

# POWELL POST

Volume 15 Issue 1

December 2008

## OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS HALSEY POWELL



### Points of Special Interest

- Christmas thoughts from Jim Wyatt are in his President's Message on the cover.
- Who was the best officer you served under on the Halsey Powell? Some of your shipmates answer that question on pages 2 & 3.
- Another story of leaving the Navy is on page three.
- A thank you letter from a woman in France is on page three.
- Ed Collender's story continues on page four with his account of war in the Pacific.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It has been a beautiful fall this year here in the northern Utah Mountains. Warm days and cool nights. I've been able to get a lot of golf in this fall. It isn't often that we can get a lot of golf in this fall. It isn't often that we can get a lot of golf in December. Today however, it is snowing for the first time this season and for this time of year that's good. The grandchildren hate to contemplate Christmas without snow. I tell them that you really can celebrate Christmas without snow, but they are skeptical and wonder how Santa Claus will get here in his sleigh without it. So at this time of the year with the snow falling and the

Christmas season drawing near, I get nostalgic. I remember the Christmases when I was just a young child. The thrill of getting up Christmas morning to see what Santa had brought. That was what Christmas was about to me at that young age. As I grew older the celebration of Christ's birth began to become important to me and I started to see the true meaning of Christmas. I think of the sacrifices so many of our ancestors made to insure this great land of ours is free to worship as we desire. Those brave men who fought for freedom in the

revolutionary war and the brave women who supported them. The men and women who have fought in every war since then to insure that freedom still exists to worship as we wish. I feel it an honor to have served with the men of the Halsey Powell who served their country well to preserve these freedoms.

To those who try to take the word Christmas out of our celebration of the holidays we say, enough. We celebrate Christ's birth. That is what we really celebrate. Without Christ there would be no Christmas and

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no holiday season as we know it today.

In his contemplation of the Christmas season, James Wallingford penned these lines:

*"Christmas is not a day or a season, but a condition of heart and mind.*

*If we love our neighbors as ourselves;*

*if in our riches we are poor in spirit and in our poverty we are rich in grace;*

*if our charity vaunteth not itself, but suffereth long and is kind;*

*if when our brother asks for a loaf, we give ourselves instead; if each day dawns in opportunity and sets in achievement, however small—then every day is Christ's day and Christmas is always near".*

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and I will have you in my thoughts as I celebrate, and with the dawning of the New Year, I will toast to the friendship I have with all of you.

Thanks for your friendship and I wish you all fair winds and following seas and I look forward to seeing you all in Jacksonville in 2009.

And please, in your prayers remember those shipmates who are ailing or have cause to mourn.

Skipper Jim Wyatt

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## THE BEST OFFICER ON THE HALSEY POWELL

*Editor's Note: This is the question we posed to Halsey Powell shipmates for this issue of the newsletter: "Who was the best officer you served under while you were aboard the Halsey Powell? What made him a good officer? Are there any examples that you recall that caused you to think of him as the best officer you served under?" Here are the responses:*

### **Bob Justis (1953-57):**

The best officer I served under on the Halsey Powell was LT(jg) Robert Lange. He looked after his men and was a fine man to work for. Mr. Lange was the reason I made 1st class so fast. He made sure everyone got things turned in on time and correctly. I made 3rd class after only a year in the Navy and made E-6 Petty Officer in 39 months because of him. He was an outstanding man and officer.

**Ronald Johnkin BT1, USN, USS Halsey Powell DD686 May 1963-Jan 1966:**

I had the honor and pleasure of serving under Lt(jg) C.A. Smith, Engineering Officer 1963-65, as a 1st Class Boilerman. I was assigned as leading petty officer in the forward fireroom. During that time we had many exciting times, including a 6 month deployment to WESTPAC. Mr. Smith was a true leader in every way, with his quick wit, engineering knowledge and just one of the guys type attitude towards his engineering dept. His leadership was truly shown in many ways, but most of all when handling our infamous "shaft breakage" during a full power run on Nov. 16, 1963. Mr. Smith was always at hand to help when a problem arose and often would assist in the actual repairs, etc. in correcting the problem.

I can recall an incident involving #1 fuel oil pump failure spraying hot fuel oil on the deck plates and in the bilges during a normal steaming

operation at about 20 knots. This failure resulted in having to shut down and secure #1 boiler. Mr. Smith immediately was in the forward fireroom surveying the situation and also helping in removing oil from the deck plates, etc. We then discovered that a safety plug had blown out of the fuel oil pump causing the oil spill. He then took out a piece of notebook paper and drew a sketch of the plug, went back to the machine shop and machined a new safety plug on the lathe that we installed. All this was done in less than 2 hours, and we had everything back on line and back to normal operations. We were very lucky that day that we did not have a major fire.

