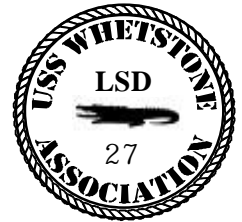




55th Edition



The Rolling Stone



Apr 2011

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The Rolling Stone is a Quarterly publication of the USS Whetstone LSD-27 Association, INC. The Association is a non profit, historical and educational organization dedicated to promoting fraternal, civic, patriotic and historical memories of those who served aboard.

I know him! That's my DAD!

A mystery that was decades in the making ended with just one glance.

The daughter of the World War II Marine took one look at her computer screen and recognized him.

"Oh, my God, that is my dad," said Becky Thursby Cardarella of Afton, Minn.

She knew right away that the man in the iconic black-and-white photo was her father, Marine Pfc. Gerald Paul Thursby Sr., crouching next to another Marine during the battle of Peleliu on Sept. 15, 1944.

Historians have been working to identify her father. All they had had to go on was a caption that identified the man in the photo as Pfc. Gerald Churchby of Akron, Ohio.

But historians were stumped, because they could not find any Marine named Churchby who lived in Akron.

The other Marine was correctly identified

as Pfc. Douglas Lightheart, who died in Michigan in 2006 at age 86.

The Akron Beacon Journal ran an article in August laying out the mystery and asking for help to find Churchby.

Jason McDonald, the webmaster for a World War II multimedia database, wanted to settle once and for all who was Churchby, whose photograph is now in the National Archives.

Last week, three months after the story was published, McDonald said he was contacted by Michael Conrad, who had found the name "Gerald Thursby" on Ancestry.com. McDonald said he then located an obituary for Thursby's

wife, Cleo, who died eight years ago.

That led to Gerald Thursby's obituary. He died of complications from pneumonia July 19, 1999, in Dallas. The search ended last week with the Facebook find of his daughter.

"If you saw other pictures of my dad, you would immediately see it was him," Cardarella said.

The photo shows a young Gerald Thursby, a Marine who happened to be photographed shortly after landing on Peleliu Island. He is holding a cigarette and an M1

Garand rifle across his lap.

"He was a very easygoing, loving man," said his 55-year-old daughter.

The family says he was a sheet-metal worker who lost two fingers in a work accident. He liked to golf and to paint advertising signs.

He and Cleo were married in 1946. They had

six children, one whose name was Linda, who died in childhood. They had twin sons, Don and Dan, born in 1960. Don Thursby lives in Wyoming, Mich., and Dan Thursby lives in Ferris, Texas.

The remaining children are Kitty Thursby Reese, who lives in Geneva, Ohio, and Gerald Thursby II, of Ferris, Texas.

After graduating from Coventry High School, the family says, Gerald joined the Marines in early 1942, less than a month after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

While he was at war, his mother, Minnie Thursby, died at 51 of an asthma attack, said his sister, Barbara

(See Dad on page 4)





Greetings from Your President



The Chaplain's Corner

Here I am sitting on my deck overlooking the ocean as the Sun brings itself up to greet the world. It's 6:30 am and the temp. is already 72 degrees. I wonder what they are doing at home in snow and ice covered Mass.?

It is so peaceful here that one has to wonder, why can't the world be at peace? Every living being deserves the right to the Freedom that we so enjoy in this great country of ours. Looking back in time, myself and I am sure my fellow crew members of the great ship Whetstone, are extremely proud to have played a part in preserving the rights and freedom that we so enjoy.

I had the pleasure of talking to Kay and Marion a couple of nights back, and as usual everything is under control as far as Branson is concerned. You all must remember the TV show "Mission Impossible." Well with Kay we will just put one little word in front of that and come up with "No Mission Impossible." All systems are go, and we are on full automatic.

I did do a little arm twisting on Kay and Marion, and discovered that the two of them from time to time have inserted their own money to keep us on an even keel. So if the members will indulge me a bit, I am taking it on my own to ask if perhaps on a strictly volunteer basis, some of us mail a small donation to the association. The association by no means is broke. It just isn't as strong as it could be.

I thank you in advance. Till next time.

God Bless and Support Our Troops

Bill Coakley USN 1958-1962

What does it mean to be set free in Christ?

John 8:36: So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

Jesus himself is the truth that sets us free. He is the source of truth, the perfect standard of what is right. He shows us clearly the way to eternal life with God. As we seek to serve God, Jesus' perfect truth frees us to be all that God meant us to be.

Galatians 5:1: It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

Christ came to set us free - not free to do whatever we want because that would lead back into slavery to our selfish desires. Rather, thanks to Christ, we are now free and able to do what was impossible before - to live unselfishly. Those who appeal to their freedom so that they can have their own way or indulge their desires are falling back into sin. Once Jesus lifts you into God's presence, you are free to obey - out of love, not necessity; through God's power, not your own. You know that if you stumble, you will not fall back to the ground. Instead, you will be caught and held in Christ's loving arms.

This Easter season let us rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus our Lord and Savior. He has set us free!! May you all have a blessed Easter.

Chaplain Marv Watson RM-3 (1960-1963)

A false hero

The commander of the Lakeport, Calif., Veterans of Foreign Wars post has resigned under a cloud of suspicion that he is not the war hero he claims to be. His letter of resignation stated only that he was quitting for personal reasons.

But Robert L. Deppe, 57 has been dogged by war veterans who believe he is a fraud, accusing him of falsifying documents that appear to bestow him with the Silver and Bronze stars and a Purple Heart for heroism in Vietnam.

William Page, who fought in Vietnam during the time Deppe claims to have been there and who occasionally works with the POW Network began looking into Deppe's background in 2005 after he recognized his own story in Deppe's autobiographical account of his year in Vietnam and how he earned his medals.

"We cannot find any record of him being in the military," said Page, who was an infantryman during the war and now lives in Louisiana. Page said it's all too common for people to make false claims of valor."In the census 10 years ago, over 11 million men claimed to be [Vietnam] veterans when only 3 million served. It's rampant," he said.



