

THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012



“The greatest ship ever launched by the American Nation...”

THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER

VOL. 1 NUMBER 4



THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

First Navy Jack in the War on Terrorism...

The following is the U.S. Navy flag news announcement issued on 31 May 2002, that all ships are directed to display the rattlesnake flag during the War on Terrorism. It is a reprint of the official directive from the Department of the Navy, Office of the Secretary, Washington, DC.

**SECNAVINST 10520.6
N09B1
31 May 2002**

**SECNAV INSTRUCTION 10520.6
From: Secretary of the Navy**

**To: All Ships and Stations
(less Marine Corps field addressees not having Navy personnel attached)**

Subj: DISPLAY OF THE FIRST NAVY JACK DURING THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

Ref: (a) U. S. Navy Regulations, 1990

1. **Purpose.** To provide for the display of the first navy Jack on board all U. S. Navy ships during the Global War on Terrorism.
2. **Discussion.** As the first ships of the Continental Navy readied in the Delaware River during the fall of 1775, Commodore Esek Hopkins issued a set of fleet signals. His signal for the "whole Fleet to Engage" the enemy provided for the "strip'd Jack and Ensign at their proper places." Thus, from the very beginning of our Navy, the Jack has been used on board American warships. The first navy Jack was a flag consisting of 13 horizontal alternating red and white stripes bearing diagonally across them a rattlesnake in a moving position with the motto "Don't Tread On Me." The temporary substitution of this Jack represents an historic reminder of the nation's and Navy's origin and will to persevere and triumph.
3. **Action.** The first navy jack will be displayed on board all U. S. Navy ships in lieu of the Union Jack, in accordance with sections 1259 and 1264 of reference (a). The display of the first Navy Jack is an authorized exception to section 1258 of reference (a). Ships and craft of the Navy authorized to fly the first Navy Jack will receive an issue of four flags per ship through a special distribution.

**s/Gordon R. England
Distribution:
SNDL Parts 1 and 2**



THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

Editor's Note:

With this issue, we want to introduce two former crewmembers of the USS Iowa, **Brad Goforth**, and **Dave Chambers**, who will become our replacement editors and writers for *The Iowan History Letter*. I sincerely hope that our Iowa shipmates will offer them the same great assistance that has been offered to me over the past year.

If our training for Brad and Dave proceeds as we hope, we believe that they will be taking over publishing of *The Iowan History Letter* early in 2013.

From Dave Chambers: "I will do whatever you need to have done for *The Iowan History Letter*. I am totally retired now and currently volunteer at the local Senior Center three days a week, but I do have the time, or I will make the time, to complete any tasks required.

One thing that I certainly agree on is digging for the important "personal" stories from former crewmen of USS Iowa. When I first arrived at the State Veteran's Administration, the newsletter contained no personal stories from the veterans and frankly, at the time, they were not allowed. When the person(s) objecting to these stories transferred, personal stories from the veterans then became the main focus and our circulation increased by 35% the first year. It has always been my argument that veterans want to offer their personal stories, and to also hear the stories of those that served with them. I will offer my best efforts to help make that happen.

Dave Chambers, LT, USN (Retired)
1065 N.W. Meadows Drive
McMinnville, Oregon 971228
ELTEEC@YAHOO.COM

From Brad Goforth: "History isn't written by one person, it's all of us. The experiences we all shared aboard our ship give future generations a much better idea of the times, the experiences and the thoughts that made our ship what she is. I hope that by getting the inputs from each crewmember about specific times aboard, we can paint a better picture of who we are and what we did. That will take the help of all of us. People need to know not only where the ship went and what she did, but what it was like in the boiler rooms, radio, CIC, on the bridge, in the gun turrets and mounts, after steering, and all other areas of the ship. That's what makes us what we are – a crew. The ship is us. As said before, she breathes through us and together we form the Iowa spirit. I look forward to hearing your stories and helping others understand and honor that spirit.

Hunter Bradford Goforth (Brad), LCDR, USN(Ret.)
1200 Somersby Lane,
Matthews, North Carolina 28105
bgoforth@thesamaritanhouse.org or bgoforth@aol.com

In conjunction with the Veteran's Oral History Program administered by the Library of Congress, *Iowan History Letter* readers are encouraged to send their stories to Brad Goforth and Dave Chambers. We are asking for articles, including those from other ships besides USS Iowa, and that also saw service during World War II and Korea. If you have a story, we ask that you consider sending it to us for publishing in *The Iowan History Letter*, and which is archived quarterly at the Library of Congress.

- Thanks... **Tom Helvig**

THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

Looking Back at Reunion 2012 By Jerry Gneckow, President

Background

The 2012 reunion of the Veterans Association of the USS Iowa was held July 2-6, 2012 at San Pedro, California in conjunction with the official dedication of Battleship Iowa as a museum & memorial.

At a 2011 meeting of the crew a decision was made to schedule our 2012 reunion at the location where Battleship Iowa would enter museum status. This decision was made because we were relatively certain that the ship was about to be donated to a non-profit organization for use as a museum/memorial, and we all wanted to be there when the ship was dedicated. Our decision was complicated by the fact that it was still unclear where the final location of the ship would be. Two organizations were still in competition for the ship, and each planned to berth the ship at a different location. One group wanted to place the ship in Vallejo, CA and one group favored Los Angeles Harbor. In October 2011 the Navy finally made its decision to donate the ship to Pacific Battleship Center. Pacific Battleship Center (PBC) in turn announced that the ship would enter museum status July 4, 2012, and be permanently berthed at pier 87 in San Pedro, California.

In October 2011 the Veterans Association began its search for a suitable reunion site in the Los Angeles area and as close as possible to the planned ship berth. It was very obvious to the planners that this reunion would be well attended. We were expecting large numbers of crew members who do not normally attend the reunions, as well as many family members who would be eager to see where their Iowa veteran had lived, worked and slept. Estimates of attendance ranged from 300-500, so our initial search included hotels that could accommodate those numbers. The nearest hotels with facilities that could support a group of our size were in Long Beach, which is across Los Angeles Harbor approximately 10 miles away.

After our initial search, it came to our attention that the people of San Pedro were eager for us to hold our reunion in their city, not only because the ship would be berthed there, but because they wanted our business. Although no single hotel could accommodate our group, the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) assured us that if our group was willing to utilize several hotels in the area, they would ensure that adequate transportation would be available for easy access between hotels and to the pier where Battleship Iowa would be berthed. Hotels in San Pedro promised an affordable room rate and adequate facilities for our meetings and banquet. Our decision to hold the reunion in San Pedro turned out to be a good one. The people were excited to have our business and enthusiastic about showing us their town.

