



"Rest well, yet sleep lightly and hear the call, if again sounded, to provide firepower for freedom..."

THE JERSEYMAN - Third Quarter Issue 2008 - 6 Years Nr. 59

BATTLESHIP NEW JERSEY CELEBRATES 65TH BIRTHDAY



*Battleship New Jersey
65th Birthday
May 23, 2008...*

Renowned historian and naval author Paul Stillwell, Keynote Speaker for the 65th anniversary of the first commissioning of USS *New Jersey* on 23 May 1943, is shown here with four crewmen who served aboard the ship during World War II.

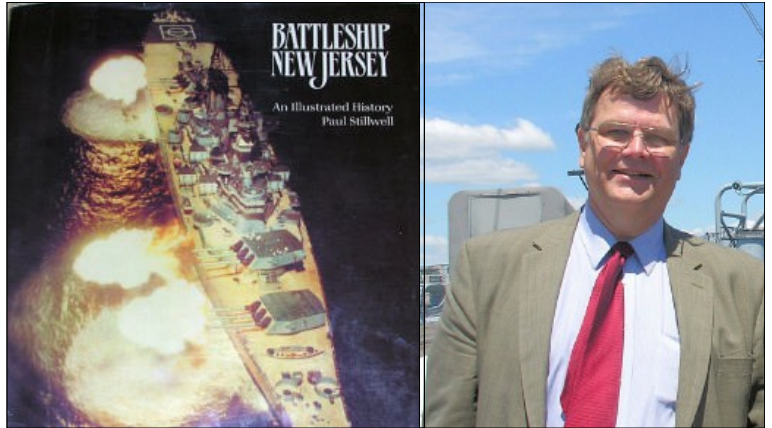
L/R: **Bob LaVine** of Warren, New Jersey, **Paul Stillwell**, **Walt Olkowski** of Bridgewater, New Jersey, **Bob Westcott** of Bridgeton, New Jersey, and **Russ Collins** of Palmyra, New Jersey.

Bob Westcott, and Russ Collins are still serving their ship today as volunteers aboard Battleship New Jersey Museum and Memorial.

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“LOOKING BACK - 23 MAY 1943”...

If you are a reader of *Naval History* magazine published by the US Naval Institute, you are probably familiar with a page titled: “*Looking Back*,” written by Paul Stillwell. During his long career as historian and naval author, Paul has written many books, and among them are: *Battleship New Jersey: An Illustrated History*, and also the illustrated histories of USS *Arizona*, and USS *Missouri*. Not surprisingly, we saw a number of well thumbed copies of Paul’s “*Battleship New Jersey*” carried aboard the ship on 23 May, and presumably each one looking for an autograph. Paul did not disappoint, and was seen graciously signing these books wherever he was found walking about the ship.



Arguably among the most knowledgeable battleship history experts in the country, Paul spoke without notes on a sunny, windy day, and described USS *New Jersey* during her construction at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, and specific events that took place 65 years ago. He began his talk by first introducing four of the World War II crewmen that were aboard to celebrate their ship’s 65th birthday. Each one of these men, and representing all of their USS *New Jersey* shipmates from World War II, were introduced noting the job that they had held while serving aboard... **Bob LaVine of Warren, New Jersey** (Gyroscope repair), **Walt Olkowski of Bridgewater, New Jersey** (Fireman - Fire-room #2), **Bob Westcott of Bridgeton, New Jersey** (Radioman), and **Russ Collins of Palmyra, New Jersey** (2nd Loader, 20mm guns portside.)

“USS *New Jersey* was launched exactly a year to the day after Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1942, and not far across the river from where she is today. The ways beneath her were heavily greased and ready, and heavy chains were hung from the bow to help slow her slide into the Delaware River. But at the last minute, shipyard workers removed some of these chains. So as the champagne bottle was swung against the hull by Mrs. Carolyn Edison, wife of then New Jersey Governor Charles Edison, she spoke the familiar christening words naming this ship *New Jersey* and the ship began her slide. In just about one minute, *New Jersey* had picked up speed to almost 20 miles per hour as she dug her stern deep into the Delaware River. The momentum of this great ship, and without the added weight of those now missing chains, allowed the ship to completely cross the Delaware and somewhat poetically, her stern touched the shore of New Jersey. After her final fitting out, the ship was officially commissioned on 23 May 1943, and at 12:38 p.m., almost exactly to the minute 65 years ago today, with Captain Carl F. Holden, USN in command...” and the history of USS *New Jersey* told by Paul Stillwell, got even more interesting as he continued his talk.

After the ship was launched, and returned to Pier four for her final outfitting, Paul then told the story of Lieutenant Jim Terry, who was Officer in Charge of lowering the massive 400 ton Turret weldments into the barbette openings. Lieutenant Terry had already calculated in advance that the dead weight of the weldments would each be closer to 416 tons, and he also knew that the crane to be used for the critical lifting was tested at only 435 tons prior to the launching of *New Jersey*. As Paul noted, “there was not much room for error”, and so Lieutenant Terry, being mindful that it was he that was going to be blamed for any mishap, decided to say nothing about it and later said: “I stayed under the load at all times when it was in the air... and so if the crane had failed and the load dropped, there wouldn’t be anything left of Jim Terry to answer any questions.”



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Paul then continued the story of when Captain Holden assumed command on 23 May, and said how the ship would no longer be known as an “it”, but from now on would be known a “she”, and how this beautiful lady would soon also respond to moments of anger that were sure to come.

According to Paul, there were many stories to draw from about NEW JERSEY during her building and commissioning, and some bring a smile even today... like the crew being warned that hot sun and cold rum do not mix. But, being sailors, a number of them took no heed, and when they came rolling back on the liberty boat, the stern crane that was supposed to be used to hoist scout planes back aboard, was fitted with a sling to help bring the sailors aboard. The sailors were dropped into the sling, hoisted aboard, and deposited on the deck in a heap.

Paul then took the audience back just five years ago, to the 60th Birthday anniversary of USS *New Jersey* in May of 2003 when Captain Robert C Peniston, USN (Retired) was the Keynote speaker. He told of how in July of 1943, and with the ship riding at anchor in Annapolis Roads, young Bob Peniston and others in his US Naval Academy class boarded USS *New Jersey*. He told of how NEW JERSEY was the first ship this midshipman from Kansas had ever set foot upon, and how Peniston often remarks about his memories of looking through a porthole into the ward-room of this great battleship.

Upon graduating from the US Naval Academy, Ensign Robert C Peniston was then assigned to his first ship, which was to be USS *New Jersey*, and he reported aboard in August of 1946. Then, in August of 1969, and twenty-three years later, Captain Robert C Peniston relieved Captain J. Edward Snyder, Jr.

With Paul Stillwell as Keynote speaker, the 65 year old history of USS *New Jersey* had come alive once again with stories of her construction, and first commissioning for World War II. Many thanks Paul. - TH

First Commissioning dates of the Iowa-Class battleships...

USS IOWA (BB-61) - 22 February 1943
USS NEW JERSEY (BB-62) - 23 May 1943
USS WISCONSIN (BB-64) - 16 April 1944
USS MISSOURI (BB-63) - 11 June 1944



With military clockwork, and only a few minutes after Paul Stillwell had finished speaking, an orange colored US Coast Guard rescue helicopter came quickly into view. Flying only a few hundred feet up, she traveled south down the Delaware river and was just about 200 feet off the portside of Battleship New Jersey. She made a full sweep, turning 180 degrees at the stern, and then proceeded slowly up the starboard side.

Seen here, the workhorse US Coast Guard HH-65A “Dolphin” helicopter gave ship’s visitors a treat as she performed a rescue demonstration, and provided a fitting end to the 65th Birthday celebration aboard the Battleship New Jersey.

“Semper Paratus” - Always Ready.

THE JERSEYMAN - REMEMBERING VIETNAM (CONTINUED...)

Change of Command... 27 August 1969 - Captain J. Edward Snyder, Jr., USN

“Admiral Bird, Admiral Vasey, distinguished guests, friends, officers and men of NEW JERSEY. One year and four months ago, I stood atop the turret behind me to take command of Battleship New Jersey. Today, in a very few moments, I shall relinquish that command. This is a difficult time for me. There is so much to say which words cannot hope to express. Duty and the passage of time require that each of us move on, and while I am saddened to leave this ship which has been my life these past twenty months, I go with the pride and the satisfaction of knowing that I have served with the finest and most professional group of men, on the finest ship afloat. The men of today’s NEW JERSEY are not afraid to experiment, to innovate, to reject old and begin new traditions. They are linked to their heritage yet not chained to the past. They are younger, better educated, and more individualistic than the men I knew as a junior officer.



