



DDG-31

DDG-73

DD-936

DD-341



USS Decatur Association Newsletter

www.ussdecaturn.org

Fall -- 2013 -- Issue 4



Spotlight on Decatur Sailors

DDG-31's Edward L. Powers, HMC (Retired) (Cont'd from Issue 3)



USS Decatur DDG-31 Nov '66-Jul '68. When my tour of duty in Vietnam was up I was transferred to the Decatur's pre-commissioning crew at the Boston Naval Shipyard. I was on Independent Duty again as the ship's Medical Department Representative, but this time I had an HM2 (Bill Hickey) on board with me. Bill was a great guy and a big help to me in taking care of the crew. Bill was awarded the Navy Cross for his heroism and bravery during a firefight against the Viet Cong while attached to a

Marine Company in Vietnam. He also earned three Purple Hearts. It was good to be back in Boston with my family again. I was gone from them for more than a year. The Decatur was commissioned in Apr '67 and that summer we took her around to the West Coast to her home port at Long Beach. I brought my wife and kids to California and we lived in San Pedro. In Jul '68 I received orders to attend MAT school just as the Decatur was preparing to deploy to Vietnam. The Captain made me ride the ship as far as Hawaii before he

let me go. He said he wanted me to break in my relief who had just reported aboard before the ship sailed.

Medical Administrative Technical School, Naval Hospital San Diego Aug '68-Jun '69. This class was easy for me because I had previously worked in Medical Administration at most of my duty stations and already knew most of what they were teaching me. I moved my family from San Pedro and rented a house near NAS Miramar while I was attending school



HMC (Retired) Edward L. Powers' Naval Career *(Continued from Page 1)*

Doc at the 2012 reunion

at Balboa Naval Hospital. Naval Hospital, Chelsea MA Jul-69-Dec '71. Back in the Boston area again for shore duty. My wife was glad to be back home again. I worked in Patient Affairs and Medical Supply.

USS Harlan County LST-1179 Jan '72-Jan '73. Back to sea again as a Medical Department Representative on Independent Duty and also as a member of the pre-commissioning crew of a brand new ship. This was my 3rd tour of Independent Duty and also my 3rd tour of putting a ship in commission. The

ship was commissioned at Long Beach CA and after our sea trials out of San Diego were completed, we took her around to the East Coast to her home port at the Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek (Norfolk VA). Summer of '72 the ship was at sea quite a bit: a cruise to Germany and training exercises in the Caribbean. I was getting tired of being away from my family so much so I submitted a request to put my papers in for retirement. I left the ship the end of Jan '73 just before she left on a Med cruise, and I was transferred to the Naval Station, Norfolk to be processed for retirement. It took more than 3 months for the paperwork and retirement physical to be processed and I finally retired on 11 May '73. I was 36 years old.

After I retired, I left Tina and the kids in our house in Virginia Beach and I went back to the Boston area to look for a job in medical administration. After a couple of months of employment interviews, it was the same old story I had the experience, but I didn't have the education. All these hospitals, nursing homes and health departments wanted me to have a college diploma. I was running out of money and with no income coming in, I decided to go back to Virginia Beach and take a job with the U.S. Postal Service temporarily until I could find good employment in the field of medical administration. That job with the Post Office that I thought was going to be temporary lasted 25 years and I finally retired for good in May '98. I was 61 years old.

Looking back, staying in Virginia Beach instead of going back to the Boston area was a good thing. It was a decent place to raise kids. Christine "Tina" and I have a son and 2 daughters ages 47, 46 and 43; and 6 grandchildren ranging in age from 16 down to 6.

Doc and Jerry Hihn at the 2000 reunion



Doc and Tina



Remembering Seymour Dombroff



Former U.S.S. Decatur (DD-936) Commanding Officer, Seymour (Sey) Dombroff, answered his last hail on November 15, 2012, in Fairfax, Virginia.

Born in New York City in 1918, Sey graduated from Brooklyn College and was obtaining his masters degree in bacteriology at the University of Oregon when the United States entered WW II. He graduated from Midshipman school aboard USS Prairie State in 1942 and was commissioned an ensign in the Navy. He saw service in the Pacific during WW II and Korea. A life-long “black-shoe” Destroyer sailor, he served as XO of USS O’Bannon during the Korean War, and commanded USS Miller, USS McGinty and USS Decatur in the 50’s. He also commanded Destroyer Division 322 and Destroyer Squadron 36. Shore assignments included tours at The Pentagon, Norfolk and Key West.

