

USS RANKIN NEWS

ISSUE #6 • THE NEWSLETTER OF THE USS RANKIN ASSOCIATION • JUNE 2007



AKA-103

1945-1947

1952-1968

LKA-103

1969-1971

GOLD E

1960-1961

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome these new shipmates, found since our March newsletter:

Victor H. Angeleri
Sherman W. Jones
Thomas R. Kenney
Dennis E. Kropetz
Franklin Masters
Antonio Silva
Victor W. Stadmiller

LOOKING FOR...

One or more people have asked us to make a special effort to find these shipmates. If you have any information about them, let us know:

Larry D. Fisher, SFP3
Bob Lawrence, RD1
Julius F. Miller, SH3
Bill Reichenbach, SM3
Lew Taylor, RM3

WEB SITE NEWS

Our web site had a minor crash in May. Almost everything is back in order now, including our unique directory of deceased shipmates. To see the latest, visit www.ussrankin.org



NEW LONDON REUNION!



Coast Guard Cutter Barque *Eagle*

The world-famous training ship of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, New London.



Foxwoods Resort Casino

With over 7,000 slot machines, all owned by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation.



USS Nautilus Museum

Featuring submarine history and the world's first nuclear powered ship. Exciting!

This year's reunion will be held from Thursday, November 1 to Sunday, November 4 at the Radisson Hotel New London, Connecticut. Our objective is to have a highly enjoyable reunion that will be economical for all to attend. Dozens of your shipmates look forward to seeing you there.

New London is an old and interesting city in an area with strong ties to seafaring and the U.S. Navy. Our tours and other attractions haven't been finalized yet, but they are likely to include visits to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, a local gaming palace, and the USS Nautilus Museum. Also on the agenda will be the fascinating Mystic Seaport and Mystic Aquarium Institute for Exploration.

But as always, the best part of the reunion is getting together with like-minded people who shared your experiences on the USS Rankin. Whether you slept in the same compartment and stood the same watches, or whether you served twenty years apart in different ends of the ship, you'll find that you have quite a bit in common.

New London is easy to get to from New York and New England, where many of our former shipmates now live. To get there by air, fly into Hartford or Providence and take a 30-minute shuttle to the hotel. We don't know for sure, but we believe there will be some very attractive air fares to one or both of those cities. Book your flights early to take maximum advantage of them.

You should be receiving your registration packets in late July or early August. Watch for them in the mail.

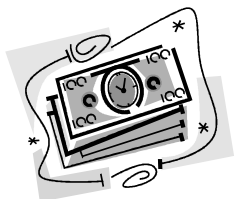
FINANCES

The returns from our Annual Fund Drive are extremely encouraging so far, but we still have a distance to go. If you haven't sent your contribution, please do so as soon as you can. Most people who contribute send \$25, but any amount is appreciated and will definitely be put to good use.

An unexpectedly large number of shipmates have become Shareholders this year, which is great for our "rainy day fund," but not so great for our regular operating budget. Right now we have barely enough to last us until the 2008 Fund Drive, but not enough to finance a project to find shipmates that we're hoping to do before September.

Since we started operations in 2003, we've located almost 1,300 living shipmates and 375 who are deceased. That leaves about 2,200 shipmates whom we haven't located yet. We're pretty sure we can find at least a few hundred of them by sending postcards and making phone calls to people whose names and ages match the people on our missing shipmates list. Since we need to send over a hundred postcards to find a dozen shipmates, the project can get expensive. If enough of the people who get this newsletter make contributions to our fund drive, we can go after the missing ones at flank speed.

The names of the 230 shipmates who have supported us financially this year appear on pages 4 and 5. Our thanks go out to them and their generous financial support.



SHIPMATES ON PARADE



This is the first in a series of articles about Rankin shipmates, their Navy careers, and their later lives. If you'd like to see your own story here, write it up and send it in.

Fernando "Fred" Gologan was born in Carles, on the island of Panay, Philippine Islands.