While we were completing our plans for the reunion, Pacific Battleship Center was hard at work moving the ship from its moth-ball storage anchorage in Suisun Bay, California to a pier at Richmond, CA where extensive restoration work was completed. Some of the work included a complete exterior paint job, removal of much of the deteriorated decking, installation of Harpoon and Tomahawk missile launchers, Close-in Weapons Systems (CIWS), chaff rocket launchers, radars, and emplacement of the forward mast. In June 2012 the ship was towed to a temporary location in the Los Angeles area where the under water portions of the ship were cleaned to remove any foreign materials prior to its harbor entrance. In early June the ship was moved to its final location at pier 87, San Pedro.

The Reunion

Shortly after our announcement that the 2012 reunion would be held at the Doubletree Hotel in San Pedro, the hotel was swamped with reservation requests. The hotel was filled in a matter of days and it became necessary to select an overflow accommodation. A second hotel, The San Pedro Inn and Suites was also filled long before the reunion began, requiring us to select a third site, The Crowne Plaza, to accommodate our members and their families.

**Crowne Plaza Hotel photo through USS Iowa
bridge periscope - courtesy Bill Humienny**



THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

Because there were so many who pre-registered for the reunion it became necessary to enlist the assistance of the Convention and Visitors Bureau to help greet and register arrivals. More than 75 San Pedro residents volunteered to help with registration, traffic control, transportation arrangements, and general assistance. Final reunion count: Veterans - 275; total registered - 755.

As is always the case, the favorite gathering place for attendees was the hospitality room where free drinks and snacks were available. The hospitality room was jammed during most of the day with men finding old shipmates, meeting new ones, and sharing their experiences from days of old. Men from the 40s, 50s, and 80s greeted one another and confirmed once again that all sailors are alike. All were excited and looking forward with great anticipation to the opportunity to board our ship at pier 87.



**Photo courtesy of
Bill Humienny**

Visiting Day

The officials of Battleship Iowa graciously set aside one day prior to the commissioning for Iowa Veterans and their families to visit the ship. We were allowed to go just about anywhere on the ship without escort. There were PBC employees and volunteers scattered throughout the ship to direct, assist, and protect those of us who were visiting. A few areas were not yet open, due to safety considerations, but for all practical purposes the whole ship was available for veterans and families to explore. And explore they did. People could be seen all the way from the 011 level, many stories above the main deck, down to the engine rooms and fire rooms. Many stopped by the huge ships store where thousands of various kinds of Battleship Iowa souvenirs are available for purchase. Others visited the museum area where the history of USS Iowa can be seen along with other nautical information. Everyone came to the crews' mess, to see where they had eaten so many delicious Navy meals. Some just strolled along the main deck and looked in awe at the overwhelming size and power of this great ship. By the time visiting hours were over, the crew and families were exhausted. Many commented, "we got lost several times", "the ship is much bigger than I remembered", or "the ladders seem much steeper and more narrow now", but everyone agreed "she sure is beautiful".

Although many crew members and their families took advantage of the tours that were offered during the reunion week, we all knew that the major event of the week would be the ship dedication. Having been told in advance that Iowa veterans would be asked to "man the rail" during the ceremony, crewmen planned to sit together for easy access to the gangway. Wheel chair and scooter-bound veterans were to be located near the front where they could then be quickly moved to an area near the ship. Families were to be seated near the veterans section and all came heavily armed with cameras.

The "Commissioning" of Battleship Iowa as a Museum/Memorial

On the morning of July 4, 2012 all of us made our way to pier 87, took our respective seats and prepared for the "commissioning" of Battleship Iowa as an interactive educational museum and memorial.

Battleship Iowa, decked out in red, white, and blue bunting from stem to stern was beautiful. Her 16 inch guns trained centerline, she looked ready for sea. Several thousand guests were already in their seats, eager to get started.

THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012



Dignitaries were filing on board to take their positions on the 01 level, starboard side, and just aft of turret two. Those in attendance included **Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa** (Photo of Mayor Villaraigosa courtesy of Bobbi Sutton), **Iowa Governor Terry Branstad**, **Iowa Senator Tom Harkin**, **Congresswoman Janice Hahn**, and a multitude of Generals, Admirals, and other high-ranking officials. Of course, the most important group of attendees were our USS Iowa Veterans, waiting in the audience for their long-awaited moment to come aboard.

The ceremony began with all present joining together for the Pledge of Allegiance led by the granddaughter of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Mayor Villaraigosa, acting as master of ceremonies, then introduced those on the podium, and spoke about the importance of preserving Battleship Iowa as a museum and what her presence would mean to San Pedro and the Los Angeles area. Congresswoman Hahn and Senator Harkin spoke of the distinguished wartime and peacetime record of Battleship Iowa and

how important it is for our young people to understand the importance of sea power to our country. Governor Branstad then reminded everyone of his long association with Battleship Iowa, the love that people of Iowa have for this ship and the support they have given to help save her for future generations. He then read a proclamation from the State of Iowa pledging continued support and congratulating Pacific Battleship Center for their outstanding work in bringing Battleship Iowa to museum status. **Retired Rear Admiral Jerry Gneckow** (Photo courtesy of Bobbi Sutton), made brief remarks about the sacrifices made by the crew of USS Iowa and their families, reminding all of the importance of remembering our veterans and our service men and women of today. He then read the U.S. Navy Certificate of Transfer which officially gave title of Battleship Iowa to the Pacific Battleship Center.



The President and CEO, Mr. Robert Kent, accepted transfer of Battleship Iowa to his organization and pledged to keep her fit and provide for her use as an educational museum and memorial. He then ordered the men of Iowa to *“man the ship”*, at which time all former crewmembers in attendance proudly marched up the gangways, fore and aft, while *“Anchors Aweigh”* played over the loud speakers. They took positions along the rail of the main deck, while Sea Cadets from the local area took positions above the main deck. (Photo below courtesy of Bobbi Sutton). Once all hands were in position, the National Anthem was sung by a local singing group dressed like the Andrews Sisters of World War II fame. (Photo courtesy of Bobbi Sutton).

During the National Anthem the ship “came to life” with gun mounts training round, radars rotating, alarms and bells ringing, ship’s whistle sounding, and spectators cheering! I was never more proud of my ship and her men! As the ceremony came to a close the words of the past echoed in my mind: “We are the men of

Iowa, securing a place in history for future generations. We are the life, the spirit, and the soul of Iowa. We give of ourselves to the goals we all share, ready to make the ultimate sacrifice for others. We will not, nor can we ever forget our ship. We are the crew of Iowa, permanently fused like the steel of the ship we sail. We are the Iowa, a part of every rivet, every plank and every line. We are the ship. She breathes through us and she lives as part of us. We will ever be a part of that Iowa spirit!”



THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

The Banquet

On the final day of our reunion, The Doubletree Hotel, our headquarters hotel, prepared for the largest banquet they had ever undertaken. We originally had planned for 350, but sold 535 tickets! The hotel was overwhelmed, and we had to utilize two floors of the banquet area in order to seat all of our guests. Fortunately we were able to contract for large screen television monitors to be placed around the banquet halls so that all in attendance could see and hear the proceedings. The hotel staff did a fantastic job, serving quickly, courteously, and professionally. The food was terrific!

We started our evening's events with the traditional "moment of silence" for the Iowa-47, and for our POW/MIA service personnel. Then, in a tearful moment, the names of our members who had passed on since the last reunion were read, and the bell was tolled in their honor and memory, followed by Taps. This solemn ceremony, was done with absolute reverence.

Our guests for the evening included many officials from Pacific Battleship Center, several local dignitaries, and members of the Convention and Visitors Bureau of San Pedro. Guest speaker for the evening was **Congressman Howard "Buck" McKeon, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee**, a strong supporter of veterans and their families.

Representative McKeon spoke of the many accomplishments of Battleship Iowa, her importance as a maritime museum, and about the sacrifices of our service personnel, past and present. He also warned that our Navy will shrink to the about the size of the World War I Navy if the plans of the present administration are enacted in 2013.

One of the highlights of the evening occurred when the Association President, Jerry Gneckow, designated Mr. Robert Kent of the Pacific Battleship Center an "honorary crew member of USS Iowa" and a "lifetime member of the Veterans Association of the USS Iowa".

The most popular introduction of the evening was the recognition of World War Two veterans. They received a resounding and steady standing ovation that brought tears to the eyes of many in attendance. That was followed by an introduction of the Korea War veterans, and finally the Cold War and Gulf War veterans.

We finished the evening with an introduction of the new officers of the Association, a cake cutting ceremony, picture taking, and finally, a dance that lasted well into the early hours. Everyone had a great time and we all vowed to be at the next reunion.

Cake-cutting Ceremony

Although it is traditional for the oldest and youngest members of the crew to jointly cut the cake, this year we made an exception and invited all members over 90 years of age to assist with the cutting of the cake.

It was amazing how many members over the age of 90 stepped forward to help.



THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

LOOKING BACK... After so many years... by Grier Sims

As we first stepped aboard our ship again I think most would agree that the mind took each of us in different directions... I remember enlisting in the Navy in Miami, Florida in Aug. of 1942 - 70 years ago! My older brother had been drafted in the Army in January of 1941, and he said, "*Grier, join the Navy!*" and so I did... and it was a good fit. My folks had moved to South Florida when I was a baby. We lived just below Miami, and about a mile from Biscayne Bay so I grew up around the water. At the time, Dad had a 16 foot flat bottom boat and a 10 HP Johnson outboard motor. My best buddy, **Jerry Lane** and I would take that boat almost out to the Gulf Stream and fish. Needless to say, my folks never knew about that!

A note about my buddy Jerry. He was about four years older than me, and I thought of him as my big brother. He enlisted in the Navy in 1940 and was lost in Manila Bay early in 1942. His body was never found. I still miss him to this day, and he was another reason that I joined the Navy.



I took the oath, got on a train at Flagler Street in downtown Miami and headed for Norfolk Virginia! What a shock that was! Remember, I was a depression era kid and had never been anywhere. Georgia and Florida was about the extent of my travels! Miami was just a sleepy little southern town and I had never even seen snow!

But then, it was off to Boot Camp in Norfolk, Virginia! We had World War ONE barracks! We wore leggings for the first six weeks and we couldn't go into town. Some of the guys took their pants out of their leggings and sneaked into town anyway! It wasn't worth the risk, especially for Norfolk For God's sake! Marching, marching, marching. What are we, in the Army? I soon learned the reasons why and came to know about discipline, obeying orders, the meaning of commands etc...

When we finished boot camp, I got leave to go home and then back to s... city and electricians school. Most World War 2 sailors referred to it by that name. In the Pacific most of us thought that if we had to go stateside for repairs and leave, and it meant going to Norfolk, we had rather stay out there—what a lousy town it was, and especially to sailors. If you have not heard about it, many lawns in Norfolk had signs that said "*Sailors and Dogs keep off the grass!*" Yep, I saw them...

After graduation another brief leave and then orders to report to the USS IOWA in Brooklyn, New York . Brooklyn...and we stayed in a barracks type building. It had several floors. I don't know if it was a Navy facility or not. We would be picked up every morning and transported to the ship in an open flat-bed truck with railings. I had never been so cold in my life than when we were on the back of those trucks!!

When we were at G. Q. my battle station was the I.C. Repair Shop on the 2nd Superstructure just aft of the forward 5 in. gun mount, starboard side. So that was where I was during typhoon Cobra on 18 December of 1944. I had seen seas, like in the North Atlantic, but never, ever, seas like Cobra wrought.

I stood in the passageway leading to the 40mm. gun tubs, which of course were not manned. The sea was our enemy at this time and not the Japanese. I watched the waves tower over us like a mountain when we went into a trough, and a moment or so later, it looked like we were on a mountain looking down, way down, at the seas. Remembering back, I was not as much scared, but more in awe of the power of the sea. I don't know how long I was on station but it was many, many long hours. We were probably not at G.Q. but the ship was dogged down at condition Zebra, so you couldn't go anywhere! I do recall the time in Leyte Gulf and the infamous chase of a Japanese decoy force when the mess hall was closed and we would go down to get a couple of sandwiches and then go back to our stations.

THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

In early July of 1945 word got out that we were going to bombard an Iron Works in Northern Japan. Frankly that scared the hell out of me. As I've mentioned, my battle station was in the I.C. Repair shop on the 2nd Deck and I figured we were going to be ten miles or so from the Japanese mainland, no Carriers would be there, and so WE would be the major target! Turns out the action was at night and no one came out to greet us. Still, it was the only time I was somewhat nervous. Then a strange thing happened. We pulled out probably 200 miles off the coast of Japan and all of a sudden it was, holiday routine. We soon learned why. The atomic bomb had been dropped! We came into Sagami Wan 27 in August 1945 and led the Missouri into Tokyo Bay two days later, on 29 August. I got ashore once. To Yokohama. It looked like it had also been hit with a atomic bomb! General Curtis LeMay's 20Th Air Force had just about leveled that place.

