

# GRIGGS-GRUNDY NEWS

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1

March 2003

## THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS GRIGGS AND GRUNDY



### *Special Points of Interest*

- *Charles Forshee has written a history of the USS Griggs that you can read in the cover story.*
- *Read Daniel Brown's Farewell on page two.*
- *MAIL CALL has letters from former shipmates who could use a get well card. Why don't you send them one today?*
- *Do you agree with the writer's description of an American? Read the article "An American" on page three and see if you agree.*
- *A military doctor changes his perspective of veterans after treating many of them in San Antonio. Read his story on page four.*

## USS GRIGGS HISTORY

*Submitted by Charles Forshee*

The ship was launched on 26th May at Pascagoula, Mississippi. It took from this time until 14th of December to complete the fitting out of the balance of the ship. This is when the ship was commissioned into service of the navy and a crew was aboard that mainly was trained in Newport, RI. Some few were already aboard such as the Captain. After the commissioning, the captain received orders as to what to do next and where to go. Leaving Pascagoula, MS, on the 15th, the Griggs set sail for New Orleans for further fitting out and drydocked to have routine maintenance done. We were in the vicinity of New Orleans from 16th till the 22nd of Dec.,

then on the 24th of Dec., after loading supplies and ammunition, we took off on Dec 25th for Galveston, TX. We were there from the 26th till the 7th of Jan. on shakedown and training for amphibious landings etc. We went into drydock on 8th Jan till 15th Jan, then received orders to report to Newport, RI, for training purposes. It took 6 days to reach Newport. On the 30th of March we were ordered to Norfolk, VA. We stayed in Norfolk until the 14th of April after picking up a company of Marines and taking them through the Panama Canal to Pearl Harbor. We off loaded them and held more training exercises until 26th May and loaded passengers for San Francisco,

CA. On 17th June we loaded a Construction Battalion (CBs) in Port Huene, CA to eventually go to Okinawa. The trip took about 47 days at sea and included stops at several islands. This was when we encountered very rough seas while avoiding typhoons. We ran across an abandoned yard tug (YTL-299), which was taken under tow by the USS BLAND, another ship in our convoy. On Aug 5th we debarked troop passengers and their equipment along with a portion of the beer in the brig. On the 12th of Aug, the PENNSYLVANIA (BB-38), anchored 1500 yards from us, was hit, suffering much damage and lost lives. The next day the LAGRANGE

(APA-124) was hit by two suicide planes and lost about 17 men. On the 15th of Aug, the signalmen hoisted flags representing the following message: "CEASE PRESENT EXERCISES DESIG WAR." After that from 23rd Aug till 27th Oct, we carried troops to various locations to occupy Japanese cities, one of which was Kobe. We loaded some Marines to bring back to the states in San Diego, CA. This is all that was in the book, but we did go get more of the troops. This was the time that we crossed the Equator and had a jolly good time initiating crews. The writer of this history had the duty of hoisting the skull and crossbones flag (actually breaking the string that tied the flag in a roll to unfurl), so I missed out on the initiation. These troops were carried to Los Angeles just before New Year's. On New Year's Eve we had a little celebration. I called the Captain's quarters just prior to midnight and asked permission to blow the ship's siren and whistle, and he okayed it. After that, I got out on points, came home and was discharged at Charleston, SC.

Charles E. Forshee  
SM1/C USS GRIGGS

## FAREWELL FROM DANIEL BROWN

To the Shipmates and Ladies of the USS GRUNDY & USS GRIGGS,

The time has come for me to step down as coordinator and turn it over to Charles Forshee as of February 1, 2003. The MLRS, Inc. and Charles have been notified of my action. This is necessary because of my and Claire's health and low income. We enjoyed being coordinator for 9 years and working with ML&RS, Inc. I will keep in touch and hope the shipmates of the USS GRUNDY will get a co-chairman. I thank you all. Good luck to all. God bless you.

Sincerely yours,  
Daniel L Brown

*Editor's note: We want to thank Mr. Brown for all his dedication to the newsletter and to the USS GRUNDY crewmembers. He faithfully sent in a message for each issue of the newsletter and kept us informed from his contacts with fellow shipmates. We hope he will continue to keep us updated. If you would like to send a thank you note to him for his service of the past nine years, you may send it to the following address:*

Daniel Brown  
1901 W. Linden St Apt 319  
Allentown, PA 18104-5523

**Published By:**  
*Military Locator & Reunion Service, Inc*  
PO Drawer 11399  
Hickory, NC 28603

828-256-6008 (voice)  
828-256-6559 (fax)

*Dinamlrs@aol.com (e-mail)*  
*mlrsnewsletters@aol.com (newsletter e-mail)*  
www.mlrsinc.com

**"Our Reunions Work, So You Don't Have To."**



## TAPS

The death of the following shipmates have been learned of since the last newsletter. The entire crew extends our sympathy to family and friends. If anyone knows of a deceased shipmate, please inform the NEWS so he can be recognized in TAPS and also be listed on the honor roll at the next reunion memorial service.