In WWII, the islands were occupied by the Japanese. Fred's brother Alberto took him to Manila, where he joined the guerrilla forces. He was beaten many times by the Japanese and detained several times for questioning. Just before the end of the war he was detained and told that his head would be cut off at 3:00 PM that day. A Japanese officer who had been educated in the U.S. told Fred that he didn't like the war and that it would soon be over. He then let Fred go free.

After the war in April, 1946, he joined the U.S. Navy in Manila because his brother Romero told him he should do so. He arrived in California aboard the troop ship USS Randall at Treasure Island on June 16, 1946. The next month, a troop train took him cross country to Pensacola, Florida. He was transferred to Norfolk in 1948, where he

served with the COMBATCRULANT staff aboard USS Missouri.

He had reenlistment leave in the Philippines in 1950, then transferred to COMNAVMAR, Guam, Marianas Islands. In January 1952, he became a plankowner of the USS Rankin, a ship coming out of mothballs at Alameda, California.

The ship and crew went through precommissioning at Long Beach. Once the ship was commissioned, they transited the Panama Canal to Norfolk and went on a six month Mediterranean cruise. In 1956 they went on another Med cruise, this one nine months long.

In 1957, Fred transferred to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. It was back to Norfolk in 1960 with COMCARDIV 16 staff, aboard USS Randolph, USS Valley Forge, USS Lake Champlain, and USS Intrepid. This duty involved some newsworthy excitement, since one of those ships picked up some splashed-down astronauts from early space flights: first some chimpanzees, then astronauts Gus Grissom, John Glenn, Wally Schirra, and Scott Carpenter.

After serving in the Office of the Secretary of Defense in Washington, Fred was assigned to Naval Air Station Agana, Guam, where he reconnected with many of his Guamanian friends from his first tour of duty there. Then he returned to the States and retired from the U.S. Navy on January 31, 1976 with thirty years of service and a rate of Senior Chief Mess Specialist.

Upon retirement from the Navy, Fred went to work for the American Legion in Philadelphia. He retired in 1989 and worked there part time until December 31, 2000. Not a bad career!

THE TREASURES OF KA-103

The Navy Department Library is looking for some USS Rankin souvenirs to add to its collection. The library, in Washington, DC, is over 200 years old. They'd like to have original copies of menus, welcome aboard pamphlets, change of command programs, plans of the day, and other similar items. In the world of librarians, these things are called *ephemera*, and basically they're paper items that were intended to do their job for a day or two, then be thrown away.

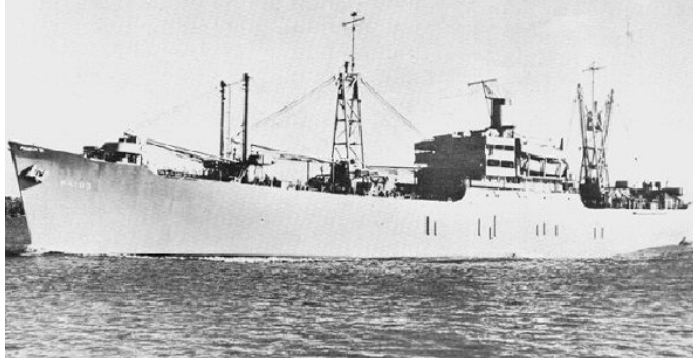
If you have any items like that, you can send them to us and we'll forward them to the proper officials at the library. The library will put them in special archival folders that are meant to last forever, and will keep them in an area that's less than a Papa boat length from materials from John Paul Jones and the earliest days of the Navy. Since the library is open to the public, people from all over the world will be able to see and touch these treasures from the USS Rankin.

START AND FINISH

The Navy Department Library does *not* want photographs for its collection, but the Association gets a lot of them from shipmates and elsewhere.

Here are what we believe to be the first and last pictures of the Rankin before she was sunk. The dark squares on the lower one are holes in the hull, put there to aid in her sinking.

