



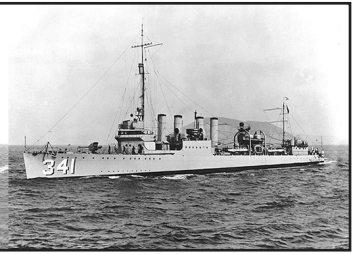
DDG-31



DDG-73



DD-936



DD-341

www.ussdecaturassoc.org



USS Decatur Association Newsletter

Spotlight on Decatur Sailors

DDG-31's Joe Whetstone (BTCM retired) Cont'd



Spring-- 2014 -- Issue 6



Soon after our return to the US, our ship received a message requesting volunteers of my rating to serve on the USS Hamner DD-718 who was short-handed and was due to sail to the Westpac. Several of us volunteered and I served on the USS Hamner until I was discharged from the Navy on 22 November 1953. The USS Hamner served in Korea on the bomb line during the siege of the Wonsan Harbor until the South Korean Armistice Agreement was signed. The remaining tour and ports of call were pretty much in-line with what we did on the USS Currier.

Broken Service-From 22 November 1954 thru 11 July 1957- I worked for

my Brother Johnny in his Sohio service station when I was contacted by the Naval Recruiter and reenlisted.

On 11 July 1957, I reenlisted in the Navy and was sent to Boilerman "B" School in Philadelphia, PA (7/22/57-11/1/57) in the Navy's effort to get me back up to speed before reporting to my first duty assignment. Upon completion of "B" School we were supposed to go to our next duty assignment but due to some glitch, there were two of us that had, somehow fallen thru the crack and had no future assignment. Since we both wanted to be assigned to the West Coast

we drove to the Personnel Assignment Desk located in Washington DC to see if we could make that happen. The guy at the assignment desk opened a large ledger and showed us how the west coast was overstaffed and the east coast understaffed, "now you guess where you're going" and then he assigned us both to the east coast and that was the end of that. At the Philadelphia Naval Base, sailors who were awaiting orders were normally assigned every day to working parties performing mundane assignments, like picking up cigarette butts, while they waited for their future assignments.

Spotlight on Joe Whetstone continues...

. My friend and I did not want to do that so we contacted the local brig and we arranged to be assigned TAD to “Chase Prisoners” instead, which we felt would be far more interesting. This duty meant that we would report in twice a day to see if they had any prisoners to pick up or deliver, if the answer was no, we could do as we pleased. So upon occasion we may have to travel to some police station or Naval Facility somewhere on the east coast to pick up or deliver some poor soul in trouble to the brig, or deliver them to the Portsmouth Naval Prison located in Portland, Maine. Because of the prison’s appearance it was commonly referred to as the “Castle”. The movie “The Last Detail” starring Jack Nicholson was based on this type of activity and received 3 Oscar nominations plus a “Best Actor” Oscar for Jack Nicholson.

About the first of January 1958 I reported aboard the USS Putnam DD 757 stationed in Norfolk, VA and remained on board until July 1961. In the summer of 1959 the USS Putnam participated in the first operation “Inland Seas” where she steamed in all five Great Lakes via the St. Lawrence Seaway. Each port that we visited seemed like we were visiting a foreign port as the local people had never seen a Naval Ship close-up before. We held open house each day so visitors could tour the ship while the rest of crew went on liberty. On weekends, the visitors would be lined up on the pier awaiting access to visit. To allow the ship to go through the locks we had to make up special guards that were welded on each side of the ship located several feet above the waterline to help prevent damage to the ship as she went thru the locks.

In 1960 we went on a Mediterranean Cruise that included visiting the following foreign ports; Brest, France- Gibraltar, Great Britain- Palermo, Sicily- Tarragona, Spain- Marseille, France- Cannes, French Riviera- Rapallo, Italy- Leghorn, Italy- Trieste, Italy- Athens, Greece- Iskenderun, Turkey and Beirut, Lebanon. This cruise also included a three months of patrol duty in the Red Sea now called the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. We made the following port visits; Port Said, Egypt- Suez Canal, Egypt- Djibouti, French Somaliland- Aden, Yemen- Muscat, Oman- Umn Said, Qatar- Das Island, Abu Dhabi- Sir Abu Nu’ayr, Sharjah of the United Arab Emirates- Bahrain Island, Kingdom of Bahrain- Bandar-Abbas, Iran and was my first taste of the Middle East. We made several stops during the Red Sea cruise where we anchored by some small island for a barbecue so the crew could enjoy a beer and have a swim if we so chose. The Middle East may have been interesting but surely was not a fun place to visit. Our Galley’s main concern during this cruise was trying to obtain fresh vegetables for the safety of the crew as “fresh veggies” were difficult to come by in the local markets.