*Silvo DelBonis*  
USS GRIGGS SF (1943-46)  
Died October 30, 2002

*Lester A. Pratt*  
USS GRIGGS  
Died October 21, 2000



## MAIL CALL

All of the following letters were sent to us by Daniel Brown. Most are from Christmas cards he received and passed on to the Griggs/Grundy News.

Dear Dan

My Navy history is after Boot camp at Farrgut, Idaho. I was sent to Memphis, Tenn. for Aviation Radioman. The most of Morse Code I could receive was 15 words per minute. Just couldn't make 22. After that I was surplus Navy. New Orleans, Norfolk, N.Y.C. and finally to Portsmouth, CT to be assigned to the USS GRUNDY. I believe 3 or 4 of us were sent to Mississippi ahead of the crew to check in all the supplies. From there you know the rest.

Dale Green  
517 Tharp Rd  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

### FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Balance after 12/02 issue  
**\$538.24**

Funds received since 12/02 issue  
**\$89.00**

Funds available for 03/03 issue  
**\$627.24**

Funds expended for 03/03 issue  
**\$124.12**

**Ending Balance \$503.12**

**SEND CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE NEWSLETTER TO ML&RS. ADDRESS IS TO THE RIGHT.**

Hello Dan & Claire,

It was so good to see you both at the reunion. We had a very good time, and hope we will be able to come next year. Milton is fine, but his eye sight is getting worse. Now we found out he has kidney problems.

Milton & Hilda Roecker  
512 Superior St  
Genoa, OH 43430-1736

---

Dear Dan and Yours,

Thanks for the card and the information. It looks like I will never get to one reunion. I was in the hospital for pneumonia and my kidneys failed me. I am now taking dialysis treatment 3 days a week at 3 hours and 30 minutes a day. I can't go anywhere. I must be near a dialysis machine.

Best of health and happiness,  
Fred Cannaday  
205 Fay Ann Dr  
Blackwood, NJ 08012

---

Dear Dan,

Thanks for the information that you sent regarding the reunions. Sorry that we have not been able to attend. Health is preventing us from doing so. Having trouble walking any great distance.

Richard (Dick) & Julie Couture  
4435 Leaf Rd  
Sebring, FL 33875

---

Dear Dan,

Thanks for the reunion news. Charlie had open heart surgery (triple by-pass) on Sept. 6th. He is doing well, but has had a rough 2 months, but God was with him.

Charles & Shirley Rhoades  
R.D 5 Box 61  
Tyrone, PA 16686

---

## CORRECTION

In the 2002 "Sentimental Journal" **El Harlow** was incorrectly identified as Ed Harlow in all the pictures he had sent to be included. We apologize for the error and hope that his former shipmates will still recognize him, even with the wrong name.

---

## AN AMERICAN

*Submitted to ML&RS by  
Larry DiPasquale,  
USS Purdy DD-734*

You probably missed it in the rush of last week, but there was actually a report that someone in Pakistan had published in a newspaper an offer of a reward to anyone who killed an American, any American. So I just thought I would write to let them know what an American is, so they would know when they found one.

An American is English, French, Italian, Irish, German, Spanish, Polish, Russian or Greek. An American may also be Mexican, African, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Australian, Iranian, Asian, Arab, Pakistani, or Afghan. An American may also be a Cherokee, Osage, Blackfoot, Navaho, Apache, or one of the many other tribes known as Native Americans.

An American is Christian, or he could be Jewish, Buddhist, or Muslim. In fact, there are more Muslims in America than in Afghanistan. The only difference is that in America they are free to worship as each of them chooses. An American is also free to believe in no religion. For that he will answer only to God, not to the government, or to armed thugs claiming to speak for the government and for God.

An American is from the most prosperous land in the history of the world. The root of that prosperity can be found in the Declaration of Independence, which recognizes the God-given right of each

man and women to the pursuit of happiness.

An American is generous. Americans have helped out just about every other nation in the world in their time of need. When Afghanistan was overrun by the Soviet army 20 years ago, Americans came with arms and supplies to enable the people to win back their country. As of the morning of September 11, Americans had given more than any other nation to the poor in Afghanistan. The best products, the best books, the best music, the best food, the best athletes.

Americans welcome the best, but they also welcome the least. The national symbol of America welcomes your tired and your poor, the wretched refuse of your teeming shores, the homeless, tempest tossed. These in fact are the people who built America. Some of them were working in the Twin Towers in the morning of September 11, earning a better life for their families. (I've been told that the people in the Towers were from at least 30, and maybe more, other countries, cultures, and first languages, including those that aided and abetted the terrorists.)

