Janelle Frost article 24 Feb 2010 ++]

# USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION

**MILITARY HISTORY:** The following "Revelation" on the USS William Porter is a bit of Naval History that you won't find in the History books. It is rather funny today, but hardly humorous then. I can't vouch for its word by word authenticity, but it is a good story and many of the major events noted can be verified:

From NOV 43, until her demise in JUN 45, the American destroyer 'William Porter' was often hailed - whenever she entered port or joined other Naval ships - with the greetings: 'Don't shoot, we're Republicans!' For a half a century, the US Navy kept a lid on the details of the incident that prompted this salutation. A Miami news reporter made the first public disclosure in 1958 after he stumbled upon the truth while covering a reunion of the destroyer's crew. The Pentagon reluctantly and tersely confirmed his story, but only a smattering of newspapers took notice. The USS William D Porter (DD-579) was one of hundreds of assembly line destroyers built during the war. They mounted several heavy and light guns but their main armament consisted of 10 fast-running and accurate torpedoes that carried 500-pound warheads. This destroyer was placed in commission in JUL 43 under the command of Wilfred Walker, a man on the Navy's fast career track. In the months before she was detailed to accompany the Iowa across the Atlantic in November 1943, the Porter and her crew learned their trade, experiencing the normal problems that always beset a new ship and a novice crew. The mishaps grew more serious when she became an escort for the pride of the fleet, the big new battleship Iowa.

The night before they left Norfolk, bound for North Africa, the Porter accidentally damaged a nearby sister ship when she backed down along the other ship's side and her anchor tore down her railings, life rafts, ship's boat and various other formerly valuable pieces of equipment. The Willie D merely had a scraped anchor but her career of mayhem and mishaps had begun. Just 24 hours later, the four-ship convoy consisting of Iowa and her secret passengers and two other destroyers was under strict instructions to maintain complete radio silence. The Iowa was carrying President Franklin D. Roosevelt along with Secretary of State, Cordell Hull and all of the country's WWII's military brass. They were headed for the Big Three Conference in Tehran, where Roosevelt was to meet Stalin and Churchill. As they were going through a known U-boat feeding ground, speed and silence were the best defense. Suddenly, a tremendous explosion rocked the convoy. All of the ships commenced anti-submarine maneuvers. This continued until the Porter sheepishly admitted that one of her depth charges had fallen off her stern and exploded. The 'safety' had not been set as instructed. Captain Walker was watching his fast track career become side-tracked. Shortly thereafter, a freak wave inundated the ship, stripping away everything that wasn't lashed down. A man was washed overboard and never found. Next, the fire room lost power in one of its boilers. The Captain, by this point, was making reports almost hourly to the Iowa on the Willie D's difficulties. It would have been merciful if the force commander had detached the hard luck ship and sent her back to Norfolk. But, no, she sailed on.

The morning of 14 NOV 43 the Iowa and her escorts were just east of Bermuda and the president and his guests wanted to see how the big ship could defend herself against an air attack. So, Iowa launched a number of weather balloons to use as anti-aircraft targets. It was exciting to see more than 100 guns shooting at the balloons, and the President was proud of his Navy. Just as proud was Admiral Ernest J King, the Chief of Naval Operations; large in size and by demeanor, a true monarch of the sea. Up to this time, no one knew what firing a torpedo at him would mean. Over on the Willie D, Captain Walker sent his impatient crew to battle stations. They began to shoot down the balloons the Iowa had missed as they drifted into the Porter's vicinity. Down on the torpedo mounts, the crew watched, waiting to take some practice shots of their own on the big battleship. On this particular morning, they unfortunately had forgotten to remove the primer from torpedo tube #3. Up on the bridge, a new torpedo officer,

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unaware of the danger, ordered a simulated firing. "Fire 1, Fire 2," and finally, "Fire 3." There was no fire 4 as the sequence was interrupted by an unmistakable whooooooshhhhhing sound made by a successfully launched and armed torpedo. Just after he saw the torpedo hit water on its way to the Iowa and some of the most prominent figures in world history, Lewis innocently asked the Captain, 'Did you give permission to fire a torpedo?' Captain Walker's reply will not ring down through naval history... although words to the effect of Farragut's immortal 'Damn the torpedoes' figured centrally within.