Billy Eugene Harris

(SN 1950-54)

We received notification from DeVonna Harris that Bill had passed on March 3, 2011. Bill served on the Whetstone from 1950-54 and served during the Korean War. He was very patriotic and proud of his military career and enjoyed receiving the newsletter and attending the reunions. Bill and DeVonna have supported the Association for a number of years.

After Bill's military service, he was employed as a cement contractor. He and DeVonna have 3 children, Cheryl Gross of Oklahoma, Bonnie Hunt of Dumas, Texas and Billy Harris of Borger, Texas.

Bill had Alzheimer's and had been in a nursing home for 8 months previous to his passing. We are saddened to hear of his passing and send our sympathy to DeVonna and her family.

Voluntary Dues

Again, **thank you** to all shipmates that have contributed dues and donations to the Association. Without your support, it would be impossible to publish "The Rolling Stone", maintain the Website and support our reunions. Dues are \$25.00 a year, are tax deductible, and are strictly **voluntary**. Dues are applied for one year (using date of check as beginning point, i.e. 01/01/11 check applies until 01/01/12). We recognize that not all are able to support the Association, but we welcome support from whomever is able. Dues received to date for 2011 are listed below. An asterisk designates dues paid for additional year(s). If anyone has paid and your name is not listed, please accept our apology and contact Kay Goble at 6200 Emerald Pines Cir, Ft. Myers, FL 33966, 239.768.1449 or via e-mail at mariongoble@comcast.net. Please make checks payable to: **USS Whetstone Association**.

Please use this list as your receipt.

Arata, Sil	Fraser, Douglas
Bell, Charles	Fry, Stephen D.
Bisping, Neil A.	Fulghem, Richard*
Bogusch, W. C.*	Funk, John
Bolick, Wes	Goble, Marion*
Boren, Ben	Gordon, Eddie
Brameyer, George	Green, Larry D.
Brown, James E.	Gregory, Carroll
Burik, Frank	Gross, Richard*
Caffey, Irby R.	Grubb, Jack*
Caldwell, William	Hager, Robert*
Carson, Capt. Grant	Hall, Charles*
Chidester, David*	Hammons, Willis
Coakley, Bill*	Haueter, Hylton*
Coldren, Wayne	Haynes, Earl
Conover, Jan	Hickie, John
Crawford, F. S.	Hjelvik, John
Crowder, Frank	Hockema, Ben
Czarnecki, Vincent	Holleman, Jimmy*
DeWalt, Gary T.	Holmes, Robert A.
Doerr, Gary T.	Hoover, Frederick
Dover, Fred	Johnson, Merrill*
Driskell, Fred L.	Jones, Dale
Dunn, Jim	Julian, Frank
Durnil, Allen	Kirby, Joe*
Edney, Edward	Klebacher, Gene
Edwards, H.D "Sonny"	Koons, Lee D.
Fox, J. Lee	Lanphear, George
Fox, Sebastian	Lonnon, Larry*

Manatt, James	Rowe, Horace
McClellan, G. A.	Sandrock, Capt. J. E.
McCray, David	Savala, Manuel
McManus, Peter	Scott, Ralph V.
McNitt, Russell*	Seabaugh, Raymond
McQuillen, Tom*	Sharkey, Robert
Meisner, J. C.	Shimmell, Thomas
Mezzanotti, Paul D.	Skelley, Jr., Daniel
Millard A., Cox	Smedstad, Randall*
Milton, Douglas	Smith, Don
Mitchell, Burley*	Stanford, Roy*
Nichelson, Joe	Teske, Glenn*
Ogletree, Ronald	Throener, Larry
Packer, Chuck	Timmons, Garrett
Pearson, Ray	Tolbert, Leon
Pierce, Charles*	Tucker, George*
Piersee, Charles R.	Van Guilder, David*
Pilgreen, Vince*	Ward, Everett*
Posey, Billy	Watson, Marvin*
Randolph, Stephen*	Weigt, Earl
Raymie, Jerry*	Weston, Keith
Reed, Jr., George E.	White, David
Richey, Albert D.	Wiesemann, Donald

GREETINGS FROM MARION AND KAY GOBLE

We want to take this opportunity to thank all that have supported the USS Whetstone Association through the years. Unfortunately, we are entering a period of time of economic hardship for the Association. Our dues and contributions are smaller and the balance sheet of the Association is not keeping up with the expenses that we incur. As you know, our hearts are with the Association and we have consistently supported the Association in all ways. The newsletter is a very important part of our Association and keeps everyone informed about each other, as well as providing interesting articles from John and shipmates. In an effort to use our funds wisely, we are looking at various ways to keep the Association sound. Two suggestions have been put forth. One is reducing the size of the newsletter to an 8-page format and the other is publishing every 4 months, rather than the 3-month cycle now in place. Printing and mailing costs are approximately \$750 for the 12-page newsletter and we are not receiving the donations and dues to continue. We would like your input as to your preference regarding a smaller newsletter or fewer publications. If you would like to receive the newsletter via e-mail, that would cut down on cost, as well. In addition, if you are receiving the newsletter, and aren't interested, please notify us and we will discontinue mailing to you. We look forward to hearing from you. Either e-mail or send via regular mail regarding your preference. E-mail is mariongoble@comcast.net and our address is 6200 Emerald Pines Circle, Fort Myers, Florida 33966.

Fast, flexible Navy vital to American security

By Vice Adm. Carol Pottenger

America's Navy is a global force for good, our country's away team, meeting threats and providing assistance whenever needed. The Navy is the branch of the U.S. military that fights on the water, under the water and over the water. It fights on the water in ships, under the water in submarines, and over the water in planes that take off and land on Navy aircraft carriers.

This ability to act from the water is very important. It gives the Navy the power to protect America's interests - anywhere, anytime.