Official US Navy photo

I watched NEW JERSEY return from the forgotten reaches of the mothball fleet in Philadelphia and saw her majestic precision in action off the coast of Vietnam. I was there when she proved to friend and foe alike, the vital role of 16” gunfire, both in interdicting the supply lines of communist infiltrators and, even more importantly, in close support of our allied ground troops ashore in Vietnam.

We have all talked with the Marines and soldiers serving in Southeast Asia, and have heard their feelings about NEW JERSEY. Perhaps the best example is a letter from a young Marine, perhaps the son of a neighbor of yours, to his mother. It read: “NEW JERSEY sits out there, big and beautiful, and when she lets go with her 16 inch guns Charlie knows he is in for some big trouble. I hope she stays out there for 135 more days. That’s my time to come home, Mom, so jus pray for me that I make it...” This response was repeated again and again by our forces ashore, and was this morning confirmed by the Secretary of the Navy in presenting NEW JERSEY the Navy Unit Commendation.

I am a battleship sailor. I have been one since I first reported aboard USS PENNSYLVANIA as a new Ensign 25 years ago. To return to a battleship as Commanding Officer has been the thrill of a lifetime, the apex of my career. It is perhaps to be expected that I would be sad to leave now, regardless of my future duty. But I could leave this ship today, and bid Captain PENISTON Godspeed, confident that NEW JERSEY would continue to do her best in the days and trials to come. But there are few more days, and just one last trial. Next week, NEW JERSEY begins what is in all probability the last voyage of the last DREADNAUGHT - the long, slow journey to join her forgotten sister MISSOURI in Bremerton, Washington.

War is hell, and it is also expensive, and the American people have tired of the expense to defend freedom. And so this year when the winter monsoon comes to Vietnam and prevents the planes from accurately supporting our allied ground forces, NEW JERSEY will not be there. The ship that made the Motto “FIREPOWER FOR FREEDOM” a reality will be abandoned to Bremerton. And the American boys who looked to the “BIG J” for their very lives must look elsewhere.

NEW JERSEY will go quietly. Her omnipotent rifles, feared and virtually unconquerable by any aggressor, have been stilled from within. The vast American public will pay less note to her passing than to a single riot on a single University campus.

But there are some who will know. There are some who believe, as I do, that NEW JERSEY is in essence the flagship of the American ideal, and they will join me in mourning her loss. If I may adapt a phrase which Ambassador Adlai STEVENSON wrote in 1963 about the assassination of President John KENNEDY... “NEW JERSEY will soon be gone. And for that, we are a lesser people, in a lesser land.”

Captain PENISTON, I know that you, too, are a Battleship sailor, and I know that in the few short weeks that remain, you will again love NEW JERSEY as we do. She is a great lady, with a magnificent crew. To the men of NEW JERSEY, I wish you well in the sad task that lies ahead, and call upon you to do your work well, toward the yet unseen day when NEW JERSEY may again be allowed to serve. God bless you all.

My orders read as follows: “When relieved you are detached from duty as the Commanding Officer, USS NEW JERSEY (BB-62) and will proceed and report to Commander, Cruiser-Destroyer Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet for duty as Chief of Staff and Aide.”

Captain Peniston, I am ready to be relieved, Sir.”

THE JERSEYMAN

USS *New Jersey* ... Bugler

On our first day at sea, I met Captain J. Edward Snyder who looked at me and said, "so you're our bugler... play 'Liberty Call'!" After performing the call the captain told me "that's the most important bugle call you'll have to play." And it was right then that I realized how Captain Snyder felt about his crew.

Later on, I met with him again, and to discuss which of 108 official US Navy bugle calls he wanted me to perform. He said it was up to me, and so I suggested that we start with about 70 calls... but that turned out to be not such a good idea. The crew was completely confused by these calls and they had no idea what was going on! So I worked out an arrangement with the Boatswain's mates to pair-up the bugle calls with the Boatswain's pipe while on watch, and eventually cutting the bugle calls down to about 35. During a normal day at sea I'd be sounding the bugle about 30 times a day from 'Reveille' at 0600 to the 'Chow Call' favorite, and everything in between up to 'Tattoo' at 2155, and five minutes later, "Taps". To my delight the crew caught on to the bugle calls and seemed to enjoy them. But every time I went to chow or moved about the ship, I could expect fun shots from the crew about wanting to throw me overboard.

Although Bob Boling and I were both assigned as ship's buglers, I became the primary Bugler for most of our Vietnam tour, and always got stuck at the Quarter Deck in each port. It was only on rare occasions that I ever left the ship.

When we were heading out to Vietnam in 1968 we stopped off in Hawaii, and as we were entering Pearl Harbor Captain Snyder asked me what I thought about performing Taps from the main deck as we passed the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial. He said it would make a great photo. He then came down with me to the Main Deck, and took this photo of me himself... performing Taps as we passed this famous memorial near sunset. Afterwards Captain Snyder put his hand on my shoulder and said "Thanks" as though we had finished something that he always wanted to do.

My duty station at sea was on the bridge, and I always kept my trumpet handy. In port I was stationed at the Forward Quarter Deck, and where I would only use my Navy issue bugle. On our very first UNREP Captain Snyder suddenly turned to me, and as we began to break away, ordered me to "Play the Lone Ranger!" I panicked! I knew the piece but had never played it! Sure enough the Bosn's opened up the 1-MC and I absolutely butchered the tune. It must have been hilarious seeing me suffer through that thing! Instead of getting upset, Captain Snyder, and the rest of the bridge crew were having the laugh of a lifetime! As Captain Snyder left the bridge he smiled and ordered me to "learn it!", and that was probably one of the best orders I can remember receiving while in the navy.



I immediately began practicing the "triple tongue" technique for it, memorized the piece from memory, and I got it down cold. A few weeks later, and to my surprise, one of the crew members managed to get a copy of the trumpet score for me, and I had memorized it perfectly! Soon the flag boys made up a huge flag of the Lone Ranger which they would then fly at every 'break-away' and as I began playing the "William Tell." The crew loved it, and so did I.

I never knew quite what to expect from Captain Snyder, and he would often order me to perform all types of tunes at short notice, including "Hello Dolly" when the commander of the Nurse Corps once came aboard by helicopter. Of course when Bob Hope arrived, I was well prepared to play "Thanks For The Memories" over the 1-MC.

Along with QM2 James Flood (now a very famous Maritime Artist), we formed up a small ship's band and practiced in a stateroom behind the bridge. I'm sure the crew will remember our performances a few times on the fan tail and during our crossing of the equator on our way to Singapore.

At our decommissioning on 17 December 1969, I asked our XO, Commander Elfelt, for permission to play a final "Taps" for our beloved ship, and Captain Robert Peniston gave his O.K. I also asked the XO if I could keep the Jack we flew in all the ports during our tour and he gave an O.K. for that too. These were very sad times for all of us.

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Submitted by:

Bert Trotter

San Bernardino, California

THE JERSEYMAN

From the Chart House '68-'69... By Stephen C. Bates

About halfway through OCS in the fall of '67, we were asked to submit our wish lists for upcoming assignment, coast, homeport, ship type. It was a sign of the times that Atlantic was a rather popular first choice. Inevitably, Pacific came out of the chute; so who cared that homeport was Long Beach, but wow that mine was a coveted assignment aboard BB-62, a ship type not on the list!

I remember doing a little research upon this news and being impressed with various pieces on the ship's roles in WWII and Korea, including a diagrammed technical article on the awesome workings of the main battery. I also recalled the original PCO, Captain Alexander, suffering political fallout from the Arnheiter -*VANCE* incident which resulted in Captain Snyder being named. There was some scuttlebutt, and relief, at this decision in that "old school, by the book" was being replaced by a more laid back style.

It was not until completion of OCS and pending pre-com schools that I got a brief letter from LCDR Roy Short, Weps senior in the nucleus crew, writing for the ship to announce my assignment as N Division Officer and Assistant Navigator. Very exciting, what better could a rookie ensign walk into: a division well anchored by BB veteran QMC Sam Tucker (honorary assignment of raising colors at Commissioning), and a department led by Navigator LCDR Jim Sabin, former CO of an ocean going tug. Little did I know at the time how close to actual operational decision making (of all kinds) this assignment would be.

But first, a Captain Snyder moment just prior to the ship's leaving Long Beach for WestPac. Our wardroom had eighty or so officers, a significant percentage of which were junior, and which for many of us meant USNR and not being long off the nation's campuses. This was '68, and our being aboard reflected a willingness to serve the country but perhaps in a more philosophically reserved frame of mind than, say, the service academies might have imbued in us. Then along came wardroom guest speaker RADM T. J. Rudden, a future Westpac Task Group boss for us and apparent old school type. His speech was a bit over the top and caused noticeable squirming among JOs in particular who commented that had the venue been the lecture hall rather the wardroom, people likely would have walked out. Captain Snyder sensed this, and later that day or the next called a meeting of JOs in the wardroom and put the Admiral's remarks in a much more receptive Snyder context. At the time it seemed remarkable that a CO would recognize this mild dissonance and make the effort to right it. Later en route Subic to DaNang for the first jittery time, I had occasion to counsel a few N Division members who were feeling this same sort of dissonance and I referred back to the encouragement of Captain Snyder's remarks following the Admiral's.