The Putnam made several trips to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to undergo “Underway Training” at the fleet training facility, more commonly referred to as GITMO. While we were operating in that general area we also made visits to Kingston, Jamaica and Port-au-Prince, Haiti. I did not like being stationed on the East Coast so in July 1961, after completing my 4 year hitch, I took my discharge and went home. I reenlisted in Cleveland, Ohio making it a stipulation that I would be stationed somewhere on the West Coast, a stipulation that they fulfilled to my great satisfaction.

After spending several weeks at home I drove to Long Beach, CA to report for duty on the USS Blue DD-744. The ship had just completed its Fram conversion and was now a “beehive” of activity with every department making preparations of being stationed in Westpac. The ship’s morale was exceptionally high as everyone on board seemed to be eager to go. I could hardly believe my luck, as this was the type of duty I really wanted, but was not aware that this type of duty even existed. Unfortunately, some crew members outfitting the ship in preparation for an extended tour overseas got a little too zealous. They thought it would be kind of neat if we had our own jeep to use at our new home port so a jeep was misappropriated from the USS Hassayampa AO 145. The duty section dismantled the local bleachers in order to provide the planks necessary to make a ramp used to load the jeep. The jeep was winched onboard and was stored in the hangar bay to be used for the mobile ASW Drone and then hidden beneath a lot books that were to be distributed in the Philippines under a program called “Operation Hand clasp”.

Decatur-land, USA

Jim Stewart called me with a newsletter feature idea: publish the Decatur Texas police reports.

“In the interests of keeping all of our fellow Decaturites in the know, I would like to share some of the police reports published each month in the Decatur town newspaper. I think it is important that each of you be made aware of the excellent police activities handled each day for the folks who live and work in my hometown of Decatur, Texas. These are real, not made up. Jay Leno has actually read some of these on The Tonight Show over the past few years. Ya can’t make this stuff up!”

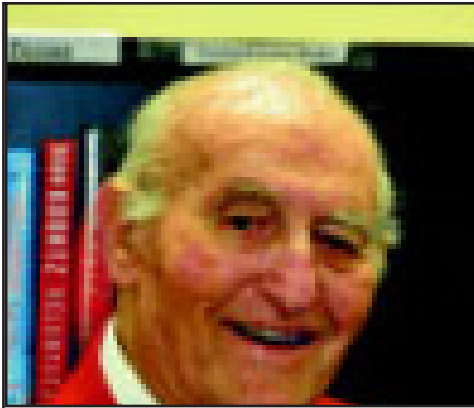
Decatur, Texas Crime Report – January, 2014

- 300 Block of County Road 1643 – A woman told a person to leave her home, and she was upset when that person peeled out and left ruts in her driveway.*
- 100 Block of County Road 4873 – A man noticed a suspicious pickup circling his house. He told police that the driver was checking out his daughter as she worked the backyard.*
- 1300 Block of Cuba Road – A man made several calls to 911 and kept hanging up. He was later spotted carrying a shovel as he walked down the road. He was arrested for public intoxication.*
- 1900 Block of Doctor’s Hospital Drive – A boy showed up at the emergency room after he accidentally shot himself in the foot.*

Decatur, Texas Crime Report – February, 2014

- 400 Block of County Road 1637: A man got enraged at his roommate and decided to pour roofing tar all over the guy’s pick-up truck.*
- 100 Block of PR 3387: A kid was riding a dirt bike on his neighbor’s land and terrified his farm animals.*
- 200 Block of County Road 4845: A woman got into a violent argument with her husband on Valentine’s Day due to his heavy drinking. (A future USS Decatur sailor, no doubt!)*
- 3300 Block of Texas 101: A man selling his pickup truck allowed a potential buyer to take the vehicle for a test drive. The man never returned.*
- 100 Block of Ashley Street: A woman reported that someone stole her Arby’s Combo Meal and some prescription drugs.*
- 1800 Block of Saddle Ridge: A woman reported that approximately one month ago, someone drugged her and then ran her over with a car. (Why ya think it took her a whole month to report this to the Decatur cops?? Mother of Jesus!!)*
- 100 Block of Spring Meadow: A newly married couple got into a violent argument over fried mushrooms. (Really??)*

Thanks Jim...



