

USS BRISTOL DD857 VETERANS ASSOCIATION

WINTER 2016 -2017 NEWSLETTER

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- Heroes Among Us.....1
- Father Aloysius H. Schmitt.....2
- In Memoriam.....3
- A Mother Asked.....5
- Pre-planning a Must.....5
- Heroes Photo Collage.....6
- Blockade Of Wonsan.....7
- Destroyer Challenges China
Claims.....17
- William "Bill" Crawford.....18
- Heroes Meet After WWII.....21
- Buddy Trampler, WWII, 11th
Airborne.....22
- 9th Infantry Division and the USS
General John Pope (AP 110)....22
- April 1966 Atlantic Storm That
Nearly Sank BRISTOL.....23
- Even cooks can be heroes.....24
- Albert Weber Honor Flight.....24
- A POEM WORTH READING 26
- POW/MIA Update 79 WWII 1st
Lt. Ben Barnes' Recovery Effort.27
- Thurston Gaines, dies at 94.....27
- Lt. Gen. John Kelly, USMC, "The
Last Six Second.....28
- True Heroes.....30

Heroes Among Us

USS Fechteler (DE-157), a Buckley-class destroyer escort of



the United States Navy, was named in honor of Augustus Fechteler, a Rear Admiral serving in the United States Navy during World War I.

Fechteler was launched on 22 April 1943 at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard; sponsored by Miss Joan S. Fechteler, granddaughter of Rear Admiral Fechteler and niece of Lieutenant Frank Casper Fechteler; and commissioned 1 July 1943, Lieutenant Commander C. R. Simmers in command.

Between 8 September 1943 and 31 December, Fechteler made two voyages on the key convoy route New York - Netherlands West Indies - North Africa, escorting vulnerable tankers

carrying fuel and other oil products essential to modern warfare. After overhaul at New York City, she took part in experimental antisubmarine exercises in Narragansett Bay, from which she sailed on 28 February 1944 for the Azores and Derry, Northern Ireland. Arriving on 6 March 1944, she joined the escort of a New York-bound convoy, reaching the United States on 22 March.

On 1 April 1944, Fechteler sailed from New York for Hampton Roads, Virginia, where she joined a convoy for Bizerte, arriving on 22 April after coming under heavy enemy air attack two days before. two days before. Homeward-bound, Fechteler was torpedoed by U-967 commanded by Albrecht Brandi on 5 May in the Western Mediterranean. As the ship began to break in two and sink, it was abandoned. Twenty-nine of the crew were killed and 26 wounded. USS Laning and other ships of the convoy rescued 186 survivors.

At our reunion in Wilmington, NC, this past September, I had the privilege of speaking with David Nixon. David told me that he was rescued by a British ship after the sinking of Fetcheler. The Brits transported David and some of his shipmates to Gibraltar with only the clothes that he had on his back.

Continued on Page 3 NIXON



Photo Cr: Nicki Kohl, Dubuque Telegraph Herald

Father Aloysius H. Schmitt (December 4, 1909 – December 7, 1941) was a Roman Catholic priest of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Dubuque, who served as a chaplain in the United States Navy during World War II.[1]

Born in St. Lucas, Iowa, Fr. Schmitt studied at Loras College (then named Columbia College) in Dubuque, Iowa[1] and graduated in 1932.[2] He then studied in Rome for the priesthood. He was ordained on December 8, 1935. Father Schmitt was first assigned as an associate at Saint Mary's Church in Dubuque. He was also assigned to a parish in Cheyenne, Wyoming. After four years, he received permission to become a chaplain, and joined the United States Navy. He was appointed Acting Chaplain with rank of Lieutenant, Junior Grade (LTJG) on June 28, 1939.

On December 7, 1941, Fr. Schmitt was serving on board the battleship USS Oklahoma during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, when a hit caused the ship to capsize. A number of sailors, including Fr. Schmitt, were trapped in a compartment with only a small porthole as the means of escape. Fr. Schmitt helped a number of men through this porthole. When it came his time to leave, he declined and helped more men escape.[1] In total, he helped 12 men escape. [citation needed]

Fr. Schmitt died on board the Oklahoma. He was the first chaplain of any faith to have died in World War II.

Fr. Schmitt was honored posthumously by the U.S. government when it awarded him the Navy and Marine Corps Medal. A destroyer escort named USS Schmitt was commissioned in 1943 by the Navy in his honor and served the U.S. Navy until 1967, when it was transferred to Taiwan.

Continued on page 3 Father Schmitt

NIXON

The Brits outfitted the survivors with British uniforms until David and his shipmates were transferred to US Navy

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Father Schmitt

The Christ the King Chapel at Loras College was dedicated in his memory and contains some of Fr. Schmitt's property that was donated to the school.

City Island, in the Mississippi River near Dubuque, Iowa (formerly known as Ham's Island, after Mathias Ham who once owned it) was renamed Chaplain Schmitt Memorial Island. It is the location of Dubuque Greyhound Park and Casino.

On 8 October 2016, members of the Patriot Guard Riders from Dubuque and other locations performed an honor guard to escort the casket bearing the remains of Chaplain Schmitt to his alma mater. Our Shipmate, Gary Johnson, performed the lead pall bearer, carrying at the dead and left of the casket.

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In Memoriam

William (Bill) Dobbins Plank Owner

passed peacefully in his sleep early Saturday, Sept. 10, 2016. He was 95. A 30-year sailor, veteran of three wars and a Pearl Harbor survivor, he was very proud of his U.S. Navy service. He retired in 1970 as a Chief Boatswain's Mate, and honored to carry the monikor "Boats" for those many years. He

will be missed by his family and the larger community in which he was so actively involved since moving to Grass Valley in 1978. Bill's friends and colleagues are legion. He was a Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus, and a member of Grass Valley Elks — both of which — helped in his development and creation of "Bill's Wheels." Bill's Wheels served as a safety net for those needing wheelchairs and electric scooters but falling through the cracks of the numerous medical assistance programs. Since its inception, "Bill's Wheels" has provided devices free to hundreds of local people needing such help. He was proceeded in death by his parents, Harold and May (Ruby) Dobbins, and his wife of 63 years, Aileen "Honey" Dobbins (Townsend).

He is survived by his son Michael and wife, Linda (Bertoncini); granddaughters, Kimberly (Polo) of Sacramento, Seana (Inducil) of Mission Viejo, and grandson Mark Mobley of Ukiah; sister Penny Weiss of Livonia, Michigan; brother Joseph Kalhorn of Howell, Michigan; and six great-grandchildren. Funeral services will be Friday, Sept. 23 at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Grass Valley. A Knights of Columbus Honor Guard will escort the casket to the church at 11:45 a.m. A

12:30 p.m. Rosary service will be conducted prior to the funeral service which begins at 1 p.m., followed by graveside Military Honors at St. Patrick Cemetery. A reception will follow at St Patrick's Hall. Services are under the direction of Hooper and Weaver Mortuary.

Tribute to Bill Dobbins

Bill was a Customer of mine at Dorado. As gruff a curmudgeon as there ever was.

His first day coming to Dorado, he pissed and moaned about getting into the store in his wheel chair or walker. That continued for years.

My sales team was confused by his gruff exterior. He had most of them quaking in their millenial boots. I think Neil finally came to understand him. I told them it is just an act or defense mechanism. I said, Ask him about the hat he wore that proudly displayed the air craft carrier he was on. When the USS Missouri was being moved to Seattle after her retrofit he just wanted to try and get a ride on her once again. An 80 yr old plus had tears just thinking about it.

We once made a late night delivery around Thanksgiving if I recall. Bill was alone at his home. I sat and talked with him for a while about the Navy. He smiled from ear to ear the entire time.

He never mentioned Pearl Harbor in all our conversations over the years. He was at Pearl and survived. He went on to several more wars aboard the USS Missouri from what I gather.

Now I know what a hero looks like. Be kind to them even if they are a bit gruff at times.

He had every right to be a lovable grouch ass. His daughter used to come in with him and say Dad be nice. We didn't mind he was so funny once you got to know him

RIP Bill. I salute you! An American hero!

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Theodore (Ted) I. Taper, 84,

passed away in Maine, at Falmouth by The Sea on Nov. 7, 2016 after an extended illness. Ted was born in Canonsburg, PA on Oct. 17, 1932, the fourth of eleven children of Ignatius and Anna Taper. His father died while Ted was in his early teens, forcing him to enter the workforce at a young age to help support the family. He joined the US Navy at the age of 18, beginning a 22 year military career which included service during the Korean and Vietnam Wars. He married Lorraine Petrin of Fall River, Mass in 1953. They had one daughter, Dale. Though Ted was stationed in many locations during his military career, the Fall River area was always home base and the family returned there after his retirement from the Navy in 1972, settling in Swansea. During his many years in Swansea, Ted was an active member of the American Legion Post 303 and an enthusiastic participant in nearly all their endeavors. He was always helpful, kind, and good humored, and enjoyed spending time with friends and family. He was an avid baseball and football fan. In 2015, he moved to Somerset and resided at Clifton Assisted Living until his recent acute illness. Ted was predeceased by his wife, Lorraine. He is survived by his daughter Dale Harrison of Cape Elizabeth, Maine, her husband Bob, and two grandchildren, Leslie and Kevin, as well as several brothers and sisters, all residing in the Midwest. At Ted's request, there will not be a funeral. A memorial remembrance will be arranged at a later date. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his honor to the Scholarship Fund of American Legion Post 303 in Swansea.

Erwin Zimmer, ET2, 57-58

Zimmer, Erwin E. (Erv) Age 79, of Apple Valley, passed away peacefully on November 6, 2016; U.S. Navy veteran. After retiring from the insurance industry, he greatly enjoyed a second career as a grain inspector, checking barges and boxcars which allowed him to appreciate the birds and animals he saw along the river and in the woods near the railroad tracks. Erv was an avid outdoorsman and treasured the days he spent in the fields, woods, and on the lakes of Minnesota. He tended his garden, watched countless hours of youth sports as a father and grandfather, and was always ready for a game of cribbage. He is survived by his loving wife of 54 years, Gail; his children Theresa (Tom) Lydon, Christine (Tim Rogotzke) Zimmer, Erwin J. (Janet), and Terence (Peggy); his grandchildren Madeline and Derek Lydon; Josephine, Olivia and Dominic Lonetti; Zeb and Senia Zimmer; and Maxwell, Ellen and Mary Zimmer; and his sister Jeannie (Tony) Dircks. Also survived by many relatives and friends including those from American Legion Post 1776 and the Fort Snelling Tuesday Memorial Rifle Squad. Mass of Christian Burial at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, November 15, at Church of the Risen Savior, 1501 County Road 42 E, Burnsville, MN. Visitation one hour before Mass at the Church with luncheon to follow. Interment at Fort Snelling National Cemetery at 1 p.m. Memorials may be sent to St. Labre Indian School (stlabre.org) or National Wildlife Federation (nwf.org). Washburn-McReavy.com Davies Chapel 612-377-2203

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Ester Speranza, 26 September 2016

Editor's Note:

My wife, Anne, tried to telephone Ester Speranza to see how the wife of our deceased shipmate, Ed Speranza, was doing. Unable to reach Ester by telephone, Anne left a message for her son, Ed. Ester's son, Ed, left a voice message stating that Ester died on 26 September of lung cancer. According to Ed, Ester only experienced discomfort two days before she died. Ed Speranza expressed his gratitude that Anne thought to call. Ester and our shipmate, Ed Speranza, were two fun people to be around.

We travelled in a group to the Norfolk reunion and I laughed most of the way down listening to Ed and Ester carry on about one thing or another. Ed and Ester loved going to Atlantic City. In fact, they moved to Monroe Twp, NJ, to be closer to their favorite haunt before returning to Staten Island, NY, after Ed senior suffered a stroke.

A little anecdote about lung cancer. I am a volunteer Emergency Medical Technician in NJ. We responded to a call where the patient's pain meds pump failed and needed to be transported back to hospital for a replacement. When we arrived, I could smell the heavy odor of cigarette smoke. Stupid me started to chastise the patient about smoking. I did not know at the time that the patient was terminal. How stupid could I be? All of our training dictates that we should not be judgmental. Here I was breaking that rule. Well Ed and Ester are with God and may they rest in peace.