To see why, think of the 70-80-90 rule:

- Water covers about 70 percent of the Earth's surface.
- About 80 percent of the world's population lives near the ocean.
- About 90 percent of all international trade travels by sea.

What happens on the water is very important to American security and prosperity. It's important to the preservation of American jobs. It's important to keeping the peace worldwide. Most fundamentally, it's important to our national defense. After all, the United States is bounded by oceans on both coasts and by the Gulf of Mexico on Florida's own shores.

For all of these reasons, we need to be able to protect ourselves on, under and over the water. That's what the Navy does.

And because the challenges our country faces are so unpredictable and diverse, the Navy's job is getting bigger and more important than ever. We need to be ready to confront a range of challenges whenever and wherever they happen.

On any given day, the U.S. military might need to attack a terrorist camp, keep watch over a potential conflict abroad, capture a pirate vessel and deliver emergency relief, all in different parts of the world. We can't always afford to wait to set up big operations on land, or to get another country's permission to come ashore.

The Navy is ideally suited for this kind of world, because the Navy is fast and flexible. It can go anywhere on the ocean on short notice, and can do all of its work from the water:

- Navy ships and submarines can shoot at targets and knock out enemy sites far inland - from the water.
- Navy planes fly about half of the aerial combat missions in Afghanistan. They don't need airstrips on the ground. They take off from aircraft carriers - from the water.
- Navy SEAL teams can carry out special operations worldwide - from the water.
- In a humanitarian crisis like the Asian tsunami or the earthquake in Haiti, the Navy can deliver huge amounts of supplies and provide hospital-quality medical care - from the water.

To handle this wide variety of missions, the Navy requires men and women who are highly trained, highly motivated, and courageous - sailors who are capable of meeting any challenge. Fortunately for our nation, that's exactly who we have. We hope you'll join us during Tampa Bay Navy Week so that you can meet some of these sailors and hear their stories.

It is important to point out that we are committed to ensuring the Navy is the most efficient and effective fighting force it can be. The series of efficiencies decisions recently announced by Defense

(Dad from page 1)

McKissick, 80, of Phoenix.

"Oh, my goodness, that is Jerry," she said last week as she looked at a computer image of the mystery photo. "That is my brother."

She said he never spoke of the war.

McDonald, who runs the World War II database, said it is terrific that the Marine's correct name has been discovered. He said he hopes to compare a family photo of Thursby to the Peleliu photo to verify that it is indeed him.

But he said he's confident the mystery has been solved based on a review of the Marine's discharge papers.

"There are all sorts of Peleliu researchers who always wondered who it is," said McDonald, a middle-school teacher in Brooklyn, N.Y.

He said he had reached the point where he had given up hope of finding out the answer to the mystery.

"I figured we weren't going to find him," he said.

It appears the error started with the photographer, who misspelled Thursby's name after the photograph was taken.

Cardarella said her father's discharge papers say he served on Peleliu.

"It is amazing," she said, to see the photograph of her father that has been admired by others for nearly 70 years. "What is remarkable about the whole thing is I never even saw that photo (before)."

She said her father spoke little of the battle.

"I think it was a memory that he wanted to forget," she said.

"What is the similarity between air traffic controllers and pilots?

If a pilot screws up, the pilot dies;
If ATC screws up, The pilot dies."

The three most common expressions (or famous last words), in aviation are:

"Why is it doing that?"

"Where are we?"

and

"Oh Sh..t!"

Secretary Robert Gates are designed to save the Department of Defense more than \$150 billion over the next five years. These savings and changes will enable us to be the Navy the nation needs today and into the future.

It's all about fast, flexible force. That's what sea power provides. And that's how the Navy protects America, now more than ever. I look forward to meeting the wonderful people of the Tampa Bay area to talk about our - and your - Navy.

Vice Adm. Carol Pottenger, who grew up in St. Petersburg, is deputy chief of staff for capability development at NATO Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation.

How much for this old horn?

Old soldier buys battered bugle from market stall... and finds it was used by his grandfather in Battle of the Somme

The grime of nine decades had tarnished its golden gleam.

But something drew Maurice Green's eye to the battered old bugle on the bric-a-brac market stall.

When he looked closer, he noticed the first three digits engraved on it matched his grandfather's Army service number.

Lucky find: A bugle used during the Battle of Somme has been found on a bric-a-brac stand by a man who later discovered it belonged to his grandfather

And when he held it in his hands, something told him that it was meant to be his.

Back home, he cleaned away the dirt to find the very bugle his grandfather had played during the battle of the Somme in 1916 – the battle he never came home from.

'I spotted this battered old bugle on a bric-a-brac stand,' he recalled. 'It was as black as soot but I noticed its Army service number had the same first three digits as my granddad's.'

'I couldn't see the last two digits because the bugle was filthy. But something in me started shaking straight away.'

'I took it home, began cleaning it and I was stunned when the last two digits corresponded to my granddad's Army service number.'

'It seems certain this was the bugle my granddad played at the Somme. The buglers weren't issued with two bugles and soldiers aren't in the business of losing their equipment so I am convinced this was the one he would have had in the trenches.'

The tragic story of Mr. Green's grandfather, Drummer Daniel Clay, had long been part of family folklore.

One of the family's most treasured possessions is a moving letter written by the 26-year-old soldier to his mother on the day before he died.

The letter told of a 'terrible bombardment' going on and predicted it would be 'hell upon earth before we have finished'.

Drummer Clay asked his mother 'if it should be that my time has come... just look after my darling little daughter.'

Tragically within 24 hours the soldier, a member of the 8th Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment, was killed in battle. His body was never recovered amongst the 60,000 British casualties of July 1, 1916.

He left a six-year-old daughter, Harriet, whose mother had died in childbirth.

Mr. Green, Harriet's son, said: 'It would have been nice if we had found the bugle while my mother was still alive, but she was so proud of him, as we all are.'

Harriet died in 1995 at the age of 85 and always had a photograph of her father on display.