We left for the USA on 20 September, destination, Seattle, Washington. Picked up some Canadian Grenadiers who had been prisoners of war for most of the war and there were almost walking skeletons. Our galley was open 24 hours a day for those guys! Also some SeaBees from Okinawa.

Tom, you asked me to try to remember, and to talk about, some of my World War 2 shipmates that I have known...well, there was **Charles Jackson Snow**, from Sweetwater Tennessee, and a rebel if there ever was one! But in a good way. Charlie was a sailor's sailor, cocky, an old salt, probably in his late twenty's when everybody else was barely twenty, he had been on the Doolittle raid in USS Northhampton in April of '42 and he was aboard when she was sunk in one of the darker days of World War 2.

I loved **Charlie Walkenhorst**, a real gentleman, always quiet, and for a long time I thought his name was "*Walkinghorse*". And then there was **Jimmy Silvas**, another really nice guy with a ready smile. And "**Mack**" **McKeever** from Colorado. Mack could tell some really tall stories. He was fun, and a real character. **Hozak! Phil Hozak**, he had permission to have a camera on board, which was strictly forbidden in World War 2. He had been a professional photographer, had a lot of pictures of Hollywood stars and he slept with his eyes open! We used to get him up with..."*hey Hozak, close your eyes and get up!*"

Three other guys who came on shortly after we got to the Pacific. **John Bleecker** the *Greek from Battlecreek*, **Gene Stock** from North Dakota, and **Ira Stone** who had relatives in North Carolina making him another Southerner. Most of the crew seemed to be from the Mid-West or from the Northeast. Bleecker, a little short guy and a real charmer. We really had some good times! It was John that introduced me to Martini's!

Gene Stock was a tall good looking guy, a cowboy type who really knew all about Indians, a real scholar. He later moved to Las Cruces New Mexico with his wife Coco, a real hoot! I need to mention **Matthew Fairweather**, a typical New England Irish kind of guy. Hale, hardy, ruddy, with a great laugh and grin. Matt used to greet me with a... "*Grier LIVINGSTON!*" Livingston, my middle name, out of Northern Ireland. Matt was also the second President of our Association.

Then there was **Chief Booth** from Tallahassee Florida. Booth was already a Chief P.O. when I got to know him so he must have enlisted in the early 30's. He was a kind man, a genuine person with a nice smile. **Andy Puleo** from Brooklyn N.Y., another nice looking guy, and a lot of fun. Andy seemed to always be in good spirits. He and Bleecker made a pair, both about 5 foot 5, the Greek and the Italian. And then **Ira Stone** from Bakersfield, California... Ira and I got back in touch with each other when he found out that there was an Iowa Association. That was in Phoenix in 1993. I had been attending reunion's since I first found out they were having them in Biloxi, MS in 1984 and when our ship was re-commissioned. I have been to almost all of the reunions since, and as has Ira starting in '93. Ira and his wife, Connie, are real good folks and Margie, my wife, and I have enjoyed being with them at our reunions. There are many more shipmates but these are the ones I recall the most. Ira and Andy, who I haven't seen since Norfolk in 2003, and me, are the only ones that are left, the rest, they are all gone...

Grier Sims
Covington, Georgia

THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

LOOKING BACK... USS New Jersey (2001) and USS Iowa (2012)

Eleven years ago, on September 23, 2001, ex-USS New Jersey was towed up the Delaware River and eased into her new pier in Camden, New Jersey. This pier is about 2 miles from where she was built at the now long gone Philadelphia Navy Yard, and she was then commissioned on May 23, 1943. The long-awaited tow was only going to take the ship about 2 miles or so up river, and not the four hundred miles that ex-USS Iowa was towed by Seagoing Tug "Warrior" from Richmond, California South to San Pedro, California. The "coming home" excitement though, was very high for both ships. Battleship New Jersey in September of 2001, and Iowa in May of 2012.



A sad and lingering footnote about ex-USS New Jersey's tow in 2001, is that there were no crowds of thousands lining the Delaware shoreline as the ship made her short journey up-river. Not that the crowds in Philadelphia and South Jersey weren't ready to see it, but the ship's move was made in secret, in the middle of the night, and none of the ship's hundreds of volunteers were told about it...

The Coast Guard ran the entire secret towing operation and permitted only a very few civilian line handlers aboard the ship. To say that the volunteers were disappointed does not describe both the tragedy of 9/11 and the injustice felt by so many over the secret move of the Battleship New Jersey.

World War II Veteran and long-time restoration volunteer George Hunt, summed up his own personal feelings and what was felt by most of the volunteers in the 3Q-2010 issue of *The Jerseyman*...:

"I began volunteering aboard in January of 2001. Yeah, as I remember it, I think we all remember how the pain of the tragedy of September 11, 2001 also screwed hundreds of volunteers out of riding "our" ship (in the middle of the night) just 2 miles north, as the Coast Guard monitored the tow from Broadway Terminal to her new permanent pier on September 23, 2001.

Tell me if I am wrong on the dates, but I think we all planned to be aboard for the tow early Sunday, September 16th, and we were all looking forward to it. But the horrific World Trade Center sneak attack happened on Tuesday, September 11, 2001!

We were then told on September 12 that the tow was going to be postponed for about 2 months because the Coast Guard was going to be busy chasing terrorists, etc... So we were very surprised, and ticked off as hell, when we heard that on Sunday, September 23rd the ship had already been stealthily towed to her permanent pier under the cover of darkness early that morning! Then, when we heard they had paid civilian line handlers for this tow, we were really ticked off again! During World War II we were handling mooring lines before these paid line handlers were even born!



THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012



Less than a month later, on Sunday, October 14, 2001, the ship's grand opening ceremonies were held on the Focs'le, just forward of turret number one. Volunteers who had taken training as tour guide Docents then took the first visitors on tours of the most decorated battleship in the history of the United States... USS New Jersey (BB-62). I'm glad that I could be a part of it.

George Hunt
Battleship New Jersey Volunteer
USS Chara (AKA-58) - World War II
Maple Shade, New Jersey

LOOKING BACK... Battleship Iowa to San Pedro, CA, Saturday, May 26, 2012



Excitement for Iowa's tow to San Pedro began with watching website (www.pacificbattleship.com) as streaming images of the ship and tugs began to push Iowa away from the pier... however the live streaming images had transmission problems, and so we relied heavily on the many incoming emails, all with their attached high resolution photos from at least 30 to 35 observers at the shorelines and also from stopped cars on the Golden Gate Bridge. These digital images were not more than an hour old and so we then turned them around and sent them back out to several thousand internet readers and viewers that were included with our USS Iowa and USS New Jersey database listings. It was a busy Saturday...



