

# USS Plymouth Rock (LSD29)

Newsletter May - August, 2005

Welcome to the USS Plymouth Rock Newsletter

**Tenth Edition:** The USS Plymouth Rock Newsletter is a publication issued every four months by the USS Plymouth Rock Ships Association. If you would like to contribute an article, a piece of Navy or Plymouth Rock history, photo, memory or anything that might be of interest to you or other shipmates, you can send it as an e-mail to:

Bill Provencal, Association Secretary at:  
[billinp@worldpath.net](mailto:billinp@worldpath.net)

or regular mail at:  
Bill Provencal  
37 South Main Street  
Pittsfield, NH 03263

If you change **address** or **e-mail address** be sure to let me (Bill Provencal) know so we can update our Crews List. My e-mail is [billinp@worldpath.net](mailto:billinp@worldpath.net) Our website is found at [www.ussplymouthrock.com](http://www.ussplymouthrock.com)



## Ships Officers

**President**  
Tom Wagner  
[tfwagner@wagnerinsuranceagency.com](mailto:tfwagner@wagnerinsuranceagency.com)  
513-574-9838

**Vice President**  
Roger Lamay  
[roghlamay@yahoo.com](mailto:roghlamay@yahoo.com)  
518-529-7450

**Treasurer**  
Paul Mohawk  
[pshawks@cox.net](mailto:pshawks@cox.net)  
623-256-6564

**Secretary**  
Bill Provencal  
[billinp@worldpath.net](mailto:billinp@worldpath.net)  
603-435-8603

**Ships Historian**  
Harry T. Andersen



★ ★ ★ Welcome Aboard ★ ★ ★

## Recently Located Shipmates

Garry Taylor, YN3, Fayetteville, GA e-mail address:  
[garrytaylor@yahoo.com](mailto:garrytaylor@yahoo.com)

Gary Johnson, ETC(SW), Poplar Bluff, MO e-mail address:  
[ropeman@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ropeman@sbcglobal.net)

Charles Race Jr., SOGSN, Palm Beach Gardens, FL e-mail address:  
[queenofjacks@adelphia.net](mailto:queenofjacks@adelphia.net)

Thomas K. Derry, QMC, Shawboro, NC e-mail address:  
[t.derry@mchsi.com](mailto:t.derry@mchsi.com)

Richard L. McCoy, RMSN, Hamilton, NJ e-mail address:  
[realmac@optonline.net](mailto:realmac@optonline.net)

<a href="mailto:andycporetsnipe@aol.com">andycporetsnipe@aol.com</a> 847-336-2151  Ships Storekeeper Brad Baldwin <a href="mailto:jpbjs11@msn.com">jpbjs11@msn.com</a> 203-374-8213	Mike Ahern. E5, USMC, Glenview, IL e-mail address: <a href="mailto:ahernmk@aol.com">ahernmk@aol.com</a> Charlie Williams, IC2, Virginia Beach, VA e-mail address: <a href="mailto:charlie1220@cox.net">charlie1220@cox.net</a> Bill Clough, FN, Wendell, MA e-mail address: <a href="mailto:kaylasgg123@wmconnect.com">kaylasgg123@wmconnect.com</a> Jeremy Lewis, BM3, Buffalo, NY e-mail address: <a href="mailto:gunfighter1b@aol.com">gunfighter1b@aol.com</a> Gerald M. Walker, SFP2, Goose Creek, SC e-mail address: <a href="mailto:trapmanj@aol.com">trapmanj@aol.com</a> Mark Darlene, PN2, Franklin, TN 37064 e-mail address: <a href="mailto:mallen3469@aol.com">mallen3469@aol.com</a> Dean George, MMFN, Halifax, PA 17032 e-mail address: <a href="mailto:breadmansam@pa.net">breadmansam@pa.net</a>
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### Recent Changes to the Ships Muster List