Navigators and OODs on duty report directly to the CO regardless of rank which allowed our team to see Captain Snyder often in addition to his routine ramblings about the ship. His sea cabin was an adjunct to the chart house, and there were the regular track planning sessions and night orders to deal with in addition to the occasional "Captain to the bridge" calls, one of which was the burdened ship incident that Scott Cheyne described in his recent *Jerseyman* article. Another of which, or two, emanated from CCC (Command Control Center), a super watch of department heads that Captain Snyder set up to oversee things while we were on the gun line. This senior group, sometimes in their enthusiasm to respond quickly to a mission, was not always fully cognizant of two of the CO's cardinal rules: Thou shalt not cross inside the ten fathom curve; and when making close in turns, bow always away from the coast. These were in deference to our deep draft and questionable reliability of charted depths. Penalty for violating would be a very non-laid back Captain Snyder.

Most of our gun line operations were off I Corps, first region from the DMZ south. One of our constant nemeses was Tiger Island just off the DMZ which for reasons unknown, was off limits to us both before and after the pullback from the 19th parallel. This meant they could fire at us with our not being allowed to return fire, and which necessitated our frequently maneuvering to give a five mile berth to this island. This didn't seem fair. Once in the chart house I asked the Captain about this situation, and he said he had no idea of the reason but wasn't happy about it. I recall we shared a sports analogy of our having the gloves on while the other guys had them off.



THE JERSEYMAN

Whenever prospective target coordinates would come in, the navigation team always rapidly plotted them for feasibility of reaching without violating the cardinal rules. One night during the mid watch off I Corps or northern II Corps, a sizable bunch of targets came in randomly. The problem was that these targets were all about 400 miles south with only about 30% of them within range from the ten fathom curve. Captain Snyder came in to evaluate. He didn't have to scratch his head to let us know he was mystified by what he saw. He asked what we thought which was that it seemed silly to steam sixteen hours at 25 knots to hit less than a third of the designated targets with no apparent future missions in that area. Evidently that was what he was thinking, and he sent a return message requesting clarification. The clarification response came back swiftly with a blunt "go now." Sixteen hours down, perhaps five to six hours of shooting, during which they figured out that we weren't going to run the ship aground to enhance our range for the other targets. So release and orders for another sixteen hours back to our usual assignments off I Corps. Some would call this clarification episode an example of the Captain's occasional outspokenness. Alternatively many of us viewed his request to the targeting authority as nothing other than perfectly rational.

When our deployment was nearing the end, Captain Snyder came into the chart house and confidentially asked us to plot a track from Westpac to California via Australia. He envisioned a goodwill tour going around the west coast to Perth, then under to Melbourne, then up to Sydney, then possibly Brisbane and/or New Zealand before back east for homecoming. This scenario would have added only about two to three weeks to our deployment. In a private moment, the Captain told me he was thinking of running this by his department heads and asked me what I thought. I told him that very few of us in our lifetimes would ever get to Australia absent this trip and that two to three weeks was not an unreasonable extension. Also that if he put it to an all married department head vote, it would be doomed. He stewed on it for a short while longer and later apologetically told me I was right about the department head vote which he seemed to regret. He really wanted to go. As fate had it, we were well on our great circle track to Long Beach (vicinity 36-05N, 155-00W, some 3300 miles from Yokosuka) when reversed in response to the North Koreans downing one our EC-121 reconnaissance planes. In hindsight, I occasionally think of how much easier it would have been to respond to this provocation from Australia than from 70% of the way across the Pacific.

Postscripts:

- * RIP, good man Captain/Admiral Snyder.
- * In the summer of '06, John McCain came to the local Yarmouth Clam Festival walking around while stumping for a candidate for governor. I went up to him, introduced myself, thanked him for his extraordinary service, and told him of his father's CINCPAC visit aboard BB-62 in Pearl Harbor which he seemed to appreciate.
- * Also in '06, I was part of the organizing group that brought the three quarter size traveling Vietnam Wall replica to Spring Point in South Portland. I still have my USS NEW JERSEY BB-62 ball cap (sewn in script at Yokosuka) and wore it during this three day event which attracted 50,000 people. Out of the blue on Sunday morning, a visiting veteran from Massachusetts saw my hat and without warning threw a big bear hug on me saying he had been waiting for 38 years to bump into one of us. He teared up as he had always wanted to thank the ship for saving his life -- twice -- with our gunfire support. I suspect there are still thousands of these untold stories out there...



Submitted by:

Steve Bates
Cape Elizabeth, Maine

THE JERSEYMAN

Night Firing Mission...

It was sometime after midnight on the night of 23 February 1969, and I was getting off watch on Spot one - a gunfire control and safety observation post located just above the bridge, aft of Turret #2. We were firing H and I Missions, and providing illumination (star shells) in support of Marines on the beach. We had two gun mounts online, Mounts 52 and 54, and before handing over the phones, I could hear chatter of the spotters asking for illumination. This was not unusual as we were just below the DMZ and enemy infiltration was a constant threat.

I then proceeded down to the Chief's quarters for a quick shower and to sack out for the next day of continuing fire support. As I was trying to doze off to the echo of two firing gun mounts, I was being lulled by the occasional BOOM, BOOM, and calm that all was well with my gunners. Then, just as I was dropping off to sleep, the staccato firing changed to BOOM, BOOM, BOOM,

BOOM, BOOM, and then multiplying increments of 2, 6, then eight, and some in single shots which was obviously illumination, and the sharp report of 6 and 8 gun salvos. Something big was up, and the old Chief wasn't going to get any sleep.

I jumped into khakis and raced up to Spot one to learn that our Marine outpost was being overrun and they were calling for "all we got"... and our gunners were sure giving them that.

I then put on a pair of headphones and could hear the outpost and surrounding gunfire. It's not hard to distinguish the AK47's from the M16's, and there many more of the AK's... I was quickly briefed that they were under attack by between 130 and 150 North Vietnamese regulars (who can count at a time like this?) I also learned of the brave Marine at the outpost who was so overwhelmed, that he requested fire on his own position rather than allow him and his classified information fall to the enemy. Later I was told that he was a Corporal... who said that in times of need our kids won't rise to the occasion - - they do it all the time!

By this time, our captain J. Edward Snyder, Jr., had summoned Master Chief Fire Controlman Bob Hawkins to combat for a fire control solution to our Marine outpost problem. To me, Master Chief Hawkins is arguably one of the best, if not *the* best, of fire controlmen, and I have been around a lot of them. Hawkins came up with a solution to fire close in around the base (a ring of fire), with secondary battery fire 5", and hit them on the periphery with 16" main battery.

We then continued illumination and told the spotter to get his head down, "we're coming at ya." After 6 hours, and between 1,700 and 1,800 rounds, we heard the welcome sound of the spotter come back and say "cease fire, cease fire. Enemy in full retreat removing their dead and wounded."

Midway through the shooting, I went down to check on the gun crews, and to check for any problems. I was not surprised that their morale was good in light of the long hours, and proud of all of them for their performance. One mount in particular had lost their power rammer, and gas ejection air, so they opened the hatch for fresh air and were hand ramming each round. I couldn't have been more proud of their action in that we had trained for this very event.

Wading through the piled up empty brass shells, I made it up to each mount and the assessment was the same. Most of the gun barrels had their paint burned off or peeling, and the recoil cylinders were bubbling hot grease. That's when you know that you've done some heavy shooting.

Now for the bad part, we had to clean up the mess, hold post-firing checks and strike the empty shell cases to storage before getting to chow. All in a days (nights) work for the gunners mates of the world's greatest battleship New Jersey (BB-62).

We later learned that Capatin Snyder had recommended the young Marine for a medal for bravery, and he surely deserved it. I'll bet he won't be forgetting the gunners and crew of USS New Jersey for a while...

To all my shipmates... with a proud heart, I wish all of you Smooth sailing, and following seas.

Mike Murphy, GMCS, USN Retired
Panama City, Florida



THE JERSEYMAN

My memories of USS *New Jersey* in Vietnam...

I was the senior PN3 in X Division, Enlisted Personnel Office, with Lt. Keith Wilcox in charge. I worked for PNC La Vella under PN1 Hulse and PN1 Phillips. We also had PN2 Guthrie and several other PN3's who were recent transfers to the ship during the summer of '69. Our office processed the crew for either transfer, discharge, or separation. X Division included the Captain's Office, Enlisted Personnel Office, Master-at-Arms, Training & Education Office, Ship's Media Personnel (JO's), radio station, and library staff.