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Clayton D. Hall

Hall, Clayton D. 88, long-time Minneapolis resident, now living in Vermillion, S.D. passed away peacefully on December 29, 2016. Clayton served his country at age 17 in the US Navy at the end of WWII as a storekeeper, stationed in Naples, Italy and Istanbul, Turkey. In peacetime he attended business college for one year and night school for 7 years. He became a CPA in 1958. He was secretary/treasurer of Swanson and Youngdale, Inc. and retired after 34 years. Grateful for sharing his life: his wife, Elsie, daughter, Nancy Foster, Vermillion S.D., daughter, Lisa (Gary) Stewart, Raleigh, N.C., grandchildren, Jon Stewart, San Francisco, CA, Heidi (Nathan) DeVries of Vermillion, SD, April Kappler, Raleigh, NC, Thomas (Jenna) Kunstle, Orange City, IA, great-grandchildren, Hope and J.D. DeVries, and Jacob and Benjamin Kunstle. A memorial service will be held at a later date.

A Mother Asked *Contributed by Gary Hults*

A mother asked this President... 'Why did my son have to die in Iraq ?'

A mother asked this President.. 'Why did my son have to die in Saudi Arabia ?'

A mother asked this President... 'Why did my son have to die in Kuwait ?'

Another mother asked this President... 'Why did my son have to die in Vietnam ?'

Another mother asked this President... 'Why did my son have to die in Korea ?'

Another mother asked this President... 'Why did my son have to die on Iwo Jima ?'

Another mother asked this President... 'Why did my son have to die on a battlefield in France ?'

Yet another mother asked this President... 'Why did my son have to die at Gettysburg ?'

And yet another mother asked this President... 'Why did my son have to die on a frozen field near Valley Forge ?'

Then long, long ago, a mother asked..

'Heavenly Father ... why did my Son have to die on a cross outside of Jerusalem ?'

The answer is always the same... 'So that others may live and dwell in peace, happiness, and freedom.'

Pre Planning Is A Must

No one likes to think about death, but if a veteran wants to be buried with military rights, or in a national cemetery, pre planning is a must.

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a website which includes information about national cemeteries, preparing in advance, donating burial flags and burial benefits for veterans buried in a private cemetery. To insure eligibility of burial in a VA cemetery, discharge papers are required. Family members should be made of aware of where these papers are kept.

The discharge papers are also required for burial benefits in a private cemetery.

The VA has 131 national cemeteries and those eligible for the benefits are entitled to a gravesite at one of the national cemeteries, providing space is available. Opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a government headstone or marker,

a burial flag and a Presidential Memorial Certificate are provided at no cost to the family.

Burial benefits are also available for spouses and dependents of the veteran in a national cemetery even if they predecease the veteran, according to the website <http://www.cem.va.gov>(click on Veteran Services, then on burial benefits in the drop down menu).

Family members need to contact a funeral home to assist with making burial arrangements at a national cemetery.

To schedule a burial, fax documentation to the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 1866-900-6417 and follow up with a phone call to 1-800-535-1117.

Veterans are entitled to burial benefits when buried in a private cemetery including a government headstone or marker, a burial flag and a Presidential Memorial Certificate at no cost to the family. Some veterans may also be eligible for burial allowances.

For more information on eligibility call 1-800-827-1000.

Arrangements for military burials in private cemeteries can also be arranged by calling the local VFW or American Legion Post.

For the VFW go to <http://www.vfw.org/find-a-post>. For the American Legion go to http://www.members.legion.org/CGI-BIN/lansawebwebapp=MYLEPOST+webtrn=wr_dsp1cr+ml=LANSAXHTML+part=TAL+lang=ENG



Herb Ross



Joe Guchek 25th ID
Vietnam



Mark Jarvis USAF



Mark & Cathy Jarvis USAF



Above: Jarvis family
with daughter, Sam
(r) and son-in-law at
Ft Bliss, TX



Matt Bloomberg, my son-in-
law, 1SG , & LTC Kairns



Below: Rob



Black and white photo above
taken April 1945 at the Philadelphia Navy
Yard. Photo shows wounded warriors
returning from Europe.



Earl "Charlie" Weaver,
Machinist Mate
Extraordinair, Vietnam

Editor's Note: The next time that you go to MacDonal'd's or any other restaurant, think about the man or woman standing or sitting next to you. That woman may have been an army nurse in Vietnam and had earned a Silver Star. I worked with that woman

Blockade of Wonsan

Wonsan was a strategic point during the war, located on North Korea's southeastern coast with a large harbor, an airfield, a petroleum refinery, 75,000 people, and as many as 80,000 troops, including several artillery batteries. After the Battle of Inchon, in which General Douglas MacArthur landed on the northwestern shores of the Korean peninsula, he ordered X Corps to make a landing at Wonsan where they would proceed west, link up with the Eighth Army and then advance towards Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea.

North Korean naval forces had been well supplied by the Soviet Union and China with all sorts of sea mines and they were used as much as possible to defend Wonsan. Soviet military advisors were also employed to create more effective mine fields. One of the first objectives of the blockade was to begin plotting the locations of mines and then destroy them. Because of this, the use of minesweepers became a necessity and eventually dozens would serve in the blockade. Operation Wonsan, or the Clearance of Wonsan, began on October 10 of 1950, ten days before the landing was scheduled to take place. Rear Admiral James H. Doyle commanded Task Force 90, a fleet of dozens of American warships which were used in the clearance.

Two days later on October 12, mines sank the sweepers USS Pledge and USS Pirate, killing twelve men and wounding dozens of others, all while under accurate fire from North Korean shore batteries. The United States Navy Pacific Fleet responded by starting the production of new

minesweepers in the largest shipbuilding program since World War II. Other vessels were damaged by mines and battery fire as well but the loss of the Pirate and Pledge proved to be the major engagement during the operation.

Operation Tailboard

Operation Tailboard was the codename for the United States Army landing at Wonsan, and it was found to have been unnecessary. Preparations began over 800 miles away at Inchon where on October 15, thousands of marines and soldiers, 30,184 in total, embarked transports to participate in the landing. When they arrived off Wonsan on October 20, the clearance of the mine fields was still taking place so for five days X Corps and the 1st Marine Division were forced to remain on ship to wait for a clear path to the beaches.

When it came time to land on October 15, the North Koreans had already withdrawn and the British and South Koreans were securing the area. Ultimately the landing was not needed and MacArthur was criticized for not using the X Corps in the pursuit of the retreating North Korean Army on the Inchon front. On October 19, the South Korean Army captured Pyongyang so instead of heading there the American army went north along the coast to occupy Hungnam and the Chosin Reservoir areas while the 3rd Infantry Division landed at Wonsan in November as reinforcements.

Evacuation of Wonsan

UN forces would not hold Wonsan for long: after the massive Chinese intervention in the war, Allied forces

were ordered to evacuate Wonsan on December 9, 1950, taking 7,009 refugees, 3,384 military personnel, 1,146 vehicles and 10,013 tons of cargo in the process. General MacArthur's plan was to regroup in Japan before launching another offensive, while holding Pusan Perimeter. When the North Koreans and Chinese recaptured the city, defenses were rebuilt in a more formidable way, additional sea mines were deployed and new artillery batteries were erected.

The blockade began on February 16, 1951 and would last 861 days until the armistice in July 1953. During nearly three years of blockading United States Navy ships and aircraft engaged shore batteries repeatedly. Several American vessels were damaged by land based artillery fire though none were destroyed. UN Task Group 95.2 was assigned to the blockade and they first bombarded Wonsan on February 17, 1951, targeting everything used by the communists and causing heavy damage.

On February 19, the destroyer USS Ozbourn, under Commander Ross E. Freeman, was fired on by shore batteries in the Wonsan area. She received two direct hits and several near misses and successfully rescued a downed pilot from the Valley Forge with a motor boat, while he was adrift in a mine field. The coxswain of the boat received a Bronze Star for the rescue. Ozbourn eventually returned to San Diego in April 1951 for repairs and later sailed back to North Korea.

On February 24, the undefended island of Sindo-ri, in Wonsan Harbor, was captured by South Korean marines supported by two

American destroyers and two frigates. Wonsan shore batteries also duelled with UN warships on March 3, but there were no recorded hits. The battleship USS New Jersey participated in her first shore bombardment mission of the war on May 20, 1951. While patrolling off Wonsan, North Korean batteries opened fire and she was struck by one shell.

Slightly damaged, she sustained one man killed and two wounded, her only casualties during the war. Another shot was a near miss and passed over the New Jersey from aft to port. She then responded by bombarding the enemy position until they were silenced. The type of warfare experienced at Wonsan would last throughout the war.

Operation Fireball

Operation Fireball was the code name for a bombardment of the Wonsan area from May through September. It involved the cooperation of naval vessels and aircraft from the 5th Air Force which caused heavy damage to the North Koreans. On the night of May 21 and May 22, during the height of the fighting, two American LSMRs, supported by light cruisers and destroyers, fired 4,903 rockets in thirty-five minutes, further damaging the defenses of the city. UN carrier aircraft were used to fire flares while the warships focused on gunnery.

It was the first time LSMRs would be deployed in the siege of Wonsan and over time would cause heavy casualties to the North Korean garrison. Between June and September the LSMRs would discharge a total of 12,924 5-inch rockets. During the operation,

destroyer USS Brinkley Bass was slightly damaged while engaging a battery, she sustained eight casualties in the action.

Action off Rei-To

On May 24, the UN station ship at Wonsan detected several small craft southeast of Rei-To Island. In a one sided night engagement, the light cruiser USS Manchester and the Brinkley Bass used radar to direct their fire and broke the enemy formation. Four sampans were recovered the following day along with the bodies of eleven enemies, one other wounded North Korean was taken prisoner and the sampans were found to have been converted to minelayers, with four M-26 mines each.

USS Walke Incident

USS Walke was a destroyer, under Captain Marshall Thompson, of Task Force 77 which was by now assigned to naval operations in the Wonsan area. On June 12 of 1951, the Walke was about sixty miles off the coast of North Korea, at position 38-52 N, 129-25 E, when she was struck either by a torpedo or a floating sea mine which had separated from a field. The resulting explosion severely damaged the Walke's hull on her port side and twenty-six men were killed and forty others wounded. Many of the casualties were blown over the side and into the water when the explosion occurred and it took a long time before all of them could be recovered.

Shortly thereafter, sailors on the nearby destroyers USS Hubbard and USS Bradford spotted an oil slick off of Walke's starboard side so they began dropping depth charges on

what they reported as being two submarines. The chase was eventually discontinued and the damage to the Walke was temporarily repaired and she made for Japan. A later investigation of the incident recovered a small metal disk from the damaged ship and when analyzed it was concluded to have been part of a torpedo detonator. The Walke was later repaired and returned to hostile Korean waters the following year.

Battle of the Buzz Saw

The Battle of the Buzz Saw, as United States Navy personnel called it, was a response to the UN's attacks on Wonsan. After causing heavy damage to North Korean forces within the previous months, the situation escalated as the communists started utilizing new weapons to lift the blockade. On July 6, 1951, the United States launched another naval bombardment of the area, causing high casualties and tempting the North Koreans to retaliate with an especially heavy bombardment on July 17, 1951.

For four and a half hours the destroyers USS O'Brien, USS Blue and USS Alfred A. Cunningham engaged the batteries at Wonsan, firing 2,336 rounds of 5-inch shells. The North Koreans offered heavy resistance and over 500 splashes were counted but there was no serious damage to the American vessels. The next day USS Evans engaged the batteries and received four near misses, wounding four men aboard the ship.

Operation Kickoff

Between late June through August 1951, North Korean attacks on

American ships seemed to increase so the United States began concentrating on destroying enemy batteries. On June 28, destroyer USS Henry W. Tucker received counter-battery fire while conducting a bombardment of Wonsan Harbor. She was struck by one round, causing light superficial damage and one man was injured.

A few days later on July 3, frigate USS Everett was attacked by the batteries and took hits, killing one man and wounding seven others. The Americans responded with an attack by the Fast Carrier Task Force. In one day 247 bombing sorties were carried out against Wonsan and 600 South Korean marines raided the mainland from the island of Cho-do.

On July 6, destroyer USS Evans landed men on the island of Hwangto-do and then with two other destroyers, bombarded buildings and a torpedo station. USS Blue captured Kukto Island the following day and established an observation point to keep watch on North Korean positions. On July 11, in the vicinity of Yo-do island, USS Blue and the Evans were attacked, approximately fifty splashes were counted near the ships but none of them were hit. Due to the attacks, particularly the Battle of the Buzz Saw, American naval commanders decided on launching Operation Kickoff which referred to maneuvers within Wonsan Harbor, aimed at reducing the batteries.