Warren E. Robinson, e-mail address, change to [robter@3bubbas.com](mailto:robter@3bubbas.com)  
Richard Doyle, e-mail address, change to [gayledoyle@metrocast.net](mailto:gayledoyle@metrocast.net)  
John Berry, mailing address, change to 12213 Fillmore Street NE, Blaine, MN 55434-3952  
Warren E. Robinson mailing address, change to 189 Duck Cove Lane, Mobjack, VA 23056  
John Chappell, mailing address, change to 344 Piercy Street, Blountville, TN 37617, e-mail address change to [jchappell2004@charter.net](mailto:jchappell2004@charter.net)  
Joe McGowan, mailing address change to PO Box 1086, Ocean Springs, MS 39566  
Paul Mohawk, mailing address, change to 14845 W. Carribbean Ln., Sunrise, AZ 85379-5415, e-mail address change to [pshawks@cox.net](mailto:pshawks@cox.net)  
George Bierce, e-mail address change to [gbierce@netzero.com](mailto:gbierce@netzero.com)  
Paul Wagner, mailing address change to 411 N. 6th Street #468, Emery, SD 57332  
Bill Sims, e-mail address change to [wildbillsims@fuse.net](mailto:wildbillsims@fuse.net)



### Shipmates Who Live in the State of Texas

Ralph L. Bello	Houston
Doug Cannon	Brownsville
Bill Hamilton	Sealy
Joe Henning	Orange Grove
David Hosea	Huntsville
David Ingraham	San Antonio
Leonaard Kaderka	Taylor
Alvin McCulloch	Round Rock
Leland Pridemore	Hewitt
Tom Richter	Livingston
Richard Webb	Dallas
Walt Willenberg	Georgetown



*Plymouth Rock (LSD-29) during amphibious exercises off Rhodes, Greece, date unknown*

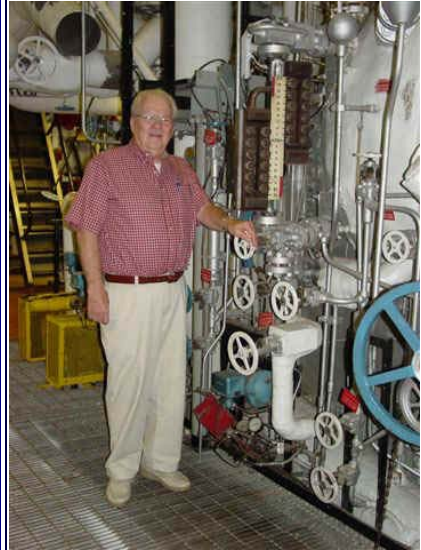
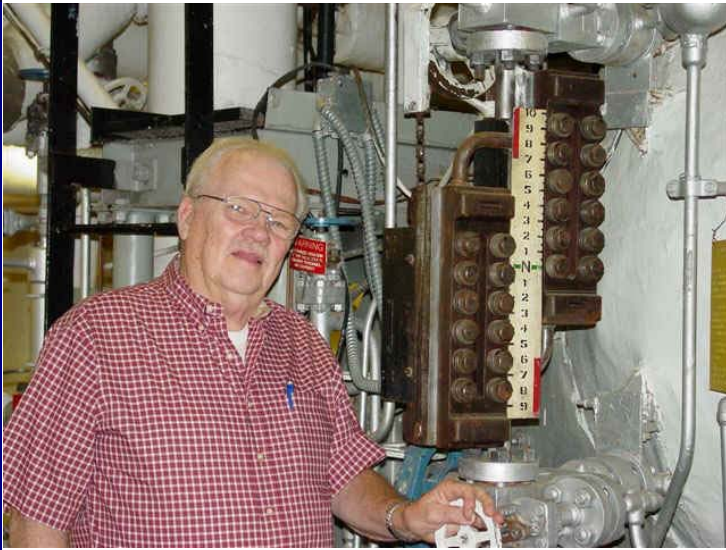