The Lipton Cup Challenge

By
Captain Sey Dombroff, USN (Ret.)

While many Americans have heard of the America's Cup Races, there is another legendary sailing race that has been going on since 1904 – the Lipton Cup Challenge Races. The races, between representative boats from some of the finest American Yacht Clubs, have usually been held in waters off the West Coast. However, in 1958, the races were hosted by the Newport Yacht Club in Newport, Rhode Island. That year, I was the commanding officer of the USS Decatur (DD 936); at the time the newest destroyer in the Navy. Our home port was Newport.

The Decatur was assigned as the Navy's representative to the event. This meant that the morning of every race day, our gangway would be lowered and hundreds of celebrities (plus their guests) from the political, business and entertainment world would come aboard. Now in those days of all-male crews, areas containing the heads (toilets) opened directly on passageways. With absolutely no restroom privacy, the only place on ship to accommodate the women was my cabin so all ladies coming aboard were informed of its location. The guests enjoyed good weather and the food supplied by the U S Navy. Everyone aboard seemed to be having a great time except me.

The first days' operations were no fun. I had positioned the ship on the perimeter of the sailing area within a relatively short distance of the competing boats. Unfortunately, hundreds of small craft had the same idea and I spent most of my time sounding the ship's horn in warning off small boats that would disappear from sight under our bow or stern. One small craft banged into our starboard propeller guard and the owner protested to the Coast Guard. Fortunately we had a picture of the boat at the moment of collision, with the guy at the helm being distracted by drinking a bottle of beer!

We returned to port around 4 P.M. Vice Admiral "Whitey" Taylor, who commanded all destroyers in the Atlantic Fleet and whose wife was one of those aboard the Decatur, stood on the bridge of his flagship watching me pull up to the pier (no pressure). Our guests disembarked and shortly afterward I was interviewed by the press as I apparently had become an instant expert on upper class sailing craft which were truly beautiful and graceful vessels.

I was about to go down to my cabin when my steward showed up. "Captain, you really don't want to go down there until I get a chance to clean up." And he was right! What a mess those genteel ladies left. Someone stole my razor; there were messages in my phone book and trash all over the place. The steward returned in a little while to report all was again ship-shape. The same pattern occurred each day we went to sea for the races. All in all, no adverse events marred our operations but I was certainly glad to see it over.

From the Bob Blakeley collection



Port side damage inspected on 8 May 1964



*Forward stack being pulled on 10 May 1964
Official Navy Photograph*

2014 Decatur Reunion Particulars

Please attend our 2014 reunion in Baltimore, MD. It will be in 11-15 September 2014 (4 nights)...Thursday-Sunday...Watch our site - www.usdecaturassoc.org