In addition to the towing of Battleship Iowa, we had also received images of the USS Potomac, of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Presidential Yacht. USS Potomac was used to ferry President Roosevelt out to USS Iowa when she carried his party to the Tehran Conference held in late 1943.

The USS Potomac photos were provided to us about a week earlier, and before Iowa's tow to San Pedro. Many of the received photos were included in The Iowan History Letter for 3Q-2012 and are archived at: www.uss Iowa.org. - TH

THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012



Serving aboard the IOWA—World War II James H. Conroy Jr., Seaman 1st Class 1942-1946 As told to his daughter, Margaret Conroy

In 1942 three friends decided they had to join the Navy in order to defend their country, and it really was "*had to*" by choice... nobody made them do it. A young James Conroy, nicknamed "*Slim Jim*" was then almost turned away for not making the required weight! The recruiter advised him to go eat a big dinner and come back, and so that is just what he did. Joining the Navy together was a nice idea for these 3 friends, but they were soon sent off in three different directions. My father, Seaman 1st Class Jim Conroy was sent to boot camp in New York State, a facility so new that they were still adding the finishing touches. This is his story...

"The first time I saw the IOWA, she was in Brooklyn in dry dock, and as I walked alongside her I could not have been prouder. I couldn't believe that soon I would be "up there" and even though I had no qualifications to even be down here, I went below to see the bottom of the ship and to make sure there weren't any holes. During the work that was going on it was required for a Sailor to stand by with fire extinguishers to over-see the welding and the workers often tried to barter with us for the canned hams we had as rations. I lived about an hour away and I reported first thing every morning and we would take her out to sea and test the engines, but no guns to be tested yet... we were too new, and I think they couldn't trust us!

One day, I don't know what I was thinking, but I volunteered to help paint the hull... well they lowered me down in a bosn's chair and for one half hour I hung on to those lines for dear life. I never once moved my hands, and I was scared to death! Finally someone yelled "*get him out of there!*", and so my new job in the 6th Division was to sweep or swab the portside of the main deck. It was not a bad job, especially if there was a good breeze! Though sometimes in the morning the deck would have some unfortunate flying fish on it.

My battle station was 1/2 up the aft chimney, outside over the 40 mm gun, behind the aft stack and where I was assigned as a sight setter. I remember once they fired off the 16" guns while we were still on deck, and it felt as if the whole ship shook! Normally we would all be below deck with our fingers in our ears when they fired, but not this time! Later on a fella I knew from school got me a job in the radar room, inside the tower and on the bridge with the Captain. Anything he wanted to say to the crew he relayed through me as the Captain's Talker. I couldn't see outside but I sure knew what was going on.

I never had any complaints, though it was a little warm being in the Pacific in the top bunk, but the food was good and there was some entertainment. We watched movies on the fantail and played cards for cigarettes. We never had much money on us, and to tell the truth, we had no use for it. Sometimes we would go swimming when we got into port but you had to watch out for the jellyfish. And while we in port if the fog rolled in we had to "man the bell," and ring out our ship's number so other ships would know that we were there.

I also remember the day we went through the Panama Canal. We all knew it would be a tight fit for BB-61, and she totally filled the lock. I was on deck when I heard a man up in the superstructure yell "*move that sailor away!*" I moved, but not before the ship actually scraped the sides and pieces of the cement from the lock came flying onto the deck and I grabbed one! I kept it for years but finally threw it away thinking no one would ever believe that story.

THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

As we neared the equator crossing there was great preparation for the shellback ceremony... a large wooden frame was covered with canvas to create a big pool. This was constructed for the dunking we were going to get in order to move up from our Pollywog status to Shellback. As I recall, the ceremony also involved kissing the Chief Petty Officer's big greasy belly! Normally there would be crazy designs shaved into your hair too, but since we were soon going to have the President aboard they wouldn't allow it... the Captain wanted to be sure we all looked like proper Sailors.

Having President Roosevelt on board was the highlight of my NAVY career. He had a special state-room complete with a MARINE at the door in the officers' quarters, and totally separate from the ship's crew. Even though the area was restricted I ventured out and stole a glance of him sitting in his wheel chair on deck, having a smoke.

I can still remember hearing the announcement that the war was over, everyone was so happy, but we were in the middle of the Pacific and weeks away from going home. On the day of surrender at Tokyo Bay it was filled with ships and it seemed that every flyer involved had a chance to fly their planes over, and it went on all day long. It was wonderful! The Iowa was so close to the Missouri that we could clearly see the Japanese in their top hats, even without using the glasses".

After the war was over, and once home in New Jersey, my father said that he then got in touch with his girl Nancy Berghorn. He said that at the time, she had other boyfriends and he had to see if he was still in her favor. And so, it was my dad against the infamous (as we knew him) "Louie the plumber," an Air Force man. Well Louie lost out; and Jim and Nancy were married in 1946. My father said that he bought Mom her wedding rings with his mustering out pay.

They had sixty years together, six children, eight grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. My mother died (peacefully) in 2006. My father, who is now 88, resides near my sister Patti in the beautiful Residences of Park Place, in Seneca, South Carolina.

Talking with him about the war for The Iowan History Letter, has given me a whole a new set of memories. I have images of a young sailor first peering under the massive IOWA in dry dock, a white knuckled young man clinging to the life lines of the Bosn's chair, and a tired Sailor drifting off to sleep to the sounds of "six bells", then "one" as heavy fog covered the majestic silhouette of the "*Big Stick*".



James H. Conroy, Jr.,
as told to his daughter
Margaret Conroy
Oxford, New Jersey

THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

Good Evening Admiral Gneckow;

I'm an old Air Force Vietnam vet who now spends a lot of his free time working security aboard the Iowa – and proud to say that I am just one of over 1,700 volunteers.

I find that as I walk the decks and talk to many of the thousands of tourists a day that come aboard at her new home in San Pedro, there is a level of respect that I'm not used to seeing at any other public area, especially here, in Southern California. Folks are generally quiet and contemplative. They read the plaques we have posted about the ship, take their caps off as they enter the Captain's in-port cabin, stare ahead quietly as they stand on the bridge, usually with one hand on the elevated blue chair on the starboard side. They all run their fingers on the thread outlining the Captain's eagle.

We who have not served aboard a battleship are at a loss for words as we try to imagine her in service and think about the times that she was placed in harm's way.