Rankin before her commissioning in 1945



Rankin before her sinking in 1988



NEW SHAREHOLDERS

The list of shareholders in the March newsletter seems to have inspired a new round of generosity. Since we mailed that newsletter, these shipmates have become USS Rankin Association shareholders:

Raymond J. Falker	MMFN	1964-1967
Michael M. Fulton	LTJG	1966-1968
Edward P. Gaskell, Jr.	LT	1954-1956
John O. Giles	BMSN	1957-1959
Earl R. Gimpel	CAPT (USMC)	1952-1953
Luther Johnson	LT	1960-1962
John Mazzarini	RM2	1960-1962
George R. Meinig	LTJG	1958-1960
Albert E. Pemantel	CM2	1945
Larry J. Richard	PN3	1965-1966
George E. Roe	YN2	1957-1959
James N. Winé	BM2	1958

Shareholders are people who have contributed at least \$100 to the Association's "rainy day fund." They don't have any special ownership rights, but we honor them by listing their names on our web site and in publications like this one.

Many organizations like ours keep a rainy day fund large enough to support their operations for a year or so. We're doing pretty well along those lines, with about fifteen month's worth of normal expenses in a savings account that we haven't ever had to touch. We don't really need any more shareholders right now, but when someone sends us \$100, we offer them the option of adding their name to the list.

SHIPMATE DIRECTORIES

Many shipmates have received a personalized shipmate directory from us. These directories are professionally bound, and range from ten to thirty or more pages. They cost us about \$5 each to print and mail. Each man's directory shows the names and rank or rate of all the men and officers who were aboard the Rankin during the years that he was aboard. If we've been in touch with someone on that list, the directory also shows his address, phone number and email address if he has provided one.

Our records show that we've sent a shipmate directory to everyone who has ever sent us any money. If you've made a contribution but don't have a directory, let us know.

If you want your own directory, just send us a contribution to the Annual Fund drive, and we'll send one automatically. Most people who contribute send \$25, but any amount at all will get you on the contributors list and get you your directory.

ANNUAL FUND DRIVE CONTRIBUTORS

These shipmates have made financial contributions to the Association during 2007. Their generosity is our lifeblood—without it, we couldn't have these newsletters, our web site, our online obituaries, and all of the other things that make the group worthwhile. All 1,250 of our members give them a big Thank You!

Adkins, John G.	BT3	1953-1954
Allen, Leslie	SFP3	1963-1966
Allen, Paul M.	ENS(SC)	1946-1947
Anderson, Harry V.	BTG2	1945
Ashworth, James R.	TESN	1954
Ayasse, Ralph F.	SMSN	1959-1962
Baire, Ronald E.	SK1	1968-1971
Baisden, Robert	YN3	1954-1955
Ballou, Joseph F.	LTJG	1957-1958
Barker, Coy E.	DC3	1962-1964
Beals, George T.	MM3	1945
Beaty, M. Paul	PN2	1957-1959
Beck, Charles W.	LTJG	1954-1955
Beck, John W.	LT	1963-1964
Berkman, Eugene M.	LT(MC)	1963-1964
Berninger, George R.	LTJG	1962-1964
Bieberbach, William H.	FTG2	1965-1966
Biersteker, Bruce J.	EN3	1953-1956
Boone, Arthur D.	BT3	1966-1969
Briggs, Wayne S.	PC3	1960-1962
Brown, James A.	BM1	1965-1967
Buchanan, Carl R.	YN3	1954-1955
Buckner, Paul H.	EN3	1957-1958
Buddle, Henry J.	SN	1964-1966
Bumgarner, Jerry E.	SN	1966-1968
Burgess, Kevin W.	SN	1969-1971
Calomino, Dominick	FN	1967-1969
Capley, Bobby W.	SFP3	1961-1965
Carrick, Marshall L.	QM3	1952
Cate, Edgardo E.	TN	1962-1963
Chapparone, Anthony L.	LTJG	1953-1955
Chism, S.	See Note 1	
Chrivia, Ronald C.	FN	1969-1970
Coccaro, Richard C.	1LT USMC	1970
Contreras, Everardo	SN	1955
Couch, Ernest C.	EMCM	1968-1970
Cramer, Charles E.	BM3	1966-1968
Crane, Roger H.	MR3	1957-1959
Cromack, Dan	LTJG	1963
Damiano, V. Jay	LTJG	1968-1971
Declat, Daniel	DC3	1966-1968
Desnoyer, David M.	EM2	1957-1961
Devault, Robert L.	SM2	1959-1962
Devroe, William P.	SK3	1963-1965
Dingle, Glennie	BT3	1955-1961
Domurat, Benjamin W.	LTJG	1969-1970
Dousman, James "Mike"	FTSN	1962
Drayton, Thomas A.	PN3	1961
Dunning, Willie D.	PFC	1962
Dwyer, William J.	BM3	1961-1965
Eckard, Larry	See Note 2	
Edmisten, Jimmie W.	EMC	1961-1965
Ellett, Frank T.	LTJG	1960-1961
Engel, David M.	EN3	1963-1967
Falker, Raymond J.	MMFN	1964-1967
Fehr, Rev. Dr. Donald C.	RMSN	1953-1954
Frost, S. David	LT(SC)	1958-1959