After the Change in Command ceremony at Pier Echo in Long Beach (where Captain Snyder was relieved by Captain Peniston,) we proceeded to Seal Beach to off-load ammunition recently loaded for our aborted second WestPac cruise. Upon returning to Long Beach we embarked family members, cars, and so forth for the one-way trip to Bremerton. I recall one California Congressman that made a declaration for the ship to have it's turrets removed, painted white, and sent around the world on a peace mission. I can't recall the guy's name - no matter - such an outrageous idea doesn't deserve name recognition. What an idiot!

The trip north to Bremerton was mostly uneventful. A final "shooting" was held on the fantail - clay pigeons. The entry into and procession down Juan de Fuca Straits was impressive. Everyone, and I mean EVERYONE who had something that floated came out to see us. What a funeral procession! We only lacked the brass band.



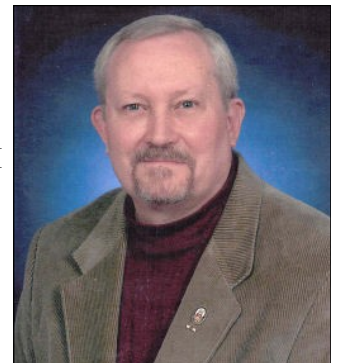
Upon arrival, NEW JERSEY was maneuvered to a steam pier at the far end of the base. This was totally inadequate for the purposes of off-loading supplies and materiel, but apparently that was Command's concern. We stayed at the steam pier until the ship was towed to drydock for sandblasting, painting, and sealing of spaces. If memory serves me correctly, we were only there a short period of time before the crew was transferred to a barracks barge a couple of piers away. It was a cold, windy, and altogether unacceptable state of affairs and a group of us in X Division decided to move off-base for the duration. 5 or 6 of our X Division members rented a large mobile home off of Kitsap Highway, just up from Bill's Tavern. You know, the one where we all hung out from evening to closing time (2 a.m). I got pretty damn good at pool, shuffleboard, and darts. I still have my set of darts from back then.

During this time, the ship was reduced to "as built" - all fancywork, wood paneling (in all the Dep't. head offices), and any linoleum flooring was removed, and I think when this occurred, the ship's personnel realized this was it - she was done for. Work was mundane, routine, without much enjoyment or satisfaction and day by day we slowly reduced the crew to a skeleton force. I did go over to Seattle once with one of the other PN's in the office, but the ferry ride was long and I don't think I was really interested in much other than getting the job done and separation from active duty.

One event sticks out in my mind... At the end of our '68-'69 WestPac cruise, we headed East heading for Long Beach in company with USS CORAL SEA and one other ship (an amphib or storeship, I can't recall). Three days out of Long Beach the North Koreans shot down an EC-121 electronics surveillance plane and we did a quick turn around at very high speed. We proceeded that way to Yokosuka, Japan, re-loaded ammunition, and then steamed into the Sea of Japan where we cruised in an oval for about two weeks. The word was that U.S. Command didn't want our ship visible from the Korean mainland since memories of the IOWA's from the Korean War would have possibly escalated the situation.

If I had one thing to do over it would have been to have delayed my separation until after the ship's decommissioning. That in itself was a sad affair to be sure, but one that I simply didn't realize the importance of at the time.

Submitted by:
Hank Strub
Winston-Salem, North Carolina



THE JERSEYMAN

An Enlisted man's View of the Wardroom, or *A Connecticut Yankee in King Edward's Kitchen*

by Patrick C. Scheidel



Constantly “looking at your life through a rear view mirror” is inadvisable, but a quick glance can be illustrative and meaningful. Such is the case for me as I reflect upon my military service aboard the USS *New Jersey* during our tour in Vietnam.

As a Hospital Corpsman, my life was spared when I received orders to the Big “J” while she was in Portsmouth, Virginia. In Vietnam, the shelf life of a combat corpsman was then being estimated at about ten days. In effect, I had unknowingly won a lottery of sorts. My gratitude grows exponentially with each passing year.

Observing Captain J. Edward Snyder, Jr. manage the *New Jersey* and her crew, I learned life-long leadership lessons. As the most decorated ship in the history of the Navy, it seemed our destiny to be an active combatant in Vietnam. “When charging into harm’s way, capable and calm leadership will carry the day” could have been Captain Snyder’s slogan. I never observed the skipper unnerved. His facial expressions, posture, demeanor and pace projected a quiet confidence.

My general quarters station was the wardroom where I served with the medical and dental officer, Catholic chaplain, and three other corpsmen. If need be, my station would become a unique emergency operating room, complete with a juice and milk bar, eating and serving utensils and a galley. With the firing of each 16-inch shell, I felt the reverberations throughout my skeletal system. No fear of dozing off. Only one quarter inch of steel separated us from the war.

A good leader mingles with his men. Like the legendary “Bull” Halsey, Captain Snyder occasionally ate with the enlisted men. Once, he chose to sit at the table where I was eating and spoke to me as I imagined he would have to any officer in the wardroom.

Even with the morning spotters’ reports of our firing activity the previous day, I was unaware of the significance of our Vietnam effort until years later, when, upon chance meetings with Marines who had once called in the rounds, and they told me of our importance to their fight and survival. The ability of the USS *New Jersey* to fire in all weather conditions saved pilots from risky missions and provided life-saving artillery support to our ground troops. Now, I can better understand the need for excellent leaders like Captain Snyder who could navigate a ship through hostile waters, respond efficiently and effectively to every call for firepower and return his charges back home alive.

From my standpoint, the skipper led with his mind and his heart. His intellect governed technical decisions but his compassion for his men was noticeable. I was able to reciprocate the Captain’s kindness by bringing him meals and medicines while he recovered from surgery. Although we were not to disturb the healing Captain, I was able to steal a few words of conversation with him and mentioned how good a Skipper I thought he was. He was appreciative and gracious. He looked you in the eye and spoke “to” you not “at” you. I was honored to be of service to such a man.

A good leader must possess a great sense of humor, and our captain was such a leader. I shall never forget the digital salute that the crew collectively presented to the pilot of the Russian recon plane who was following us to Nam. After all, it is important to render the appropriate acknowledgment to foreign officers. And, by hosting the Bob Hope Show, Captain Snyder also proved that he understood the restorative properties of humor and its positive impact upon morale.

By this missive, I salute Captain J. Edward Snyder, Jr. for being the humble, gentleman warrior who cooked up lessons of leadership in his kitchen that have provided me a lifetime of nourishment.

Submitted by:
Patrick Scheidel
Essex Junction, Vermont



THE JERSEYMAN

The Bob Hope Show... by Bill Wolfe

Well, my story is about what happened on December 24th 1968. I had heard that the Chaplain was looking for a few men to be members of the cast and to assist the crew of the Bob Hope show. New Jersey crewmen were going to be tour guides for the show folks, so that they wouldn't get lost while getting around the ship. But when I applied, I got a bit more than I had expected. The Chaplain was taking the applications, and when I got to him he told me that all positions had been filled, but he asked if I would care to be part of the show. Readers can probably guess what was my answer, and I consider my participation to be an honor to this day.

I was to be in the part of the show just before the main show started, and I was taken to the officer's wardroom to study my lines. I was seated just across the table from Ann-Margret and I was talking to her, but my study time was all too brief for learning my lines. After a short while I was called on deck for the show. I took my place on stage, and as seen in this photo, Miss World, Penny Plummer was to my right, and to my left was the great man himself, Mr. Bob Hope.

To this day, I sure wish I had learned my lines. I must have done more damage to those lines than anyone would think possible, and that was to be my 15 minutes of fame!

But destiny knocked for me once more as I fast forward 20 years into the future, and to August of 1980. There is a yearly pro-am golf tournament in the Portland, Oregon area, and back in 1980 it was called the Fred Meyer challenge. And, as luck would have it, one of the celebrity guest players was going to be Bob Hope. I contacted Peter Jacobsen enterprises, and told them of the story of my meeting with Bob Hope aboard USS *New Jersey* 20 years ago. They were then kind enough to set up a meeting with Mr. hope and they had me as their guest

On the day that I met Bob Hope again, I had my cruise book with me in hopes that he might remember the show. He looked at the cruise book and told me that he remembered the show aboard the USS *New Jersey* very well. He also said that my part in the show couldn't have been any funnier even if I had done my lines the way they were supposed to be. What a true gentleman he was...

Just before we said goodbye for what would be the last time, he pulled my cruise book over to him and signed it under our photo that you can see here. Then he stood up, walked around to my side, said how nice it was to see me again, and with a smile, shook my hand and walked onto the golf course.