Initially, there was some reluctance to admit what had happened or even to warn the Iowa. As the awful reality sunk in, people began racing around, shouting conflicting instructions and attempting to warn the flagship of imminent danger. First, there was a flashing light warning about the torpedo which unfortunately indicated it was headed in another direction. Next, the Porter signaled that it was going reverse at full speed! Finally, they decided to break the strictly enforced radio silence. The radio operator on the destroyer transmitted "'Lion (code for the Iowa), Lion, come right.'" The Iowa operator, more concerned about radio procedure, requested that the offending station identify itself first. Finally, the message was received and the Iowa began turning to avoid the speeding torpedo. Meanwhile, on the Iowa's bridge, word of the torpedo firing had reached FDR, who asked that his wheelchair be moved to the railing so he could see better what was coming his way. His loyal Secret Service guard immediately drew his pistol as if he was going to shoot the torpedo. As the Iowa began evasive maneuvers, all of her guns were trained on the William D Porter. There was now some thought that the Porter was part of an assassination plot. Within moments of the warning, there was a tremendous explosion just behind the battleship. The torpedo had been detonated by the wash kicked up by the battleship's increased speed.

The crisis was over and so was Captain Walker's career. His final utterance to the Iowa, in response to a question about the origin of the torpedo, was a weak, "We did it." Shortly thereafter, the brand new destroyer, her Captain and the entire crew were placed under arrest and sent to Bermuda for trial. It was the first time that a complete ship's company had been arrested in the history of the US Navy. The ship was surrounded by Marines when it docked in Bermuda and held there several days as the closed session inquiry attempted to determine what had happened. Torpedoman Dawson eventually confessed to having inadvertently left the primer in the torpedo tube, which caused the launching. Dawson had thrown the used primer over the side to conceal his mistake. The whole incident was chalked up to an unfortunate set of circumstances and placed under a cloak of secrecy. Someone had to be punished. Captain Walker and several other Porter officers and sailors eventually found themselves in obscure shore assignments. Dawson was sentenced to 14 years hard labor. President Roosevelt intervened; however, asking that no punishment be meted out for what was clearly an accident. The destroyer was banished to the upper Aleutians. It was probably thought this was as safe a place as any for the ship and anyone who came near her. She remained in the frozen north for almost a year, until late 1944, when she was re-assigned to the Western Pacific.

Before leaving the Aleutians, she accidentally left her calling card in the form of a five-inch shell fired into the front yard of the American base commandant, thus rearranging his flower garden. In DEC 44, she joined the Philippine invasion forces and acquitted herself quite well. She distinguished herself by shooting down a number of attacking Japanese aircraft. Regrettably, after the war, it was reported that she also shot down three American planes. This was a common event on ships, as many gunners, fearful of kamikazes, had nervous trigger fingers. In APR 45 the destroyer was assigned to support the invasion of Okinawa. By this time, the greeting "Don't Shoot, We're Republicans" was commonplace and the crew of the Willie D had become used to the ribbing. But the crew of her sister ship, the USS Luce, was not so polite in its salutations after the Porter accidentally riddled her side and superstructure with gunfire.

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On 10 JUN 45, the Porter's hard luck finally ran out. She was sunk by a plane which had (unintentionally) attacked underwater. A Japanese bomber made almost entirely of wood and canvas slipped through the Navy's defense. Having little in the way of metal surfaces, the plane didn't register on radar. A fully loaded kamikaze, it was headed for a ship near the Porter but just at the last moment veered away and crashed along side the unlucky destroyer. There was a sigh of relief as the plane sunk out of sight but then it blew up underneath the Porter, opening her hull in the worst possible location. Three hours later, after the last man was off board, the Captain jumped to the safety of a rescue vessel and the ship that almost changed world history slipped astern into 2,400 feet of water. Not a single soul was lost in the sinking. After everything else that happened, it was almost as if the ship decided to let her crew off at the end.

[Source: [www.usshancockcv19.com/histories/willie-d.htm](http://www.usshancockcv19.com/histories/willie-d.htm) Naval Historian Kit Bonner Mar 08 ++]