Fuerstenberger, Harry	ICFN	1965
Fulton, Michael M.	LT	1966-1968
Gagne, Donald P.	SKC	1955
Garner, Austin	RM2	1967-1970
Gaskell, Edward P.	LT	1954-1956
Gauthier, Leo A.	ET2	1958-1961
Gilbert, George E.	EM2	1957-1960
Giles, John O.	BMSN	1957-1959
Gimpel, Earl R.	CAPT USMC	1952-1953
Ginn, Raymond E.	MM3	1956-1958
Given, Philip R.	LCDR	1970-1971
Gladue, George A.	BMCM	1957-1961
Goebel, Peter H.	RM2	1958-1960
Golingam, Fernando	E-4	1952-1957
Goodall, Leon S.	ENS(SC)	1947
Gordinier, Dean F.	ENS	1945
Gould, Elton E.	CSSN	1956-1960
Gully, Stewart E.	LTJG	1957-1958
Hack, John D.	SN	1961-1962
Hadley, Nelson B.	EM2	1963-1966
Hamlin, Jay E.	SGT	1953
Hand, William R.	LTJG	1959-1961
Hansen, Robert A.	RM3	1960-1962
Hardegree, Howard L.	ENS	1960-1961
Haring, Jacob A.	BMSN	1953-1955
Hawks, Merle G.	F1C	1945-1946
Healey, Dennis T.	MM2	1953-1956
Heffelfinger, Karl W.	FT3	1960-1961
Hennings, L. William	LTJG	1964-1966
Herring, Thomas E.	SFC	1961-1962
Hickey, William A.	LTJG	1969-1971
Hill, Michael A.	SN	1965-1966
Hitchcock, Matthew H.	LTJG	1962
Hodurski, David A.	CS3	1967-1968
Holbrook, Hilliard B.	LT	1960-1961
Holly, Leland E.	COX	1945-1946
Horejsi, Walter A.	QM2	1966-1967
Houle, Michael J.	FN	1961-1962
Houser, Dennis W.	BMSN	1963-1965
Hungerford, James M.	LT	1952
Hurwitz, Alfred Y.	S2C	1946-1947
Icardi, Edward W.	EN2	1965-1967
Jacobs, John H.	LTJG	1963-1964
Jannie, William C.	BM3	1956-1958
Jenkins, Neil	DC1	1961-1967
Jeron, David P.	EM3	1953-1955
Johnson, Donald V.	CS2	1952-1954
Johnson, Luther	LT	1960-1962
Johnson, Verne D.	SK1	1952-1954
Jones, Mallie C.	EN1	1957-1961
Jones, Vincent T.	BM2	1946-1947
Joyce, Harry H.	RM3	1945-1946
Kasid, Alfred L.	ENS	1957-1958
Keith, Robert E.	ENS	1953-1955
Kell, George C.	YNC	1957-1959
Kitzmiller, Theresa	See Note 3	
Kling, Arthur H.	COX	1945-1946