He retired to the Melbourne, FL area in 1972 and moved to the Virginian in Fairfax in 2007.

Married to Estelle Margolis (who survives him) in 1943, they had two children, Jeff Dombroff (of Warrenton, VA) and Wendy Sternberg (of Bala Cynwyd, PA). He is also survived by daughter-in-law, Susan Dombroff and son-in-law, Michael Sternberg, five grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren along with countless friends. Captain Dombroff was interred in Arlington National Cemetery on December 13, 2012.

Captain Dombroff’s illustrious 30 year Naval career

- May 1942 – Commissioned Ensign via V-7 Program (USS Prairie State)
- August 1942-May 1945 Assigned USS Heywood (APA-12)
- September 1945 – HQ, 3rd Naval District
- 1947 – Fleet Training Group, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba
- 1948 – Communications Officer, USS Little Rock (CL-92)
- 1948-1949 – Brooklyn Navy Yard
- 1950 – 1952 – Executive Officer USS O’Bannon (DD-450)
- 1953 – 1954 – Commanding Officer, USS McGinty (DE-365)
- 1954 – 1957 - Associate PNS, Columbia University
- 1957-1958 – Commanding Officer, USS Miller (DD-535)
- 1958-1959- Commanding Officer, USS Decatur (DD-936)
- 1959-1962 – Operations Officer, Key West Test and Evaluation Detachment
- 1962-1963 – Commander, Destroyer Division 322
- 1963-1964 – Head, Readiness Department, ASW Force, Atlantic
- 1964-1965 – Commander, Destroyer Squadron 36
- 1966-1969 – Staff, ASW Operations, OPNAV
- 1969 – 1972 – Commanding Officer, Fleet Sonar School, Key West
- April, 1972 – Retired



DD-936 plaque hung proudly near his desk for many years

This was his 1959-1960 Mediterranean Cruise Book

Donated by Jeff Dombroff



Remembering Bob Blakeley



Bob at our 2009 Reunion

Kill Devil Hills – Captain William R. Blakeley, U.S. Navy (Retired), 72, of Kill Devil Hills, crossed over the bar to be with his maker on Friday, April 12, at his home in Kill Devil Hills. Bob is survived by Anne, his loving wife of 51 years; their four children: John, David, Beth and Patti; and seven grandchildren: Will, Lauren, Evan, Macy, Austin, Coleman and Bella.



Bob was born September 27, 1940 in Ann Arbor, Mich. He enlisted in the Navy while still in high school, but eventually joined the NROTC program at the University of Louisville where he met Anne. They went on to serve their country together at twenty-two duty stations over 29 years, including Bob's wartime service in Vietnam and his command of the destroyer USS McCandless. He retired as a highly decorated captain in 1991, whereupon Bob and Anne settled in Kill Devil Hills. In retirement, Bob dedicated himself to crafting children's toys, cataloging an expansive genealogical history, driving for Dare County Transportation and Social Services, rescuing retired greyhounds and making up for lost time with Anne.

Bob Anson remembers...

"Bob Blakeley & I were shipmates on the DD936 in the '62-'64 timeframe.... We were both new ensigns, both assigned to the Engineering Dept..... he as DCA and I as MPA. One of my more memorable moments is as follows: In May 1963 ... we were seasoned by this time.... (when we had the collision with the Lake Champlain) our refueling stations were in the Log Room, he on the calculator figuring out how much more fuel we could put into such and such a tank (& on the 1JV) and I was on the 2JV with the snipes on the fueling stations and with the main spaces..... (I wasn't too good at math or calculators)..... we were done!!!! and HADN'T put any of that ugly black stuff all down the side.... suddenly I hear from the snipes topside (unusual, yes for them to be up there, I know).... words to the effect, "S***, this is getting a bit close.... I'm getting out of here"..... ((Chickens,,,,, they weren't used to salt spray in their face))..... I look at Bob and he's listening to some really important stuff on the 1JV, holds up his index finger to put me off for a second and THEN we both feel the ship lean to starboard..... 'OMG' as they would say today.... We knew what had happened.... I'm out the door heading for Main Control with Bob close on my heels... Don't know where he was heading.... Going up that first ladder was a bit disconcerting as it was leaning & swaying a bit.... So, I make it to Main Control.... fires lost in the forward fire room (stack crimped), they had cross-connected with aft but couldn't get enough draft or air (stack ripped back at the main deck or O-1 level)..... FDB's running at max to keep up the steam.... then comes Bob B. and his team of ship-fitters (wish I could remember the name of the PO-1, (Pryor, I think)).... and they put a block & tackle on the top of the stack to what was left of the after mast, pulled it forward and closed up the uptakes a bit so we could at least get a bit more draft for the boilers..... Other sheet metal patches on the intakes got us going, (cross connected on one boiler), 13 knots or so, and with normal hotel services as we then headed towards NORVA."