**KOREAN WAR VETS:** The Friends of American Veterans of Korean War (FAVKW) are extending an invitation to their annual 'Appreciation Dinner, Ceremony, Concert and Dancing, Symposium and Prayer' in honor of American Veterans of Korean War. More than 800 veterans and their spouse attended the 2009 Appreciation Event held in Las Vegas. This year's event will be held 13-14 JUN 2010 at The Orleans Hotel, 4500 W. Tropicana Ave., Las Vegas (1-800-675-3267, [www.orleanscasino.com](http://www.orleanscasino.com)). Attendees do not have to be a member of the KWVA. All vets who served in Korea from 1945 to present are eligible to participate. FAVKW will be inviting as many 1000-1200 American Korean War veterans from across the USA. They plan to provide a full accommodation for one night and two days (June 13: lunch, dinner and room/ June 14: breakfast and lunch) to veterans and their spouses if they come to the venue by their own expense for transportation. If you are interested in attending you should directly inform FAVKW by 31 MAR 2010 via one of the below means. In early MAY they plan to send the formal invitation to all of those who informed their participation. ✉ E-mail to: [gasiri0112@yahoo.com](mailto:gasiri0112@yahoo.com)  
[Source: KWVA Secretary Frank E. Coheel letter dtd 15 Jan 2010 ++]

## CAMP LEJEUNE TOXIC EXPOSURE UPDATE 11:

For what appears to be the first time, a former resident of Camp Lejeune, N.C., has been permitted to move ahead with a claim against the Marine Corps for years of water contamination that she says led to the development of her non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. The U.S. Department of the Navy, which includes the Marines, this week lost its bid to dismiss the case of Laura J. Jones of Iowa, who lived at Camp Lejeune from 1980 to 1983 as the spouse of a Marine officer. In 2005, more than two decades after she left North Carolina, Jones was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. According to her personal injury claim in federal court, Jones had never heard about the years of contamination that plagued the well water at Lejeune. She accuses the military of recklessly allowing families to drink toxic water and failing to warn residents about the contamination. The Navy argued in the U.S. District Court in Raleigh that Jones had filed her civil suit beyond the statute of limitations. And the Navy said regulations at the time didn't cover contaminants such as trichloroethylene, tetrachloroethylene, vinyl chloride and benzene, and therefore the Marine Corps shouldn't be liable for them.

In a decision released 24 FEB, however, U.S. District Judge Terrence Boyle rejected those arguments. He said the Navy was to blame in part for Jones' ignorance about the contamination. And he pointed out that the military didn't begin earnestly seeking victims until after Jones' diagnosis. "The Department of the Navy's unwillingness to release information regarding contamination at Camp Lejeune or to provide notice to former residents remains relevant in that such conduct limited the information available to potential clients," Boyle wrote. The Navy had argued that an Internet search on "lymphoma" and "Camp Lejeune" would have yielded early news stories about the contamination, according to the judge's order. Boyle countered that there was no way Jones could have known to make such a query 20 years after leaving the base. Boyle also agreed that federal regulations made clear in DEC 72 that drinking water "shall not contain impurities which may be hazardous to the health of consumers." The decision means the case can now move forward, said Joseph L. Anderson, a Winston-Salem, N.C., attorney who represented Jones and has heard from thousands of other potential victims at Lejeune. The Navy could appeal the decision, but Anderson said he's preparing for the next phase of the case. "We're grateful for the judge's decision and for the opportunity to represent these families," he said. [Source: McClatchy Newspapers Barbara Barrett article 24 Feb 2010 ++]

## Tips on Firearm Safety Week of April 19, 2010

The basic safety rules for dealing with firearms have not changed. The first rule is to treat every weapon as if it is loaded. Here are some other tips from the Naval Safety Center: (1) keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to fire; (2) never point at anything you do not intend to shoot; and (3) always keep the weapon unloaded until you are ready to fire. The last rule is especially important for gun owners who have children in the house. Also, remember that alcohol and weapons are the same deadly combination as alcohol and driving--they do not mix. For more safety tips, visit the [Naval Safety Center website](http://www.navy.mil/naval-safety-center).

# USS BRISTOL DD 857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION

## America 1935 - 1939

Contributed by Manny Calimaum



When we think that we are having a bad day, let's remember those of us who lived through the depression years.



World T.E.A.M. Sports Bethesda, MD, 2010, 350 riders and 70 disabled riders. Our soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen completed 110 miles over 2 days with the help of volunteers. Below are two EMT volunteers who have participated in 3 such events. On the left is Russ Lemming, former Marine and Diane Colangelo of Point Pleasant Boro EMS. I am proud to know these two people.