Well that's my story, and I am very happy that I had the chance to meet Bob Hope, and can now share the rest of the story with my "old" shipmates.

Submitted by
Bill Wolfe
Beaverton, Oregon
USS *Oklahoma City*, (CLG-5)
USS *New Jersey* (BB-62)



THE JERSEYMAN

Storm at Sea on the USS *New Jersey* - 05 Feb 1969

As I remember, we were departing Yokosuka Japan Navy Yard after a week of R&R. The weather was winter like, cold and windy, as we eased out of our berth with a special sea and anchor detail set, and proceeded down the channel and out into the sea of Sagami which approaches the Pacific. Many sailors had bought reel to reel tape recorders, players, and such, while in Japan and I remember ordering four or five three piece suits of different material cut to my drawings, of which I was extremely delighted. The Japanese tailors had a very good reputation. As we worked our way out into the bay, there was a lot of coaster and freighter traffic, many on the same course as we. At first, while we were in the lee of the Japanese headlands, the sea was fairly flat. However as we worked our way out into the Pacific at 20 knots, the seas grew a great deal rougher. I remember that the freighters, some of them four to five hundred feet long, started being obscured from our view up to their funnels and mast tips. (Our view from the 04 level bridge was approximately 60 feet above sea level). We began taking spray over our bows with some regularity. The sea and anchor detail meanwhile had been secured, and I had the QM watch on the bridge, the primary duty of which was keeping the ship's log, recording course and speed changes, along with anything else noteworthy going on in the ship. The watch had settled in, and I remember wishing that I had brought my camera with me, as the seas were getting quite dramatic. It occurred to me how beautiful the old girl must look thundering along in the mountainous seas at 20 knots, utterly disdaining slowing down like our lesser companions the freighters and the coasters were compelled to do.

I remember that we had such confidence in our ship that we used to enjoy the rough weather and look forward to the storms so that we could witness the awesome splendor of the waves being cleaved by the ship's majestic bow, and the ensuing spray and foam rising high in the air.

Up to this point the weather, though bitter cold, was clear. However, presently, the sky became overcast, and the seas became even rougher. All the other coastal traffic had been overtaken and left far behind and the *New Jersey* found herself alone on a stormy ocean. I remember I was having a splendid time as I waxed poetic and Pepysian in my prose as I described our surroundings in our ship's log. While thus engaged, I remember hearing someone say "Look at that!" and, as I peered forward, I beheld a huge mountainous rogue wave, much bigger than its neighbors, heading straight for the ship. The bows fell into a deep trough immediately in front and we watched in awe as the foc's'cle disappeared. As the bow crashed down and punched its way into the front of the wave, white spray blossomed and spread far out to either side, then, incredibly, as the bows buried, the wave cam further aft and thundered off the face of 16 inch turret number 1, and then, unbelievably, off the face of turret number 2. Suddenly, our view on the bridge was totally obscured by tons of white water spreading up and over the bridge roof (05 level) and on up reaching the 08 level before being dispersed in the shrieking wind. As the great battleship shook herself free and the bow rose, we became deafened by the simultaneous clatter of the ship's general quarter's alarm, the gas alarm, and the collision alarm pounding in our ears.

"Who sounded those alarms?" shouted the officer of the deck into the 17 inch thick steel armored conning tower, where the helm was located. "Nobody, sir" was the reply by the startled helmsman. At this point Capt. Snyder rushed onto the bridge shouting "What the hell is going on?!" After a quick look around he ordered the word passed on the 1MC., (ship's announcement system) to belay/disregard the alarms, and by no means go out onto the weather decks. As this was happening, I was furiously recording what I was seeing and hearing into the logbook. Capt. Snyder ordered the speed immediately cut to about 10 knots, and we settled back down to battle the storm. The seas continued throughout this day and into the next as the wind shrieked and whistled, but the old ship proved once again what an excellent sea handler she was, as she took it all in her stride.

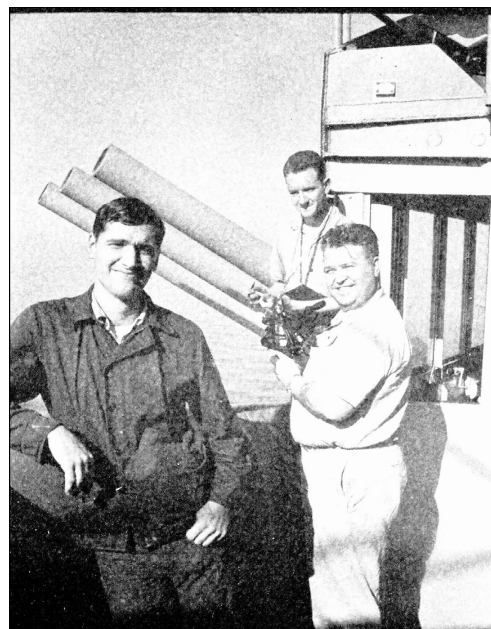


Photo courtesy of Jim Flood.

Jim at the left, Chief Tucker standing to the right, and ship's Bugler Bert Trotter above...

THE JERSEYMAN

Later on in the watch, we got a report that another wave had broken free some acetylene containers aft on the helo pad, so we reversed course down wind until the ship's wind became more manageable, and ventured out on the deck to rescue the rolling tanks. It was at this time it was discovered that the earlier rogue wave had punched in the water tight door to the unoccupied QM's inport deck shack, located in the angle formed where turret 2 barbette met the forward superstructure. The water tight door was crumpled like tissue paper into the shack and the wave had gouged out and carried away all the furniture that had been in there, including the desk - it was cleaned out. It had also shorted out and set off every alarm in the ship, and this turned out to be reason for pandemonium after the big wave. The seas also damaged the starboard side motor whaleboat, lifelines were downed and some electric cables were also wrenched off the side of bulkheads.

Presently, my watch was over, so I looked through my description of the watch's events with pride and signed my name thinking I had recorded history. The third morning dawned clear and warmer and we had run out of the storm. I got my camera to take pictures of the damage, and made my way up to the bridge and into the charthouse with some anticipation. I wanted to see what the OOD had transcribed from my dramatic entries in the QM's rough log and into the OOD's smooth log. I managed to take a quick look at the desired volume, and read with astonishment something to the effect of "Steaming on course such and such at such and such speed and at such and such time reduced speed to 10 knots, etc., etc., etc." So now my literary efforts are resting in some dusty storage bin. Yes, I was disappointed that my creative writing didn't make it into the official ship's log.

Submitted by:

Jim Flood

Delray Beach, Florida

USS *New Jersey's* Swimming Pool...

I recall that early in our tour, Captain Snyder caused the empty 40 meter gun tubs on the 01 level abreast either side of the bridge areas to be painted blue, so that they could be used as swimming pools. As we reached the tropics, the pools were filled with purified boiler feed water. The water was safe for swimming, but it did have kind of a brownish hue and so nobody immediately went in for a swim. The captain decided to go into the pool himself to show the crew that the water was okay.

It was a clear warm day, the superstructure was crowded with men watching the event, and we quartermasters were all watching from our vantage point on the 04 level bridge. About eight of us were leaning out of the bridge windows and someone remarked that the captain's orderly, standing beside the gun tub pool, was wearing a side arm. Someone asked why he was there, and before I really thought about it, I shot back that he was guarding the captain and looking out for sharks (in the pool), and the bridge convulsed with laughter. To this day I don't know if the captain heard my wisecrack, but he heard the laughter, and just smiled along. That's just the way he was, a great captain, and a fine gentleman.

Submitted by:

Jim Flood

Delray Beach, Florida

Editor's Note: For those Vietnam-era shipmates curious on how Jim Flood's maritime artwork has evolved since serving aboard USS *New Jersey*, these are two good examples.

One depicts the "*Homecoming of USS New Jersey*", which Jim donated to Battleship New Jersey, and is on permanent display in the Wardroom.

The other painting is of the two great ships in New York harbor:

*"Queen Elizabeth 2 and Queen Mary 2
April 25, 2004 to May 1, 2004
New York - Southampton"*



THE JERSEYMAN

EC-121 Shootdown... by Ken Kersch

The year was 1969 and we were on the way back to California aboard the USS *New Jersey* after more than 8 months in Viet Nam. We were steaming in a group of ships, including the carrier USS *Coral Sea* and a few destroyers, and you could hear the constant pinging of the destroyers through the hull. We were of course excited about heading home to see family and friends, and for me, I was also heading home not only to see my family again, but also to be a part of my sister's wedding. The wedding was scheduled for the day we were scheduled to dock in Long Beach, CA., and that would have been a problem for me to get to the wedding in time, except that the *Coral Sea* was docking in San Francisco on Friday, and a day earlier than the *Jersey*. So I had put a request in to be transferred to the *Coral Sea* and to begin my leave immediately upon docking. This request was approved and I was told that I would be transferred along with a few other sailors on Thursday morning. I was ready to go.