Last weekend I went into the conning tower on the O-5 level and peered through the portside periscope. As I looked at sailboats floating quietly in the harbor, I tried to imagine what you saw when you, as the Captain, may have looked through those very same lenses so many years ago. I looked down at turret 2 and placed myself in the same position as the officer filming the explosion on 19 April 1989 – I tried to see what he saw and to feel what he felt. There is a plaque on the starboard side of turret 2 that lists the name of every man that died on that day. I sometimes watch the tourists reach up to touch a name, then they quickly pull their hand away as if they're afraid they'll mar the surface or somehow show disrespect. Those of us that were not in the Navy don't understand the rank or rating, but the names stand out clearly.

At the end of the day when the last of the tourists are gone and the sun is setting, I walk along the tour route dogging the hatches down for the night.

There are sounds that seem to come from nowhere. I can almost feel the hands of thousands before me that sealed these same hatches years ago. All the missiles and mortars and rockets I dodged in Vietnam seemed almost like a walk in the park compared to life aboard a battleship in time of war.

I hope you can return to the Iowa as she opens more and more of her secrets to so many of those who have never felt the pain of war. Maybe it will extend the peace a little longer just knowing how bad war can be.

I'll try doing my small part to keep her in the same shape in which she was entrusted to our care.

I had the opportunity to meet many of the Iowa's veterans on the July 4th ceremony.

As they boarded the ship to man the rails I saluted each of them – regardless of rank. It was an honor to shake their hands. To them, and to you, I offer my salute and say *thank you* for your service!



Photo attached – I am Doug Iversen on the left. The other security guy is Howard Sharpe, and the guy in blue coveralls is Bill Maggio. Bill does maintenance for generators that provide juice for the Iowa - until we get the shore-power going.

**Doug Iversen, SSgt, USAF
Cucamonga, California**

THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

LOOKING BACK... Remembering Tokyo Bay - January of 1946

USS Iowa had relieved the New Jersey in Tokyo bay as the flagship of the 5th fleet in late January of 1946. A few days later, USS New Jersey left for home and she created a picture in my mind that is still vivid in my mind—even today.

It was snowing hard. So hard that you could hardly see the shoreline. We were moored in the stream pretty close to shore, and at about 600 yards or so, the New Jersey came up fast and was picking up speed on our starboard side - between us and the shore. It was further away than you could throw a rock, at a safe distance, probably not close enough to recognize faces but just about. And after all of these years, I can still see that picture in my mind... I was standing toward the rear of turret one and the Jersey came by on our starboard side, at high speed and heading to sea. What a picture-- in that heavy snow storm! I told you that this was not much of a story Tom because you would have had to be there to appreciate it. If I had just had a camera and a picture of it, I think I could have sold thousands of pictures. Being from California, I still think of it every time I see winter snow reports on the TV news. That incredible picture is etched—permanently, and I'll never forget it.

Now, about the New Jersey---this isn't about the ship but about some of the men. When we relieved her, or maybe she relieved us, there was a period of six or seven days when we were both in Tokyo bay. It was the middle of winter and it got dark early, by about 1730 or 1800, and we had groups of Japanese soldiers, still in uniform all over the place. We didn't talk to them, and they didn't talk to us, so mostly we got along.

We went ashore in Yokosuka on this night, and there were more sailors in the area than usual so they had to be New Jersey sailors. We never asked what ship you are from because it didn't matter. we were all American sailors. We couldn't eat or drink anything ashore because of their farming and fertilizing methods so there was no place to go except to just keep walking around. As it got dark, there were about 20-30 each of New Jersey and Iowa sailors in an area that had a few stores or shops with their lights on so that was like a gathering place. Unfortunately it was also that way for the Japanese soldiers and there were about an equal number of them.

Something happened, a little distance away from us, pushing and shoving with the Japanese and this quickly spread to us. Just when things started looking really bad, two American half tracks pulled up about 70--100 feet away. One had a spotlight, an interpreter, and the other had American soldiers with a .50 cal. machine gun. The order came to "raise your hands and don't move!" So there we were, hands raised, and all mixed in with a bunch of Japanese soldiers looking down the barrel of a .50 Cal. I think some of the New Jersey sailors were just about 7 or 8 weeks out of boot camp so this must have been a real awakening for those guys. They kept us standing like this for what seemed like forever, and then said "American service men approach the half tracks!" With our hands up still up in the air, we went up to them and when we got there they said... "ok guys, get lost!"

Before the war, I lived on the edges of the sand dunes in San Francisco and we had ten blocks of sand between our house and the beach. I was just 14 years old, and two days after Pearl Harbor, not knowing where the Jap fleet was, they sent companies of our soldiers to various positions in the sand dunes—in case the Japs came in. So there I was, laying in the sand with our soldiers waiting for them, and that started the war for me. Now, here I am at 18 years old, on a little side street in Yokosuka, Japan mixed up with a bunch of Japanese soldiers, with our hands in the air, looking down the barrel of a 50 cal. machine gun. For me, this ends the war... who would ever believe this?

George Hillenbrand
Petaluma, California



THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

LOOKING BACK... How Sweet It Is (WAS)!

I reported aboard the Iowa just after re-commissioning in '51. I was assigned to the "D" (dog) Division which maintained the ship's sides, the Sail and Paint lockers. My job was to issue paint and brushes, and had never filled so many buckets with red lead or yellow primer, and then white or battleship gray paint. On the way to Hawaii while I was painting the Admiral quarters, I was the only sailor to have a radio/record player for my own use, except that only one record was available, "Bye-Bye Black Bird" and no radio stations in the middle of nowhere. When we were requested to spray paint a compartment, it was understood that we would paint everything that was not covered and we did not do any clean up. Needless to say, we left many-a-big mess.

I was soon transferred to the "SS" (Ship's Service) division. If you needed a haircut, shoes repaired, clothes tailored, buy new clothes or laundry old ones, buy toilet needs, watches, or candy and ice cream, you were served by our SS personnel. I trained in the cobbler shop, by first removing heels and soles, and advanced to sewing soles onto the shoes. The first pair I sewed, I sewed the upper part of the instep to the sole. The shoes happened to belong to an officer. I filled the holes with bees wax, and I never heard a complaint. The Cobbler shop was open half a day, so after making repairs I had the rest of the time off.

Three weeks before arriving in Long Beach. after our tour in Korea, I was also put in charge of the Soda Fountain. Being in charge made you accountable (+/-) for one tenth of one per cent of the goods you had signed for. ALL Ship Store items were inventoried once a month by the Supply Officer and his team. Before I took over, I was told by the person I was relieving that a I should pre-inventory the week before to make sure that everything would balance.