Every day on from July 17, 1951, elements of the allied fleet, assigned to bombardment groups, would sail at five knots to bombard known enemy positions and continue doing so from 3:00 pm until dark. On the

first day of the maneuvers, the LSMRs USS LSMR-409 and USS LSMR-525 received heavy accurate fire from enemy batteries on the islands of Kalmagak, Umi-do and Ho-do Pan-do. Both of the vessels were struck by shells and damaged but not seriously. Over 500 shells splashed in the water around USS O'Brien and she sustained at least a couple of hits. One man was injured although the damage was light. USS New Jersey and heavy cruiser USS Helena also participated in the bombardment.

On July 31, the Helena engaged in a gunnery duel, she was hit one time before delivering counter battery fire which destroyed seven gun emplacements and an ammunition dump. There were no casualties caused by the shell striking the ship but near misses wounded two men.

On August 4, British Royal Marines installed mortars on Hwangto-do for use in countering the North Korean shore batteries and on August 11, USS Hopewell, using SFCP, fired direct and indirect fire missions against enemy troop concentrations and transportation targets in Wonsan area. Minesweepers USS Dextrous, USS Heron and USS Redstart also came under fire by shore batteries that same day while conducting check sweep operations in the vicinity of Hodo-pando. Dextrous suffered two direct hits; killing one man, three wounded and moderate damage.

With the exception of an attack on USS Uhlmann on August 20, while off Hodo-pando, Operation Kickoff proved to be a success as the number of attacks on blockading ships decreased for a while until new batteries were constructed.

Seven enemy guns opened fire on the Uhlmann that day and after a long engagement, five of the guns were destroyed and 117 splashes were counted by the sailors but there were no hits. The Uhlmann had to break off the attack without silencing the remaining two artillery pieces because allied patrols entered the area.

Because the communists were still mining the approaches of Wonsan and Hungnam, the commander of CTF-95 ordered on September 5, the minesweeping group CTG-95.6 to sweep the coastline so as to allow UN ships to remain within gunfire range of the shore at all times while blockading. Upon completion, allied warships no longer had to withdraw out of range each night. While supporting the minesweepers involved in the mission, destroyer USS William Seiverling was hit three times on September 8 by ground based artillery, her fire room flooded but there were no casualties.

On September 10, the minesweepers Redstart and Heron were again damaged by shell fire from Wonsan, this time while rechecking pre-swept waters and on September 20, USS Orleck bombarded enemy troops and mortar positions, scoring five hits which destroyed an ammunition dump. Orleck also attacked a large sampan, suspected of minelaying, and struck her four times with gunfire. On September 24, the ROKN PF-62 was also damaged by shore battery fire. After three hits, the frigate was moderately damaged and caught on fire. Three South Korean sailors were wounded but they were able to save their ship from complete destruction.

Minesweeping operations would continue for months, the UN ships constantly swept various areas to ensure that no new mine fields were laid. Incidents of shore batteries scoring hits on allied warships also became less common and for weeks no vessels were damaged until October 29 when the USS Osprey was engaged. The Osprey's engine room flooded after being hit three times and communications went out, one man was seriously wounded though the ship was saved from sinking. By November 9, the minesweeping mission was eighty percent complete, accurate shore battery fire delayed the UN ships from completing the operation for a few more weeks.

Escalation of the Naval War

In late 1951 and 1952 intelligence from captured or surrendered North Koreans became more frequent and reliable. The information told the United States that the enemy was building sampans for minelaying and preparing offensives against the islands around Wonsan. MIG aircraft were also being reported in larger numbers and would begin to threaten UN aircraft and the blockading force. North Korean Army troops, well supplied by the Soviets and the Chinese, were also conducting large artillery bombardments that demonstrated their supply of ammunition.

Shore batteries increased their effectiveness as well, now that fire control was being equipped, air burst rounds were also starting to be used. With the minesweeping operation mostly completed, American bombardment groups began shelling the city again. The USS New Jersey carried out a series

of attacks at Wonsan and other nearby coastal targets from November 1 to November 6, 1951, during which she targeted the petroleum refinery at Wonsan, trains, bridges, tunnels, railroads, troop concentrations and shore batteries.

From November 22 to 24, LSR Division 31, including the LSMRs, 401, 403 and 404, conducted fire missions and on November 24 and 25, naval gunfire supported a guerrilla raid on the island of Ka-do where several North Korean prisoners were taken. On November 28 and 29, the North Koreans launched a small offensive operation, in it, armed sampans attacked the island settlement on Hwangto-do, killing one civilian and taking five civilians prisoner.

Most of the homes on the island were destroyed in the attack and the North Koreans suffered no casualties. Another large scale bombardment of Wonsan took place on December 20, with the battleship USS Wisconsin participating. Six days later the ROKN PC-740 was lost, presumably due to striking a mine off of To-do in Wonsan Harbor.

On January 11, 1952, the next significant gunnery duel began when the Redstart and Dextrous received accurate battery fire from Ho-do Pan-do while they were sailing without an escort. The fire was concentrated on the Dextrous and she sustained considerable superficial damage and a loss of one man killed and two wounded. Later on, the USS Gregory and USS George K. MacKenzie engaged in a one hour duel with four 76-millimeter batteries. MacKenzie was

closely straddled with thirty-six rounds but there was no damage or casualties. She also made three direct hits on the North Korean command post.

The George K. MacKenzie was engaged again on January 24 from Han-do Pan-do, along with the USS Marshall. Neither ship was damaged and there were no casualties, two 76-millimeter mortar rounds splashed 1,000 yards away from the Marshall. TF-77 rescued survivors from a helicopter crash on February 8, twenty-five miles outside of Wonsan. Reports from RESCAP indicate that personnel involved were apparently in enemy hands. Heavy flak in the area was the probable cause. The grounded helicopter was also destroyed by TF-77 aircraft. By the one-year anniversary of the blockade, bombing Wonsan occurred on a daily basis though occasionally the UN fleet would combine their firepower for larger engagements.

On February 16, exactly one year after the blockade began, USS Gregory, USS Twining and USS Rowan attacked in the usual bombardments that would last until the end of the war. Enemy shore batteries were active on March 13, at Kalmagak, Wonsan against UN siege forces. Counter battery engagements by USS Manchester, USS James E. Kyes, USS McGinty and USS Douglas H. Fox, plus the help of Fast Carrier Task Force planes silenced the enemy guns. Shore battery fire was most accurate to date indicating the possible use of fire control equipment.

USS Wiltsie and Brinkley Bass engaged shore batteries at Wonsan on March 20, utilizing SFPC

spotting. Brinkley Bass scored seven direct hits on one of the batteries located near the city of Wonsan. Neither ship was struck, but the Bass received some shrapnel. March 20 marked the beginning of a four-day attack on the blockade by North Korean artillery, on May 21 USS Osprey was taken under fire by enemy shore batteries while searching for mines.

Utilizing SFCP spot, Osprey silenced three batteries and suffered no damage. Brinkley Bass and USS Stickell silenced a battery at Kalmagak on March 22. USS Wiltsie received fire from the batteries east of Kalmagak on March 23 and, together with Brinkley Bass, responded with counter-battery fire to silence the enemy guns. During the following day the Bass was struck again with one round from Ho-do Pan-do, wounding five men, one seriously, and causing damage to the ship's radio and electronics. On March 28 USS Burlington was fired on from Ho-do Pan-do, shots straddled the ship but evasive maneuvers prevented probable hits. The Burlington responded with 123 rounds of her own and caused a small forest fire.

April 1952

USS Leonard F. Mason experienced an explosion in the depth charge starboard detonator locker on April 1, while bombarding Ho-do Pan-do, no casualties were reported. The Wiltsie, USS McGinty, and USS Condor were also engaged in the action. USS Symbol, USS Murrelet and USS Edmonds received enemy fire near Wonsan on April 2 and again no damage or casualties were experienced. The same day USS Wiltsie received ten near misses

from shore batteries east of Kalmagak while providing fire support for the Condor. Wiltsie was attacked a few more times within the next several days and they were all inconclusive contacts.

USS George K. MacKenzie

In the Wonsan area on April 10, TF-77 carried out a coordinated strike using the guns of USS Saint Paul and USS Hanson. USS Silverstein, to the north of Ho-do Pan-do, received 30 rounds of enemy fire at a range of 12,400 yards with fall of shot fifty to 300 yards from the ship but without damaging her. The incident was taken as evidence that the North Koreans were beginning to use fire control more regularly. On April 11, the Wiltsie and the McGinty were taken under fire by Wonsan shore batteries. Both ships conducted maneuvers in separate areas and delivered counter battery fire.

Silverstein, USS Cabildo and USS Apache fired suppression fire against the batteries on Ho-do Pan-do. The McGinty was straddled by enemy shore batteries as she moved near Wonsan on April 17. McGinty and the USS Maddox replied with counter fire and the enemy guns ceased. USS Cabildo was attacked again from shore batteries on April 29 from Ho-do Pan-do. Three near misses straddled ship and one direct hit amidships caused minor damage to structure and electrical wiring, two were wounded.

On the same day, USS Silverstein and USS Maddox, in a swept area south of Yo-do, were covering the withdrawal of two friendly sampans from Umi-do, when suddenly enemy batteries opened fire. The sampans received the first salvos, around 30

total so the Silverstein and the Maddox returned the fire and suppressed the batteries. Aircraft from USS Valley Forge were also called in to provide close air support. Silverstein received 110 rounds of estimated 105 millimeter batteries though she was not damaged, Maddox received two rounds. There were no allied casualties in the action.

USS Waxbill attacked a shore battery the following day and on April 28 the Silverstein, and USS Conserver received fire from Ho-do Pan-do. With South Korean small craft, the allied ships bombarded the opposing battery and laid a smokescreen while other nearby ships withdrew. The Conserver received ten rounds of estimated 122-millimeter fire. On May 7, USS Waxbill was fired on by twelve rounds but apparently did not return fire and on May 10, while sweeping Wonsan Harbor, USS Merganser and USS Redhead received ten rounds of enemy fire from Kalmagak.

Also that day, the Maddox and USS Laffey attacked North Korean railroad targets, scoring many hits, two railroad cars were damaged along with two buildings. Batteries on Kalmagak fired ten rounds of 76-millimeter fire at the sweepers, the nearest one landing 100 yards from the ship. Counter fire by Maddox scored two more hits. On the next day, the Maddox, the Laffey, the Herbert J. Thomas and the USS Evansville, received 206 rounds of seventy-five and 155-millimeter fire and an hour long engagement.

North Koreans were using hidden guns which were difficult to locate but were believed to have been fired

from Han-do Pan-do, Hapchin-ni and Kalamagak. Return fire destroyed three enemy gun positions and the Thomas was hit once, causing little damage and no casualties. On May 17, TG-95.2 reported that an interrogation of seven prisoners, captured off Ho-do Pan-do the day before, revealed that the enemy were planning an attack on Yodo in the near future. Troops are being concentrated in two locations on He-do Pan-do and are going to use about eighty fishing sampans for transport. Ten days later on May 27, shore batteries at Wonsan fought against the USS Cabildo and Ozbourn. In a typical duel the American ships bombarded the coast and were not damaged, the day after USS Ozbourn accepted the surrender of two North Koreans soldiers.

USS O'Bannon suppressed enemy batteries on May 29 after the North Koreans opened fire on friendly islands. The USS Ozbourn, USS Radford, and USS Heron also engaged on May 29 and May 30. Ozbourn received six rounds of 155-millimeter fire and, the Radford, ten rounds of estimated 75-millimeter gunfire with the nearest one landing fifty yards from the ship. The Heron was hit by machine gun fire that hit aft section of the vessel. There were no friendly casualties in any of the actions and in all cases the ships returned fire with naval guns.

On June 5, the O'Bannon, Radford and the Lofberg attacked and silenced a battery of 75-millimeter guns south of Ho-do Pan-do. The artillery opened fire on some American minesweepers but quickly quieted by the escorts. North Koreans artillery in Wonsan bombarded Hwangto-do on June 7,

no casualties were reported but twenty-one shot holes were found to have passed through the flag over the island. USS Albuquerque was straddled by enemy fire on June 12, wounding one man and on June 19 the North Koreans staged another artillery bombardment against friendly held Hwangto-do. USS Parks caught 300 enemy troops repairing a railroad, south of Wonsan on the same day, and fired twenty-eight rounds.