But when reveille blew on Tuesday morning, you could tell right away that the ship was running faster than we had been the night before, and the pinging from the destroyers was missing. Then, when some shipmates came up from aft steering they mentioned that the ship was on a heading of 290 degrees! That course was almost due West, and not the direction you want to be going when you are trying to get back to the United States from the middle of the Pacific Ocean. I also remember going up on deck and watched the sun rising in the East over the fantail of the ship. There were no other ships around us, and I guess they were still heading home, but we were heading back towards the far east. My heart sank... big-time, and I realized that I was not going to make it for the wedding party.

Later in the day, Captain Snyder came on the 1MC and announced to all hands that the ship had been ordered to immediately turn about. A few hours earlier, 31 American sailors had been lost in the cold waters of the Sea of Japan. An EC-121 reconnaissance plane, flying a routine mission out of Atsugi Naval Air Station in Japan was shot down by North Korean aircraft over international waters.

USS *New Jersey* had now been ordered to Sasebo, Japan in the event she was needed, but en route, we took on fuel while underway and our orders were again changed. We headed directly for Yokosuka, Japan to take on stores and to re-arm.

The security of the events precluded the immediate announcement of the ship's diversion to the world, and our families back in the States were still looking forward to seeing their husbands, brothers and sons on the 19th. It was not until much later in the evening of the 18th that the Department of Defense confirmed that USS *New Jersey* would not be arriving home the next morning. This left many families waiting on the pier at Long Beach without an expected loved one that morning. I heard later that a New Jersey Assistance Center was set up to help the families with aid and to offer whatever comfort they could provide.

We arrived in Yokosuka at approximately 10 am on Tuesday, April 22, 1969, to receive whatever other provisions and munitions we needed, and departed Yokosuka before dark on that same day for a holding area at sea. Further confrontation with the North Koreans did not occur, and I think it was sometime around the April 26th, that we headed back home again, and finally arriving back at Long Beach on May 5th.

Because of these hurried revisions to the *Jersey's* course, I never made it to the wedding, leaving my family in a rush to find a replacement for me in the wedding party. But as we think back to this unexpected and warlike event from 40 years ago, I still have sad thoughts for our shipmates that gave their all in that EC-121. We lost 31 shipmates that day.

I have since seen the wedding pictures, and everyone tells me it was a nice wedding, but it was just not in the cards for me to be there...

Submitted by:

Ken Kersch, former MR2/c

South Brunswick, New Jersey

(Ken has been a volunteer aboard Battleship New Jersey for 7 years.)

THE JERSEYMAN

Decommissioning... 17 December 1969

Captain Robert C Peniston, USN Retired

6 April 2008 marked the 40th anniversary of NEW JERSEY's third call to the colors, and this time it was to provide massive gunfire support in Vietnam. She was recommissioned in an impressive ceremony at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, close to her place of birth.

Such occasions give rise to my own long association with the ship. She is the first ship I ever set foot on (July 1943); my first on graduation from the U. S. Naval Academy in June 1946; and, finally, my third command. It took 23 years of service from when assigned as an ensign and then ordered as a four striper in command.

I wish I could say I was greatly involved in her return in 1968 but cannot. I did have a part in selecting officers to the recommissioning crew. At the time, I was the Head, Surface Warfare Assignment Officer in in the Bureau of Naval Personnel (BuPERS) so was involved in the assignment of surface officers below the rank of captain. I was most pleased when three officers who had served under my command aboard USS TATTNALL (DDG-19) were assigned to the only battleship in service. They were Lieutenant G. L. Littell, Fire Control Officer; Lieutenant Ray Raulerson, Engineering; and Lieutenant (Junior Grade) Jack Jenkins, Secondary Battery Officer. There was one billet that was contentious - that of Executive Officer. Some of the officers involved in the process thought that any good destroyer captain could do the job. Possibly, but I insisted that the officer for this billet must be or have been a destroyer captain but also had to have served aboard a big ship. I won out because Commander Jim Elfelt, a destroyer captain, and who had also been a cruiser sailor got the job. Jim proved to be an outstanding selectee.

The Prospective Commanding Officer was Captain Richard G. Alexander who I had relieved twice in my career. First, as Navigator of the Presidential Yacht WILLIAMSBURG; and secondly, as Aide to the President, Naval War College. Had he remained long enough to assume command, it would have been a third time. Why he did not is another story left for the historians to tell.

As the commissioning drew near, I received an invitation to the commissioning ceremony. As fate would have it, the assassination of Martin Luther King prevented my wife and me from attending. Washington, D. C. was a dangerous place incidental to this senseless act. The roads into and out of the city could be used only with great risk. Besides that, our children were afraid for us to go, and with good reason. On the afternoon of 5 April I placed a call to Commander Jim Elfelt to tell him that we could not attend and the reasons therefor.

So NEW JERSEY entered the service, and I kept track of her in a casual way with every good wish for her success.

Fast forward to February 1969. I was in the zone for selection for a major command. While the board was in session, I went to my boss, Captain John D. H. Kane, and asked to be assigned to command NEW JERSEY if I made the major command cut. He immediately took a pencil in hand and wrote a short memorandum to the Captains' detailer, Captain Thomas E. Bass, III, telling him, "If Bob Peniston is selected for major command, assign him as CO NEW JERSEY."

I was selected and was issued orders dated 30 April 1969 as Commanding Officer, USS NEW JERSEY! My joy knew no end. From July 1943 as a midshipman; then as an ensign aboard; then to command, I had cemented my relationship with this great man-o-war. Figure out the odds of this happening – small to almost nothing, I would say.

Of course, I followed the ship's operations in Viet Nam with great zeal. As the time approached for my detachment from BuPERS, I called on Vice Admiral Charles K. Duncan, Chief of Naval Personnel who was reassuring that the ship would remain in service despite the rumors that she would not deploy for her second tour in that troubled area. He also said that when my tour was complete, he would like to have me return to the Bureau. I liked that. I also called on General Leonard Chapman, Commandant of the Marine Corps and General Lew Walt, Deputy CMC, who knew my late father-in-law. Both assured me that the ship would indeed make her second deployment as scheduled. They cited a recent conversation they had with Senator Richard Russell, Chairman, Senate Armed Forces Committee that the ship would be retained in service.



THE JERSEYMAN

So I left reassured of the ship's future. We moved to Long Beach and shortly after moving in, Commander Elfelt called to tell me that the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy had visited the Chiefs' Quarters aboard the ship and told them that the ship would not deploy. It is rumored that the MCPON was escorted off the ship in not a friendly fashion.

I reported aboard on 20 August. The next day Captain Snyder and I were in the Executive Officer's cabin when the Ship's Secretary told the Captain that the Executive Assistant to the Vice Chief of Naval Operations was on the phone and wanted to speak to him. The message was that 100 ships and the Battleship NEW JERSEY would be taken from service. So much for the reassurances of the Chief of Naval Personnel, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Senator Russell.

Captain Snyder went to the 1 MC and made the announcement. To me, it was an eerie feeling – almost dead silence save for the whirl of a few electric motors then some expletives from some of the sailors nearby.

The change of command was six days away, and the decision made that I would relieve Captain Snyder as planned. Of course, the press was after us constantly for any scrap of information in the matter.

The change of command was what one would expect of a major warship. Ed Snyder let fly as only he could do – some remarks were not kind to the powers that be. I had little to say other than I was a Battleship Sailor and loved the ship. My final words concerned my goal to lay up the ship in such a manner and condition that if a battleship were needed again, NEW JERSEY would be the one chosen to serve. As we well know, it came to pass on 28 December 1982.

The ship was busy. Tons of ammunition had to be off loaded along with many items sorely needed by active ships. It was a sad time, but the crew never flagged in doing their duty. Even the rains came early to Bremerton this year and added to the gloom.

The day before sailing for Bremerton, I had a call from Mr. Troy Ziglar of the Beverly Hills Navy League. He wanted to provide a ceremony for the ship's departure. My first reaction was no, but when he said that the concept had been approved by flag officers in the Long Beach area and that Senator George Murphy (of Hollywood fame) wanted to be part of it, I acceded to his request. It was an emotional ceremony, and I shed a few tears after being seated and making my remarks. To add to the gloom, a passing rain shower added to the tears. However, it was a wonderful event and made the departure a bit easier.

