



DD-341

DDG-31  
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DD-936

# USS Decatur Association Newsletter



Summer -- 2013 -- Issue 3

## Spotlight on Decatur Sailors

### *DDG-31's Edward L. "Doc" Powers HMC (Retired)*



I attended Boot Camp at Bainbridge Md summer of '54 right after high school graduation.

I went aboard the USS San Marcos LSD-25, home port Norfolk VA, Nov 54 - Apr 56. I was a Seaman on the Deck Force.

We made a Med cruise, Caribbean cruise, operations along the Atlantic Coast, and a summer in dry dock in Philadelphia.

A lot of swabbing decks, chipping and painting, mess cooking, etc. I didn't like it very much but it made a man out of me..... learning discipline, following orders, hard work, camaraderie. While operating with the Marines off the North Carolina coast,

I had an attack of acute appendi-

citis and was transferred to Naval Hospital, Camp Lejeune for an appendectomy. While there, I saw how easy the corpsmen had it compared to my life aboard ship, so when I got out of the hospital and returned to the ship, I put in for Hospital Corps School.

I attended the Hospital Corps School, Bainbridge, May-Sep '56. My hardest subject was chemistry, but I managed to pass it. To my surprise, I graduated second in my class (my fellow classmates must have been dumber than me).

I was assigned to the Naval Hospital Bethesda MD, Sep '56 - Dec '58. Reported as an HN and made HM3 Nov 56. I Worked on Tower 16 (VIP ward on the 16th

floor). My patients were active duty admirals, senators and congressmen. After a year on ward duty I transferred to Patient Affairs and worked with health records, service records, decedent affairs, etc. I really liked Bethesda. Made some good friends, some of whom I still keep in touch with; and Washington DC was a great place for liberty for a kid 20-21 years old. After four and a half years, my first enlistment (and extension) was up and I was released from active duty just prior to my 22nd birthday. I went home to Medford MA (near Boston), but reenlisted a month and a half later.

*Continued on Page 2....*

# *Spotlight on DDG-31's Edward L. "Doc" Powers*

(Continued from Page 1)



*"Doc" and Tina at the 2000 Decatur Reunion*

- USS Franklin D Roosevelt CVA-42 Feb-Sep 59. Reported aboard, made a six month cruise to the Mediterranean, during which time I made HM2. Upon returning to our home port in Mayport FL
- I received orders to an air squadron. Air Anti-Submarine Squadron 36 (VS-36) Sep '59-May '62. The squadron was based at NAS Norfolk and we operated at sea aboard USS Randolph CVS-15. I was the squad-

ron corpsman. When we were ashore I was always TAD to the NAS

Dispensary and when at sea I worked as flight deck corpsman during air operations and when the planes weren't flying. I worked in the carrier's sick bay.

- Boston Naval Shipyard Dispensary May '62-Jul '65. I made HM1 the day I reported aboard. I ran the medical records office during most of my tour there. (I was at MIT giving immunizations to the college ROTC students when President Kennedy was shot).

- I met and married my wife during my tour of duty at the shipyard dispensary. Tina was a local girl from Everett MA.

- USS Repose (AH-16) Aug '65-Jul '66. Reported to the pre-commissioning crew of the hospital ship at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, San Francisco. It was my first time to California and the West Coast. After the ship was commissioned, we left San Francisco for Vietnam right after New Year's Day 1966. Stopped at Pearl Harbor for a few days and then

arrived off the coast of DaNang about the middle of January. The ship operated back and forth off the coast between DaNang and ChuLai. I worked in the Patient Affairs Office most of the time but whenever we began to receive wounded Marines and soldiers via helo I worked triage. I made Chief in Jul '66 and because the ship already had too many HMC's, I was transferred to Independent Duty aboard an LST. Left the Repose at DaNang and because my new duty station ship was out at sea, I spent several weeks at the Naval Support Activity, Danang. Then I was transferred to the Naval Support Facility at ChuLai because that's where my ship was supposed to arrive. While spending two weeks at ChuLai waiting for my ship to arrive I worked at the 1st Medical Battalion, First Marine Division.