Mr. Green, 73, inherited his grandfather's war medals, which had his service number 13202 – the number on the bugle. It was played again this Remembrance Sunday when the Last Post sounded over Rotherham.

Mr. Green, who paid £5 for his piece of family history at a market in Rotherham, said he believed the bugle was picked up on the battlefield by one of the few survivors.

'They were a Rotherham unit and it will have been picked up as a memento,' he said.

'I asked the stallholder where he bought it from and he said it came from a house clearance but he couldn't remember when or where he got the bugle.'

'The important thing is that it has ended up back in the right hands in the end, in my granddad's family, where it belongs.'



Texas Preparation

A guy cruises thru a stop sign and gets pulled over by a local policeman. Guy hands the cop his driver's license, insurance verification, and his concealed carry permit.

"Okay, Mr. Smith," the cop says, "I see your concealed weapon permit. Are you carrying today?"

"Yes, I am."

"Well then, better tell me what you got."

Smith says, "Well, I got a .357 revolver in my inside coat pocket. There's a 9mm semi-auto in the glove box. And, I've got a .22 magnum derringer in my right boot."

"Okay," the cop says. "Anything else?"

"Any ship can be a minesweeper...Once."

"Yeah, back in the trunk, there's an AR15 and a shotgun. That's about it."

"Mr. Smith, are you on your way to or from a gun range...?"

"Nope."

"Well then, what are you afraid of...?"

"Not a damn thing..."



Wow! Look what we missed during the reunion!

ASTORIA, Ore. (AP) - A vacant city block in downtown Astoria has collapsed after heavy weekend rain.

No injuries were reported.

City Manager Paul Benoit believes the collapse may be related to a depression in the concrete where rainwater pooled. The area that collapsed was the floor above the basement of an old Safeway store.

The block behind the American Legion building has caused concern in the past.

Three months ago, the city noticed a depression in the ground and fenced off the area. Benoit said the city will most likely fill in the ground and once the economy improves, use the space to build some sort of civic center/park.

Astoria Mayor Willis Van Dusen said city workers quickly put up a fence around the collapsed area after they spotted it Monday morning.

On second thought, I don't dance much. If I did, it wouldn't be on the site of a demolished Safeway building during a heavy weekend rain. I guess there wasn't much danger to the reunion crew of the Whetstone after all. - John

Most Embarrassing Moment By Capt Grant Carson (RET)

In 1957 I was an ensign assigned to Whetstone, my first ship. I was excess to the manning document, meaning the Executive Officer could assign me whatever duties he pleased. So my primary duty became a collection of collateral duties. I became Administrative Assistant to the Executive Officer, Combat Information Officer, Protestant Lay Leader, and Information and Education Officer. There's a tale to tell about each of those jobs, but this tale is about CIC Officer.

I worked very hard at being CIC Officer. For one thing, I knew the Communications Officer and I were the only two officers who knew how to produce maneuvering board solutions. When neither he nor I was on watch on

the bridge, I slept behind the vertical plot in CIC, because I feared the ship might run into another ship. Since the Officer of the Deck didn't know the maneuvering board, he would often rely upon the recommendation from CIC. And, being CIC Officer, I knew that my radarmen were 180 degrees out sometimes.

Refresher training loomed. Do you remember when the Fleet Training Group put the ship through its paces at double time to see if we were fit to serve with the fleet?

I pressed the radarmen hard. We drilled and drilled and drilled. We were darned near perfect, I thought. We had a General Quarters team honed to respond to any contingency,

*(See **Embarrassing** on page 7)*

Eric R. Lillegaard

Eric R. Lillegaard was sent on his Eternal mission on Dec. 28, 2010, in Pocatello, Idaho. He battled a long and hard fight, finally succumbing to his cancer battle. He died in the Idaho State Veterans Home, among his family members who love him dearly.

Mr. Lillegaard was born in Lemmon, South Dakota on September 22nd, 1947 to the former Wilma Elizabeth Kile, and Clarence Barney Lillegaard. They homesteaded south of Keldron, where he started his early life with his mom, dad, two younger brothers Michael and Vernon, and a younger sister Denise. Eric had a lot of fun on the farm, plowing, and learning how to be a wheat farmer. He went to Moe School southwest of Keldron until his fathers death when he was 11. After his fathers untimely demise, the family had to leave the farm and move into Lemmon, where his education continued until he moved to Fort Pierre in 1960. He went to High School in Fort Pierre for his first couple of years, then he returned to Lemmon. When he was 17, he went into the US Navy, where he obtained his GED, and was sent overseas during the Tet Offensive. Eric was a storekeeper onboard the USS Whetstone during the Viet Nam War. Unknown to him, he was exposed to Agent Orange which caused him health problems in his late fifties. Eric spent four years in the Navy.

Eric met Jeannie Brown while he was living with his sister and brother in law after his tour of duty. They met in Blackfoot, Idaho, and it was fireworks from the start... They married a few months later, and nobody thought it could last. Their marriage was solemnized in the LDS Temple in Oakland, CA in Jan. of 1972. They soon moved into Portland, Oregon. where they raised their son, David. Eric worked in various jobs throughout the years. He was a very hard worker, and did many things. His truck driving career began when he was about 30 years old, in 1977. He always described his truck as his rocking chair. He enjoyed going throughout the country, and often took his wife and son David with him.

When Eric was diagnosed with cancer in 2007, he won

(Embarrassing from page 6)

every man doing his job, spread thin to cover everything, but well trained.

We had an SA-2 air search radar, so old it didn't have the grace of the new system of naming air search radars, AN/SPA-XX. And it didn't work. It was so useless we had a letter from the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations saying that we shouldn't even waste time trying to make it work.

Refresher training started. CIC turned in high score after high score.