Knight, James R.CAPT USMC... 1961-1963
 Kortkamp, Gary R.LTJG..... 1961-1964
 Kraus, Joseph.....LT(SC)..... 1963-1964
 Kristof, Gregory M.EMFN..... 1965
 Labbé, Charles L.MM3 1970
 Laboda, MatthewEN2..... 1955
 Labonte, Roger S.....HM2..... 1963-1966
 Laskorski, Lawrence R.F1C 1945-1946
 Lathrop, Allen L.SN 1957-1959
 Lents, Thomas J.IC3 1958-1959
 Levine, Abraham.....ENS..... 1946
 Lewis, Raymond L.....GMG3..... 1960-1963
 Lewis, Vincent D.S1C..... 1945
 Liff, Donald E.SH3 1953-1955
 Lint, Paul C.RD2 1964-1967
 Lobello, ThomasRDM 2/c 1945-1946
 Long, George B.ENS..... 1955-1956
 Long, Gordon W.MM1/c(T)..... 1945
 Lowery, Marvin R.SN 1966-1968
 Malik, Noble M.DK1..... 1952
 Maloney, William A.S1C..... 1946-1947
 Manders, Karl L.LT(MC) 1953-1954
 Mangen, Kenneth J.MM2 1959-1962
 Marshall, Lum C.SA 1953-1956
 Maxwell, JohnFTG3 1964-1966
 Mazzarini, John.....RM2 1960-1962
 McCullough, Glenn E.....CS3..... 1968-1970
 McDade, Thomas C.SN 1961-1963
 McKoy, GaylordBTC 1961-1964
 Meinig, George R.....LTJG..... 1958-1960
 Middlebrooks, ZedaSee Note 4
 Miller, H. Edward.....ENS..... 1962-1963
 Mohun, Richard A.LTJG..... 1959-1961
 Moore, Johnnie E.....QM3..... 1955-1958
 Moretz, Charles H.SKCS..... 1968-1969
 Morgan, Ernest C.....FN 1965-1967
 Munch, Melvin M.S1C..... 1946
 Oertel, John N.ENS..... 1967
 Oroz, DanENS..... 1966-1967
 Ortolon, James C.S1C..... 1952-1954
 Osborn, Delbert M.LTJG..... 1959-1961
 Overbeck, B. KennethLCDR 1964-1967
 Overson, Lee C.SN 1964-1967
 Parrish, Richard G.FN 1968-1970
 Pemantel, Albert E.....CM2 1945
 Peña, Manuel J.RM3 1963-1964
 Pflueger, Arthur B.DC2 1955-1958
 Plancey, Elmer J.....S1C..... 1945-1946
 Plumb, Edward J.....BT3 1966-1968
 Pontious, Harold E.....RM2C 1945
 Prentice, Colm N.....BT2 1965-1969
 Prevar, John E.....QM3..... 1970-1971
 Ranes, Wayne P.RM2 1960-1963
 Raso, Jack L.....LTJG..... 1963-1964
 Reding, Patrick G.RMSN..... 1952-1954
 Redler, Gary L.EN2..... 1962-1965
 Reed, Donald A.....ENS..... 1952-1953
 Reedy, R. WayneEN3..... 1960-1961
 Reid, Allen B.S1C..... 1945-1946
 Reynolds, Marty M.....ENFN..... 1960-1963
 Rhodes, Fred R.YN3 1945-1946
 Rhodes, Robert M.....LT 1967-1970
 Rhodes, Stuart C.EN2..... 1968-1971
 Richard, Larry J.PN3..... 1965-1966