At 0900, 6 September, all lines were taken in, two bells struck, one long blast on the whistle followed by three short blasts, and NEW JERSEY was underway on possibly her last voyage. The band struck up Anchors Aweigh followed by Aloha Oi. Emotions were evident. The ship got underway as a battleship should. Chief Bos'n Joe Heeny told me so later, and I appreciated hearing it from this epitome of a man in his billet.

Huge crowds were along the departure route to say nothing of the myriad of small boats trying to run with the ship. Few were successful because they could not make 25 knots. One was anchored in the fairway and got the thrill of his life when the wake bounced him up to the edge of his tether.

On board were special guests of the Secretary of the Navy from the western states. No easterners were allowed because of the go quickly and quietly dictum. There were several journalists, a college history professor, and the MC from the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas who provided some humor during the transit that was without incident.

Before arriving in Bremerton, the base commander asked if a band was desired on arrival. My reply was in the negative because this was not a joyous occasion. On mooring, I gave the final order: "Secure the main engines. Answer no more bells." The appearance of the ghost-like cruisers PASADENA, QUINCY, and PITTSBURGH matched our mood.

The work of inactivation went well. The shipyard personnel were most helpful. It seemed like they did not like the task any better than we did. Given 120 days to complete the inactivation, we set our goal at 100. One ceremonial event stands out in my memory. On 11 September, the senior Chief Boilerman was given the "honor" of securing the fuel to the last steaming boiler. NEW JERSEY was for all practical purposes a dead ship. Another event sticks with me. The Shipyard Commander brought some senior members of his staff to the engineering spaces after we were close to decommissioning to have a look at the work that had been done. One wanted to see the bilges, now dry and spotless. The Chief in charge of the space gave permission but only after the officer had removed his shoes. Admiral

THE JERSEYMAN

Petrovic thought that was a bit unusual but told the party that this was amazing and said that if they were in the bilges of the KITTY HAWK they would have to wear boots. Different ships under different circumstances. Here was a ship going out and one being overhauled. No comparison in cleanliness.

One of the myriad of my tasks was to get a guest speaker for the decommissioning ceremony. I asked for the Under Secretary of the Navy, John W. Warner, but was told no in no uncertain terms by the Chief of Information. Then I asked for General Lew Walt of the Marine Corps. Again, no. “Remember the ship was to go quickly and quietly.” I asked the Commandant Thirteenth Naval District to accept. He did and it was approved by Washington. But he was not the most prominent person on the platform. Through a friend, I invited Governor Daniel J. Evans of Washington to be my personal guest. He accepted after canceling a Christmas party through the persuasion of my friend, Red Beck, a State Senator. The Governor had served aboard the ship during the Korean War when he was a staff member of Commander, Seventh Fleet.. He favored us with a few well chosen remarks about the ship and what she had meant to the Navy and country.

The task was completed and NEW JERSEY left the service on 17 December in a blaze of glory. In spite of the desires of the Washington establishment to go quickly and quietly, she did not go quietly. CBS News sent Jed Duvall who was known nationwide. Colonel R. D. Heinl, USMC (Ret), a noted military columnist covered the event and his column appeared in several of the nation’s most prominent newspapers.

The day was gloomy and the weather matched the mood of the crew and guests. Admiral Hannifin gave an excellent speech lauding the ship and the men who had sailed in her. My time came. There were rumors among the crew that I would break down. But I did not and was able to deliver with special dignity the entire speech with special emphasis on the last two sentences: “Rest well, yet sleep lightly, and hear the call, if again sounded, to provide fire-power for freedom. She will hear the call, and thanks to her magnificent crew she is ready.” Then in an aside barely audible, I said “Goodby sweetie.”

The former sentence has gained some fame, even quoted by President Ronald Reagan on 28 December 1982 when the ship answered her fourth call to the colors. The latter sentence made me somewhat of a prophet. But the deed was done and the crew marched off to the strains of Thanks for the Memories and Auld Lang Syne. I was the last to leave the ship and half way down the gangway, I welled up a bit and was caught by a photographer “wiping away some mist.”

I cannot close this out without making mention of the help I received in crafting the next to last sentence of the speech. I struggled with it and could not get it right so I asked Lieutenant (j.g.) Jeff Vernallis, and English major from Stanford, to have a look. With the insertion of the word “hear” that replaced a few of mine, it was just right.

NEW JERSEY joined her three sisters IOWA, MISSOURI and WISCONSIN that gloomy afternoon in Bremerton. In doing so, it should be noted that she was denied the salute of the naval service that transcends all others, WELL DONE, and closes out the active service of a ship of the U. S. Navy. It matters not because the ship left in great dignity befitting a great man-of-war. Let those responsible for this omission live with their error.

And now the lines that held her were soon replaced by chains that I had refused to be used while the ship was in commission. To me they suggested the finality of it all. So the big ship in my life, literally and figuratively was gone. It was Dreadnought Farewell.

As a foot note to this piece, let me say that I never believed that NEW JERSEY was taken out of service for the lack of funding – the official reason given. Years later, I met a professor at the Virginia Military Institute, Malcolm Muir, who cited a paragraph in a book he authored about the IOWA class battleships and had given one to me. In a debate concerning the ship’s performance in the war in Viet Nam on the floor of the Senate between Senators Chafee of Rhode Island and John Warner of Virginia, on 7 April 1981, the latter said: “Against my recommendation, I went down and personally saw the Secretary of Defense and was ordered from the White House that ship should be deactivated because it was impeding the peace negotiations.” Now we know!

As I approach my 85th birthday, I recall the great honor accorded me when asked to be the keynote speaker on NEW JERSEY’s 60th birthday on 23 May 2003. As the ship approaches her 65th birthday in May 2008, I salute this gallant lady that has been so much a part of my life, and also render it on behalf of those Sailors who were privileged to serve aboard her famed and storied career in the United States Navy.

Captain Robert C Peniston, U. S. Navy, Retired
Lexington, Virginia

THE JERSEYMAN



Photo courtesy of
Captain Robert C Peniston, USN (Retired)

VOLUNTEERS - ABOUT THE DECKS...

Ship's volunteer photos will resume again in the next issue - 4Q-2008



ALL HANDS!

In putting together these past two issues, we were surprised at having received so many stories from the Vietnam veterans of USS *New Jersey*. We thank all for taking the time to write them, and they will now be included with the ship's history during Vietnam.

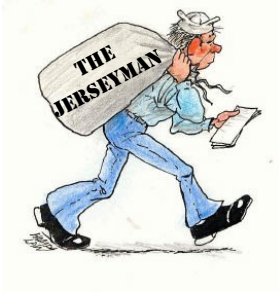
With these recent Vietnam-Era stories as a guide, we are also asking for other stories from the former crewmen of USS *New Jersey*... those sailors and Marines that once proudly served aboard BB-62 during World War II, and the Korean War.

We would also like to invite the many Battleship New Jersey volunteers that once served in so many ships and stations during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, to send us their stories. If you have a photo or two to go along with the story, so much the better... all photos will be returned upon request.

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During the past two years, we had some discussions with Admiral Snyder about the 40th anniversary of the ship's commissioning for Vietnam. He had also planned to include his own thoughts from 40 years ago, but sadly this was not to be. I know that had he lived, he would have been proud of what has been written about the ship by his crewmen, and also for the many fine thoughts said about him. Many thanks to all for sending the stories and the photos. - TH

## THE JERSEYMAN



### MAIL CALL...

**HMAS Sydney article and photos... *The Jerseyman*, 1Q-2008 issue...**

"The Sydney, like the Melbourne, was built by the British during the second world war however, they were not completed in time for service during the war. During Vietnam, the Sydney was used as a stores transport rather than an aircraft carrier, i.e., carrying vehicles, APCs and tanks etc... Neither the Melbourne or the Sydney were designed for tropical climates and apparently they were real hot boxes. The Melbourne was still carrying out an aircraft carrier role into the 70s.

Late in its career, in two separate incidents, the Melbourne rammed and sank one US destroyer/frigate (the Evans I think), and an Australian frigate the Voyager. Later the Melbourne was decommissioned and we saw it being towed to a breaking yard in an Asian country. When the Melbourne was decommissioned, the Australian Fleet Air Arm ceased to exist. Australia was going to buy a jump jet carrier second hand from the British, however the Falkland Islands problem arose and the British decided to keep the ship. The Australian navy now has only helicopters as an air component."

**Submitted by:**  
**Rod McMahon**  
**Brisbane, Australia**



Korean War... ships of Task Force-77 underway at Point Oboe - 1951. USS *Missouri* (BB-63) shown here buried up to Turret #2 in heavy seas. This original photo was "taken while I was standing messenger watch on the signal bridge of USS *Philippine Sea* (CV-47)... at the time I was probably a Yeoman 3/c".