2013 Decatur Reunion Particulars

Please attend our 2013 reunion in San Diego, CA. It will be in September 19-22 2013 (4 nights)...Thursday-Sunday...

ALL sailors that served aboard any Decatur are welcome.

Please send a \$40 reunion registration fee to:

USS Decatur Association (Checks payable to:)
P.O. Box 880442
Port St. Lucie, FL 34988

Please join our USS Decatur Association:
Send \$24 for TWO years of membership (or) our NEW option of a LIFETIME membership for \$125 to:

USS Decatur Association (Checks payable to:)
P.O. Box 880442
Port St. Lucie, FL 34988

In this issue:

Page

- Doc Powers in the spotlight.....1-2
- Remembering Seymour Dombroff.....3
- Remembering Bob Blakeley.....4
- Reunion Information / Decatur Travels...5
- Orville Shipp's DD-341 in WWII.....6
- Bonnie Deringer's Navy Women.....7
- Jim Jamison's DD-341 June 1939 - September 1941.....8

Next issue -- Look for:

- GM2 Orville T. Shipp's compelling DD-341 exploits during WW II.
- Our next Decatur sailor spotlight -- Joe Whetstone (BTCM retired)
- San Diego Reunion re-visited in pictures
- Decatur CO's -- John J.Skahill
- 2014 Reunion / Reunion Mug Logos
- CAPT Jamison's DD-341 chronology continues...

Decatur Travels**



Decatur travels to DisneyWorld in Florida



Decatur travels to Tracy Arm in Alaska



Decatur travels to Juneau in Alaska



Decatur travels to Mendenhall Glacier in Alaska

****Take some travel pictures with your Decatur hat and send them to me...**

This is GM2 Orville T. Shipp's (we lost him on 7 January 2010) article chronicling the USS Decatur (DD-341) throughout her WW II years. I'll provide a page each Newsletter. The pages are NOT edited and are presented directly as they came from his typewriter.



of our ship before we turned to shield USS Card and cleared the area. We were called back to Norfolk, VA after this engagement. From Norfolk to New York we had a sub contact just off our coast it fired a torpedo almost the same time we began depth charging. They didn't hit us and I don't think we got them. We hunted for 2 hours and was joined by a new destroyer and still couldn't get sub. On entering New York harbor we passed the new destroyer, USS Turner DD648 which was on fire, exploded and sank by time we were passed it. They had ships standing by to help them but lost many lives plus the captain anyway.

Sixth trip - Left Norfolk, VA on March 10, 1944 with very large convoy went through straits of Gibraltar on March 30th. In the Mediterranean had air attack by German 2 engine bombers 20-Ju99s at 4:00 in morning April 1, 1944. (Note: these planes were intercepted by army air force but were able to get through). This was the largest convoy to sail in the Mediterranean 70+ cargo and tankers plus 34 escorts which included 2 air craft carriers (probably small carriers), 2 English cruisers and the rest destroyers and (DE) destroyer escorts which was smaller than destroyers. This was the longest air raid in Mediterranean, it lasted 45 minutes. Three Ju88's were shot down and one freighter was hit but did not sink. We had one man wounded, could have been our convoys shelling. These ships went to several African ports, we just went to Bizerte arrived there April 5, 1944. Left Bizerte April 11, 1944, arrived home, no days recorded. Left Portland, Maine, August 22, 1944 escorted USS Nelson into Boston harbor. Destroyer USS Nelson had its fan tail blown off and was towed by sea going tug. We arrived in Boston harbor on August 26, 1944. Arrived Bermuda September 6, 1944 (Liberty in Hamilton Bermuda, very pretty place). Left Bermuda September 9, 1944 arrived in Trinidad September 12 1944. September 16 1944, airplane No. 44 had PBM amphibious plane ride over Trinidad while we were there. Arrived in San Juan,



***“Everything I Needed To Know, I Learned in Boot Camp”
by Bonnie Mathews Deringer HM3***



(Continued from the Summer 2013 issue #3...)