### **You might be a redneck if...**

**It never occurred to you to be offended by the phrase, "One nation, under God..."**  
**You've never protested about seeing the 10 Commandments posted in public places.**  
**You still say "Christmas" instead of "The Holidays."**  
**You bow your head when someone prays.**  
**You stand and place your hand over your heart when they play the National Anthem.**  
**You treat Viet Nam vets with great respect... and always have.**  
**You've never burned an American flag.**  
**You know what you believe and you aren't afraid to say so, no matter who is listening.**  
**You respect your elders and expect your kids to do the same.**  
**You'd give your last dollar to a friend.**



### The Good Olde Days, Harry at Great Lakes NTC, BT/MM School



### Reunion Photos - Branson, MO



**Roger and Ellen Lamay at Banquet**



**Jim Freeman and Shorty Cyr**



## 2006 Reunion Update

The Sixth Reunion will be held in Mystic/New London, CT area in late September or early October 2006. Reunion Chairman for this reunion are:

**George Bierce**  
 67 Talmadge Hill Road  
 Prospect, CT 06712  
 e-mail: [gbierce@netzero.com](mailto:gbierce@netzero.com)  
 cell 203-223-6965  
 203-758-3125

**Dennis (Shorty) Cyr**  
 119 Pinecrest Drive  
 Waterbury, CT 06708  
 e-mail: [shortybm3@yahoo.com](mailto:shortybm3@yahoo.com)  
 203-753-6220



### Paid Association Members for 2004-2006 As of April 25, 2005 we now have 137 paid members

The 2004-2006 dues are now due, please send dues to Paul Mohawk, Treasurer. Make checks payable to USS Plymouth Rock Association. Dues are payable on a bi-annual basis (every two years) at \$20.00 and are due on the year of the reunion (are due on an even year 2004, 2006, 2008, etc). *Should a member or prospective member pay at any other time, dues will be credited from the preceding even year.* The dues help to support the association with planning and having the reunion, newsletter printing and mailing, general postage and the cost of maintaining our website on line. Paul Mohawk's address is: 14845 W. Caribbean Ln., Sunrise, AZ 85379-5415

Adam, Ian	Alardyce, John	Andersen, Harry	Baldwin, Brad	Balf, Sue
Bell, Joe	Bello, Raph	Bena, Joe	Bentheimer, Glenn	Berry, John
Bierce, George	Bild, Bob	Britt, Ben	Brusky, David	Buchanan, Richard
Buiak, Peter Jr.	Bullington, Calvin	Caldwell, Tim	Casillas, Greg.	Chappell, John
Clark, Robert	Conboy, Bill	Conklin, Robert Sr	Conroy, Mike	Crowl II, Martin
Cummings, Bob	Cummings, Steve	Cypher, Hal	Cyr, Dennis	Czarnetski, Bruce
Czarnetski, Jon	Dailey, Ronald J.	Dalfonzo, Sam	Decuir, Wilton	Derry, Thomas K.
Dortch, David	Dussault, Andrew	Edwards, Maurice	Edwards, R. A.	Eldridge, Marguerite
Farneski, Robert	Fisher, Jack	Fisher, Jay	Formaro, Frank	Forton, Andrew G
Freeman, James	Gee, James	Gibson, David	Goodman, William	Gorse, Peter
Greco, Sal Jr.	Gregory, Peter	Grier, Frank	Guertin, Jerry	Haines, Janice
Hart, Ed	Hartson, George	Haws, Joe	Helledy, David	Hill, Edward Jr.
Hoffman, Rosalie	Hofman, Timothy	Hopper, Richard	Howland, John	Ishmael, Harry
Jennings, Seeley	Jepson, Norm	Johnson, John	Joyce, Ed	Kane, Thomas
Kaderka, Leonarad	Kellar, Harry	Krolak, Ray	Kuhns, Jimmy	Lamay, Roger
Larson, Jerry	Lillig, Bernie	Luttrell, James	Madill, Shorty	Mathis, Richard
McAvoy, John Sr.	McCoy, Richard L.	McCull, Wade C.	Miskelly, Francis	Mohawk, Paul
Moyer, Larry	Murtha, Jerry	Musella, Rocco	Nichols, Bob	Noto, Ralph
O'Neil, Thomas	Pihl, Walter C.	Power, Rand	Provencal, Bill	Purvis, Anthony
Pyle, Ted	Race, Charles Jr.	Ramondetta, Vitto	Raniszewski, Louis F	Reed, John
Rhine, Donald	Robertson, Allen	Robinson, Jim	Robinson, Warren	Rose, Chris
Sandlin, Richard	Schneider, James	Scott, Bill	Shanahan, Robert	Shewchuk, Richard
Shober, Robert	Sims, Bill	Smith, James	Smith, Larry	Stackhouse, Norman