So you can try to kill an American if you must. Hitler did. So did General Tojo, and Stalin, and Mao Tse-Tung, and every bloodthirsty tyrant in the history of the world. But, in doing so you would just be killing yourself. Because Americans are not a particular people from a particular place. They are the embodiment of the human spirit of freedom. Everyone who holds to that spirit, everywhere, is an American.

So look around you. You may find more Americans in your land than you thought were there. One day they will rise up and overthrow the old, ignorant, tired tyrants that trouble too many lands. Then those lands, too, will join the community of free and prosperous nations. And America will welcome them!

---

## FROM A MILITARY DOCTOR

I am a doctor specializing in Emergency Medicine in the Emergency Departments of the only two military Level-One-trauma centers. They are both in San Antonio, TX, and they care for civilian emergencies as well as military personnel.

San Antonio has the largest military retiree population in the world living here because of the location of these two large military medical centers.

As a military doctor, in training for my specialty, I work long hours and the pay is less than glamorous. One tends to become jaded by the long hours, lack of sleep, food, family contact and the endless parade of human suffering passing before you. The arrival of another ambulance does not mean more pay, only more work. Most often the victim is from a motor vehicle crash. Often it is a person of dubious character who has been shot or stabbed. With our large military retiree population, it is often a nursing home patient. Even with my enlisted service and minimal combat experience in Panama, prior to medical school, I have caught myself groaning when the ambulance brought in yet another sick, elderly person from one of the local retirement centers that cater to military retirees.

I had not stopped to think of what citizens of this age group represented. I saw "Saving Private Ryan." I was touched deeply. Not so much by the carnage in the first 30 minutes, but by the sacrifices of so many. I was touched most by the scene of the elderly survivor at the graveside, asking his wife if he'd been a good man. I realized that I had seen these same men and women coming through my Emergency Department and had not realized what magnificent sacrifices they had made. The things they did for me and everyone else that has lived on this planet since the end of that conflict are priceless.

Situation permitting, I now try to

ask my patients about their experiences. They would never bring up the subject without inquiry. I have been privileged to an amazing array of experiences, recounted in the brief minutes allowed in the Emergency Dept. encounter. These experiences have revealed the incredible individuals I have had the honor of serving in a medical capacity, many on their last admission to the hospital.

There was a frail, elderly woman who reassured my young enlisted medic, trying to start an IV line in her arm. She remained calm and poised, despite her illness and the multiple needle sticks into her fragile veins. She was what we call a "hard stick." As the medic made another attempt, I noticed a number tattooed across her forearm. I touched it with one finger and looked into her eyes. She simply said, "Auschwitz." Many of later generations would have loudly and openly berated the young medic in his many attempts. How different was the response from this person who'd seen unspeakable suffering.

Also, there was this long retired Colonel, who as a young officer had parachuted from his burning plane over a Pacific Island held by the Japanese. Now an octogenarian, his head cut in a fall at home where he lived alone. His CT scan and suturing had been delayed until after midnight by the usual parade of high priority ambulance patients. Still spry for his age, he asked to use the phone to call a taxi to take him home, then he realized his ambulance had brought him without his wallet. He asked if he could use the phone to make a long distance call to his daughter who lived 7 miles away. With great pride we told him that he could not, as he'd done enough for his country, and the least we could do was get him a taxi home, even if we had to pay for it ourselves. My only regret is that my shift wouldn't end for several hours, and I couldn't drive him myself.

I was there the night MSgt. Roy Benavidez came through the Emergency Dept. for the last time. He was very sick. I was not the doctor taking care of him, but I walked to his bedside and took his hand. I said nothing. He was so sick, he didn't know I was there. I'd read his Congressional Medal

of Honor citation and wanted to shake his hand. He died a few days later.

The gentleman who served with Merrill's Marauders, the survivor of the Bataan Death March, the survivor of Omaha Beach, the 101-year old World War I veteran, the former POW held in frozen North Korea, the former Special Forces medic—now with non-operable liver cancer, the former Viet Nam Corps Commander. I remember these citizens. I may still groan when yet another ambulance comes in, but now I am much more aware of what an honor it is to serve these particular men and women. I am angered at the cut backs, implemented and proposed, that will continue to decay their meager retirement benefits. I see the President and Congress who would turn their back on these individuals, who've sacrificed so much to protect our liberty. I see later generations that seem to be totally engrossed in abusing these same liberties, won with such sacrifice. It has become my personal endeavor to make the nurses and young enlisted medics aware of these amazing individuals when I encounter them in our Emergency Dept. Their response to these particular citizens has made me think that perhaps all is not lost in the next generation. My experiences have solidified my belief that we are losing an incredible generation, and this nation knows not what it is losing. Our uncaring government and ungrateful civilian populace should all take note. We should all remember that we must "Earn this."

Written by CPT. Stephen R. Ellison, MD

**2003 REUNION  
DATES!  
OCT. 13-16  
RAMADA PLAZA  
HOTEL  
ASHEVILLE, NC**