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

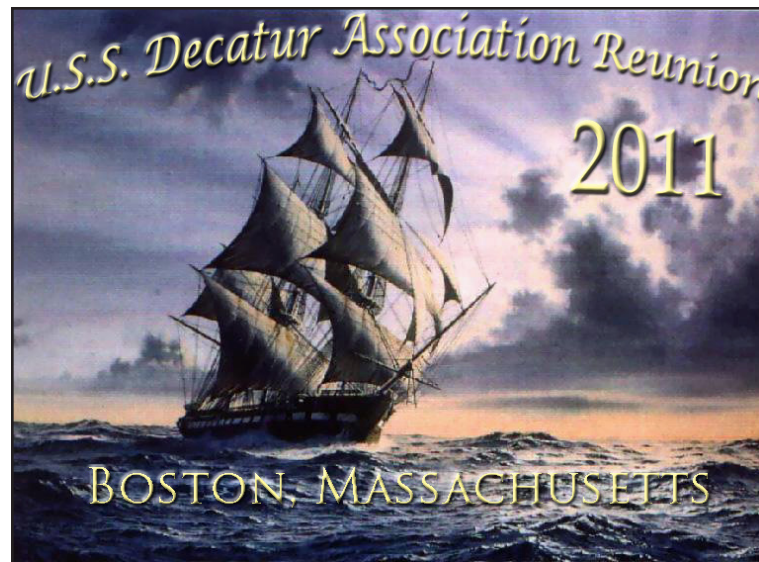
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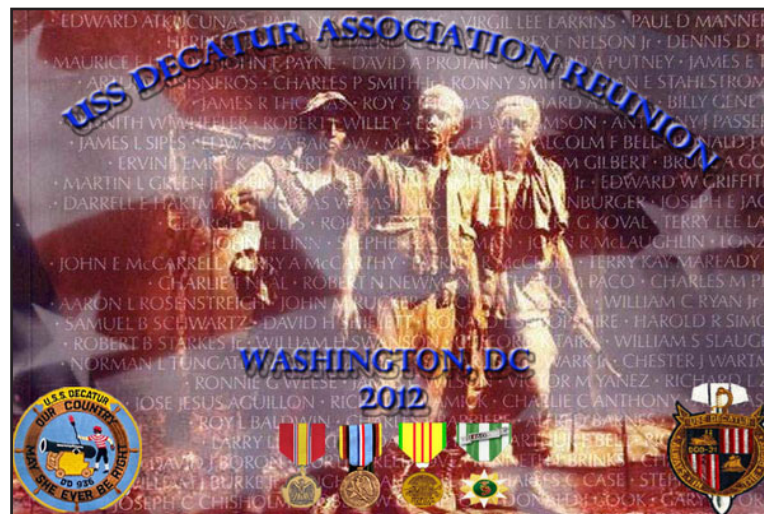


BTCM (ret.) Joe Whetstone continues
Bob Blakeley's DD-936 Pictures
Bonnie Deringer's Boot Camp II continues

Reunion Mug Logos (Cont'd)



by Karen West



by Tony West



by Tony West

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.



gunnery practice and then returned back to the east coast. We did have liberty in Balboa, Panama City and Colon a very pretty area, but very hot in the summer.

At different times we escorted the Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth into New York harbor. I have no exact dates but when we were off the island of Trinidad we were one of the escort vessels for new ships that were on shake down. There were 4 of these; they were battleships USS Missouri and USS Wisconsin, aircraft carrier USS Bennington and cruiser USS ____? ____ (lost this name). I was privileged to see at different times the construction of the battleship USS Missouri when we were in Brooklyn navy yard, in fact I would go over sit on some of it's armor plating lying in the yard and watch close up. This was a great honor for me knowing what I know now. It would be hard to explain how large this construction was and how thousands of men swarmed over this, welding and riveting night and day, was almost like a city lit up.

Two things I experience which few get to see, one happened when I was on watch at night we could see a small tongue of fire dance up and down the rigging to the mast this is called St. Elmo's Fire. IT is caused by electric charges in the air; this experience lasted well over half an hour.

Second, was in daylight we were near a mist or light rain shower and there was a huge rainbow and one end came down next to the ship, I walked over and put my hand into this rainbow which was very pretty; it felt slight moist and was a once in a life time experience.

This ends Orville's chronicle on the USS Decatur's WWII exploits.
Thanks Orville, your family and RIP Decaturite.

Everything I Needed to Know I Learned in Boot Camp II

by Bonnie Deringer HM3



*Bonnie Mathews (Deringer) and Kathy Wise
Easter Sunday, 1956 -- Bainbridge, MD*

In March of 1956 and on into April at Bainbridge Training Center, I recall many things that would stay in my memory for many years. The incident that I recall most was the cold stormy March night that the lights in the barracks went on at 02:200, and a voice that was very loud announced that there was a body missing! The first thought that entered my mind was that someone had actually died in this place, and they could not find the body! “Attention on deck” was called and we all jumped out of our bunks in our PJ’s and robes, curlers dangling, stood at attention. The barracks was searched, for the missing body. The recruit had fallen asleep in the wrong bunk, after standing watch in an empty barracks on night watch. To her advantage, we never did find out who she was.

