

The FLAGSHIP

Volume 17 Issue 1

May 2009

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS ROWE



Special Points of Interest

- Share "The Seabag" with your family members so they can get an idea of what it was like to own one. See our cover article.
- If you have stories of a reunion with an old Rowe buddy like Carl Cramer's on page three, let us know.
- Some updating on Navy ratings can be found on page three.
- What was the most surprising thing you learned in the Navy? See what Wally Seyferth has to say on the subject on page four.
- Read the history of the USS Huntington and become acquainted with your fellow reunion ship. See page four.
- See 2009 reunion dates on page four.

Editor's Note: We ran a similar piece a long time ago, but we had a request for it again, so here it is:

There was a time when everything you owned had to fit in your seabag. Remember those nasty rascals? Fully packed, one of those suckers weighed more than the poor devil hauling it. The damn things weighed a ton and some idiot with an off-center sense of humor sewed a "carry" handle on it to help you haul it. Hell, you could bolt a handle on a Greyhound bus, but it wouldn't make the damn thing portable.

The Army, Marines and Air Force got footlockers and we got a big ole' canvas bag.

After you warped your spine jackassing the goofy thing through a bus or train station, sat on it waiting for

THE SEABAG

connecting transportation and made folks mad because it was too damn big to fit in any overhead rack on any bus, train and airplane ever made, the contents looked like hell. All your gear appeared to have come from bums who slept on park benches.

Traveling with a seabag was something left over from the "Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum" sailing ship days. Sailors used to sleep in hammocks. So you stowed your "issue" in a big canvas bag and lashed your hammock to it, hoisted it on your shoulder and in effect moved your entire home and complete inventory of earthly possessions from ship to ship. I wouldn't say you traveled light because with one strap it was a one-shoulder load that could torque your skeletal frame and bust your ankles. It was like

hauling a dead linebacker.

They wasted a lot of time in boot camp telling you how to pack one of the suckers. There was an officially sanctioned method of organization that you forgot after ten minutes on the other side of the gate at Great Lakes or San Diego. You got rid of a lot of issue gear when you went to the SHIP. Did you ever know a tin-can sailor who had a raincoat? A flat hat? One of those nut hugger knit swimsuits? How bout those roll your own neckerchiefs—the ones the girls in a good Naval tailor shop would cut down and sew into a 'greasy snake' for two bucks?

Within six months, every fleet sailor was down to one set of dress blues, port and starboard undress blues and whites, a couple of white hats, boots, shoes,

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

assorted kivvies, a peacoat and three sets of bleached out dungarees. The rest of your original issue was either in the pea coat locker, lucky bag or had been reduced to wipedown rags in the engine room. Underway ships were not ships that allowed a vast accumulation of private gear. Hobos who lived in discarded refrigerator crates could amass greater loads of pack rat crap than fleet sailors riding tin-cans. The confines of a canvas-back rack, side locker and a couple of bunk bags did not allow one to live a Donald Trump existence. Space and the going pay scale combined to make us envy the lifestyle of a mud hut Ethiopian. We were the global equivalents of nomadic Mongols without ponies to haul our stuff.

And after the rigid routine of boot camp we learned the skill of random compressed packing... Known by mothers world-wide as 'cramming'. It is amazing what you can jam into a space no bigger than a breadbox if you pull a watch cap over a boot and push it in with your foot. Of course it looks kinda

weird when you pull it out but they never hold fashion shows at sea and wrinkles added character to a salty appearance.

There was a four-hundred mile gap between the images on recruiting posters and the actual appearance of sailors at sea. It was not without justifiable reason that we were called the tin-can Navy.

We operated on the premise that if 'Cleanliness was next to Godliness', we must be next to the other end of that spectrum... We looked like our clothing had been pressed with a waffle iron and packed by a bulldozer. But what the hell did they expect from a bunch of jerks who lived in the crew's hole of the Chevalier, a 2250 Gearing/Fletcher can. After a while you got used to it... You got used to everything you owned picking up and retaining that "distinctive" aroma... You got used to old ladies on busses taking a couple of wrinkled nose sniffs of your peacoat then getting up and finding another seat...

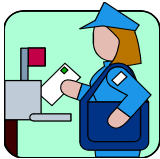
Do they still issue seabags? Can you still make five bucks sitting up half the night drawing a ships picture on the side of one of the damn things with black and white marking pens

that drive old masters-at-arms into a 'rig for heart attack' frenzy? Make their faces red... The veins on their neck bulge out... And yell," What in God's name is that all over your seabag?" "Artwork, Chief... It's like the work of Michelangelo... My ship... Great huh?" "Looks like some damn comic book..."

Here was a man with cobras tattooed on his arms... A skull with a dagger through one eye and a ribbon reading 'DEATH BEFORE SHORE DUTY' on his shoulder... Crossed anchors with 'Subic Bay 1971' on the other shoulder... A fly on his privates... An eagle on his chest and a full blown Chinese dragon peeking out between the cheeks of his butt. If anyone was an authority on stuff that looked like a comic book, it had to be this Chief.