Then came the final battle problem, the graduation exam. The CIC observer from the Fleet Training Group insisted that we have an operator for the SA-2 radar, to read the scripts of aircraft attacks. That destroyed the well honed organization, for every radarman already had a full menu. The disruption of the organization was enough that CIC flailed during the battle problem.

his agent orange claim, and he and his wife decided to retire to Lemmon. He wanted to go home to be with his family members and friends. He and Jeannie bought a small home in Lemmon, where they were very happy for the last three years of his life. He went into remission early in 2007, and had a few good years. He became androgen resistant in 2010, just after his mom died in December. His wife fought very hard to save his life by taking him to the George Whalen VA Medical Center and the Huntsman Cancer Center in Salt Lake City. He had several good months before becoming very ill early in Dec, 2010.

Eric fought a long battle and is a hero to his family members. He will be missed very much. On his deathbed, his only desire was to express his love for his family, and to keep them smiling and happy.

He is survived by his wife, Jeannie of McCammon, ID, his son, David Lillegaard, of Portland, Oregon, His grandson, Robert Lillegaard, of McCammon, ID, his sister, Denise Lillegaard, of McCammon, Idaho, his brother, Vernon, of Bismarck, N.D., his niece, Michele Poisel, of McCammon, Id, his Nephew, Dennis Poisel of Wyoming, his nephew Adam Lillegaard of Hettinger, ND, his niece and nephew Brandon and Lindsey Lillegaard, of Portland, Oregon. He is preceded in death by his parents and his brother Michael. And a great niece Stephanie Vaughan

Military Graveside services were held Monday, Jan. 3, 2011 at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery



At the final critique in the wardroom, CIC scored so poorly my face burned with embarrassment. I thought my Navy career was over.

But then I discovered a human side of the Navy. The Operations Officer and Commanding Officer gave me a favorable fitness report because I tried so hard. They gave me a Navy career, and I never forgot the lesson that if someone tries very hard he should be rewarded for trying.

They gave me a career that included command of my own LSD, USS Thomaston (LSD-28), only one hull number up from Whetstone. When I took command of Thomaston I felt as if I were coming home.

And I gave the CIC Officer a little latitude, but with the advice of seasoned judgment!

Grant Carson

CAPT, USN (Ret)

VA Links Agent Orange and Diabetes.

On November 9, 2000, the VA announced that Vietnam veterans with Type-II diabetes would now be eligible for disability compensation. This decision allows veterans that were in-theater to apply for compensation.

Studies from the Air Force and National Academy of Sciences (NAS) indicated "limited / suggestive evidence" of a link between Agent Orange and adult-onset (Type-II) diabetes. The report also concluded that other traditional risk factors for diabetes – heredity, weight and sedentary lifestyle – far outweigh the risks of Agent Orange.

Still, based on those reports, Acting Secretary Hershel Gober announced that he was directing the addition of Type-II diabetes to the list of presumptive conditions associated with herbicide exposure.

Oct. 16, 2009

The department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Eric Shinseki announced a decision to establish a presumptive service-connection for Vietnam veterans who have B cell leukemia, Parkinson's disease or ischemic heart disease. These diseases are all related to exposure to Agent Orange, a herbicide used in Vietnam. Secretary Shinseki's decision was based upon the recently released Institute of Medicine (IOM) report that was mentioned in the July 31, 2009 edition of Newsbytes.

<http://www.baystatevet.com/bluebrownwater.pdf>

MY STATE MISSOURI

ENFN	1951	Beebe, Jr., Raymond	Independence
BT	1964-67	Brasher, J. C.	Sheldon
BM3	1967-68	Brondel, David E.	Jefferson City
IC3	1964-66	Lewis, John A.	St. Louis
BT2	1967-69	McDowell, Allen R.	Fulton
BT	1952-55	McGrew, Joseph	Shell Knob
MM	1962-66	Needy, Clifford	Green Ridge
SF1	1962-64	Rosenburg, Billy	Rolla
RD3	1969-70	Schauperl, Carl W.	Raymore
MR1	1964-67	Semler, William	Dittmer
EM	1953-57	Starz, Walter	Troy
EM	1956-57	Vaughan, Harold "Joe"	Lee's Summit
FN	1958-62	Whited, Gail L.	Pineville
SM	1952-55	Wilson, Buddy "Willy"	Rollo

MY STATE NEBRASKA

BT3	1959-62	Alexander, Larry	Cambridge
SF2	1965-68	Guerrero, Jose	Bridgeport
RD3	1956-57	Johnson, Leroy	Columbus
FN	1968-70	Lehi, Steve	Chadron
MM	1965-67	McQuillen, Thomas	Plattsmouth
QM2	1959	Mueller, James W.	Papillion
SM2	1965	Papke, Thomas R.	Chambers
EN1	1962-63	Porter, Scottie	Creighton
GM	193-67	Sanchez, Gene	Chadron
SFM3	1961	Schlotfeld, William	Omaha
RM3	1960-63	Watson, Marvin	Lincoln

MY STATE MINNESOTA

MM2	1960-63	Anderson, Robert	Rochester
SM2	1946-48	Belisle, Nobert L.	Lakeland
EN2	1961-63	Fines, Roger G.	Forest Lake
SN	1958-60	Gamradt, Jr., Max A.	Wrenshall
RD2	1951-54	Hager, Robert W.	McGregor
BT3	1945-47	Hudalla, Edmund R.	Minneapolis
MM	1966-69	McNitt, Russell	Aitkin
BT3	1953-59	Olson, Clyde	LeRoy
MM	1953-54	Royseth, Raymond	Babbitt
MM	1952	Silrila, Floyd K.	Carlos
FT3	1962-63	Sjolund, Doug	Brainerd
DCA	1966-67	Smedstad, Randall	Howard Lake
MM	1962-66	Smith, Donald J.	Cologne
MM3	1966-69	VanGuilder, David B.	Holyoke
LTJG	1956-60	Vandevoort, Everett	Beaver Creek
EN3	1961-64	Whited, Gerald "Jerry"	Spring Lake Park

REUNION UPDATE

As you are aware, our reunion is in Branson, Missouri. We are planning a September 2012 reunion and are in the process of obtaining quotes for hotels, events, etc. and hope to have the hotel information available in the next newsletter. It is our hope that this location will provide an opportunity for many to attend that have been unable to attend previous reunions. Branson has a reputation of honoring veterans and sponsoring numerous military reunions. We look forward to seeing you and are hopeful of a great turnout for the reunion.