She reported inflicting seventy-four casualties and scoring hits on a railroad bridge and tracks. When it became dark, Parks also fired star shells at the location for bombing runs by allied aircraft. The next exchange in the siege of Wonsan occurred a month later on August 10, 1952. Enemy gun positions on He-do Pan-do, fired upon USS Barton and USS Jarvis with approximately 250 75-millimeter to 155-millimeter guns. The Barton suffered superficial damage, one man killed, and one wounded. Jarvis was not damaged and counter battery fire destroyed two gun emplacements.

Two days after, the USS Grapple was the target for about thirty rounds of 105-millimeter artillery. The ship was hit once below the waterline causing slight damage. USS Barton fired eighty-nine shots in response and scored three hits on two North Korean batteries. The ROKN FS-905, was also attacked on May 12.

While anchored off Yo-do Island, with a cargo of gasoline and ammunition for motor torpedo boats, ROKN FS-905 was taken under fire by enemy shore guns and received one hit in the starboard

machine gun battery. The damage was light and there were no casualties. Hwangto-do was bombarded again on August 16 by the North Koreans with four 155-millimeter artillery pieces and large mortars from Kalamagak. The guns could not be located so none of the allied warships could respond.

Typhoon Karen

Typhoon Karen swept through Korean waters over the next few days so also blockading activities were suspended. Several UN warships were damaged during the height of the storm. The communists used the chance to attack Hwangto-do again. After the typhoon passed USS Lewis fired seven rounds of 5-inch shells at an enemy battery on Kalamagak, which was firing on friendly islands in the Wonsan area. The enemy artillery was silenced although they killed one person and wounded and two others.

On September 11, 1952, batteries on Umi-do fired eighteen 105-millimeter rounds at the USS Lewis, no damage or casualties. On September 13, aircraft from the USS Bon Homme Richard attacked a 130 foot naval like vessel near Wonsan and sank it with rockets and 20 millimeter strafing. The enemy ship was one of the few sunk by UN forces during the war. Two days later, the Barton hit was suspected of being a floating mine while sailing 100 miles due east of Wonsan Harbor. Five enlisted men were counted missing and later presumed dead, six other men were wounded. The fire room flooded and there was other less severe damage. Flooding was brought under control and she set a course for Sasebo under her own power.

USS Cunningham received five hits on September 19. Guns from Wonsan, estimated to be 105 to 155-millimeters, at a distance of 3,500 yards away, hit the Cunningham with their first shot, four more followed along with seven nearby air bursts. Eight Americans were wounded but none of them fatal and the ship was moderately damaged though she was capable of firing 159 rounds of return fire with 5-inch and 3-inch guns.

USS Toledo in September 1951.

USS Jenkins and USS Taylor came under fire from accurate shore batteries in the vicinity of Hwangto-do, the two vessels received an estimated twenty-one rounds of 90-millimeter and three rounds of 105-millimeter, there was no damage. North Korean forces also bombarded Hwangto-do though their batteries were silenced by thirty-nine rounds from the Jenkins. The North Koreans attacked Yo-do Island with artillery a few days later and on September 23 the USS Iowa was attacked but her 16-inch guns quickly silenced the perpetrators. USS Taylor also silenced a battery on September 25 and the Heron received 105-millimeter fire but was not damaged. Three splashes were counted near the ship.

North Korean air attack

The first and only naval air battle at Wonsan and Hungnam occurred on October 7. MIG-15s attacked TF-77 aircraft three times, one MIG made a firing pass on two American AD planes so they returned fire. There were no damage or casualties on either side and the MIGs retired to the west. Later on four MIG-15s attacked a flight of F4Us while two others attacked eight ADs near

Hungnam. In these engagements there were no casualties but in a final attack later on that day, a single MIG-15 destroyed one of four F4Us in another action near Hungnam.

On October 16, USS Toledo was shot at with four rounds from estimated 75-millimeter and 122-millimeter guns. No damage was reported as all of the shells landed splashed in the water around 1,000 yards short of the ship, USS Mansfield was also attacked with about forty 75-millimeter rounds. For over a month no artillery was exchanged until November 20 when the USS Kite and USS Thompson received fire from 120-millimeter guns. The Thompson was hit by one round of the many which straddled her, one man suffered wounds and minor material damage resulted. USS Kite fought another duel on the following day. She received fifty-five 75-millimeter rounds but again sustained no casualties.

On November 25, the Thomson found herself in action, this time against enemy aircraft. Jets dropped six to eight explosives over the American ship, the closest landing 300 yards away. The aircraft were heard by the Thompson's lookout but radar showed nothing. USS Merganser was fired upon by guns at the mouth of the Namchongang River on December 6, the Seiverling replied with 101 rounds, and was herself taken under fire by guns on Kalmagak. Fifty-six additional shells were then sent in that direction.

On the following day, Merganser received thirty more rounds of 75-millimeter fire from Kalmagak but she was not damaged. USS Shields, USS Seiverling and UN

minesweepers were fired upon by approximately seventy-five rounds on December 11. The small minesweepers were forced to slip their gear and use smoke pots to help cover themselves. That same day, USS Waxbill and USS Marshall collided west of Yo-do, Waxbill sustained topside damage to hull fittings but was still operational and otherwise unharmed.

On December 12 the Marshall was attacked again, twenty rounds were fired her way but as usual the communists could not hit their target. USS Grasp and the Seiverling were also attacked and they too escaped harm. About forty rounds of North Korean artillery targeted the Waxbill and the Marshall on December 13, while they were patrolling near the Namchongang's mouth. Though the fire was accurate, no hits were made. The closest shot splashed in the water ten feet from the Waxbill which caused shrapnel damage. Twelve shots were fired by the Americans in return.

Waxbill came under fire again on December 19, three rounds were fired her way but none struck the ship. A few days later, USS Toledo received the same treatment while bombarding the city but was not damaged either. On December 23, while providing gunfire support for the minesweepers in Wonsan Harbor, USS Marshall, USS McGowan received approximately thirty rounds of estimated 75-millimeter shells. During the firing, four to nine airbursts fell near the McGowan, sixty to seventy near Marshall, and several rounds between the minesweepers. Throughout the engagements the North Koreans failed to cause any

damage. The McGowan engaged in another shore battery action two days later.

Height of the Fighting

January 2, 1953 marked the first day in a large scale North Korean bombardment of the UN held islands in Wonsan Harbor. Over the course of the next few months, enemy shore batteries in and around Wonsan fired hundreds of rounds primarily against Hwangto-do and Yo-do. The operation lasted until May and less sporadically thereafter. It was also a failure, UN intelligence estimated that ninety percent of the North Korean shore batteries were active against friendly islands rather than the blockading fleet, though throughout the bombardments, which occurred almost on a daily basis, only four friendlies were killed and fifteen wounded. During the operation, UN ships constantly responded with counter battery fire.

On February 9 and February 10, a maximum effort strike by American naval aircraft was conducted against supply concentrations and transport targets from Wonsan through Songjin to Chongjin and Hoeryong. USS Philippine Sea, USS Oriskany and USS Kearsarge participated in the operations which caused extensive damage to the communists logistics system. As part of the communist bombardment in the Wonsan area, enemy shells killed two men on February 14, including an American marine, and wounded nine others in the most successful North Korean artillery attack against UN land forces. A command post on Yo-do was also damaged, one DUKN was destroyed and two other sustained damaged to their hulls. An aid station, two tents and

communication wires were also damaged. Two bunkers caved in on Hwangto-do.

USS De Haven and USS Moore responded with a bombardment of their own and they received fire with the nearest shells splashing 400 yards away. February 16, was the second anniversary of the blockade. Despite that Wonsan was mostly ruins it remained a key transportation hub for communists forced, which gave UN forces the incentive for continuing blockade duties. Because of the constant threat of amphibious assault, approximately 30,000 North Korean soldiers and 6,000 civilians were pinned down and therefore could not be used at the frontline.

On March 5, during a heavy UN bombardment in Wonsan Harbor, USS Missouri was challenged by five rounds of 105-millimeter shore battery fire. Missouri was not hit and she hastily silenced the battery. Five days later the Missouri received fifteen more rounds of 75-millimeter to 155-millimeter cannon fire while bombarding the city. The American ship escaped damage again, the nearest shot landing 500 yards off. USS Merganser was also engaged with the nearest shot splashing harmlessly 200 yards from her.

On March 18, 1953, USS Los Angeles was carrying out bombardment duties at Wonsan when two air bursts and one surface round landed near the ship. On March 22, during another heavy bombardment, two 90-millimeter air bursts and two 105-millimeter rounds landed near the Missouri but she was undamaged. USS Prichett and the Waxbill also received fire

but no damage resulted in any of the attacks. The Prichett was attacked again on March 25 but no damage was sustained, USS Shelton, USS Eversole, ROKN AMS-502 and AMS-515 engaged in a similar action the following day.

USS Los Angeles was hit by one enemy round on March 27 but the damage was light and no one was injured. A day later two air bursts landed 200 yards from the Prichett and on March 30 and March 31, the Prichett evaded thirty-five more enemy shots without damage. Eight days of combined naval and air operations then started against the defenses of Wonsan. TF-77 aircraft pounded the city but the results were negligible. On April 2, USS Los Angeles received another hit by Wonsan shore batteries. This time there was only minor structural damage to the mainmast though thirteen men were injured. Fourteen others, who were wearing body armor, were also hit but not wounded.

The North Korean batteries targeted naval vessels on April 5, USS Maddox received six rounds of 75-millimeter while ROKN AMS-515 avoided fifty shots of 105-millimeter fire, neither of the ships were struck. Two days later on April 7, the communists again targeted the blockading ships but without results. USS Los Angeles and USS McCord evaded two rounds, the enemy also continued their bombardment of friendly islands off Wonsan. On April 8, at least sixty-four shots were fired at the fleet and a couple days after, USS Eversole and the Los Angeles engaged in a duel with shore batteries.

On April 16, the Maddox was hit with one shot out of 156 fired at her during a forty-minute action against a ten-gun battery. The shot, a 76-millimeter, hit port side on the main deck, tearing a sixteen inch hole and wounding three men. Maddox responded with counter fire but failed to silence the hostile guns. USS Shelton was fired at three times on April 17. April 19 was a lively day during the Blockade of Wonsan. Twenty-five rounds from 105-millimeter guns were fired at the Eversole but as was typical, the North Koreans did not strike the ship. USS Curlew also received three shots and another forty-one at the New Jersey and USS Renshaw. The only ship damaged in action that day was the USS James E. Kyes. One 155-millimeter round, out of sixty, tore a three foot hole through the Kyes, wounding four men in the process, one seriously.

North Korean bombardment of UN held islands

On April 22, the North Korean bombardment of UN held islands continued, with dozens of rounds being fired each day, USS Manchester also sustained slight superficial damage from a battery. Between 2:30 and 4:00 pm on April 23, the island of Tee-do was under intense enemy fire from gun positions on Kalma Pan-do. Five marines were wounded, including one American. USS Henderson provided counter fire while USS Owen took aboard the casualties. During the mission, Henderson and Owen were fired on so they withdrew and TF-77 aircraft took over by bombing the area.

On the next day, Wonsan guns fired around 100 rounds of 76-millimeter

to 105-millimeter rounds at the USS James C. Owens and USS Henderson, no damage or casualties were reported. The James C. Owens was attacked on April 25 though again there was no damage sustained. On April 29, as the bombardment of UN held island continued, a HU-1 helicopter received fourteen rounds of VT fuzed enemy shells while on a mine reconnaissance flight over Wonsan Harbor. The aircraft was not damaged but the encounter told the Americans that another new type of weapon was being used by North Korean forces. USS Gurke also avoided six enemy shells that day.

April 1953 was reported by the United States Navy as being the height of the three-year battle with enemy forces firing over 2,000 artillery rounds in defiance of the blockade alone, and over 1,000 more at the friendly guerrilla held islands. Usually the was average was about 500 rounds a month. North Koreans troops also constructed hidden batteries on Ho-do Pan-do, the Americans bombarded them with 5-inch guns without effect. Because of this, UN naval forces were ordered to stay out of the area in daylight until the weapons could be destroyed by cruisers and battleships or naval aircraft.