Sometimes I look at all the crap stacked in my garage, close my eyes and smile, remembering a time when everything I owned could be crammed into a canvas bag.

Submitted by Carl Cramer



MAIL CALL

To Whom It May Concern:

Thanks for printing my inquiry about the death in Gitmo. I did receive two letters concerning the matter. Both of the guys remembered the incident, but not the name. The writers were: Harold Porterfield and Edward Wojunar. I appreciate your efforts.

Thanks guys,
Paul Dehm

Dear Karen:

A couple of months ago, I purchased a CD of the USS Rowe DD-564 1954 World Cruise Book. It is done very nicely and I'm really glad that I purchased it. It was purchased

from:

Great Naval Images LLC
6815 Chadbourne Dr
Valley View, OH 44125

E-mail: <http://navyboy63.com>

The price is \$39.95 (and they charged me \$4.00 shipping, making my total bill \$34.95).

How I found out about this is because I have notified Ebay that if anything comes in and/or up for sale about the USS Rowe DD-564 to notify me.

When I purchased mine, they only had 10 and they had 9 left for sale.

Believe this is something that should be put in our USS Rowe DD-564 Flagship Publication. I'm sure other shipmates will be interested in purchasing a copy. (See ad on next page at the bottom.)

Thanks much,
STGC Carl Cramer, USNR (Ret)

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Balance after 11/08 **-\$60.72**
Funds received since 11/08 issue
\$708.44
Funds available for 05/09 issue
\$647.72
Funds Expended for 05/09 issue
\$103.16
Ending Balance for 08/09 \$544.46

A big thank you to all who generously contributed after the 11/08 issue! Please continue to support the newsletter with contributions sent to ML&RS, Inc at the address on page 4.

**2009 USS ROWE
REUNION
ALBUQUERQUE,
NM
SEPT. 17-20**

BEST WESTERN HOTEL

TWO OLD FRIENDS REUNITED

By Carl Cramer

On the weekend of Dec. 12, 13, & 14th, our family rented a former ski lodge up in Black Moshannon State Park (Pennsylvania). Black Moshannon State Park is located in Centre County not far from Penn State University. On Saturday, December 13th, my son Matt drove me over to Luthersburg, PA (about an hour's drive) to see former USS Rowe DD-564 shipmate RD2 Donald (Donnie) Wingert. Donnie and I were good buddies aboard ship and we were both in the Operations Department. This was only the second time I had seen Donnie in some 52 years. I remember when we were in Charleston, SC in the shipyard being framed. We received word that there was a USS Rowe DD-564 shipmate at the Charleston bus station who needed a ride out to the ship. Well, I was the one who went to pick Donnie up and we have been friends ever since. We pulled a lot of liberties together with

my good friend RD2 Alan (Al) Morgan. All Donnie ever talked about was when he got out of the Navy, he was going to go to Canada and buy some cows and start farming. (He was raised on a farm.) Well, this is what he did and as we were leaving he was getting dressed to go out to the barn to feed the cattle. One other thing I will always remember about Donnie is that he liked his snuff. It didn't matter how rough it was, when we were on CIC watch, he would get this worst smelling tobacco out and put a pinch in his mouth. I asked him if he still chewed snuff and he told me not for two years. He has had some medical problems this past year, but he was the same old Donnie the day I visited. While visiting I had my son Matthew (Matt) take a picture of Donnie and me. I am enclosing a copy of the picture for you to use as you see fit.

STGC Carl Cramer, USNR (Ret)



Left: RD2 Donald Wingert, Right: STGC Carl Cramer

Ad Submitted by Carl Cramer

Visit this web page at Great Naval Images navyboy63.com: Looking for a certain US Navy cruise book from WWII, Korea or Vietnam? We might just have it. The cruise books have been placed on CD for years of enjoyable viewing. This is a multimedia presentation that you will find very interesting and unique.

Correction: In Jan Bohren's story in the Nov. 2008 issue, Lt Fitzgibbons was incorrectly referred to as Fritz. It should have been "Fitz."

STOREKEEPER, POSTAL CLERK RATINGS TO MERGE INTO LOGISTIC SPECIALIST RATING

By Mass Communications Specialist 3rd Class Devin Thorpe, Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

MILLINGTON, Tenn. (NNS)— Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Gary Roughead, has approved the merger of the storekeeper (SK) and postal clerk (PC) ratings to the logistics specialist (LS) rating, according to a Navy message released Nov. 17.

The conversion from SK and PC ratings to LS officially begins Oct. 1, 2009 for all active-duty Sailors and Reserve component E-6 and above according to NAVADMIN 326/08. Conversion for Reserve component E-1 through E-5 begins April 1, 2010.

The SK rating badge will be used to represent the new LS rating. All PC personnel are required to convert uniform rating badge to the SK rating badge no later than Oct. 1, 2011.