<b>Stark, Peter Jr.</b>	<b>Stovall, Jack</b>	<b>Stull, John III</b>	<b>Swart, Mike</b>	<b>Swathwood, David</b>
<b>Swearingen, Ronald</b>	<b>Tacinelli, Jerry</b>	<b>Tesh, Sam</b>	<b>Trevino, Jorge</b>	<b>Viaene, Robert</b>
<b>Vranesevic, Robert</b>	<b>Waggoner, Bernice</b>	<b>Wagner, Paul</b>	<b>Wagner, Thomas</b>	<b>Walker, Gerald M</b>
<b>Walling, Roger</b>	<b>Ward, James</b>	<b>Warwick, Robert</b>	<b>Watkins, Richard</b>	<b>Wells, Andy</b>
<b>Welsh, Mike</b>	<b>Ziemba, James</b>			



**Official U.S. Navy Photograph, USS Plymouth Rock LSD29, overhead starboard beam, March 17, 1969**



## Thank You's

We would like to thank the following shipmates/friends for providing pictures, information and articles to the website, the Ships Association and newsletter.

Harry Andersen	Cindy Freeman	Van Tunstall	Gerald Borden
USS Whetstone LSD27	Richard McCoy	Jerry Murtha	Tom Hickson
Patricia Houle	John Chappell		



Picture at Rocco Mesella's Reunion of old friends from the P Rock, in Honesdale, PA on Labor Day Weekend, 2003





**Photo #: NH 97359**

### **USS Plymouth Rock (LSD-29)**

Photographed circa the later 1950s or early 1960s, with a HUS helicopter parked on her after deck.

*Official U.S. Navy Photograph, from the collections of the Naval Historical Center.*

**Online Image: 130KB; 740 x 610 pixels**



## **U.S. Navy base closure affects a lot of people'**

The Roosevelt Roads Navy base in Puerto Rico is closing, taking with it about 2,500 jobs and \$300 million. Pennsylvania native Michelle Hoffman came and opened her Splash tattoo parlor near here in 1995 after noticing that the community surrounding this U.S. Navy base did not have one of the sailors' ages-old activities. "In every port there is a tattoo shop. When I found out they didn't have one here, I jumped on it," said Hoffman, 37, whose shop in Ceiba brought in up to \$60,000 a year. "It was great for a long time. We were busy all the time." But now her profits have dropped by about half as the 60-year-old base, known popularly as Rosie Roads, winds down and heads toward its official closure March 31 -- a move that will mean the loss of about 2,500 civilian jobs and \$300 million in Puerto Rico.

For some of its neighbors and employees, the base's closing is retaliation for the Puerto Ricans' raucous pressures that forced the Navy to surrender its bombing range on the eastern tip of the tiny island of Vieques, eight miles southeast of Rosie Roads. For others it represents another step toward an end to U.S. colonial presence in Puerto Rico, seized by U.S. troops during the Spanish-American War in 1898.

### **BAD SIGNS**

The signs are all bad. The number of military personnel, dependents and civilian employees is already down from 6,000 last year to fewer than 2,200. The airfield, port and base hospital have closed. Base schools will cease operations when classes end June 4. A decade ago, Rosie Roads was the largest Navy base outside the U.S. mainland in terms of area, with more than 30,000 acres that included one-third of Vieques. When it closes, Guantánamo Bay in Cuba will be the only U.S. naval base left in the Caribbean. Now the Puerto Rican government is trying to figure out what to do with the facility. There are proposals to turn its airstrip into a civilian airport, open its port to cruise ships and convert its housing -- from Spartan apartment blocks to fancier officers' homes -- into condominiums for tourists. But many remain skeptical of the government plans and point to the lingering impact on the western town of Aguadilla from the closing in the early 1970s of the Ramey Air Force base.