## Viet Nam Vets MC / Legacy Vets MC,

Contributed by Earl Weaver

(VNV MC / LV MC), one of the most loyal, patriotic, kindhearted groups in the biker culture is beginning to fade away as member's age. Gordon Edwin Haats was one of these men. He was doing what war heroes and bikers do best by coming to the rescue of a woman in domestic distress. The strain was too stressful on 'Big Daddy Gordo's' heart and sent him to the hospital where he was stabilized. After tests were run, it was decided he would have bypass surgery and it was scheduled. No one had reason to believe that he wouldn't fly through the procedure, recuperate and be back riding and live to hero again when occasion called for it. In Gordo's own words, his last statement to one of his club brothers was "Ain't nothin but a thing."

Sadly, Gordo suffered another attack before the repair could be done on his ailing heart, the heart that was always so concerned for others.

VNV MC / LV MC members rode in from neighboring states to Dallas yesterday, in honor of their departed brother. Throughout the years, beards, pony tails and braids have turned white and the men move a little slower as time has its way with their bodies. As one brother follows the other in laying his 'earth suit' down, everyone knows Viet Nam Vets will someday fade away, ergo the reason for Legacy Vets MC.

Veterans of more recent wars, those who wear the Legacy MC patch will carry on the honor, traditions and respect that our Viet Nam Vets failed to receive from their country so many years ago.



The Chapel was packed to standing room only and spilled out into the vestibule which was fitted with speakers so no one missed the many eulogies. Let's face it, how do you say good bye to someone who lived his entire life as a hero from beginning to end? It was difficult for the men who spoke.

Gordon was born August 21, 1952 in Iowa Falls, Iowa and passed away April 29, 2010. He was a veteran in the US Navy for 8 years. He is survived by his wife Carolina Lasconia Haats to whom he was happily married for almost 37 years. She was truly the love of his life. He is also survived by grandson Keith Haats of Carrollton, daughter Geraldine Haats and her two children Kyana and Xavier of Corpus Christi; along with other extended relatives. As the funeral service was over, club members began saying their goodbyes to each other. Old soldiers hugged one another and back-patting of leather vests could be heard all over the vestibule and parking lot. Two **prospects** policed the parking lot picking up cigarette butts or any other litter. I must say, this funeral home probably doesn't usually get that kind of respect from its normal attendees.

## Agent Orange Update

*Last Fall, VA established service-connection for Vietnam Veterans with Parkinson's disease, ischemic heart disease or B-cell leukemias such as hairy cell leukemia.*

*If you served in in-country Vietnam between 1962 and 1975 (including those who visited Vietnam briefly) and have one of the following diseases, VA presumes you have been exposed to Agent Orange and encourages you to learn about disability compensation and other VA health care entitlements.*

- acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy
- AL amyloidosis
- B-cell leukemia
- chloracne (or similar acneform disease)
- chronic lymphocytic leukemia
- Hodgkin's disease
- ischemic heart disease
- multiple myeloma
- non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Parkinson's disease
- porphyria cutanea tarda
- prostate cancer
- respiratory cancers

## Agent Orange Update *continued*

- soft-tissue sarcoma (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi sarcoma or mesothelioma)
- type 2 diabetes

*Vietnam Veterans who have these specific diseases don't have to show that their diseases are related to their military service to get disability compensation. To file a claim or learn more, contact your local VISN 3 Medical Center's Agent Orange Coordinator or eligibility specialists, or visit VA's Guide on Agent Orange Claims at [www.vba.va.gov/bin/21/benefits/Herbicide/AOno3.htm](http://www.vba.va.gov/bin/21/benefits/Herbicide/AOno3.htm).*

## Fight the Fat

*According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, obesity is the top health risk facing Americans today, resulting in an estimated 400,000 deaths a year.*

*In response to these staggering statistics and in an effort to support the vital health needs of area Veterans, local VA medical centers have implemented healthy living and weight-management programs. Programs such as MOVE (Motivating Obese Veterans Everywhere) have been very successful.*

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## Editor's Note:

My wife, daughter, Teresa, and I visited Alaska as part of a celebration of our marriage of 40 years in September. Throughout the two week period, we spent three days at sea aboard a luxury liner and the remainder touring the gold rush stampede trails. Of course we did not have to "hump it" like the gold rushers.

The point is I wore my Bristol cap everywhere. No matter where we went someone came up to me to speak about the Bristol, serving in Tin Cans, or just one veteran to another acknowledging our service. In fact, while in Juneau, AK, a man approached me and asked when I had served in Bristol. He told me that he was a Corpsman in 1968. I gave him our website and asked him to send me some "stuff" that I could put in the newsletter.