- USS New London County LST-1066 Aug-Nov '66. This was my first time as a Medical Department Representative on Independent Duty. I was it! No other corpsmen! no doctor! and I was in a combat zone responsible for the medical care and health of more than 100 of my shipmates. I was scared that I would let my crew down, but I guess my prior training and experience paid off because I did okay.

We operated up and down the rivers of Vietnam delivering everything from weapons, ammo, tanks, etc. to bags of rice, cement, and new replacement troops.



*"Doc" aboard the DDG-31*

*Will be continued in the Fall 2013 issue...*

# A Tribute to the BT's on the USS Decatur (DDG-31)

by Joe Whetstone (MCPO Retired)



*Jim and Joe reunite in Vegas -- 2012*



*Joe Whetstone MCPO (ret)*



*I. Jackson BT1*



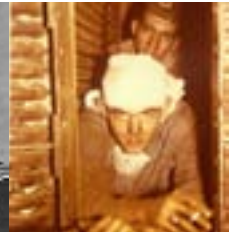
*Jim Stewart (Oil King)*



*E. Gasque BT2*



*D. Stoffel BT2*



*Jim Stewart Circa 1967*

BT's are without a doubt the most under- appreciated group who ever served onboard the Decatur. Having served onboard the USS Currier DE 700, USS Hamner DD 718, USS Putnam DD 757 and the USS Blue DD 744 prior to my reporting onboard the USS Decatur I feel gives me the unique qualification to make the following comments. To put this into perspective you need to realize the following; the destroyers noted above have two boilers, four forced draft blowers and two fuel oil service pumps located in each fireroom. The Decatur had the above but in addition; in the Navy's ultimate wisdom they crammed into each fireroom a deaerating feedtank, two main feed pumps plus two main feed booster pumps which now almost doubled their maintenance requirements. Unfortunately, the Decatur has the same manpower available per fireroom that you would normally have on the above mentioned destroyers.

With the addition of the above, the humidity and heat in the fireroom really increased to where the BT's were almost always wringing wet with sweat. BT's getting off a normal four hour watch would appear up on deck looking like they had been run through a wringer. This type of situation made BT's appear to be different and seemed to separate them from the rest of the crew. The BT's took this as a challenge and it seemed to just make them stronger and become a very close tight-knit group that helped support each other.

I feel that it was a special privilege for me to have been in-charge of this unique group of individuals. They may not have been aware of how I felt, but I was very proud of them, for who they were, and what they stood for. I remember when they were off-watch and relaxing on deck, they seemed to have a unique sixth sense to know when- ever the fireroom experienced an engineering casualty. They would all stop whatever they were doing, whether it was eating chow, playing cards or what-ever and they dropped everything and took off for the fireroom to help their shipmates with the casualty. They would not leave the fireroom until all conditions were normal again. Whenever the ship lost power the ship normally loss ventilation causing the fireroom to become almost unbearably hot which puts even more emphasis on their unrecognized dedication to duty and to their ship-mates. I am so proud to have served with them. Without their dedication and loyalty I am quite sure that I would not have been promoted to Master Chief Petty Officer. I salute you,one and all, and may you have smooth sailing!



*W. DeLaet -- BT3  
D. Trammell -- BTFN*



*M. Ramsdell -- BT3  
J. Irving -- BTFN*

Allison                      Blesi                      Terrell                      Stewart



# Decatur Sailors Speak Out!!!

Joe Allen  
DD-936



I entered the Navy in 1960 , served the first two years aboard the USS Galveston CLG-3 , Then was sent to the USS Decatur DD-936 out of Rhode Island spent almost two years on her was part of Decommissioning crew in Boston , left her and went TAD to the USS Kretchmer DER-329 for 6 months ,left her reported to Great Lakes for two years shore Duty , left there report aboard the USS Savage DER-386 out of Pearl Harbor for two years ,left her for a year aboard a new DE being built in Bay City , MI. , at the defoe ship yard the USS O'CALLAHAN DE-1051 got out of the Navy in 1969 joined a reserve outfit out of Janesville , Wi spent two years with them , then trnasfered to Glenview Naval Air Station for two years with a VR squadron , lefte their joined a Sea Bee unit # 25 out of Madison , WI spent three years with them and the switch horse's and jioned up with the 84th Div , Rail splitters a DI outfit and spent five years in the US Army & retired out of the Military in 1982 as and SFC - E7 Dinning Facility Manger .