### **LAST YEAR'S DECISION**

The decision to close Roosevelt Roads came last year, after years of simmering opposition to the bombing range in Vieques boiled over following a 1999 accident in which two off-target bombs killed civilian guard. Range opponents also claimed the bombings harmed the environment and was the source of poor health among Vieques residents.

President Bush ordered the exercises to cease last May and in September signed a bill that gave Roosevelt Roads six months to shut down. The base had been the Navy's key support facility for the war games on Vieques and the waters offshore. "Who knows whether the U.S. government is now punishing the Puerto Rico government for what's happened" in Vieques, Balcerzak said. The Navy claims it was not retaliation but simple logistics and finances. "The reason for the base was to support exercises. When the Vieques function went away, it was no longer feasible to keep the base open," said the base commander, Capt. Robert D. Wilson.





## US Navy "Oath of Enlistment"

I, Top Gun, in lieu of going to prison, swear to sign away 4 years of my life to the United States Navy because I want to hang out with Marines without actually having to BE one of them, because I thought the Air Force was too "corporate," and because I thought, "Hey, I like to swim... why not?" I promise to wear clothing what went out of style in 1936 and to have my name stenciled on the butt of every pair of pants I own. I understand that I will be mistaken for the Good Humor man during the summer, and for Waffen SS during the winter. I will strive to use a different language than the rest of the English speaking world, using words like "deck, bulkhead, cover, and head" when I really mean "floor, wall, hat, and toilet." I will take great pride in the fact that all Navy acronyms, rank, and insignia, and everything else for that matter, are completely different from the other services and make absolutely no sense whatsoever. I will muster (whatever that is) at 0700 hrs every morning unless I am buddy-buddy with the Chief, in which case I will show up around 0930 hrs. I vow to hone my coffee cup handling skills to the point that I can stand up in a kayak being tossed around in a typhoon, and still not spill a drop. I consent to being promoted and subsequently busted at least twice per fiscal year. I realize that, once selected for Chief, I am required to submit myself to the sick, and quite possibly illegal, whims of my new-found "colleagues." So help me Neptune.

## LSD's Currently Still in Service

USS Harpers Ferry LSD-49



Harpers Ferry Class Dock Landing Ship: Laid down, 15 April 1991, at Avondale Industries, New Orleans, LA. Launched, 16 January 1993 Commissioned USS Harpers Ferry (LSD-49), 7 January 1995 *Harpers Ferry* is forward deployed at Sasebo, Japan

**Specifications:**

**Displacement** 11,604 t.(lt), 16,601 t.(fl)

**Length** 609' 7"

**Beam** 84'

**Draft** 20' 4" (max)

**Speed** 20+ kts.

**Complement** 22 Officers, 327 Enlisted

**Troop Accommodations** 27 Officers, 473 Enlisted

**Aircraft helicopters**, (Flight Deck, 2 spots)

**Boats** (Well Deck Capacity) two LCAC's

**Armament** two (mk15 mod1) Phalanx (CIWS) 20 mm Vulcan cannon gun mounts, two (mk16) 25 mm Bushmaster chain gun mounts, six .50 cal machine guns, two Rolling Airframe Missile (RAM) launchers, six Super Rapid Blooming Outboard Chaff launchers

**Propulsion** four Colt-Pielstick 16 cylinder diesels, 2 shafts, combined SHP 33,000



**Newspaper Article, circa 1960's  
Contributed by Richard McCoy**

## ALL SERVICES REPRESENTED IN MIDEAST DISTURBANCE

By the Associated Press

Here are the United States military units thus far identified as participating in activities in the Middle East area:

**MARINES**—1st Battalion of the 8th Regiment, 2d Battalion of the 2d Regiment and the 3d Battalion of the 6th Regiment. These battalions are part of the 2d Marine Division based at Camp Lejeune, N. C.