I went out with some friends last night and tied one on. I got really plastered. Knowing that I was wasted, I did something that I have never done before. I took the bus home.

I arrived safe and warm, which seemed really surprising as I have never driven a bus before.

'Old Ironsides' is Hiring

We missed out on the LST-325 adventure, but..

The Navy is looking for Sailors willing to serve on the slowest, oldest and least high-tech ship in the fleet.

Oh, and you have to be willing to scale the ship's nearly 200-foot rigging, climb out on the wooden yardarms and man a 5,600-pound cannon.

The USS Constitution -- the iconic warship known as "Old Ironsides" that fought French, Barbary and British ships two centuries ago -- gives today's Sailors a good taste of Navy life hundreds of years before nuclear power and stealth technology.

"It's definitely something that's an eye-opener," said MC1 Frank Neely, who joined the crew about a year ago. "You realize what Sailors back in the age of sail went through, the dangers they faced in doing their jobs ... and doing it at times of battle."

But old-fashioned nautical skills and physical demands aside, the Navy has no problem getting volunteers for duty aboard the Constitution, according to the ship's top enlisted Sailor, Command Master Chief David Twiford. "I literally got [application] packages a day after the message went out," Twiford said.

More than any other Navy ship, the Constitution lives in the public eye. As a living museum, it caters to more than 500,000 visitors a year. Two years ago, it also was designated America's "Ship of State," which means it is an official venue for entertaining heads of state and for signing treaties or military-related legislation.

Its days in the blue water Navy are long gone, but with the recent completion of a three-year, multi-million-dollar restoration, the Constitution is being prepped to sail next year as part of Op-Sail 2012, a "tall ships" event marking the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812. The ship earned its "Old Ironsides" nickname during that war when British sailors watched their cannonballs bounce off the wooden hull.

Half the 68-member crew are Sailors who have fleet experi-



ence and half are straight out of boot camp. "These fleet returnees are vital to continuing the 'sailorization' process for these boot camp folks," Twiford said. The Constitution encourages female Sailors to join the crew as well, he said, because the Navy wants the crew to mirror the modern Navy.

"A lot of people think 18th and 19th century Navy -- all males," Twiford added. "We're looking to see the faces of the Navy - male, female, black, white -- you name it."

The unique role of Constitution Sailors means some stringent requirements for volunteers. Exceptional maturity and military bearing are only part of it. Sailors with non-judicial punishment blemishes or alcohol-related problems in the previous three years need not apply.

Then there are tattoos. You can have tattoos, but the ship's public mission today requires standards more restrictive than elsewhere in the Navy, according to Twiford.

"When we're in our 1813 uniforms, our sleeves are rolled up and if you've got tattoos on your arms, people are going to see them," he said. "Some tattoos are not a problem, but we

deal with the public all the time. Someone could take offense to a particular tattoo."

And then there's the fitness requirement, which means no evil/fitness reports below 3.0 within three years and being within current body composition standards.

And no fear of heights. The sails won't unfurl themselves. It takes crew scrambling up the rigging.

"Whenever the weather is good, we climb. Usually about once a week to stay proficient," said Constitution crewman Neely. "And when you climb up those masts ... you realize: Wow! This is definitely something challenging."

Sailors may apply for Constitution billets via e-mail at constitution.cc@navy.mil.

Agent Orange

Some shipmates were aboard the Whetstone and served in Vietnam. They may have been exposed to Agent Orange. Marion Goble sent me a document that is partially reproduced here. There isn't enough room in the newsletter for the entire document, but the whole thing is posted to the website (USSWhetstone.net) (This is a similar story to the preceding one, but it's better to have repetitive information than miss out.

Navy and Coast Guard Ships Associated with Service in Vietnam and Exposure to Herbicide Agents

Updated January 6, 2011

This ships list is intended to provide VA regional offices with a resource for determining whether a particular US Navy or Coast Guard Veteran of the Vietnam era is eligible for the presumption of Agent Orange herbicide exposure based on operations of the Veteran's ship.

According to 38 CFR § 3.307(a)(6)(iii), the presumption of herbicide exposure requires that the Veteran's service involved "duty or visitation in the Republic of Vietnam." For those Veterans who served aboard ships operating primarily or temporarily on the inland waterways of Vietnam, their service involved "duty" in

(See *Agent Orange* on page 12)

Unbelievable Bad Luck!

I've found this story in a few places. I can't swear that it's true, but it appears to be. Anyway, it's just too good not to share.— John

A BIT OF HISTORY THAT YOU MAY NOT KNOW OF!!!!!!

From November 1943, until her demise in June 1945, the American destroyer 'William Porter' was often hailed - whenever she entered port or joined other Naval ships - with the greetings: 'Don't shoot, we're Republicans!' For a half a century, the US Navy kept a lid on the details of the incident that prompted this salutation. A Miami news reporter made the first public disclosure in 1958 after he stumbled upon the truth while covering a reunion of the destroyer's crew. The Pentagon reluctantly and tersely confirmed his story, but only a smattering of newspapers took notice.

In 1943, the Willie D as the Porter was nicknamed, accidentally fired a live torpedo at the battleship Iowa during a practice exercise. As if this weren't bad enough, the Iowa was carrying President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the time, along with Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, and all of the country's W.W.II military brass. They were headed for the Big Three Conference in Tehran, where Roosevelt was to meet Stalin and Churchill. Had the Porter's torpedo struck the Iowa at the aiming point, the last 60 years of world history might have been quite different.