Tom Augustine  
DDG-31



I was an ETN-2 from 1973-75. Made a WESPAC aboard the ole “Dicky-Do”, I had gooodd time!!! I was transferred to the LST-1189 USS San Bernardino and finished out a ten year navy hitch. I retired sunday after 38 yrs with the govt. Last 21 years with the Federal Aviation Ad.I also spent seven years with Coast Guard. I live in the Las Vegas

Joe Hanzel  
DD-341

Reported aboard the Decatur 17 Aug 1935; as a F3C - F2C; transferred 18 Oct 1937 to the USS Jacob Jones DD130; The decatur was sold to Boston Metal Co Baltimore, MD on 30 Nov 1945 for \$8777 then resold to Northern Metal Co in Philadelphia, PA

Bob Blakely  
(Deceased)  
DD-936



First commissioned tour. Joined DECATUR after DCA School in Philadelphia, September 1962. “R: Division officer & DCA. Brief stop as “M” Division officer & MPA. Participated in the Cuban Missile Crisis Quarantine and two (I think) Space Capsules recoveries in support roles.

Jack Challender  
(Deceased)  
DDG-31



Tony, Count me in. Check will be in the mail by Monday. Please keep me informed and let me know if I can help. After Decatur, I wound up as XO of Navy Recruiting District in Seattle building a recruiting force after the draft was dis-continued. If you remember, the navy ran out of funds and I wound up staying in that job for 4 years.

Rex Corter  
DDG-31

Since the Navy, I've worked on the Kill Floor of a Beef Packing Plant in Lincoln, Ne. Graduated from the University of Nebraska with a degree in Business Administration, and currently work for Nationwide Insurance in Des Moines, IA.

## 2013 Decatur Reunion Particulars

Please attend our 2013 reunion in San Diego, CA. It will be in September, 2013 (4 nights)... Thursday-Sunday. We'll be touring the DDG-73 on 22 September 2013.

**ALL** sailors that served aboard any Decatur are welcome.

Please send a \$40 reunion registration fee to:

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

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

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

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Next issue -- Look for:



- The next installment of our own GM2 Orville T. Shipp's compelling DD-341 exploits during WW II.
- Bonnie Deringer's: Women in the Navy continues...
- Our Decatur sailor spotlight continues with Edward "Doc" Powers
- Remembering Bob Blakeley.

## Reunion Cakes



*2012 -- Washington, DC*



*2011 -- Boston, MA*



*2010 -- Charleston, SC*



*2009 -- Norfolk, VA*

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



tanker of the German battleship Bismark, don't know how the British captured it. This tanker was enormous! I believe this tanker supplied submarines also, for it has racks for torpedoes above its decks. Back out in the bay for several days. One day while taking on fuel and supplies from the carrier USS Card, our rudder jammed and we crashed into the carrier. The waves caused us to be lifted up under the USS Card's overhanging deck and smashed our aft 20mm and 3-inch guns; also the guns ammunition which never exploded. The USS Card pulled away from us and parted the fuel hose before it could be uncoupled. This sprayed oil over our ship and the steel spiral in the fuel hose got entangled into our 2 propellers. They left us alone to get ourselves going again. A diver was sent down in rough seas to get the spiral from the propellers which took over a day and just one propeller cleared; also, rudder was cleared and we entered Casablanca, Africa where the other ships awaited us. We took on stores and a 20mm gun from the USS Leary to replace one of our damaged guns aft. Then back to Bay of Biscay, very rough seas, 45 degrees rolls, 55 ft. waves. Very hard to sleep at nights, 4 hours on and 4 hours off watch, was very tired. Christmas eve around 11 o'clock December 24, 1943 while I was on port watch I heard 3 explosions. We had run into a German wolf pack and the Leary was hit with three torpedoes and sank. Our center escort USS Schenck depth charged on sub and sank same (Note: at this time we thought we had run into 5 subs and 2 were sunk, but a German historian wrote it was 3 subs and one was sunk by destroyer USS Schenck). We escorted carrier USS Card out of this area and USS Schenck had dangerous job of picking up USS Leary survivors, half of USS Leary crew members lost their lives, about 75 men. (Note: The USS Card's sub hunt trip prior to our trip, they lost the destroyer USS Borie DD215, which rammed a German sub and was too badly damaged to go further, and then she was sunk by USS Barry DD215, after crew was taken off). I was able to see one periscope wake in front and to port (left) side