Mine warfare also increased during the month of April, after months of finding nothing, thirty-two new mines were found in Wonsan Harbor. On May 2 the hidden guns made two hits and two near misses each on the USS Maddox and USS Owen, both ships received slight damage and there were no casualties. Over two hundred shells were fired by the enemy. The Gurke

came under fire on the following day, along with the friendly islands of Wonsan Harbor. USS Bremerton engaged in a heavy gun strike against enemy batteries eighteen rounds of 76-millimeter to 105-millimeter shells flew by. One near miss minorly wounded two men and the ship received superficial damage topside. USS Samuel N. Moore was hit by a 90-millimeter shell on May 8 but it did no significant damage. The round starboard side just above the waterline. The same battery fired at USS Brush, sixty-four total.

Allied air strike against Yo-do island

On May 15, TF-77 aircraft attacked an airfield on Yo-do island while American ships silenced the batteries on the islands. USS Brush was also hit in the mount that day, making it inoperable, and nine men were wounded, four seriously. The battleship New Jersey was fired at on May 27 but her 16-inch guns quickly put an end to it, meanwhile the islands were still receiving their daily barrage which continued in June. heavy gun strikes also continued, the communists resisted every UN attack but very few hits were made. On June 3, Wonsan shore batteries fifteen 105-millimeter shells at the USS John A. Bole and USS Lofberg but no damage occurred. The guns were silenced by return fire.

USS LSMR-409 was hit on June 4, causing moderate damage to the messing compartment and the radio room, and resulting in five men wounded. The enemy fired thirty rounds of 76-millimeter fire before being silenced by over 200 rockets from the LSMR. USS PC-706 destroyed five North Korean fishing boats on the beach at the northern

end of Ho-do Pan-do. The weather was very foggy and sure enough Typhoon Judy was announced the following morning which hampered TF-77's operations for three days. The Lofberg and the John A. Bole were attacked on June 8 by batteries but it was another inconclusive contact. Bole spent the next day bombarding enemy guns. On June 11, the USS Wiltsie received an estimated forty-five rounds of 105-millimeter fire. The vessel was hit one time on the starboard side of her main deck but was still completely operational. Shrapnel caused a lot of damage and a four-inch hole in the deck. No casualties were inflicted on American forces.

Three days after this incident the USS Bremerton, USS Lofberg and USS John A. Bole exchanged fire with the batteries, several guns were destroyed and there were no friendly casualties. The Lofberg, the Bole and the USS Current received 110 rounds of fire on the next day without effect. Shore batteries on Ho-do Pan-do were increasingly menacing the allied blockade, concentrated fire was directed against destroyers in Wonsan Harbor on June 17. USS Irwin and USS Rowan re-escaped to seventy-five fathoms and the Henderson avoided another seventy-five, the nearest landing ten yards from the Henderson.

The Irwin and the Rowan would fight another battle the following day. In it the North Koreans scored their most number of hits in one engagement. USS Irwin was hit by one round from Kalmagak and it tore a three foot hole in the main deck. Five American sailors were wounded. The Rowan suffered five hits and ten casualties, none of them

fatal, and she received forty-five rounds of different caliber altogether. The destroyer was moderately damaged. Thirty-six shells were fired at the Saint Paul but she was not hit.

A small surface engagement occurred the same day. An armed South Korean Army intelligence boat encountered a North Korean thirty foot patrol boat and for ten minutes the vessels fought until the North Koreans withdrew under cover of a battery. The patrol boat had a speed of twenty knots, carried a radio and was armed with rocket launchers, machine guns and the crew carried various small arms. On June 19 the Rowan and the Bremerton were fired on but no hits resulted.

USS Manchester was conducting a heavy bombardment of Wonsan on or about July 3 when fragments from a near miss put a two inch hole in the after stack and through the door of a powder room, no one was hurt though. On July 7, enemy gunners on Ho-do Pan-do concentrated their on the blockade. Over 300 rounds of 76-millimeter to 122-millimeter fire landed near the USS Lofberg, USS Thomason and USS Hamner. Thomason suffered holes and dents topside due to air burst straddles but there were no casualties. The Americans returned 880 rounds of counter battery fire before the action ended.

A few days after, enemy artillery fired forty-eight rounds of 76-millimeter to 105-millimeter shells at USS Saint Paul and scored a hit on a gun mount. Two guns were damaged but nobody was wounded. For the next several days the North Koreans focused on attacking

friendly islands until July 23 when the Saint Paul drew twelve rounds of 155-millimeter fire and all of the shots splashed in the water ten to fifty yards from the ship. On July 27 the Saint Paul fired the last American shots of the battle against shore batteries. With the signing of an armistice, the fighting came to an end after 861 days of action.

Aftermath

United Nations ships at Wonsan achieved a significant goal by maintaining a blockade against hostile territory for so long. UN naval forces inflicted heavy casualties on the North Korean forces while sustaining comparatively few casualties of their own. The North Korean artillerymen who defended Wonsan were mostly ineffective, thousands of dollars worth of artillery shells were wasted. Wonsan was destroyed and remained so for years after the war, but due to its location, it was eventually rebuilt and is still an important strategic point.

Editor's Note:

Our shipmate, Dick Brusky, related to me that Bristol took part in gunfire support as allied troops withdrew to Wonsan. US carrier based aircraft strafed and conducted bombing runs on the approaching Chinese Army. One of those aircraft was disabled by ground fire and the pilot had to ditch. The downed pilot was rescued and dropped off on the fantail of Bristol.

Bristol's CO would not return pilot to his carrier without first getting many gallons of ice cream for Bristol crew. Carrier CO complied and pilot returned to his carrier. ///

Destroyer Challenges China Claims

The destroyer Decatur conducted a close patrol 21 OCT of the disputed Parcel Islands, a move that challenges China's claimed dominion over the South China Sea islands, according to two U.S. officials familiar with the action.

The patrol did not cross the 12-mile territorial limit of any of the features, but was intended to challenge claims in the Paracels, one official said. The U.S. and neighboring countries have called excessive.

The patrol comes amid tensions as Beijing doubles down on its claims to control most of the South China Sea and the land features that pepper the 1.4 million square mile body of water.

The distance of the patrol is significant because if the ship patrolled within 12 miles, the Navy would handle it as a freedom of navigation operation that asserts U.S. rights to freely operate in waters claimed by other countries.

Those operations need to be approved at the highest levels. It's unclear whether the U.S. views this patrol as a freedom of navigation operation.

"USS Decatur (DDG 73) conducted this transit in a routine, lawful manner without ship escorts and without incident on Oct. 21," said Defense Department spokesman Cmdr. Gary Ross. "The United States conducts these routine operations on a regular basis around the world, in full compliance with international law."



In the past, officials have said that such patrols are not solely directed at China, but are challenges to the excessive claims of all parties. The Paracel Islands are claimed by Taiwan, Vietnam and China

Navy Times first reported in July that U.S. destroyers have been



regularly patrolling China's claims in the Spratly Islands and in the Paracels. Experts called it a show of force that signals resolve to

the Chinese and U.S. allies in the region.

During 2016, analysts have marked a significant increase in U.S. presence in the South China Sea, though the Navy has been diligent about calling the patrols routine.

During a July visit to China's North Sea Fleet Headquarters in Qingdao, China, the Navy's top officer said the U.S. would continue its patrols in the region.

"The U.S. Navy will continue to conduct routine and lawful operations around the world, including in the South

China Sea, in order to protect the rights, freedoms and lawful uses of sea and airspace guaranteed to all this will not change," said Adm. John Richardson, chief of naval operations.

Tensions around the Paracel Islands spiked earlier in the week when

China confirmed it had stationed troops on Woody Island, where it has already built an airstrip, according to a UPI report. China claims control of most of the 69 South China Sea, and has sought to bolster those claims by building manmade islands atop reefs and shoals in the Spratly Islands chain. Those claims were invalidated by a ruling in the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, which said China could not create territorial rights by building islands on reefs and sandbars.

China rejected the court's ruling, saying that it did not have jurisdiction because of prior agreements with the involved parties to negotiate bilaterally.

[Source: Navy Times David B. Larter | October 21, 2016]

William "Bill" Crawford

was an unimpressive figure, one you could easily overlook during a hectic day at the U.S. Air Force Academy. Mr. Crawford, as most of us referred to him back in the late 1970s, was our Squadron janitor.

While we Cadets busied ourselves preparing for academic exams, athletic events, Saturday morning parades, and room inspection, or never ending leadership classes-Bill quietly moved about the squadron mopping and buffing floors, emptying trash cans, cleaning toilets, or just tidying up the mess 100 college-age kids can leave in a dormitory.

Sadly, and for many years, few of us gave him much notice, rendering little more than a passing nod or throwing a curt, "G'morning!" in his direction as we hurried off to our daily duties. Why? Perhaps it was because of the way he did his job - he always kept the squadron area spotlessly clean, even the toilets and showers gleamed. Frankly, he did his job so well, none of us had to notice or get involved. After all, cleaning toilets was his job, not ours.

Maybe it was his physical appearance that made him disappear into the background. Bill didn't move very quickly, and in fact, you could say he even shuffled a bit, as if he suffered from some sort of injury. His gray hair and wrinkled face made him appear ancient to a group of young cadets.

And his crooked smile, well, it looked a little funny. Face it, Bill was an old man working in a young person's world. What did he have to offer us on a personal level?

Maybe it was Mr. Crawford's personality that rendered him almost invisible to the young people around him. Bill was shy, almost painfully so. He seldom spoke to a Cadet unless they addressed him first, and that didn't happen very often. Our janitor always buried himself in his

work, moving about with stooped shoulders, a quiet gait, and an averted gaze. If he noticed the hustle and bustle of cadet life around him, it was hard to tell. For whatever reason, Bill blended into the woodwork and became just another fixture around the Squadron. The Academy, one of our nation's premier leadership laboratories, kept us busy from dawn till dusk. And Mr. Crawford...well, he was just a janitor.

That changed one fall Saturday afternoon in 1976. I was reading a book about World War II and the tough Allied ground campaign in Italy, when I stumbled across an incredible story.

On September 13, 1943, a Pvt. William Crawford from Colorado, assigned to the 36th Infantry Division, had been involved in some bloody fighting on Hill 424 near Altavilla, Italy.

"William Crawford's Medal of Honor Citation."

The words on the page leapt out at me, "in the face of intense and overwhelming hostile fire... with no regard for personal safety... on his own initiative, Private Crawford single-handedly attacked fortified enemy positions." It continued, "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at risk of life above and beyond the call of duty, the President of the United States..."

"Holy cow," I said to my roommate, "you're not going to believe this, but I think our janitor is a Medal of Honor recipient." We all knew Mr. Crawford was a World War II Army vet, but that didn't keep my friend from looking at me as if I was some sort of alien being. Nonetheless, we couldn't wait to ask Bill about the story.

We met Mr. Crawford bright and early Monday and showed him the page in question from the book, anticipation and doubt on our faces. He stared at it for a few silent

moments and then quietly uttered something like, "Yep, that's me."

Mouths agape, my roommate and I looked at one another, then at the book, and quickly back at our janitor. Almost at once, we both stuttered, "Why didn't you ever tell us about it?" He slowly replied after some thought, "That was one day in my life and it happened a long time ago." I guess we were all at a loss for words after that. We had to hurry off to class and Bill, well, he had chores to attend to.

After that brief exchange, things were never again the same around our squadron. Word spread like wildfire among the Cadets that we had a hero in our midst - Mr. Crawford, our janitor, had been bestowed The Medal! Cadets who had once passed by Bill with hardly a glance, now greeted him with a smile and a respectful, "Good morning, Mr. Crawford."

Those who had before left a mess for the "janitor" to clean up, started taking it upon themselves to put things in order.

Cadets routinely stopped to talk to Bill throughout the day and we even began inviting him to our formal Squadron functions. He'd show up dressed in a conservative dark suit and quietly talk to those who approached him, the only sign of his heroics being a simple blue, star-spangled lapel pin. Almost overnight, Bill went from being a simple fixture in our Squadron to one of our teammates.