"Over the past several years, the postal clerk rating has been shrinking. We went from having an enlisted authorization of almost 1,000 people, and now we're down to 645. It's at a point now that we're losing billets faster than we lose people, which stifles promotion," said Master Chief Postal Clerk (SW/AW) Ron Guyton, the Navy's technical advisor for the supply ratings.

The rating merger overall will benefit the Sailors more than two separate rates would, said Guyton.

As an element of the Navy's total force strategy, this merger will capitalize on the knowledge, skills and abilities found in the two ratings and apply them toward a unified mission according to the NAVADMIN.

"With most PCs gone from smaller ships, the storekeepers are doing that work already, and it's been success. So now we're taking a bigger step and training more Sailors to do a wider variety of jobs. There's no way the Navy can lose by having better trained Sailors," Guyton said.

THE MOST SURPRISING THING I LEARNED IN THE NAVY

Editor's Note: The following e-mail was sent asking for input for this newsletter: "Please send a story about the most surprising thing you learned in the Navy. Many of you were a small town or farm boy when you went in, so there must have been some real surprises when you were exposed to the world. Maybe it was another culture, an unfamiliar language (accents, phrases, foreign languages, etc.) or listening to how other shipmates were used to living back home. Maybe you learned something about yourself and your abilities that you never thought you could do." We only got one response, so we would like to extend this story idea for the next issue.

Please send in your most surprising story for August.

Here is the one response we received:

Wally Seyfferth, RD 2:

I was one of those small town boys that you referred to, and I was never out of the state of Michigan until I enlisted in the Navy. My parents came through the first great depression of the thirties and also the pre-union days in the automotive plants. With five children to support in those lean days, there was not money enough for family vacations or much of anything else. Needless to say, when the Rowe went to New York for a week-end

shortly after I went aboard, I was in awe of all the people, tall buildings, restaurants, the subway system, etc. Representatives came aboard shortly after we docked and left passes for Radio City Music Hall, various shows and plays. A buddy and I (Del MacFadden-RD1) were able to see a "Yankee" double header in the old stadium. That week-end in New York kicked off a whole lot of traveling from that point on; such as Havana, San Juan, Rome (twice), Barcelona, Copenhagen, and on and on. Those four years on the Rowe were a great experience for me. I have been traveling ever since.

HISTORY OF THE USS HUNTINGTON CL-107

Editor's Note: Since the USS Huntington will be meeting with the USS Rowe for the 2009 reunion, we thought we would give you a history of the Huntington so you would be familiar with their ship.

From: Dictionary of American Fighting Ships, Vol. III, 1968, Navy Department, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Naval History Division, Washington, D.C.

Note: HUNTINGTON (CL-77) was under construction at New York Shipbuilding Co., Camden, N.J., 1941 to 1942, but was converted to an aircraft carrier while building to be launched as COWPENS

(CVL-25) HUNTINGTON (CL-107) dp. 10,000; l. 611' 2"; b. 66' 6"; dr. 20'; s. 33 k. cpl. 992; a. 12 6", 12 5"; cl. FARGO

The second HUNTINGTON (CL-107) was launched by the New York Shipbuilding Corp., Camden, N.J., 8 April 1943; sponsored by Mrs. M. L. Jarrett, Jr.; and commissioned 23 February 1946, Captain D. R. Tallman in command.

After shakedown training off Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, HUNTINGTON sailed from Philadelphia 23 July 1946 for duty with the 9th

Fleet in the Mediterranean. During the cruise she visited many ports, including Naples, Malta, Villefranche, and Alexandria, helping to stabilize the volatile post-war situation in Europe. Departing Gibraltar 8 February 1947, she took part in exercises off Guantanamo Bay, stopped at Norfolk and Newport, R.I. and departed the latter port 20 May 1947 for another tour of duty in the Mediterranean.

Returning from her cruise 13 September 1947, HUNTINGTON departed Philadelphia 2 October with Naval Reserve personnel for exercises off Bermuda and Newfoundland until 14 November 1947. The ship then entered Philadelphia Naval Shipyard and underwent an extensive overhaul until 12 April 1948. Returning to Norfolk 27 April from her refresher training cruise in the Caribbean, HUNTINGTON sailed to Newport and departed for another tour of duty in the Mediterranean 1 June 1948.

HUNTINGTON visited a variety of ports during June to August 1948, and after transiting the Suez Canal 22 September, embarked on a good will tour of Africa and South America, arriving Buenos Aires,

Argentina, 6 November. There the ship was honored by an official visit from President Peron, and continuing to Uruguay received a similar visit from President Berres 10 November. HUNTINGTON called at Rio and Trinidad before returning from this valuable good will cruise 8 December 1948.

The cruiser made one short cruise from Philadelphia to the Caribbean, returned to Newport 22 January, and decommissioned 15 June 1949. She was finally struck from the Navy List 1 September 1961 after being in reserve, and was subsequently scrapped.

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