The USS William D Porter (DD-579) was one of hundreds of assembly line destroyers built during the war. They mounted several heavy and light guns, but their main armament consisted of 10 fast-running and accurate torpedoes that carried 500-pound warheads. This destroyer was placed in commission on July 1943 under the command of Wilfred Walker, a man on the Navy's fast career track.

In the months before she was detailed to accompany the Iowa across the Atlantic in November 1943, the Porter and her crew learned their trade, experiencing the normal problems that always beset a new ship and a novice crew. The mishaps grew more serious when she became an escort for the pride of the fleet, the big new battleship Iowa.

The night before they left Norfolk, bound for North Africa, the Porter accidentally damaged a nearby sister ship when she backed down along the other ship's side and her anchor tore down her railings, life rafts, ship's boat and various other formerly valuable pieces of equipment. The Willie D merely had a scraped anchor, but her career of mayhem and mishaps had begun.

Just twenty four hours later, the four-ship convoy, consisting of Iowa and her secret passengers, the Willie D, and two other destroyers, was under strict instructions to maintain complete radio silence. As they were going through a known U-boat feeding ground, speed and silence were the best defense. Suddenly, a tremendous explosion rocked the convoy. All of the ships commenced anti-submarine maneuvers. This continued until the Porter sheepishly admitted that one of her depth charges had fallen off her stern and exploded. The 'safety' had not been set as instructed. Captain Walker was watching his fast track career become side-tracked.

Shortly thereafter, a freak wave inundated the ship, stripping away everything that wasn't lashed down. A man was washed

overboard and never found.

Next, the fire room lost power in one of its boilers.

The Captain, by this point, was making reports almost hourly to the Iowa on the Willie D's difficulties. It would have been merciful if the force commander had detached the hard luck ship and sent her back to Norfolk. But, no, she sailed on.

The morning of 14 November 1943 dawned with a moderate sea and pleasant weather. The Iowa and her escorts were just east of Bermuda, and the president and his guests wanted to see how the big ship could defend herself against an air attack. So, Iowa launched a number of weather balloons to use as anti-aircraft targets. It was exciting to see more than 100 guns shooting at the balloons, and the President was proud of his Navy. Just as proud was Admiral Ernest J King, the Chief of Naval Operations; large in size and by demeanor, a true monarch of the sea. Disagreeing with him meant the end of a naval career. Up to this time, no one knew what firing a torpedo at him would mean.

Over on the Willie D, Captain Walker watched the fireworks display with admiration and envy. Thinking about career redemption and breaking the hard luck spell, the Captain sent his impatient crew to battle stations. They began to shoot down the balloons the Iowa had missed as they drifted into the Porter's vicinity.

Down on the torpedo mounts, the crew watched, waiting to take some practice shots of their own on the big battleship, which, even though 6,000 yards away, seemed to blot out the horizon. Lawton Dawson and Tony Fazio were among those responsible for the torpedoes. Part of their job involved ensuring that the primers were installed during actual combat and removed during practice. Once a primer was installed, on a command to fire, it would explode shooting the torpedo out of its tube.

Dawson, on this particular morning, unfortunately had forgotten to remove the primer from torpedo tube #3. Up on the bridge, a new torpedo officer, unaware of the danger, ordered a simulated firing. "Fire 1, Fire 2," and finally, "Fire 3." There was no fire 4 as the sequence was interrupted by an unmistakable whoooooooshhhing sound made by a successfully launched and armed torpedo. Lt H. Steward Lewis, who witnessed the entire event, later described the next few minutes as what hell would look like if it ever broke loose.

Just after he saw the torpedo hit water on its way to the Iowa and some of the most prominent figures in world history, Lewis innocently asked the Captain, 'Did you give permission to fire a torpedo?' Captain Walker's reply will not ring down through naval history... although words to the effect of Farragut's immortal 'Damn the torpedoes' figured centrally within.

Initially there was some reluctance to admit what had happened, or even to warn the Iowa. As the awful reality sunk in, people began racing around, shouting conflicting instructions and attempting to warn the flagship of imminent danger. First, there was a flashing light

warning about the torpedo which unfortunately indicated it was headed in another direction.

Next, the Porter signaled that it was going reverse at full speed! Finally, they decided to break the strictly enforced radio silence. The radio operator on the destroyer transmitted "Lion (code for the Iowa), Lion, come right." The Iowa operator, more concerned about radio procedure, requested that the offending station identify itself first. Finally, the message was received and the Iowa began turning to avoid the speeding torpedo.

Meanwhile, on the Iowa's bridge, word of the torpedo firing had reached FDR, who asked that his wheelchair be moved to the railing so he could see better what was coming his way. His loyal Secret Service guard immediately drew his pistol as if he was going to shoot the torpedo. As the Iowa began evasive maneuvers, all of her guns were trained on the William D Porter. There was now some thought that the Porter was part of an assassination plot.

Within moments of the warning, there was a tremendous explosion just behind the battleship. The torpedo had been detonated by the wash kicked up by the battleship's increased speed.

The crisis was over and so was Captain Walker's career. His final utterance to the Iowa, in response to a question about the origin of the torpedo, was a weak, "We did it."

Shortly thereafter, the brand new destroyer, her Captain and the entire crew were placed under arrest and sent to Bermuda for trial. It was the first time that a complete ship's company had been arrested in the history of the US Navy.

The ship was surrounded by Marines when it docked in Bermuda, and held there several days as the closed session inquiry attempted to determine what had happened. Torpedoman Dawson eventually confessed to having inadvertently left the primer in the torpedo tube, which caused the launching. Dawson had thrown the used primer over the side to conceal his mistake.

The whole incident was chalked up to an unfortunate set of circumstances and placed under a cloak of secrecy. Someone had to be punished. Captain Walker and several other Porter officers and sailors eventually found themselves in obscure shore assignments. Dawson was sentenced to 14 years hard labor. President Roosevelt intervened; however, asking that no punishment be meted out for what was clearly an accident.