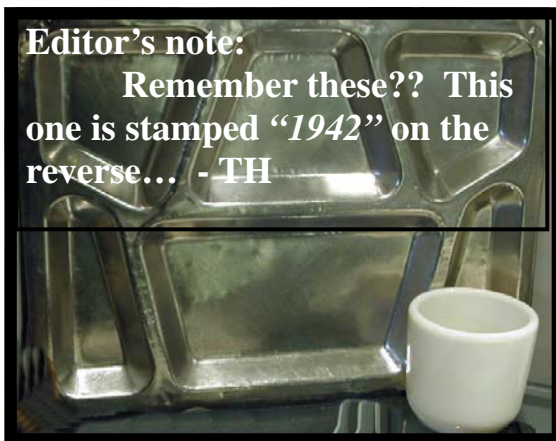
When making ice cream, the volume can vary depending on the freezing or the length of mixing time. If you were over, for the next week the cups were filled to the brim or more ice cream was serviced to the general mess. The guy I relieved did not tell me to do this a week before inventory. All that said... The first pre-inventory I held was the night before. And I was way, way, waaaay over. How do you get rid of five two gallon cans of mix that is as thick as honey? GI can? No, someone would find it and bring it back or report it. Could not carry it off, the officer of the deck would want to know what I was doing at midnight. Ha Ha! Dump it down the drain with hot water. Lucky for me the outlet from drain was on the other side of ship that the Officer Deck was on because the water was white for fifty yards in all directions of the ship. After that, and if you ever wondered, the crew always got a bigger serving of ice cream at the end of the month. Things get sweeter!

The last time the ship was in Long Beach dry dock. I was now in charge of the twelve store rooms that held all Accountable stores. These store rooms were located all over the ship. Two were under the fan-tail, one held heels for the cobbler shop. The other store room held all the CANDY that was sold in the two stores and soda fountain. Next to these compartments were the aviation fuel storage tanks. The supply de-

partment was not told that the tanks were going to be steam cleaned and pressure tested. I don't know how hot or how long this went on but when I opened the hatch to our compartment, there was six inches of chocolate all over the deck! Hershey bars, World's Finest chocolate, Hi Ho crackers, Oreo cookies and all other candies had melted! All was a complete loss. The working party had their share of goodies while cleaning up this mess.

HOW SWEET IT WAS!

Robert (Bob) King
Ship Serviceman 2nd Class, 1951-1953
Alamagordo, New Mexico



Editor's note:

Remember these?? This one is stamped "1942" on the reverse... -TH

THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

LOOKING BACK... USS IOWA (BB-61) Through the eyes of Bill Coffman

In the seventh month after commissioning, morale was still running high as we pulled out for Korea. We stopped by Pearl Harbor to pick up some last minute personnel, and enough pineapple for a week. A couple of days out we started hitting ground swells from Japan. Twenty to twenty five foot waves were breaking over the main deck forward for five days. What a sight to see from the 010 level. The navigator posted a map showing our progress each day as we headed for Japan.

One morning we could see Mt Fuji, and she had a light haze covering her face. As we entered Tokyo Harbor, tugs parted the submarine nets and the harbor master and pilot came aboard to take us to our mooring out side of Yokosuka. When the Wisconsin came in from Korea, the two wagons came side by side. After passing the torch to the Iowa, they were on their way back home.

After meeting up with Task force 77 in early April, we had our first taste of combat destroying railroads, bridges, tunnels and road ways. Coming out that night we could hear some of the crew singing: "We've been working on the rail road, all the live long day". After a day of bombardment, the North Koreans would come out at night trying to repair the damage, that's where harassing gun fire came into play, with a round fired every 10 to 15 minutes, all night long.

Each patrol was a new adventure. We picked up a Hellcat off a barge in Wonson Harbor and hauled it out to a seaplane tender. Then we picked up a North Korean prisoner and dropped him at a prisoner of war camp in Pusan, South Korea. While there **President Sigmund Rhee**, his wife and staff came aboard for a visit.

After leaving Pusan going back up the coast, a North Korean shore battery fired three rounds at us. The first hitting 200 yards off the fantail on the port side. Then 100 yards, and over the ship. During this time Captain Smedberg called "full ahead", turning back around, firing a 16 and taking out the shore battery. When a 16" is fired, if you are fast enough, you can sometimes follow the projectile just before it hits the target.

After our third trip to the war zone we started going into Sasebo on the southwest coast of Japan, for supplies and liberty. Came time for the change of command... it was **Captain Smedberg III** who brought the Iowa out of moth balls and back to her glory, as: "The right man, for the right Job". **Captain Joshua W. Copper** took command and the fighting spirit of Grand Lady Iowa was as strong as ever.

Soon a typhoon was coming upon us, and the Admiral sent our destroyer escort out of harms way. Being part of the R division our sleeping compartment was on the second deck. At about midnight, a port hole gave away and water came crashing down on the guys sleeping close to the hatch. The water was at least a foot deep carrying shoes, and clothing back and forth with each roll of the ship.

During this time, two men from the R division were up top side checking things out when a big wave came crashing over, knocked them down and washed them aft. At the same time a life net had lifted out of its rack and the two men got tangled up in it, what a close call! Their lives were spared.

After leaving the far east, I was transferred to the engineering office. Upon arrival in Norfolk I went to work for **Lt. Adams, the dry dock officer**. My job was keeping track of all parts that left the ship for repair, and we watched the Iowa enter into the dry dock. When the water was pumped out she settled perfectly. Lt Adam and I, along with the dry dock superintendent and his foremen went down under the Iowa to check out our main intake valves, screws and where the shaft came through the ship bottom. I felt like an ant under a shoe. Now, I can truly say I've been from the top to the bottom of USS Iowa. I thank the Good Lord for letting me be part of a great ship and crew. I left the Iowa in the summer of 1953 never to see her again until 1983.

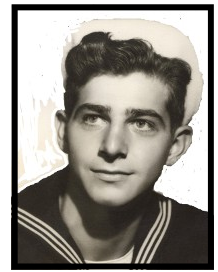
Living in Baytown, Texas in the early 1980s, my neighbor **Wade Griffin** (rest his soul) and I were talking about our time in Korea. I told him I was aboard the Battleship Iowa, and he said: *your ship saved our fanny one night on patrol. The enemy had us pinned down and started moving in. I called for fire support and pulled it in as close as I could. What a night! The next day I called the spotter to thank the artillery unit. He was told you got fire support from the Battleship Iowa that was then sitting 10 miles off the coast!*

Soon after, we went to visit our daughter Sandy and her husband Mike in Pascagoula Mississippi. He had gotten permission to bring me on board the mothballed Iowa still in some of her cocoons. Mike was part of the first crew aboard, and I was able to take Mike for a grand tour of the Iowa. Being a pipefitter back in Korea, I came to know the Iowa in and out like the back of my hand. I knew where I was about 90% of the time. You know, the Iowa didn't seem as big as she did when I was a 17yr old kid. She is a memory that few of us can ever forget.