Mr. Crawford changed too, but you had to look closely to notice the difference. After that fall day in 1976, he seemed to move with more purpose, his shoulders didn't seem to be as stooped, he met our greetings with a direct gaze and a stronger "good morning" in return, and he flashed his crooked smile more often. The Squadron gleamed as always, but everyone now seemed to notice it more. Bill even got to know most of us by our first names,

something that didn't happen often at the Academy. While no one ever formally acknowledged the change, I think we became Bill's Cadets and his Squadron.

As often happens in life, events sweep us away from those in our past. The last time I saw Bill was on graduation day in June 1977. As I walked out of the Squadron for the last time, he shook my hand and simply said, "Good luck, young man." With that, I embarked on a career that has been truly lucky and blessed.

Mr. Crawford continued to work at the Academy and eventually retired in his native Colorado, one of four Medal of Honor recipients who lived in the small town of Pueblo. A wise person once said, "It's not life that's important, but those you meet along the way that make the difference." Bill was one who made a difference for me. Bill Crawford, our janitor, taught me many valuable, unforgettable leadership lessons, and I think of him often.

Here are ten I'd like to share:

1.) Be Cautious of Labels. Labels you place on people may define your relationship to them and bind their potential. Sadly, and for a long time, we labeled Bill as just a janitor, but he was so much more. Therefore, be cautious of a leader who callously says, "Hey, he's just an Airman." Likewise, don't tolerate the O-1, who says, "I can't do that, I'm just a Lieutenant."

2.) Everyone Deserves Respect. Because we hung the "janitor" label on Mr. Crawford, we often wrongly treated him with less respect than others. He deserved much more, and not just because he was received the Medal of Honor. Bill deserved respect because he was a janitor, walked among us, and was a part of our team.

3.) Courtesy Makes a Difference. Be courteous to all around you, regardless of rank or position. Military customs, as well as common courtesies, help bond a

team. When our daily words to Mr. Crawford turned from perfunctory "hellos" to heartfelt greetings, his demeanor and personality outwardly changed. It made a difference for all of us.

4.) Take Time to Know Your People. Life in the military is hectic, but that's no excuse for not knowing the people you work for and with. For years a hero walked among us at the Academy and we never knew it. Who are the heroes that walk in your midst?

5.) Anyone Can Be a Hero. Mr. Crawford certainly didn't fit anyone's standard definition of a hero. Moreover, he was just a private on the day he earned his Medal. Don't sell your people short, for any one of them may be the hero who rises to the occasion when duty calls. On the other hand, it's easy to turn to your proven performers when the chips are down, but don't ignore the rest of the team. Today's rookie could and should be tomorrow's superstar.

6.) Leaders Should Be Humble. Most modern day heroes, and some leaders, are anything but humble, especially if you calibrate your "hero meter" on today's athletic fields. End zone celebrations and self-aggrandizement are what we've come to expect from sports greats. Not Mr. Crawford-he was too busy working to celebrate his past heroics. Leaders would be well served to do the same.

7.) Life Won't Always Hand You What You Think You Deserve. We in the military work hard and, dang it, we deserve recognition, right? However, sometimes you just have to persevere, even when accolades don't come your way. Perhaps you weren't nominated for junior officer or airman of the quarter as you thought you should - don't let that stop you. Don't pursue glory; pursue excellence. Private Bill Crawford didn't pursue glory - he did his duty and then swept floors for a living.

8.) No Job is Beneath a Leader. If Bill Crawford, a Medal of Honor recipient, could clean latrines and smile, is there a job beneath your dignity? Think about it.

9.) Pursue Excellence. No matter what task life hands you, do it well. Dr. Martin Luther King said, "If life makes you a street sweeper, be the best street sweeper you can be." Mr. Crawford modeled that philosophy and helped make our dormitory area a home.

10.) Life is a Leadership Laboratory. All too often we look to some school or class to teach us about leadership when, in fact, life is a leadership laboratory. Those you meet every day will teach you enduring lessons if you just take time to stop, look, and listen. I spent four years at the Air Force Academy, took dozens of classes, read hundreds of books, and met thousands of great people. I gleaned leadership skills from all of them, but one of the people I remember most is Mr. Bill Crawford and the lessons he unknowingly taught. Don't miss your opportunity to learn.

Bill Crawford was a janitor. However, he was also a teacher, friend, role model, and one great American hero. He passed away on Mar. 15, 2000 and was buried on the grounds of the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

For more on the life of Bill Crawford and the action that earned him his Medal of Honor, please go the following site: http://homeofheroes.com/profiles/profiles_crawford2.html

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Take United 93 Down!

U.S. Air Force Lt. Heather "Lucky" Penney was a rookie in the fall of 2001, the first female F-16 pilot ever at the 121st Fighter Squadron of the

District of Columbia Air National Guard 113th Wing located at Joint Base Andrews, Camp Springs, Maryland. She had grown up smelling jet fuel, as her father, retired U.S. Air Force Col. John Penney, was a veteran air racer who flew jets in Vietnam and was a flight captain with United Airlines at the time. She got her pilot's license when she was a literature major at Purdue. She planned to be a teacher. But during a graduate program in American studies, Congress opened air combat aviation to women and Penney was nearly first in line. "I signed up immediately," Penney says. "I wanted to be a fighter pilot like my dad."

On Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001, Penny and others from her squadron had just finished two weeks of air combat training in Nevada. They were sitting at a briefing table when someone looked in to say a plane had hit the World Trade Center. When it happened once, they assumed it was some yahoo in a Cessna. Word slowly filtered in that it was not a small private plane, but two commercial airplanes that had slammed into the Twin Towers in New York; then, that a third plane had flown into the Pentagon; and finally, that a fourth plane, United Airlines Flight 93, was heading toward Washington, D.C. to possibly take out the Congress or the White House.

Penney and her commanding officer, Col. Marc Sasseville, were ordered to stop United Airlines Flight 93 from reaching the nation's capital and hitting its intended target. But there was no time to arm their F-16s, which had only dummy training ammo on board - no incendiary high-explosive bullets and no missiles. They were flying the only missiles they had. She and Col. Marc Sasseville made a desperate pact - they would be kamikaze pilots, on a suicide mission, to stop Flight 93 from hitting Washington at any cost.

He planned to strike the plane's cockpit. Without batting an eye, the petite, blonde, 25-year old Penney, one of the Air Force's first female fighter pilots - and who had never "scrambled" a jet fighter before - replied, "I'll take [down] the tail."

"We wouldn't be shooting it down - we would be ramming the aircraft, because we didn't have weapons on board," Penney said in an interview with the Washington Post. She added, "I gave some thought to whether I would have time to eject, but I had to be sure. You only get one chance. You don't want to eject and then miss. You have to stick with it the whole way."

What made her mission more terrifying was her knowledge that her father was a flight captain for United Airlines at the time, flying an East Coast rotation that could have included Flight 93. It turns out that her father had been piloting United 93 earlier in the day but had gotten off at Boston, something she had no way of knowing at the time.

On that cool, clear morning, Penney jammed the throttle of her unarmed F-16 fighter jet at Andrews Air Force Base into a roaring "scramble" takeoff, skipping the normal half-hour pre-flight, knowing that if her mission was successful, she would not be coming back.

But none of her thousands of hours in the air quite compared with the urgent rush of launching on what was meant to be a one-way flight to a midair collision.

"It was so surreal because the air space was so quiet," she recalled. "I really didn't have much emotion or time to reflect that day because I was focused on getting the job done, but there was significant adrenalin." She muttered a fighter pilot's prayer - "God, don't let me f**k up" - and followed her commander into the sky under full military take-off power, afterburners scorching their trail. Their flight path from Andrews

took them over the Pentagon, still billowing smoke as service members and employees and rescue personnel desperately worked to contain the blaze and save lives.

What she and Sasseville didn't know it at the time, Flight 93 had already crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. She didn't have to take out an airliner full of innocent civilians, the hostages on board were willing to do just what the two Guard pilots had been willing to do: give their lives for their country.

Her mission soon changed to helping clear and establish a defensive cap over Washington's airspace and escorting Air Force One, with then-President George W. Bush aboard, to Andrews Air Force Base.

Their lives were spared, but many were lost, including that of a family friend.

One of John Penney's best work buddies and cubicle mate back at United's pilot training center, Captain Jason Dahl, was the pilot of United 93 that fateful morning.

Had the passengers of that plane not overcome the terrorists and taken it down in a field outside Shanksville, Pennsylvania, "Lucky" would have died killing one of her father's closest friends, among others.

"It would have been utterly devastating for my wife and me," John Penney told the Post. "With Jason on the plane, it would have been an additional level of grief. But there were thousands of families that learned about the loss of their loved ones that day."

When Lt. "Lucky" Penney thinks about her role on Sept. 11 and how it will be remembered, she said she hoped media attention on the attacks won't make Americans fearful of the future.

"We saw so much of the best of ourselves come out that day, with

strangers helping strangers and many courageous acts," she said. "We remembered something more important than ourselves, and that was the community to which we belonged."

In the time since that clear blue morning, Penney said, "I've come to realize that heroism isn't something unique or possessed by only a chosen few. That courage is there inside of each and every one of us. In the normal, perfectly average people that helped each other in the moments before the towers fell. The first responders. Neighbors and strangers coming together and lifting each other up. Those who sacrificed to undertake the dangerous and difficult task of cleaning up and rebuilding. How, in defiance of those who would threaten our way of life, how we all got up that next morning and went on."

Penney, a single mother of two girls, works at Lockheed Martin as a director in the F-35 program. She is now a major and no longer a combat flier. She flew two tours in Iraq and she serves as a part-time National Guard pilot, mostly hauling VIPs around in a military Gulfstream (C-38), pursuing a second master's degree.

"The real heroes are the passengers on Flight 93 who were willing to sacrifice themselves. I was just an accidental witness to history."
-Heather "Lucky" Penney

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Heroes Meet After WWII

I attended a veterans affair hosted by a local long term care facility and the Leisure Knoll (Manchester, NJ) Veterans Club. The highlight of the affair was the introduction of two of Leisure Knoll's residents who served in the navy during WWII. Nick Velardi served in the USS Luce DD 522, and Anthony Marchitelli

who served in USS Rogers Blood APD 115.

In the Philippines, Luce got the nickname of Lucky Luce as she survived Japanese air attacks and shot down three enemy aircraft in January 1945. However, Luce's luck did not continue long since from April 1, 1945, she was assigned to various radar picket stations surrounding Okinawa to protect the main American fleet. During breakfast on May 4, 1945, radar detected about 90 enemy planes approaching from the north about 100 miles out. American fighter planes picked off some of them, but two Luce surviving crewmen remember hearing a report through their earphones that 28 Japanese aircraft were circling Radar Picket Station No. 12, where the destroyer Luce and four other smaller ships prepared for battle [1].

The first kamikaze plane to damage Luce nearly hit the bridge and splashed off the starboard side. The plane's bomb that exploded on impact knocked out much of the ship's electrical system and caused some casualties from the shrapnel. After that, the crew's accounts of the number and types of planes that hit Luce become somewhat inconsistent. Surels tries to summarize the several stories that contain quite a few discrepancies (p. 127):

In less than a minute after the first plane splashed off the starboard bow, at least two other planes had simultaneously hit the aft section, and possibly a third crashed close to midships on the port side. . . . One of the planes that hit, in all probability, carried a bomb which blew up in the aft magazine, the combined explosion of the ammunition and the bomb blowing out a section of the bottom of the ship, thereby giving it the coup de grace, as the ship had probably already started to sink because of the damage caused by the first plane which splashed close to the ship and exploded.

The author organizes the numerous eyewitness accounts into six chapters that cover each aspect of the kamikaze attack and its aftermath. The chapters describe the planes circling, the actual attack, the carnage, abandoning ship, time in the water, and the rescue. These chapters contain less than a handful of specific times and few references to what happened to other ships at the same radar picket station [2]. Despite the many years that passed between the sinking of Luce and the interviews for this book, the survivors graphically describe what happened. Orville Hiles describes what happened to him when one of the kamikaze planes exploded (p. 133):

Next thing I knew, I was standing on my head in the corner of the turret, in the safety net, and my clothes were all burned off. I only had about a six inch strip around my belt with my keys, and the rest, I think, was basically nude, with the exception of my life jacket, which was burning. I threw that right off. Suffering from burns, I wandered towards the wardroom to get some medical attention.