It was black as pitch! I couldn't see anything, nor could the others. I didn't know if I was marching or not? I thought I was going to faint, from hunger. I thought I heard one of the women gasp and groan! So off we went up that snow and ice hill for food! At last we got into the chow hall, which was huge! There were sailors in the kitchen that yelled at us and asked us if we were hungry. We shouted back, that we were really starving! We thought they would bring us big juicy hamburgers, like from Bob's Big Boy, in Pasadena. Oh wow! And Hot coffee!

They said they would bring us the trays that had been left out for us. So here they came with plastic trays of cheese and bread sandwiches, cold milk, with a small green orange apiece. It was an insult and some conspirator's jester to us Californians. I asked them if I could have coffee instead of milk because I hated milk. They said NO! So I drank it, and somehow I was grateful. I would not eat the green orange either. I was from California, and we have standards and attitude, where our food is concerned. When we got back to the barracks, there was a lot of noise about a shower that needed to be scrubbed out. Someone handed me a scrub brush and told me to clean the shower. When I finished that, I had to mop the shower floor. Somehow I completed that task without saying anything! I was just waiting to hear someone say we could now go to sleep – after we made up our bunks. It was a clear message that everyone here just hated us!

Well, that's just about it for the first day at boot camp at Bainbridge. I knew I should be in for some great growth process here, but I really didn't figure it out until I graduated, from Bainbridge, “Everything I needed to know, I learned in Boot Camp”.

First of four articles, about one woman in the Service of the United States Navy Medical Corps, 1956-1958, a Cold War Veteran.



*Taken by Dave Evans
in 2013*



USS DECATUR DD-341 (June 1939-September 1941)

by CAPT James P. Jamison (retired)

(Note: James Jamison's biographical sketch is spotlighted in our 2nd issue)



I first boarded the DD 341 in the summer of 1939 in Annapolis, along with about 30 of my Naval Academy classmates, for a 6 week training cruise on the East Coast. The Captain was LCDR J. C. Sowell and gunnery officer was Lt. (jg) "Punchy Lee."

The next time I boarded her was in February, 1941 in Key West, FL as a newly commissioned Ensign. The Captain was LCDR Sowell and Punchy Lee was still the gunnery officer. The DECATUR was the squadron flagship and the Commodore was Captain Hewlett Thubaud, Rhodes Scholar, who had recently completed a tour of duty at the Naval Academy. He still thought of me as a midshipman. In those days a destroyer squadron consisted of nine ships, a squadron flagship and two divisions of four ships each with its own division commander.

The DECATUR and one division were in Key West conducting "neutrality patrols" in the Gulf of Mexico. A single DD sailed from Key West to the Yucatan straits at the west end of Cuba. Three German merchant ships were known to be in Tampico; we would check that they were still there, patrol the straits for a few days and then return to Key West.

When we came upon a merchant ship at night, we would signal them requesting their name and nationality. They usually ignored our request, so the captain would increase speed to 20 knots, pass close astern of the merchant ship, and illuminate the stern with a large search light. We then knew her name and home port, and we were soon getting a lot of information via the signal light from a suddenly cooperative merchant ship.

If we ever sighted a German ship we were to follow it, broadcasting its position on a British navy frequency. We were to follow the German ship until a British warship arrived. We never sighted a German ship.

I was assigned the job of assistant gunny officer, and junior officer of the deck underway. At lunch just prior to getting underway for my second patrol, I was surprised to hear the Captain tell the Exec, "Jamison will have the first watch. Take Ensign S. off the watch list." He then mumbled, "Maybe I can get some sleep now." Increased responsibility was coming faster than I expected.

The next surprise was not long in coming. Two weeks later the Captain had a meeting of the officers and announced that Punchy Lee was now the Communications Officer, the communications officer was relieved of all duties and that I was the Gunnery Officer.

We had a main battery of four - 4 inch guns controlled by a fire control system which involved the gun crews manually following signals from the director, to dial in the guns. Not that sophisticated but it was the same system installed at the Naval Academy's gun shed and I knew how it worked. I now had all the responsibility that I needed.



CAPT James Jamison (Retired) - Silver Star recipient

Continued in the NEXT issue