The destroyer was banished to the upper Aleutians. It was probably thought this was as safe a place as any for the ship and anyone who came near her. She remained in the frozen north for almost a year, until late 1944, when she was re-assigned to the Western Pacific.

Before leaving the Aleutians, she accidentally left her calling card in the form of a five-inch shell fired into the front yard of the American base commandant, thus rearranging his flower garden.

In December, 1944, she joined the Philippine invasion forces and acquitted herself quite well. She distinguished herself by shooting down a number of attacking Japanese aircraft. Regrettably, after the war, it was reported that she also shot down three American planes. This was a common event on ships, as many gunners, fearful of kamikazes, had nervous trigger fingers.

In April, 1945, the destroyer was assigned to support the invasion of Okinawa. By this time, the greeting "Don't Shoot, We're Republicans" was commonplace and the crew of the Willie D had

become used to the ribbing. But the crew of her sister ship, the USS Luce, was not so polite in its salutations after the Porter accidentally riddled her side and superstructure with gunfire.

On 10 June, 1945, the Porter's hard luck finally ran out. She was sunk by a plane which had (unintentionally) attacked underwater. A Japanese bomber made almost entirely of wood and canvas slipped through the Navy's defense.

Having little in the way of metal surfaces, the plane didn't register on radar. A fully loaded kamikaze, it was headed for a ship near the Porter, but just at the last moment veered away and crashed along side the unlucky destroyer. There was a sigh of relief as the plane sunk out of sight, but then it blew up underneath the Porter, opening her hull in the worst possible location.

Three hours later, after the last man was off board, the Captain jumped to the safety of a rescue vessel and the ship that almost changed world history slipped astern into 2,400 feet of water. Not a single soul was lost in the sinking. After everything else that happened, it was almost as if the ship decided to let her crew off at the end.

Mystery Solved!

By: John Worman

A few years back I mentioned a foul weather jacket I had at the end of my enlistment back in 1964. I used the jacket while I rode my motorcycle in and around San Diego.

I took it home with me and used it for motorcycle riding as well as winter warmth.

Even later it was used on the job, running a large main-frame computer out at White Sands Missile Range where the computer room temperature was well below 70°. Sometime in the late 60s the coat got thrown away.

I received a letter from Tom Walkinshaw the other day, and he talked about some adventures while serving on the Whetstone. One thing he brought up was the foul weather jacket! He said he stashed it in the port uptakes.

I could not remember where I obtained the jacket, and I'm not sure yet if Tom gave it to me or did I find it and abscond with it? Whatever happened, **Thanks Tom!**

Love those Kids!

Out bicycling one day with my eight-year-old granddaughter, Carolyn, I got a little wistful. 'In ten years,' I said, 'you'll want to be with your friends and you won't go walking, biking, and swimming with me like you do now.'

Carolyn shrugged. 'In ten years you'll be too old to do all those things anyway.'



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Note: Russ McNitt has added the entire **Agent Orange** document to the usswhetstone.net website. It lists all the ships affected. You can find it under **Links of Interest** and it's the top entry:

List of Agent Orange Ships as of 1-6-11

It is a 9 page PDF document that you can read, print or download.

SHIP'S STORE



To order any Ship's Store item please contact Marion Goble, 6200 Emerald Pines Circle, Ft. Myers, FL 33966, (239)768-1449 or e-mail marion-goble@comcast.net When submitting an order, please make checks payable to **USS Whetstone Association**. All jackets and golf shirts are navy blue with gold lettering. T-shirts are navy blue with gold lettering or gray with navy lettering. Hats are navy blue with gold silhouette of ship, white with navy blue silhouette of ship or red with gold silhouette of ship, or camouflage with gold silhouette of ship (**red and camouflage hats and DVD of Reunions are new items**).

Items for Sale:

Ball Caps (With Silhouette)	\$20.00
Cruise Books (57, 61,66,67/68 & 69)	\$20.00
DVD of Reunions (1996-2006)	\$10.00
DVD of 2008 or 2010 Reunion	\$10.00
Golf Shirts (S,M,L,XL)	\$35.00
T-Shirts (S,M,L,XLG, XXL)	\$20.00
Jackets (S,M,LG,XLG)	\$50.00
Jackets (XXL & XXXL)	\$52.00
Mouse pads w/Whetstone Picture	\$10.00
Yosemite Sam Patches	\$ 8.00
Zippo Knives w/Ship Silhouette	\$20.00
Zippo Lighters w/Ship Silhouette	\$13.00
Whetstone Pictures on Canvas	\$25.00

Note: All Prices Include Shipping

(Agent Orange from page 9)

Vietnam. In such cases, the evidence must show that the ship was on the inland waterways and the Veteran was aboard at that time. For those Veterans who served aboard ships that docked and the Veteran went ashore or served aboard ships that did not dock but the Veteran went ashore, their service involved "visitation" in Vietnam. In cases involving docking, the evidence must show that the Veteran was aboard at the time of docking and the Veteran must provide a statement of personally going ashore. In cases where shore docking did not occur, the evidence must show that the ship operated in Vietnam's close coastal waters for extended periods, that members of the crew went ashore, or that smaller vessels from the ship went ashore regularly with supplies or personnel. In these cases, the Veteran must also provide a statement of personally going ashore.

This list includes three categories of ships:

- Ships operating primarily or exclusively on Vietnam's inland waterways
- Ships operating temporarily on Vietnam's inland waterways or docking to the shore
- Ships operating on Vietnam's close coastal waters for extended periods with evidence that crew members went ashore or that smaller vessels from the ship went ashore regularly with supplies or personnel

This list is not complete. (There are many more ships)

USS Whetstone (LSD-27) on-loaded and delivered troops to Da Nang, Hue, Phu Bai, Dong Ha with beach landings and "mike boats" and served as long term "boat havens" for repairs of smaller vessels at Da Nang and Qui Nhon during 1965, 1966, 1968, and 1969