Mr. Smith was also a person that you could talk to on a man to man basis, whether it be personal problems or whatever. He was well liked and respected by all crew members. Anyone having the pleasure of being associated with him in anyway would definitely benefit and walk away a better person. I had an 8½ year career in the Navy and had the opportunity to serve under four commands and six engineering officers. Mr. Smith would rise to the top out of some good ones. I have also had the great opportunity to see Mr. Smith at some of our past reunions in Albuquerque, NM and Nashville, TN. He is still the quick witted, great person that I knew 45 years ago.

### **Gene LaPorte (1958-60):**

There are two officers that I will never forget or cease to admire.

David F. Loomis, Commander

We were steaming with more ships than our radar screen could even see. The center ship was the USS Columbus and the president of Vietnam was aboard. The entire convoy put on a display of power for him.

We were steaming at flank

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speed on the outer perimeter of the convoy. At 10:45 Captain Loomis walked from his bridge chair to the aft part of the port bridge. In an instant he yelled, "Man overboard, I have the con." He then deftly maneuvered the high speed Halsey out of formation, around a following ship and picked up the man. The officer resumed the con and wrote in the log book, "10:45, man overboard, 10:57 man back aboard, resumed position in formation."

Once the seaman was back aboard, Captain Loomis started shaking and yelled, "Put that SOB on report!" He then retired to his quarters. It was the Captain's instant reaction and skill that saved the seaman's life. I was at the helm at the time.

On a lighter note, my all time favorite officer was Lt(jg) Erwin Blackwell. While on anti submarine maneuvers off the coast near San Diego, the captain gave the con to Mr. Blackwell and retired to his quarters. Blackwell was leaning over the charts and looked up to see three destroyers heading at speed towards each other. "Holy &%\$#," he yelled, "we're all %\$#^% up!" (Unfortunately someone had left the radio key stuck in the talk position.)

After altering course and avoiding the collision we heard the radio blasting, "Unidentified station using profanity, this is Yulelog Yankee, (the Admiral's call sign). Identify yourself immediately!" Mr. Blackwell looked around the bridge to make sure the captain was still below, picked up the radio and said, "We're not that #\$\$%^&\* up." Both exciting and good times aboard the Halsey.

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## ANOTHER TALE OF LEAVING THE NAVY

*This is from the question in the last issue about leaving the Navy.*

Ed Collender:

Release from Reservist Active Duty service was contingent with something called "POINTS." (Regular Navy release was in accord with their Enlistment Contract.) Rules for officers and enlisted were different, but the basic point was "time served." As an unmarried officer, I remained on Active Duty for several months! I suppose that one reason for this phased release might be consideration of the capacity of the Nation's Air and Rail transportation, as well as a safe and orderly shutdown of this Tremendous War Machine!

At least that's the way I remember it!



## TAPS

The Post was notified of the following shipmates' deaths since the last newsletter. Not all members died recently, but we just learned of their deaths. The entire crew sends our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of the deceased. Please let ML&RS know if you learn of the death of a former shipmate so he can be recognized in here and on the Honor Roll at the reunion.

**Vance White**

*Date of death not reported*

**John McArdle**

*Date of death not reported*

*Happy New Year!  
Health & Happiness To All*

## LETTER TO MY LIBERATORS

*Editor's Note: The following letter was brought back from the 2008 reunion. It came from the 7th Infantry Group who was having their reunion at the same time in the same hotel in Nashville as the Halsey Powell.*

Elisabeth Gozzo  
Association THANKS GIs  
10 rue de la Moselle  
57680 CORNY, France

Dear American Liberators,

We want to give expression to our deepest gratitude to you for what you did for us in 1944. We know the terrible cost of our freedom: after four years spent under the cruel Nazi boot, France was bloodless; French people daily lived the humiliation, the fear, the denunciations, the threat of torture and the concentration camps. It was a nightmare....

**AND THEN YOU CAME!**

In an irresistible impulse, you appeared like a fabulous sunbeam after a terrible four-years long night, like a blessing from God.

You wrote a page of our history, and without doubt, it's the most beautiful. You offered us the most wonderful present in the world: LIBERTY!

But at what price?

All these young Americans sacrificed in the spring of their lives, all the inhuman suffering which wounded your bodies and your souls, all what you endured rend our hearts and pain us. We are so indebted to you. We have for you the highest respect. You are our heroes who defeated the barbarism and who saved us.

You are our dear liberators.

We'll never forget you, and our gratefulness for you is deep and endless.

You are graven in our hearts.

Thank you whole-heartedly,  
Thanks, GIs.

God bless you all—God bless America. We love you.