Cliff Jones tells of a gruesome shark attack that he witnessed (pp. 160-1):

As I was helping a man get aboard one of the little ships, two long grey shapes quickly went under me through the water, about ten or twelve feet down. They were sharks, going for our barber—I can't recall his name—and while he had his life jacket on, he was bleeding. He was swimming toward the ship when those two sharks got him. It was an awful, bloody mess as they chopped him and pulled him under. He disappeared. I never wanted to go into the ocean again. The fear of sharks was imbedded in me.

In contrast to F. Julian Becton's history of the destroyer Laffey, which gives the captain's perspective, this history of the destroyer Luce presents the feelings and experiences of various surviving

officers and crewmen. The Epilogue describes the annual Luce reunions that started in 1985 and that allowed survivors to share their feelings that many had buried for several decades. J.C. Phillips, who had been making breakfast for the crew when interrupted by approaching kamikaze planes, was able to make breakfast again for the survivors at the 1988 reunion aboard the museum ship USS Kidd, a destroyer of the same class as USS Luce.

Before Luce sank, requests for assistance had been broadcast and the radioman, "Tony" Marchitelli, aboard Roger Blood APD 115, received those distress calls. Roger Blood rescued the survivors of the Luce sinking. As it turns out Nick and Tony met each other many years later in Leisure Knoll. Heroes among us.

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Buddy Trampler, WWII, 11th Airborne

At the same veterans event, Buddy Trampler, aged 92 who looks like a man in his 60s, served in the 11th Airborne during WWII.

Buddy told the story of a combat jump where one of the parachutists' parachute did not open but "streamed". Buddy explained that the decent is very quiet. During this jump, Buddy heard other members of his "stick" yelling, "streamer, streamer".

Looking up Buddy saw the streamer and was able to maneuver his chute close enough to grab the falling soldier. They both made it to the ground safely. Buddy never saw the other soldier again. That is heroism.

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9th Infantry Division and the USS General John Pope (AP 110)

USS General John Pope (AP-110) was a troop transport that served with the United States Navy in World War II. After the war she was transferred to the Army and redesignated USAT General John Pope. She later served in the Korean and Vietnam Wars as a civilian-manned Military Sea Transportation Service vessel, as USNS General John Pope (T-AP-110).

General John Pope was launched under a Maritime Commission contract 21 March 1943 by the Federal Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company of Kearny, New Jersey; acquired by the Navy 2 July 1943; placed in ferry commission the same day for transfer to Baltimore for conversion to a transport by Maryland Drydock Company, and commissioned in full 5 August 1943, Captain George D. Lyon in command.

General John Pope reactivated 17 August 1965 to serve again as a civilian-manned ship of MSTs, operating from San Francisco. From 1965 through 1970, she transported troops to bases in the Pacific and Far East, supporting the anti-communist struggle in Vietnam. During three consecutive months, November and December 1966, and January 1967, the General John Pope, along with the USNS General Daniel I. Sultan, transported U.S. military troops to Southeast Asia.

On 6 June 1966, elements of the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment boarded the General John Pope at Oakland Army Base. Eighteen days later on 24 June 1966, the 503rd PIR disembarked at Vung Tau, South Vietnam. On 23 July 1966, elements of the 64th Transportation Company boarded the General John Pope, and departed from the Tacoma, Washington Outport Facility, arriving in Okinawa on 5 August 1966. Departing Okinawa the following day, she disembarked the 64th TC at Qui Nhon, South Vietnam on 10 August 1966.

On 20 November 1966 the first elements of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade departed the Oakland Army Base on the General Daniel I. Sultan. Two days later, on 22 November 1966, the General John Pope departed Oakland Army Base with the second of two elements of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade, elements of the 1st and 2nd Brigades of the 9th Infantry Division, and the 58th Field Depot. On 12 December 1966, the 199th Light Infantry Brigade and 9th Infantry Division disembarked the General John Pope in Vung Tau, South Vietnam. Three days later, on 15 December 1966 the 58th Field Depot disembarked the General John Pope at Qui Nhon.

In early January 1967, the General John Pope returned to San Francisco Bay. On 8 January 1967, she departed Oakland Army Base with the remaining elements of the 9th Infantry Division to South Vietnam, disembarking the units at Vung Tau on 30 January 1967. In April 1967, she transported the 589th Engineer Battalion to Qui Nhon from Oakland. On 7 July 1967, the General John Pope departed U.S. Naval Base San Diego, transporting elements of the U.S. Army 244th Aviation Company (aerial surveillance), elements of D Company, 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment (C Packet), and elements of the 3rd Marines, 9th Marine Regiment. On 21 July 1967, she arrived in Okinawa to disembark partial elements of the 3rd Marine Regiment. She arrived at Vung Tau on 29 July 1967 to disembark the 244th Aviation Company and the 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment. She sailed on to Da Nang to disembark remaining elements of the 3rd Marines.

On 1 September 1967, she departed Oakland Army Base with elements of the 1st Battalion (Mechanized) 50th Infantry, reaching Okinawa on 18 September 1967. She departed Okinawa the following day and on 22 September 1967 disembarking the 1st Battalion, 50th Infantry at

Qui Nhon. On 1 November 1967, the General John Pope again departed Oakland Army Base with elements of the 61st Assault Helicopter Company, the 92nd Assault Helicopter Company, the 134th Assault Helicopter Company,§ The third packet of the 221st Signal Company(Pictorial) and the 45th Military Intelligence Detachment, arriving in Okinawa on 17 November 1967 for a 24-hour layover. Departing Okinawa the following day she arrived at Qui Nhon, South Vietnam on 21 November 1967 and disembarked the 61st Assault Helicopter Company. She then departed and arrived at Cam Ranh Bay South Vietnam on Thanksgiving Day, 23 November 1967 disembarking all units.

Now what this history of the Pope doesn't tell you is the 30 or so days those poor troopers of 9 ID did while embarked on Pope. It took almost a month to reach Vietnam. Pope stopped in Pearl Harbor and other ports for refueling on the way. This little respite gave the troops a chance to get their land legs back for the number of hours that they spent in port.

During much of the cruise, most of the troops were sea sick. The berthing compartments were crammed with troops who slept 5 high. The deck in the berthing compartments for the most part were covered with vomitus. The odor was horrendous.

Queuing for meals started in the morning. A troop may reach the mess line by lunch time. On most occasions, troopers endured other troopers vomiting on the mess tables next to them.

Things were so bad aboard ship that two troopers from B Company, 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry (Mechanized) jumped over board. Efforts to rescue them failed. Their bodies were never recovered.

Upon arrival in Vietnam, the troops disembarked Pope via cargo nets into landing craft as though it was an amphibious assault.

The troops were just glad to be off that nightmare, USS General John Pope. My brother-in-law told me that within a month the battalion commander was killed in action. You don't have to earn the Medal of Honor to be a hero. Surviving the journey to a war zone is heroic enough.

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April 1966 Atlantic Storm That Nearly Sank BRISTOL

The photo below shows the "greenies" this Italian cruise liner experienced during that storm back then.

On April 12, 1966
t h e



Michelangelo was hit by a massive storm in the mid-Atlantic, with waves up to 20 meters (65 ft) high, they hit the ship, breaking high over the bridge and washing over the open decks. Then a wave so big, it tore a large hole in the forward superstructure. Sadly, this violent

experience saw two passengers and one crewmember killed.

The morning fog clung to the surface of lower New York Bay. The sound of distant foghorns, seagulls cawing overhead, and buoy bells clanging in the damp air broke the silence. Slowly standing upriver from the Verrazano Narrows came the great white liner. As her apparition loomed larger out of the shrouding mist it became apparent that the ship had endured a beating at the hand of the merciless North Atlantic.

Her curved forecastle was buckled back, deck railing and bulwarks were torn away from the bow, window casings held makeshift plywood shutters, and a huge white tarpaulin was strung mournfully across the forward facing expanse of her broad superstructure to shield

her visceral wounds from the eyes of the world. With her flag at half-mast, t h e

MICHELANGELO stoically steamed up the Hudson River toward her pier at the foot of West 50th Street.

BRISTOL endured similar seas enroute from Brooklyn, NY, to San Juan, Puerto Rico. I remember the Boatswains Mates securing the

midships passageway with 1” line in a mesh fashion across the opening . I secured the storerooms in the same fashion where “stuff” may shift.

While the MICHELANGELO steamed from East to West, BRISTOL steamed from North to South. Which was worse, I can’t say. But, let me tell you about the heroes we had that dreadful night. Captain William S Butler had the Con. I don’t know who had the helm and lee helm. Those guys were great performing their tasks and keeping us into the enormous seas that terrible day and night.

BRISTOL got hit with a major “greenie” that partially lifted Mount 51 off the main deck. Tons of water flooded the upper and lower handling rooms below the gun mount. The Con realized that BRISTOL was not rising as quickly as before and ordered the Damage Control Party to investigate, which they did. Repair One found that the lower handling room was flooded to the overhead. They determined this by tapping on the handling room bulkhead. In order to start the pumps, someone had to go into the handling room to “hit” the switch and get the pumps going.

Upon opening the access watertight door (WTD) in the Chief’s Quarters, sea water flooded the compartment. With the pumps activated, Repair One secured the WTD. Now the water in the compartment had to be eliminated. A bailing party bailed the sea water into the Chief’s head where it would drain over the side.

While all of this heroic work was going on, the poor snipes performed miracles so that we didn’t lose the load and founder. We took greenies down the forward stack, which knocked out, I believe at least one boiler, if not two. How about the guys in after steering. That’s not a fun place to be even in calm seas.

When BRISTOL reached Naval Base San Juan, it was all hands to get BRISTOL in some semblance of sea worthy shape for the return trip. The “deck apes” worked furiously to replace tiles on the deck of the inboard passageway forward of midships. The snipes had their hands full getting the boilers back in action. As I remember, everyone had liberty before we left San Juan. Now those are the guys you want in your lifeboat.

Here’s a photo of the motor whaleboat partially torn from its davits, which crashed into the deck house. The little room where the



post office had been got wrecked. I snapped the photo above the morning after. Photo below taken night before arriving in San Juan Photo above shows a freighter that didn’t make it to San Juan and sank on the sand bar at the mouth of the



entrance to San Juan just opposite of El Morro Castle.

Even cooks can be heroes

Sitting around the dining room table just talking about stuff in general, I asked “Pop Pop” if he had any stories about his experience in Vietnam. Here’s his response: “I was a cook in a base camp located near Long Binh, about 25 miles north of Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City. Every morning at 0400, I would drive into Saigon and collect the local civilian employees and bring them back to camp. These employees consisted mostly of young women, but also a couple of “papa sans”.

The workers worked mainly in the scullery washing the pots and pans. The papa sans were trying to teach me Vietnamese. Of course, the only thing they taught me were the dirty words. Whenever I used these words to the young women, they would yell back at me. “did papa san teach you?”

Albert Weber TM2



Honor Flight Honoree 5 October 2016

Continued on page 25

I can only imagine how it must feel to be selected as an Honoree for the

Honor Flight. Here are some of the photos of Al's experience on his trip to Washington, DC:



Al and his escort in Oklahoma



Photo above: Welcoming home back in Oklahoma.



Photo left: Group photo of all the honorees

**A POEM
WORTH READING**

He was getting old and paunchy
And his hair was falling fast,
And he sat around the Legion,
Telling stories of the past.

Of a war that he once fought in
And the deeds that he had done,
In his exploits with his buddies;
They were heroes, every one.

And 'tho sometimes to his neighbors
His tales became a joke,
All his buddies listened quietly
For they knew where of he spoke.

But we'll hear his tales no longer,
For ol' Joe has passed away,
And the world's a little poorer
For a Veteran died today.

He won't be mourned by many,
Just his children and his wife.
For he lived an ordinary,
Very quiet sort of life.

He held a job and raised a family,
Going quietly on his way;
And the world won't note his
passing,

Contributed by Don Tanner

'Tho a Veteran died today.
When politicians leave this earth,
Their bodies lie in state,
While thousands note their passing,
And proclaim that they were great.

Papers tell of their life stories
From the time that they were young,
But the passing of a Veteran
Goes unnoticed, and unsung.

Is the greatest contribution
To the welfare of our land,
Some jerk who breaks his promise
And cons his fellow man?

Or the ordinary fellow
Who in times of war and strife,
Goes off to serve his country
And offers up his life?

The politician's stipend
And the style in which he lives,
Are often disproportionate,
To the service that he gives.

While the ordinary Veteran,
Who offered up his all,
Is paid off with a medal
And perhaps a pension, small.