*In this issue*

*Page*

- *Doc Powers Spotlight.....1-2*
- *Whetstone's Tribute to BTs.....3*
- *Decatur Sailors speak-Out.....4*
- *Reunion Info and Cakes.....5*
- *Orville Shipp's WWII Chronolog....6*
- *Bonnie's Navy Women.....7*

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

It was March 1956, about 9:00 PM. I believe there were six of us women who got off the gray Navy bus. Earlier that day we had flown out of a perfect spring day near Los Angeles. One girl, from someplace on the west coast, had even dressed as if she were going to an Easter service at a big church on Colorado Blvd. in Pasadena. She wore a pink hat with spring flowers and ribbons on her blonde head. We flew across country on a very big, noisy propeller commercial aircraft, for a long day and evening – away from Los Angeles, our



beautiful city where I had had so much fun. Then we landed some place in the “EAST,” but where, we didn’t know! All we knew for sure was that it was dark, and very cold. We waited, we were getting hungry, and there was no place to eat. We boarded a train and still no one gave us much information about where we were or where we were going until we got to a place called Havre de Grace, Bainbridge, Maryland. Our California coats were useless against the wind blowing against our frozen legs and rear ends. The gal with the pink, Easter bonnet now had crushed, fake flowers, and dye from wet ribbons running colors down her blonde hair and face. My good leather penny loafers were soaked, as was my green tweed skirt, which also had mud on the hem. As we were waiting on the sidewalk another ugly, grey Navy bus pulled up, splashing mud and slush all

over places on our frozen bodies that hadn’t already been soaked! It was then that we started to wonder what in the world had we signed up for!

The sailor driving the bus told us to get on board, sit down and don’t talk! There was a doomed and dark silence among us. We bumped along on that old bus, and must have hit every pothole on the way to Bainbridge. It must be where we were headed because it said Naval Training Station on the side of the bus. To this Californian, it looked like a Refugee camp! It had barbed wire and cyclone fences over the entrance. The gates were swung open and our bus passed through. There were lights coming from ugly hanging lamps on at the entrance of one building. Finally, after hitting several potholes, with more bumps and grinds and with screeching brakes, the old bus stopped with a jolt.

In front of the barracks, there was a welcoming committee! This consisted of women who were about ready to graduate from Boot Camp. They yelled at us to get in line, and follow them. One girl came alongside of us with a red nose, and a shaking voice. She told us that she just got her laundry finished and no one had better bump into her, because it took her a long time to starch her blouses and press them. She told us that she had been slopping around in the bad weather all winter and she had a cold. She said her company never did learn to march outside very well. All I could feel was doom! We marched into the barracks which was empty on one side, of the two wings. That was going to be Company Four. We were told to put our belongings in the cardboard boxes and say good bye to them as they would be sent back to our hometowns. Then we could line up and go to the chow hall. I looked at a clock above the hallway door. It said, 9:00 PM or 21:00.

A recruit was in charge of us until our Chief Petty Officer, arrived in the morning. The graduating recruit said, “See that place up there where the small lights are shining?” We said yes we did, and they seemed very far away! She said no, they are only 2 ½ miles up that hill you see on the left of the road. Let’s go recruits! March! To your left, your right, your left!

***Bonnie Deringer, a friend of association member Jim Bussert, has graciously agreed to provide our newsletter with her vivid accounts of Navy women in the 1950s. This will be a continuing feature straight from her...to you.***