**ARMY**—1st Battle Group of the 187th Regiment, flown from Germany to Adana, Turkey.

**AIR FORCE**—Units of the 63d Troop Carrier Wing, based at Donaldson Air Force Base, Greenville, S. C., and a composite strike force of the Tactical Air Command.

**NAVAL SHIPS**—Carriers Saratoga, Essex and Wasp; cruisers Des Moines and Boston. Also destroyers Deal, Cromwell, Hartley, Taussig, John Willis, Van Voorhis, Rich, Basilone, Damato, R. L. Wilson, W. M. Wood, Steinaker, Noa, New, Lester, H. J. Ellison, Miller, Rooks, Hailey, Barry, Stribling, Leary, Vesole, Wadleigh, The Sullivans, Cone, McGowan and McNair. Command ships Taconic, Mount McKinley and Pocono. Attack transports Fremont, Olmstead, Monrovia, Chilton and Rockbridge. Attack cargo ships Muliphen, Capricornus and Vermilion. Landing ship docks Plymouth Rock, Spiegel Grove and Fort Snelling. Landing ship tanks Walworth County and Traverse County.



## Bow and Stern - Contributed by Thomas Hickson



### Known Deceased Shipmates For a complete listing visit our Memorial Page in the ships website

David Hoffman, MMFN, January 29, 2005

Ira (Butch) Haines, BMSN, April 21, 2005



*In light of the recent appeals court ruling in California, with respect to the Pledge of Allegiance, the following recollection from Senator John McCain is very appropriate:*

#### *"The Pledge of Allegiance" - Senator John McCain*

*As you may know, I spent five and one half years as a prisoner of war during the Vietnam War. In the early years of our imprisonment, the NVA kept us in solitary confinement or two or three to a cell. In 1971 the NVA moved us from these conditions of isolation into large rooms with as many as 30 to 40 men to a room.*

*This was, as you can imagine, a wonderful change and was a direct result of the efforts of millions of Americans on behalf of a few hundred POWs 10,000 miles from home.*

*One of the men who moved into my room was a young man named Mike Christian. Mike came from a small town near Selma, Alabama. He didn't wear a pair of shoes until he was 13 years old. At 17, he enlisted in the US Navy. He later earned a commission by going to Officer Training School. Then he became a Naval Flight Officer and was shot down and captured in 1967. Mike had a keen and deep appreciation of the opportunities this country and our military provide for people who want to work and want to succeed.*



*As part of the change in treatment, the Vietnamese allowed some prisoners to receive packages from home. In some of these packages were handkerchiefs, scarves and other items of clothing.*

*Mike got himself a bamboo needle. Over a period of a couple of months, he created an American flag and sewed on the inside of his shirt.*

*Every afternoon, before we had a bowl of soup, we would hang Mike's shirt on the wall of the cell and say the Pledge of Allegiance.*

*I know the Pledge of Allegiance may not seem the most important part of our day now, but I can assure you that in that stark cell it was indeed the most important and meaningful event.*

*One day the Vietnamese searched our cell, as they did periodically, and discovered Mike's shirt with the flag sewn inside, and removed it.*

*That evening they returned, opened the door of the cell, and for the benefit of all of us, beat Mike Christian severely for the next couple of hours. Then, they opened the door of the cell and threw him in. We cleaned him up as well as we could..*

*The cell in which we lived had a concrete slab in the middle on which we slept. Four naked light bulbs hung in each corner of the room.*

*As I said, we tried to clean up Mike as well as we could. After the excitement died down, I looked in the corner of the room, and sitting there beneath that dim light bulb with a piece of red cloth, another shirt and his bamboo needle, was my friend, Mike Christian. He was sitting there with his eyes almost shut from the beating he had received, making another American flag. He was not making the flag because it made Mike Christian feel better. He was making that flag because he knew how important it was to us to be able to Pledge our allegiance to our flag and country.*