## “THE STORY OF MY LIFE” BY ED COLLENDER

Continued from June 2008

### FAST CARRIER TASK FORCE

**8-22-44:** Our squadron was detached and directed to report to Command Fast Carrier Task Force 58, VAdm Marc Mitscher USNA '10 at Eniwetok, where we completed 83 days of continuous steaming. There were four carriers and two heavies (BB or CA) in the middle, surrounded by 20-24 destroyers and a few CLs in the screen; each ship staying on a fixed compass bearing from the center, in a six mile diameter regardless of the course. During air attack we would shrink to a four mile diameter. Most of the time we were in TG 38.2 in company with Halsey on the Battleship Iowa and later the New Jersey. The senior DD squadron Commander would be designated Com-Screen and would handle individual destroyer assignments such as fueling sequences, delivering mail (no Helos then), and plane guard detail (400 ft aft of Carrier) during flight operations. The OTC (Officer of Tactical Command) was usually on one of the carriers, most convenient for frequent course changes into the wind for flight ops, but could be passed around to any ship. While OOD one day, I even had a shot at being the Task Group Guide for a few hours.

### THE PHILIPPINES

**8-28-44:** Task Groups 58.2 and 58.3 (*38 and 58 were the same except for the Commanding Admiral*) departed Eniwetok.

**9-1-44:** Crossed the equator at 155.26 E longitude. Shellback MM1c Jake Reich's beard was cut off!

**Sept 6-7:** Began a series of strikes on Palau Islands.

**Sept 9-10:** Strike at Mindanao, the first in the Philippines.

**Sept 12, 13, 14:** Strikes on Yap, Negros, Leyte, Samar and Cebu.

**Sept 15-17:** Provided air cover for landings on Peleiu.

**Sept 19-20:** Strikes on Luzon in-

cluding Manilla, Corregidor and Bataan

**Sept 21:** Strike at Formosa—The task force launched too early, had heavy opposition over the target, and retired too soon—into a cloud bank. Many aircraft with empty tanks made water landings in the evening twilight. When Admiral Spruance asked returning pilots for a course to steer to clear weather, the air was full of profanity to the effect that any course other than the present one would be more favorable. We picked up two fighter pilots. And then six, three man, torpedo plane crews, which landed in formation. When we found them at 3 AM, they said that we were expected but why did we take so long. Tony, the baker, was making donuts that night, in addition to the daily bread rations, so we preformed like the Red Cross, handing out blankets, donuts and coffee. The forecasted typhoon came the next two days and we marched in place just hanging on.

**Sept 24:** Another strike on the central Philippines.

**Sept 28:** Arrived at Saipan to reload ammo, fuel and return to sea.

**9-23-44** Ulithi occupied. Development started to create an Advanced Fleet Base with Falalop Islet as the air base, Asor the advanced fleet base, Sorlen to have a 100 bed hospital and boat pool, and Mogmog to become one of the most important recreation centers in the Pacific. Seaplane Tender Hamlin arrived with a squadron of PBM Mariners. Later, Feitabul Islet in the southern sector was added as a second recreation center.

**Sept 29:** The entire fleet departed Eniwetok, arriving Ulithi **10-1-44**. At this point, Commander Sidney D B Merrill USNA '34 reported aboard as prospective CO.

**10-3:** Violent storm, all ships ordered to sea. Following day the storm abated and we returned. Eighty-eight motor whaleboats were lost including both of ours, and 68 men drowned. After a few days for familiarization by the new skipper, he assumed command on **10-6-44**, and we joined TGs

38.2 and with 38.3, sortied from Ulithi and rendezvoused with the rest of the Fast Carrier Task Force the next day to support the landings at Leyte Gulf. At this point, the disposition of the Japanese Fleet was unknown but a possible Fleet action could be in the cards.

**10-9:** Off Nansei Shoto island chain for strikes at Okinawa, Amami Giunto and Miyako Retto with no air opposition. Followed up the next day.

**10-12 & 13:** More strikes off Formosa. Evening of 10-12 the entire TG 38.2 was illuminated by flares. We tried to intercept two torpedoes that were heading our way, but missed. Cruisers Houston and Canberra were torpedoed. I really felt naked there in that bright light.

**10-14:** Still off Formosa to provide fighter escort for B-29 bombings. We splashed our first plane today. Low cloud cover overhead with the task group in the AA defensive formation, (that is the heavies on the 4,000 yard ring with the destroyers). Suddenly a bogie appeared low on the deck coming straight at us from out of the mists. His bomb bay opened and dropped the load in the water. Five inch bursts were all around him and our 40s seemed to be pouring into the propeller hub...then he splashed and we cheered...until the distinctive tail of an SB2C dive bomber popped up. Fortunately the Cruiser behind us picked up the unhurt pilot and crewman. The pilot was unhappy, but he had violated a standing order to NEVER approach a formation in this defensive disposition.

**10-18 & 19:** Off Luzon, strikes against all shipping and airfields.

**10-20** D-Day at Leyte, all aircraft supporting landing.

**10-21, 22, 23:** Continuing attacks on the Central Philippines.

**10-24:** Off Samar. We had no idea of what was to happen next!...Nor did Admiral Halsey or Admiral Toyoda.