Riley, Robert E.DK2..... 1962-1963
 Robsahm, Leon E.....CS2..... 1952-1954
 Roe, George E.YN2 1957-1959
 Rogan, Lawrence M.SN 1961-1964
 Rohrbaugh, Neal L.EMC..... 1961-1963
 Rose, Meyer H.CDR..... 1967-1968
 Rowland, JackS1C..... 1945-1946
 Roy, Alfred J.RM2 1962-1966
 Rubino, Evan A.LT 1956-1958
 Rupp, Jean K.See Note 5
 Sander, Louis "Skip"LTJG..... 1961-1963
 Saroka, Frank F.....HA 1961
 Satrom, Robert E.LTJG..... 1968-1970
 Schiel, Frank E.LTJG..... 1945-1946
 Schnackenberg, Arthur T.SN 1956-1959
 Seigel, Jerome J.....PN2 1955-1957
 Shaffer, Ross E.....RMC 1952-1953
 Sherer, Cecil W.LTJG..... 1963-1965
 Siciliano, Ercole C.....CS3 1963-1964
 Smith, J. Thomas.....ENS(SC)..... 1960-1961
 Smith, Robert D.....FT3 1952-1953
 Smith, Vernon C.LTJG..... 1956-1958
 Spicer, S. Ray.....BT3 1960-1963
 Spicer, Tex R.BT3 1960-1962
 Steger, Edward H.ENS..... 1958-1959
 Stone, David L.....LTJG..... 1960-1963
 Stringer, Walter M.MM3..... 1965-1969
 Stromberg, David P.....LT 1965-1967
 Suarez, Emilio W.SN 1967
 Swett, Lawrence B.....SHSN 1954
 Tarpey, Donald A.HM3..... 1970-1971
 Thomas, Mark A.IC3 1967-1969
 Thompson, William M.LTJG..... 1967-1970
 Thomsen, Kenneth W.....EN2 1956-1959
 Torgan, Alvin N.LTJG..... 1963-1964
 Ullmer, Thomas H.....ETR3 1970-1971
 Valentine, Mervel M.HM3..... 1965-1966
 Vander Well, Lester N.YN3 1954-1957
 Vice, Lloyd A.S1C..... 1945-1946
 Wade, Lewis C.LTJG..... 1955-1956
 Wakelee, David M.....LTJG..... 1952-1954
 Wall, Kermit F.BMCM 1968-1971
 Ware, Wilbert H.SDCS..... 1957-1964
 Warms, Donald E.....QMC..... 1953-1955
 Wharton, Deward B.....PHM2 1946-1947
 Whyno, Peter P.....BM3 1952-1955
 Wilburn, Donald L.LCDR 1965-1967
 Williamson, Rodney M.....QMQ3 1952-1954
 Wilson, James G.....LTJG..... 1953-1955
 Wilson, Leslie J.....LT 1952
 Winé, James N.BM2 1958
 Wirt, Neal H.QM2 1960-1963
 Wisnewski, Paul S.....LTJG..... 1961-1962
 Woodward, Robert W.MM3..... 1963-1965
 Young, H. StewartENS..... 1952
 Zimmer, Harry J.LTJG..... 1958-1960

NOTES:

- 1 - Wife of Henry George Chism, RMC, 1952
- 2 - Military Locator & Reunion Service, Inc.
- 3 - Daughter of Rudolph T. Sommer, LT, 1952-1953
- 4 - Wife of Melvin Louis Middlebrooks, SK1, 1954-1957
- 5 - Wife of Harold P. Rupp, LT, 1952



Rankin sailors in China, 1946



Rankin sailor and codfish off Newfoundland, 1953



Rankin sailors on tour bus, 1955



Rankin sailors on tour bus, 2005



A very big hook!



CS3 Hemphill & Apollo 11 practice capsule, 1968

UNIFORM OF THE DAY
WINTER AT SEA

U.S.S. RANKIN (AKA-103) TIME ZONE: A4 QUEBEC
c/o Fleet Post Office
New York, New York

PLAN OF THE DAY FOR SATURDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 1964

Carry out the normal at sea routine as prescribed in the Standard Ship's Organizational Manual except as modified below:

0630 Breakfast
0745 Quarters for muster, inspection, and school call.
0830 Turn to - commence field day.
0900 Commence Preliminary Admin Inspection of Navigation and Medical Departments.
1230 Officers school call in the Wardroom.
1300 Planning Board for Training meeting in Wardroom.
1615 Knock off work.

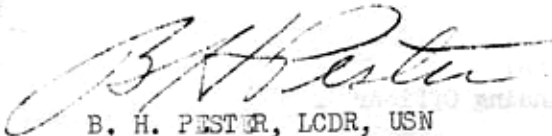
NOTES:

1. It seems that there are a good many "fair weather" sailors among us who just give up on getting any work done because of a little rough weather. Don't let them get away with it. There's a tremendous amount of work to be done below decks if we can't get topside -- and that doesn't just include painting. No painting is to be done -- but there are a million other things. Petty Officers will have to show what they're made of and supervise. And officers will have to insure that work is being directed in the right direction and that the POs are doing their jobs. Remember - the weather has changed nothing but our arrival date home. The work is still there to be done.
2. Training schedule for today is as follows:

OI - OC Div	Med 10	Crew's Lounge
3rd, H, N Div	DC 17	Mess Deck hatch area
Officer's School	Insurance Benefits and the Family Protection Plan	
3. As discrepancies are found in the prelim-admin inspections they must be corrected ASAP - like quickly. Follow-up reports are required daily from department heads to the Exec to insure progress.
4. Do you feel that you would like to better yourself? If so, there are many opportunities to do this by seeing the Information and Education Officer in the Ship's Office. Courses available include:

GED high school level
GED college level
High school and college subjects

There are many colleges and universities that participate in the USAFI program. And the successful completion of a course from one of them may start YOU on your way to a college education.

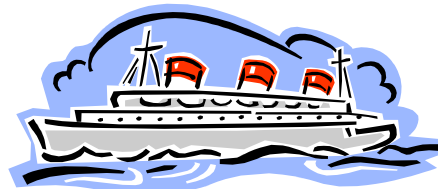

B. H. PESTER, LCDR, USN
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

THE SNIPE'S LAMENT

Now each of us from time to time has gazed upon the sea
 And watched the warships pulling out to keep the country free.
 And most of us have read a book, or heard a lusty tale,
 About the men who sail these ships through lightning, wind and hail.
 But there's a place within each ship that legends do not teach,
 Within the shell, deep down in Hell, where Legend cannot reach.
 It's down below the water-line, and takes a living toll—
 That red-hot metal living hell, which sailors call "The Hole."
 It houses engines run by steam that makes the shafts go 'round.
 A place of fire, noise, and heat that beats your body down.
 Where boilers, like a hellish heart, with blood of angry steam,
 Are molded gods without remorse, like nightmares in a dream,
 Whose threat'ning hiss and fiery roar maintain the watch-long doubt,
 That any moment they can break their chains and snuff you out.
 Where turbines scream like tortured souls, alone and lost in Hell—
 (When ordered from above somewhere, they answer every bell.)
 The men who keep the fires lit and make the engines run
 Are strangers to the world of light, and rarely see the sun.
 They have no time for play or fun, no tolerance for fear,
 But when a shipmate passes on, each one will shed a tear.
 For there's not much that men can do that these men haven't done,
 Beneath the decks, down in their Hole, to make the engines run.
 And every hour of every day they keep their watch in Hell,
 For if their fires ever fail their ship's a useless shell.
 When ships converge to have a war upon an angry sea,
 The men below just grimly smile at what their fate will be.
 They're locked below like men foredoomed, who hear no battle cry—
 It's well assumed that if they're hit the men below will die.
 But every day's a war down there: when gages all read red,
 Twelve hundred pounds of heated steam can kill you mighty dead.
 So if you ever write their song or try to tell their tale,
 The very words will make you hear a fired furnace wail.
 And people, as a general rule, don't care for fire and steel,
 So little's heard about that place, just inches from the keel.
 But I can sing about the Hole, and try to make you see
 The hardened life of men down there, for one of them is me.
 I've seen these sweat-soaked heroes fight in superheated air,
 To keep their ship alive and right, though no one knows they're there.
 And thus they'll fight for ages on till warships sail no more,
 Amid the boiler's mighty heat and turbine's hellish roar.
 So when you see a ship pull out to meet a war-like foe,
 remember faintly if you can, The Men Who Sail Below.

Anonymous

The poem to the left will be meaningful to anyone who spent time below decks on the Rankin or any steam-turbine-powered ship from the WWII era or thereabouts. Seafarers from a later time might not even know what it's about.



"The Snipe's Lament" appears in various forms in many nautical places, including on plaques presented to departing engineering department personnel. In many of the versions, words have been obviously botched or left out, and sometimes extra lines have been added. Sometimes the work is entitled "Ode to a Snipe" or "The Men Who Sail Below."

The version printed here has been assembled from several of these slightly differing ones by Louis F. Sander, and has been polished a bit by him.

If you know the poem's history, or if you can provide some evidence of its source, we'd like to hear from you.



USS RANKIN NEWS

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