*So the next time you say the Pledge of Allegiance, you must never forget the sacrifice and courage that thousands of Americans have made to build our nation and promote freedom around the world..*

*You must remember our duty, our honor, and our country*

*"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."*







**Smooth Sailing**



**Ballasted down bow, to repair bent screw in Malta, circa 1958**



## USS Portland decommissions from Little Creek

The amphibious dock landing ship USS Portland (LSD 37) will be decommissioned during a ceremony, 10 a.m., Aug. 4 at Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, Va.

The last year produced some memorable moments for the 32-year-old ship, under the command of Cmdr. Lawrence Creevy.

In January, 2003, just 30 days after returning from a four-month UNITAS deployment, Portland deployed as part of the seven-ship Amphibious Task Force East to support Operation Enduring Freedom and, subsequently, Operation Iraqi Freedom. The task force, affectionately known as the "Magnificent Seven" was the largest amphibious surge force assembled in over a decade, carrying approximately 5,000 Sailors, 7,000 Marines and tons of heavy equipment and aircraft.

Guest speaker for the decommissioning ceremony will be Rear Adm. Michael P. Nowakowski, Commander Amphibious Group 2, who also commanded Amphibious Task Force East.



**The amphibious dock landing ship USS Portland (LSD 37) will be decommissioned during a ceremony, 10 a.m., Aug. 4 at Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, Va.**

Portland was the second Naval ship to bear the name. The first USS Portland (CA-33), a heavy cruiser, was commissioned in 1933 and operated extensively in the Pacific Theater during World War II. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Portland, with its nine 8-inch guns, was the largest gunship in the region until late 1942. Although often outgunned by the Japanese fleet and severely damaged by a torpedo in the Battle of Guadalcanal,

she participated in almost every major naval engagement and survived the duration of the war.

While operating in the Pacific Theater, Portland was credited with sinking two destroyers, shooting down more than a dozen airplanes and assisting in the sinking of three battleships. It was also responsible for the sinking of a Japanese submarine



## Davit

Not used until 1811; which is the term for the tackle on the main and foremost shrouds for hoisting heavy boats aboard ship. -First called 'davitt', and by Captain John Smith, 'The David's End', in 1626. It itself is derived from 'Daviet', or 'David'; since it was the custom in those days to give proper names to implements, such as 'billy', or 'jack'. A few scholars have theorized that the true origin is related to the Biblical story of King David's son, Absalom, who was caught hanging from a tree branch by his hair.

## Dipping the Ensign

A Merchant vessel used to be required to heave and clew up all her canvass when approached by a warship on the high seas, so as to indicate her willingness to be searched. Delays resulted, and eventually, dipping the flag was authorized as a time-saving substitute.

Today U. S. Naval ships return the salutes dip for dip, except those rendered by ships under flags not recognized by the U. S.

## Eight Bells

Aboard Navy ships, bells are struck to designate the hours of being on watch. Each watch is four hours in length. One bell is struck after the first half-hour has passed, two bells after one hour has passed, three bells after an hour and a half, four bells after two hours, and so forth up to eight bells are struck at the completion of the four hours. Completing a watch with no incidents to report was "Eight bells and all is well."

The practice of using bells stems from the days of the sailing ships. Sailors couldn't afford to have their own time pieces and relied on the ship's bells to tell time. The ship's boy kept time by using a half-hour glass. Each time the sand ran out, he would turn the glass over and ring the appropriate number of bells

## Frigate

From the French word, 'Frigata'. Originally a class of Mediterranean vessels which used both oars and sails. The French were the first to use frigates on the ocean for war or commerce. By the eighteenth century, it became a term for a single-decked ship, or rather, a single gun-decked ship, with an upper, or 'weather' deck. (Often called a 'spar' deck, since replacement spars for the ship's masts were stowed there for easy access).



## Navy Recruiting Posters