We didn't have time to exchange names, etc, but he did tell me that after Bristol, he served with the Marines in Viet Nam. He went on to become and officer in the Air Force and retired as a Col. Sir! If you are reading this, please send me some stuff. Nothing is unimportant.

That brings me back to the emails I receive. I am asking you to consider a day aboard Bristol before you forward me an email. Take a few minutes to jot down some thoughts and forward them to me. I know that there has got to be some good stuff you have. Hey! Have anyone of you ever been the whaleboat crew? You have got to have some stories of near misses. Think about it.

## DID YOU KNOW THIS?

A United States flag drapes the casket of deceased veterans to honor the memory of their service to America. The flag is placed so that the blue field with stars is at the head and over the left shoulder of the deceased.

After *Taps* has been played, the flag is carefully folded into the symbolic tri-cornered shape. A properly proportioned flag will fold 13 times on the triangles, representing the 13 original colonies. The folded flag is emblematic of the tri-cornered hat worn by the Patriots of the American Revolution. When folded, no red or white stripe is to be evident, leaving only the blue field with stars.

The folded flag is presented as a keepsake to the next of kin or an appropriate family member. Each branch of the Armed Forces uses its own wording for the presentation...

**U.S. Air Force:** "On behalf of the President of the United States, the Department of the Air Force, and a grateful nation, we offer this flag for the faithful and dedicated service of (Service Member's rank and name)."

**U.S. Army:** "This flag is presented on behalf of a grateful nation and the United States Army as a token of appreciation for your loved one's honorable and faithful service."

**U.S. Coast Guard:** "On behalf of the President of the United States, the Commandant of the Coast Guard, and a grateful nation, please accept this flag as a symbol of our appreciation for your loved one's service to Country and the Coast Guard."

**U.S. Marine Corps:** "On behalf of the President of the United States, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and a grateful nation, please accept this flag as a symbol of our appreciation for your loved one's service to Country and Corps."

**U.S. Navy:** "On behalf of the President of the United States, the Chief of Naval Operations, please accept this flag as a symbol of our appreciation for your loved one's service to this Country and a grateful Navy."

If the next of kin has expressed a religious preference or belief, add: "God bless you and this family, and God bless the United States of America."

From: The American Legion American legion military honors ceremony.

## Bristol Shipmates by Marty Walsh

I have discussed the subject of Charitable Donations and the importance of "wise giving" at our annual reunions as well as through this newsletter. In an effort to obtain all the information that I could about fundraising by various organizations I enrolled as a member (my cost) of the American Institute of Philanthropy (AIP). My membership includes AIP's rating publication which classifies organizations by category. The rating for most charities are based on a percentage of dollars spent on program services and cost to raise \$100. AIP maintains a scale of A,B,C,D,F. The category of Veterans and Military has 40 listed organizations, of which 18 rate "F". Eight are in the "A" category, One "B" and Six "C" and are listed below.

- A+ Fisher House Foundation, 888-294 8560
- A+ Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund, 760 725 3680
- A+ Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund, 800 340 4376
- A+ National Military Family Association, 703 931 6632
- A+ Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, 703 696 4904
- A Homes for our Troops, 866 787 6677
- A- Armed Services YMCA of the USA, 703 313 9600
- A- Veterans Fund, 757 942 2463
- B+ Operation Homefront-N.O., 800 722 6098
- C+ WWP (Wounded Warrior Project), 877 832 6997
- C- Disabled American Veterans, 877 426 2838
- C- Freedom Alliance, 800 475 6620
- C- Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US and Foundation, 816 756 3390
- C Soldiers' Angels, 626 529 5114
- C USO (United Service Organizations), 800 876 7469

Should you require any additional information please feel free to contact me at [mdw554@optonline.net](mailto:mdw554@optonline.net) or at 631 698 5170. Let your pocketbook and your heart be your guide when it comes to donations. If you have a local organization that you have been donating to and are comfortable with their results please continue to do so. The links listed below will take you to informational sources that you can use to research this subject further.

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/phonefraud/publicsafety.shtml>

<http://www.crimes-of-persuasion.com/Crimes/Telemarketing/Outbound/Minor/donations.htm>

Marty Walsh  
Secretary Bristol Association

## TAPS

*Albert Comex, DC3, 49-50, deceased 2009*

*John Kobasa Sr, TM3, 45-46, Deceased,*

*May 28, 2010, Brandon, FL*

*William K. Mallinson, LT, Operations*

*Officer, 65-67, in Feb 2010,*

*at Punta Gorda, FL*