**Submitted by:**  
**Chuck Davis**  
**Port Charlotte, Florida**

## THE JERSEYMAN

### Editor's Note:

This past April, a book extract written by **Admiral James L. Holloway, III, USN (Retired)**, was sent to *The Jerseyman* by **Walt Eife**, a former P-3's flyer and early restoration volunteer aboard Battleship New Jersey. Walt thought the article extract would make interesting reading for all hands in *The Jerseyman*, and it is. It describes how, in April of 1975, the F-18 Hornet was officially selected by the US Navy. - TH

### *Aircraft Carriers at War. A Personal Retrospective of Korea, Vietnam and the Soviet Confrontation* By Admiral James L. Holloway III, USN Retired

In September 1974, Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger accepted the General Dynamics F-16 as the winner of the lightweight fighter competition and authorized production of the F-16 for the services. The Navy preferred the Northrop F-17 design and proceeded to upgrade the F-17 concept to satisfy its follow-on fighter attack plane (FAX) requirements. As chief of naval operations, I had approved a scaled-up version of the F-17 that was then designated the F-18. The F-18 included substantial improvements over the F-17 to make it carrier-suitable and all-weather capable with the Sparrow III air-to-air missile. Although I made this decision independently of the Secretary of the Navy, the decision was consistent with my statutory responsibility for military requirements.

Initially, a majority of the members of Congress wanted a single Light Weight Fighter (LWF) to lower program costs. I had testified that "the Navy wasn't interested in a fighter that could only get on and off of a carrier by means of a crane, no matter how little it costs." Congressional opposition to a single LWF for both services-with probably the F-111 debacle of 1960 in mind-was neutralized. But the OSD was adamant that the Navy be forced to take the F-16. By spring this appeared to be a fait accompli to the extent that Secretary of the Air Force John McLucas, encountering me by chance in the E ring of the Pentagon, proclaimed in a loud voice to ensure that both I and the two Air Force four-stars in his company could clearly hear, "Admiral, the Air Force is the program manager for the F-16, and I can promise you we are not going to screw up the design and performance by adding a lot of stuff that the Navy wants. It's an Air Force lightweight fighter, and we are going to keep it that."

By April the situation had become critical. The Navy had not yet received the go-ahead from the DoD to go to contract for the F-18. The OSD was making plans for the Navy to procure a slightly modified version of the F-16. The main spokesman for this position was a civilian analyst in OSD, "Chuck" Myers, a member of the "Fighter Mafia" and a longtime watchdog of naval aviation.

I appealed to Secretary Schlesinger, and he agreed to hear out the issue "like a country judge," letting both sides arguing their cases. The CNO was to represent the Navy, and Leonard Sullivan, another longtime carrier critic, would be the F-16 protagonist.

The meeting was held in April 1975 in Schlesinger's office. It was to begin at 1:30 in the afternoon and go on until neither side "had anything more to say." Then Schlesinger would make the decision. The CNO was allowed to bring only two people "because of the size of the room." I selected Vice Adm. Tom Hayward, who headed Navy Programming, and Vice Adm. Kent Lee, the commander, Naval Air Systems Command. Both were experienced Navy fighter pilots. When the three of us arrived at the SecDef's office we were stunned to find more than a dozen OSD people assembled - Leonard Sullivan and Chuck Myers, plus analysts, engineers, and finance types. It looked like an attempt to overpower the Navy with sheer volume of testimony. The first part of the meeting involved lengthy discussions on the carrier suitability of the F-16. I advised that our naval test analyses indicated the F-16 would bang the tailpipe on the deck with unacceptable frequency. OSD claimed this could be solved by faster landing speeds and better pilot technique. Then came the discussion of the alternative program costs and the synergy of a single type of fighter for all services.



Official US Navy Photo  
Ca. 1974  
Courtesy of the  
Naval Historical Center

## THE JERSEYMAN

The CNO was to be the only witness to speak for the Navy side. When I complained that the short mission range of the F-16 would reduce the carrier air wing's striking radius by several hundred miles from even its current capabilities, Leonard Sullivan told SecDef that could be a plus; it would get the carriers back where they belonged, conducting antisubmarine warfare and covering amphibious landings.

I had saved my blockbuster until the SecDef's Office of Program Assessment and Evaluation (PA&E) had run through all of their arguments. I then advised that the F-16 was not acceptable as a carrier fighter because it lacked an all-weather capability. There was dead silence in the room. Schlesinger said, "Say that again and explain." I pointed out that the F-16 carried only AIM-9 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles and they were clear-air-mass missiles. In clouds, a radar missile like the AIM-7 Sparrow III was required. This capability, with the necessary radar guidance system and heavier pylons, had been incorporated in the F-18 design, but the F-16 would not accommodate an all-weather missile system without extensive redesign and added weight. Schlesinger was incredulous. He asked Sullivan to explain. There was silence and then confusion. Then Myers said, "Most of the time, maybe two thirds, the weather on the average would be suitable for Sidewinder. Why should we assume the enemy would attack in bad weather?"

I replied that if the enemy knew our air defense was no good in cloudy weather, that is precisely when they would choose to attack. The debate was over. There was another half an hour of perfunctory discussion, but the suggestion that Sparrow III be installed on the F-16 was never mentioned again.

Both sides had run out of discussion points, and SecDef adjourned the session. He called me into his inner office alone. "Admiral," he said, "you've got your F-18." After a pause, he added, "PA&E never pointed out to me the all-weather limitations of the F-16." On 2 May 1975, the OSD announced that the Navy had DoD approval to develop the F-18 for production.

The F/A-18 is still the Navy's premier aircraft. It has filled the carrier decks as a fighter-attack aircraft, replacing the A-7 attack plane and the F-14 fighter with a single plane that can perform both of its predecessors' functions. This gives the carrier enormous flexibility in its air wing, capable of launching more than fifty attack planes or fifty fighters, depending upon the tactical situation. With four squadrons of F/A-18s in the air wing maintenance and supply support has been dramatically simplified, and the F/A-18 was designed for ease of maintenance, only needing a third of the man-hours required by the F-14. Early F/A-18 models performed admirably in Afghanistan and in 2003, during Operation Iraqi Freedom, and as the F/A-18E and F versions continue to enter the fleet, this will be another giant increase in air wing capability.

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**The editor of *Wings of Gold*, who also published this chapter, added the following:**

**ADM Holloway is the Chairman Emeritus of the Board of the Association of Naval Aviation. In addition to the top billet in the Navy as CNO, he flew combat in the Korean War, commanded VA-83, the seaplane tender USS Salisbury Sound, USS Enterprise, Carrier Division Six, and was Deputy CinC Atlantic Fleet and later, Commander, Seventh Fleet. As CNO from 1974 to 1978 his tour of duty was marked by the transition from the divisive Vietnam War era into a time of particularly intense naval competition with the Soviet Union.**

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**Royalties from the sale of this book are being donated to the Naval Historical Foundation for the construction of a new gallery in the National Museum of the U.S. Navy honoring the Naval heroes of Korea, Vietnam and the Soviet Confrontation.**

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***Aircraft Carriers at War. A Personal Retrospective of Korea, Vietnam and the Soviet Confrontation* is available at bookstores, online, or direct from the US Naval Institute. 800-233-8764/410-268-6110.**

## THE JERSEYMAN

### BATTLESHIP DAYS... BY HAMP LAW



#### Editor's Note:

During phone conversations with our battleship cartoonist Hamp Law, he often mentions how lucky some WWII sailors are to have their old ships still around to visit as museums. Hamp's battleship USS *Tennessee* (BB-43), was not that lucky and all that remains today, are the ship's bell and a few artifacts located at the ship's museum in Huntsville, Tennessee.

Hamp reported aboard USS *Tennessee* in May of 1943 and rode the ship through the war until his discharge in 1945. From mid-1943 to 1945, with Hamp and "My Ol' shipmates" "Deacon" Harrell, and Charles (Chuck) Lafitte," aboard, *Tennessee* saw a lot of naval history which included "crossing the "T" at the Battle of Surigao Strait, and most of the hard island battles before making it into Tokyo Bay.

To help support the small USS *Tennessee* Museum, Hamp asked if we might include an address so that those interested could order the new 80 page booklet about his great ship "USS *Tennessee* in World War II," and yes, one of Hamp's cartoons also made it in there...

In tribute to Hamp, who will be 85 this November, and to support his ship's museum, we are asking *Jerseyman* readers to consider ordering this booklet as a way to say "Thanks Hamp," for those many great cartoon smiles he has given to all of us.

The cost is \$15 dollars, with \$3 additional for postage. To order, please send a check to:

USS TENNESSEE MUSEUM  
Att'n: Karen Dawson  
249 Clover Circle  
Jacksboro, TN 37757

Thanks... - TH

#### **Disclaimer:**

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Logo courtesy of Maritime Artist and former USS NEW JERSEY crewman,  
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