It is not the politicians
With their compromise and ploys,

Who won for us the freedom
That our country now enjoys.
Should you find yourself in danger,
With your enemies at hand,
Would you really want some cop-
out,
With his ever-waffling stand?

Or would you want a Veteran
His home, his country, his kin,
Just a common Veteran,
Who would fight until the end.

He was just a common Veteran,
And his ranks are growing thin,
But his presence should remind us
We may need his likes again.

For when countries are in conflict,
We find the Veteran's part,
Is to clean up all the troubles
That the politicians start.

If we cannot do him honor
While he's here to hear the praise,
Then at least let's give him homage
At the ending of his days.

Perhaps just a simple headline
In the paper that might say:
"OUR COUNTRY IS IN
MOURNING,
A VETERAN DIED TODAY."



**POW/MIA Update 79
WWII
1st Lt. Ben Barnes'
Recovery Effort**

On Dec. 5, 1944, 1st Lt. Ben B Barnes flew his P51 aircraft as part of the 361st Fighter Squadron, 356th Fighter Group on an escort mission to Berlin, Germany, to protect U.S. bombers. He had only been in the European theater of operations for less than six months when he took off that day. On the return flight, Barnes, along with other aircraft in his unit, encountered the enemy. His plane was last reported northeast of Berlin over Eberswalde, Germany. At the time, the area where he was last seen was a Russian occupied zone, making it impossible for an American Graves Registration team to further investigate. Because of this, Barnes was considered missing in action, and later presumptively declared deceased. The political situation in that area did not change after the war, still prohibiting the American government from searching for Barnes' remains. Unsure that he would ever be recovered, his name was inscribed on the Walls of the 14 Missing at Cambridge American Cemetery, along with more than 5,000 other Americans. American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) World War II cemeteries around the world include the names of those considered missing in action, lost or buried at sea. The cemetery where the name is etched is based on the area where the individual went missing, or near the airfield from which they flew. The U.S. government chose to do this as a permanent way to honor those that rest in unmarked graves. For more than 60 years, Barnes remained one of the many names on the wall one of more than 82,000 Americans from World War II whose remains have never been recovered. But in 2010 the Department of Defense had a lead they hoped would result in a

recovery. A Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (now a part of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, DPAA) investigation team went to Germany in 2010 to conduct field research and interview an eye witness to the crash. The witness led investigators to the location of the wreckage, which was consistent with records from German investigators in the 1950s. With this evidence in hand, DPAA brought a recovery team to the site in 2015 to excavate. They recovered two .50 caliber machine guns as well as possible human remains, personal equipment and material evidence. The serial number on the machine guns matched those on Barnes' aircraft. With the use of mitochondrial DNA, as well as dental and anthropological analysis and circumstantial evidence, DPAA was able to identify the remains as Barnes'. His next of kin decided to have his remains returned to Miller, South Dakota, his hometown, for permanent burial. On Oct. 15, 2016, nearly 72 years after he took his last flight, Barnes was buried with full military honors. That same month, staff at Cambridge American Cemetery in Madingley, England, placed a bronze rosette next to his name on the Wall of the Missing to denote that he had been recovered, identified and accounted for. Honoring Barnes did not end there; The Martlesham Heath Aviation Society and Control Tower Museum specifically honored him during their Remembrance Sunday ceremony on Nov. 13, 2016. To this day, the local citizens consider it a duty to honor men such as Barnes, who were based out of Martlesham Airfield during the war. 1st Lt. Ben Barnes' name appears with a bronze rosette on the Wall of the Missing at Cambridge American Cemetery in M a d i n g l e y , E n g l a n d .

The Department of the Navy is now assigning females to quarters in a separate, private, OFF LIMITS area on all aircraft carriers...

Addressing all ship personnel at Pearl Harbor, the Admiral advised, "The female sleeping quarters will be out-of-bounds for all males. Anybody caught breaking this rule will be fined \$20 the first time."

He continued, " Anybody caught breaking this rule the second time will be fined \$50.

Being caught a third time will cost you a fine of \$100. Are there any questions?"

At this point, a seasoned old Master Chief from the engine room stood up and inquired: "How much for a season pass???"

Contributed by Marty Walsh

Thurston Gaines, dies at 94

One of the original Tuskegee Airmen, Dr. Thurston L. Gaines, Jr., died in California Saturday. He was 94.

Gaines, as one of World War II's Tuskegee Airmen, was one of the United State's first black military pilots. He flew a P-51 Mustang in 1945.

In April 1945, Gaines was shot down over Germany and captured. He was held in German prisons until he was liberated in June of 1945 by Gen. Patton's division.

Gaines received the Congressional Gold Medal from President George W. Bush in 2007. He also received the Purple Heart.

Gaines became a medical doctor as a civilian and worked as a surgeon for 17 years in New York.

In retirement, Gaines lived in Sun City West and Litchfield Park before moving to California.

Lt. Gen. John Kelly, USMC, "The Last Six Second

This is an unbelievable story of bravery that I thought you would want to know of it.

If you'd like to know more about Trump's pick for Homeland Security, USMC Gen. John Kelly, please read the speech that he gave just 4 days after he lost his son in combat. One can hardly conceive of the enormous grief held quietly within General Kelly as he spoke. Even if you do not want to know more about Trump's pick, read it anyway, it's about the few brave who let the rest of us live free and then forward it to your friends.

"The Last Six Seconds"

On Nov 13, 2010, Lt General John Kelly, USMC, gave a speech to the Semper Fi Society of St. Louis, MO. This was four days after his son, Lt Robert Kelly, USMC, was killed by an IED while on his 3rd Combat tour. During his speech, General Kelly spoke about the dedication and valor of our young men and women who step forward each and every day to protect us.

During the speech, he never mentioned the loss of his own son. He closed the speech with the moving account of the last six seconds in the lives of two young Marines who died with rifles blazing to protect their brother Marines.

"I will leave you with a story about the kind of people they are, about the quality of the steel in their backs, about the kind of dedication they bring to our country while they serve in uniform and forever after as veterans. Two years ago when I was the Commander of all U.S. and Iraqi forces, in fact, the 22 ND of April 2008, two Marine infantry battalions, 1/9 "The Walking Dead," and 2/8 were switching out in Ramadi. One battalion in the closing days of their deployment going home very soon, the other just

starting its seven-month combat tour. Two

Marines, Corporal Jonathan Yale and Lance Corporal Jordan Haerter, 22 and 20 years old respectively, one from each battalion, were assuming the watch together at the entrance gate of an outpost that contained a makeshift barracks housing 50 Marines. The same broken down ramshackle building was also home to 100 Iraqi police, also my men and our allies in the fight against the terrorists in Ramadi, a city until recently the most dangerous city on earth and owned by Al Qaeda. Yale was a dirt poor mixed-race kid from Virginia with a wife and daughter, and a mother and sister who lived with him and whom he supported as well. He did this on a yearly salary of less than \$23,000.

Haerter, on the other hand, was a middle class white kid from Long Island. They were from two completely different worlds. Had they not joined the Marines they would never have met each other, or understood that multiple America's exist simultaneously depending on one's race, education level, economic status, and where you might have been born. But they were Marines, combat Marines, forged in the same crucible of Marine training, and because of this bond they were brothers as close, or closer, than if they were born of the same woman.

The mission orders they received from the sergeant squad leader I am sure went something like, "Okay you two clowns, stand this post and let no unauthorized personnel or vehicles pass. You clear?" I am also sure Yale and Haerter then rolled their eyes and said in unison something like, "Yes Sergeant," with just enough attitude that made the point without saying the words, "No kidding, we know what we're doing." They then relieved two other Marines on watch and took up their post at the entry control point of Joint Security Station Nasser, in the Sophia section of

Ramadi, Al Anbar, Iraq.

A few minutes later a large blue truck turned down the alley way - perhaps 60-70 yards in length, and sped its way through the serpentine of concrete jersey walls. The truck stopped just short of where the two were posted and detonated, killing them both catastrophically. Twenty-four brick masonry houses were damaged or destroyed. A mosque 100 yards away collapsed. The truck's engine came to rest two hundred yards away knocking most of a house down before it stopped. Our explosive experts reckoned the blast was made of 2,000 pounds of explosives. Two died, and because these two young infantrymen didn't have it in their DNA to run from danger, they saved 150 of their Iraqi and American brothers-in-arms.

When I read the situation report about the incident a few hours after it happened I called the regimental commander for details as something about this struck me as different. Marines dying or being seriously wounded is commonplace in combat. We expect Marines regardless of rank or MOS to stand their ground and do their duty, and even die in the process, if that is what the mission takes. But this just seemed different. The regimental commander had just returned from the site and he agreed, but reported that there were no American witnesses to the event - just Iraqi police. I figured if there was any chance of finding out what actually happened and then to decorate the two Marines to acknowledge their bravery, I'd have to do it as a combat award that requires two eye-witnesses and we figured the bureaucrats back in Washington would never buy Iraqi statements. If it had any chance at all, it had to come under the signature of a general officer.

I traveled to Ramadi the next day and spoke individually to a half-dozen Iraqi police all of whom

told the same story. The blue truck turned down into the alley and immediately sped up as it made its way through the serpentine. They all said, "We knew immediately what was going on as soon as the two Marines began firing." The Iraqi police then related that some of them also fired, and then to a man, ran for safety just prior to the explosion. All survived. Many were injured, some seriously. One of the Iraqis elaborated and with tears welling up said, "They'd run like any normal man would to save his life." "What he didn't know until then," he said, "And what he learned that very instant, was that Marines are not normal."

Choking past the emotion he said, "Sir, in the name of God, no sane man would have stood there and done what they did. No sane man. They saved us all." What we didn't know at the time, and only learned a couple of days later after I wrote a summary and submitted both Yale and Haerter for posthumous Navy Crosses, was that one of our security cameras, damaged initially in the blast, recorded some of the suicide attack. It happened exactly as the Iraqis had described it. It took exactly six seconds from when the truck entered the alley until it detonated.

You can watch the last six seconds of their young lives. Putting myself in their heads I supposed it took about a second for the two Marines to separately come to the same conclusion about what was going on once the truck came into their view at the far end of the alley. Exactly no time to talk it over, or call the sergeant to ask what they should do. Only enough time to take half an instant and think about what the sergeant told them to do only a few minutes before, "Let no unauthorized personnel or vehicles pass." The two Marines had about five seconds left to live. It took maybe another two seconds for them to present their weapons, take aim, and open up. By this time the truck was half-way through the barriers

and gaining speed the whole time. Here, the recording shows a number of Iraqi police, some of whom had fired their AKs, now scattering like the normal and rational men they were -some running right past the Marines. They had three seconds left to live.

For about two seconds more, the recording shows the Marines' weapons firing non-stop the truck's windshield exploding into shards of glass as their rounds take it apart and tore in to the body of the (I deleted) who is trying to get past them to kill their brothers - American and Iraqi-bedded down in the barracks totally unaware of the fact that their lives at that moment depended entirely on two Marines standing their ground. If they had been aware, they would have known they were safe because two Marines stood between them and a crazed suicide bomber. The recording shows the truck careening to a stop immediately in front of the two Marines. In all of the instantaneous violence Yale and Haerter never hesitated. By all reports and by the recording, they never stepped back. They never even started to step aside. They never even shifted their weight. With their feet spread shoulder width apart, they leaned into the danger, firing as fast as they could work their weapons. They had only one second left to live.

The truck explodes. The camera goes blank. Two young men go to their God. Six seconds. Not enough time to think about their families, their country, their flag, or about their lives or their deaths, but more than enough time for two very brave young men to do their duty into eternity. That is the kind of people who are on watch all over the world tonight - for you.

We Marines believe that God gave America the greatest gift he could bestow to man while he lived on this earth - freedom. We also believe he gave us another gift nearly as precious - our soldiers, sailors, airmen, U S Customs and

Border Patrol, Coast Guardsmen, and Marines - to safeguard that gift and guarantee no force on this earth can ever steal it away.

It has been my distinct honor to have been with you here today. Rest assured our America, this experiment in democracy started over two centuries ago, will forever remain the "land of the free and home of the brave" so long as we never run out of tough young Americans who are willing to look beyond their own self-interest and comfortable lives, and go into the darkest and most dangerous places on earth to hunt down, and kill, those who would do us harm.

God Bless America , and SEMPER FIDELIS !"