Our life in boot camp went on, with the issue of our clothes and uniforms, which were tailored to fit. We had to buy our underwear, which was charged to us from our first pay. They were really ugly, and had to be stenciled with our name in black ink, which made them even uglier. We were issued “granny panties”, “bullet bras” and cotton hose, as the final insult, but they kept our legs warm. The next event that was memorable was our physical exam, which included the dreaded and much whispered and giggled about, “Pelvic Exam!” Most of us were concerned, some even giggled. One of the nurses told us that it was to make sure everything was “stenciled”. So we sat there in rows of chairs with sheets wrapped around us wondering what more invasive thing they could do to us. Someone said, “Maybe they will stop when they find the Doctor’s ring”. That made some girls cry and others laughed out loud.

Somehow we all got through the final insult. We started Navy Training School, learning about the Navy and the other military groups and how to identify them. We had nutrition sunken into asphalt. We learned what to do if we needed help away from a base. It was then I learned never to trust the Red Cross, as a charity. Always go to and contribute to the dear Salvation Army. We could always trust them to help service people. I always feel good when I watch the annual Rose Parade, and see how many people stand and applaud for them as they march by, playing, “On Ward Christian Soldiers”.

USS DECATUR DD-341 (September 1941 - December 1942) by CAPT James P. Jamison (retired)

In late September 1941, after a short period of refresher training, the DD341 left Casco Bay, Maine, bound for Argentia, Newfoundland and our first trans-Atlantic convoy. There was a change in our neutrality status. West of a particular longitude we were neutral; we flew our colors, and at night illuminated them with a searchlight. East of the longitude, we still flew our colors, but off went the searchlight, we darkened ship, and we were a belligerent, at war with the German U-boats. This was four months before the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor. Argentia was a large bay where convoy escorts topped off with fuel and provisions and anchored awaiting their convoy, which was assembling in Halifax.

Our first convoy was ready shortly. Our group of escorts that left Argentia included two modern DD's and our destroyer squadron, commanded by our Commodore, who as escort commander embarked in one of the newer ships. In addition to being more comfortable, it had a radar.

The convoy was impressive. It consisted of five or six parallel columns of merchant ships of all kinds, under the command of the convoy Commodore, usually a retired naval officer. He tried to keep good order in the convoy; he saw that all ships kept their assigned station, no one made smoke, no one straggled, etc. Speed was 8-10 knots. This was a problem for the escort watch standers. Destroyers prefer to move at 15 knots or more in submarine infested waters, so to maintain their station in front of or on the sides of the convoy required them to constantly maneuver to left or right of the base course. This was especially difficult at night when it was hard to see the merchant ships.

To be continued...



Harold Robison a DD-341er...as told by his daughter Janet Oglesby

After USS Decatur he was transferred to the USS Wyoming (AG-17). The USS Wyoming's big guns had been removed and replaced with more five-inch and smaller weapons in early 1944, reflecting an increasing emphasis on anti-aircraft requirements. In July 1945 she became an experimental gunnery ship with what soon became the Operational Development Force.

Harold was honorably discharged on April 5, 1946 at Bainbridge, MD. He had to take an English test to receive his high school diploma in May 1946. It was a difficult time finding employment. His dad's diary in 1947 showed that he worked alongside of him on the railroad, but it wasn't steady. He saw an ad in the paper for television repair school in Louisville, Kentucky. He attended school for two years on the GI Bill then found employment with RCA in 1950, retiring from RCA 36 years later. He witnessed the change in technology from vacuum tubes to transistors to the digital chip and saw become a disposable, instead of repairable.

He married in 1954 and was the father of three children. His death in August of 2012 broke a marital union of 58 years. He was a Boy Scout Master and during his tenure 13 scouts achieved the rank of Eagle. He enjoyed traveling, camping, gardening, square dancing and bowling.

Though my dad was never shot at or had to shoot at anyone, he served and he was proud to be a "Tin Can Sailor."



In Bermuda

Manning a 40MM during WWII

Decatur Travels

Send me your Travel pictures wearing your Decatur hat



Decatur Gives Back



The USS Decatur Association has donated \$500 to the Wounded Warrior Project for 2014.

If you have a favorite charity, we will entertain an association contribution to that charity for 2015.

Send a justification for our 2015 “Decatur Gives Back” before our 1 October 2014 deadline.

The USS Decatur Association will vote on all submissions and render a final decision.

Thanks, Tony

Decatur Gives Back