Submitted by:

Bill Coffman

Citrus Heights, California



THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

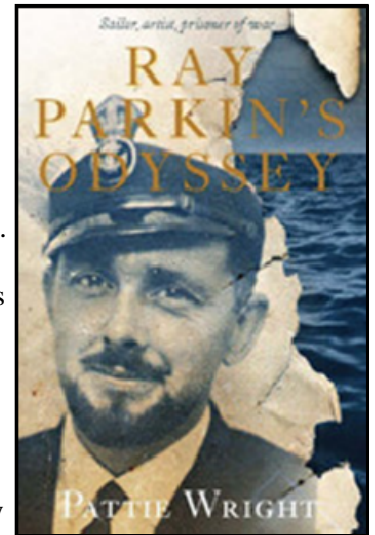
LOOKING BACK... The Jerseyman 4Q-2006 – USS Houston and HMAS Perth...

If readers can locate a copy of the 4Q-2006 issue of *The Jerseyman* (see cover below), it contains an article about **Master Chief Bill Stewart, USN/Retired**, a **USS Houston** survivor that was held as a POW by the Japanese for 42 months during WW2.



The article below, is another story about the loss of USS Houston, and HMAS Perth on March 1, 1942. **It is about an HMAS Perth survivor, Chief Petty Officer Ray Parkin, RAN.**

Recently, we were introduced to Ms. **Pattie Wright**, the Author of “*Ray Parkin’s Odyssey*”, by my navy buddy Bruce DeWald. At our request, Pattie provided us an article about her book on Ray Parker, which appears below, and will also be carried in the October 1, 2012 issue of *The Jerseyman*.



Pattie’s first book was ‘*The Men of the Line*’ (Melbourne University Press/Miegunyah Press, 2008) an oral history of the Thai Burma Railway. And after four

years work, ‘*Ray Parkin’s Odyssey*’ is now being published by Pan Macmillan, Sydney, Australia and will be available in bookstores on 18 September 2012. It can also be purchased from the author, or online by Pan Macmillan. For further information on how to get a copy of Pattie Wright’s book, and which is also available for the iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch, let me know... - - Tom Helvig

CHIEF PETTY OFFICER RAY PARKIN, AM, RAN, HMAS PERTH... ‘An author’s view’

Over the years, and since my first reading of Ray Parkin’s extraordinary wartime trilogy, ‘*Out of the Smoke*’, ‘*Into the Smother*’ and ‘*The Sword and the Blossom*’, (The Hogarth Press 1960-68) I have felt there is a ‘Secret Ray Parkin Society’ out there in the ether. Perhaps its something I want to be true. But, surely it exists? Having just written ‘*Ray Parkin’s Odyssey*’, the biography of this artist and author, this POW and sailor, and receiving enormous interest from across the globe, I feel ‘the Society’ might just be real. The continuing real life connections first forged in battle fought together against the Japanese by HMAS *Perth* and USS *Houston*, only confirm my wonder at the interest in this Royal Australian Navy Chief Petty Officer and what he wrote. And, if one is watching the clock, these connections only flourish some seventy years after the Battle of the Sunda Strait where these two ships were both lost in heroic battle against overwhelming odds.

Ray’s story is long, with rather an unexpected, literary finale. The biography recounts his eighteen years in the RAN, beginning in Australia’s young navy in 1928 and onto his time as part of the commissioning crew of the Modified *Leander* light cruiser, HMAS *Perth* – his favourite ship – and her first outing at the 1939 New York World Fair. World War 2 interrupted many a life, as it did the ship’s journey home and *Perth* found herself on Kingston Station in the oil protection business at the outbreak of war. The horror months of the Mediterranean campaign ensued, first fighting the Italians and then fending off multiples of German dive-bombing Stukas in and around Alexandria and Malta and the battles for Greece and Crete. But *Perth* was a lucky ship in those days. Through all those torrid early times at war until her end, PO Ray Parkin was *Perth*’s helmsman, and after she sank, he then became her unofficial chronicler.

THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

In the fight for Java, Ray was one of the lucky ones to make it into the water alive on the night of 1 March 1942 and even luckier to have swum onto the coral edge of Sangieng island in the Sunda Strait. From there, he and nine others rigged a derelict lifeboat to sail home to Australia. The attempt was valiant, but the inevitable turned to reality when the lifeboat 'Anzac' and her crew surrendered in Tjilatjap on the southern shore of Java only eleven days later. Three and a half years as a POW followed in Java and Thailand on the death railway in Dunlop Force.

What stands Ray Parkin out from the many thousands of British, Australian, American and Dutch POW's up on the Thai Burma Railway is that he kept a diary – each day – and he drew, sketched and watercoloured everything he could from Japanese guards to the purple 'elephant hills' around Hintok, to the Thai river barges, the mushrooms, the orchids, their rotten canvas huts and the decline of the men around him. Ray's iconic imagine, entitled '*Two Malarias and a Cholera*' is now the emblem of the Changi Museum in Singapore.



This Ray Parkin drawing is under the copyright of the Parkin family. It is presented here with thanks for the courtesy of the Parkin family...

Ray Parkin readied all of his papers, his meticulous diaries and his artwork to be considered and read, and this biographer is more than grateful. He left the world a mighty account of one man's life lived through a time of great turmoil. At times it is told with bitterness and confusion at man's weaknesses, but using his great talent as a writer with a love of words, the world, nature and the belief in the final strength of man, Ray Parkin has bequeathed an extraordinary account for all to remember not just him, but all of them: all of those men who perished in the seas and later in the mud and disease of Thailand. Ray Parkin was a self-taught artist, author and philosopher.....a perplexing and fascinating man, who, if you asked him what he was, he would call himself a sailor first and foremost.

Ray Parkin died in 2005, acclaimed not only for his art and his wartime trilogy, but also for his prize-winning masterpiece, **H. M. Bark Endeavour**, an extraordinary evocation of Captain Cook's ship and the voyage up the east coast of Australia in 1770.

Ray Parkin's Odyssey is an extensively researched biography. It is illustrated by 100 paintings, photographs and sketches, and it is the first full and comprehensive account of Ray's life and wartime experiences. This author was fortunate enough to be able to use first hand accounts from filmed interviews with Ray himself as well as personal accounts from other *Perth* and *Houston* men and the too few surviving ex-POW's of the Thai Burma and Japan. Other contributions to the biography came from access to Ray's letters, diaries and unpublished memories. I am looking up at Ray as I write this and praying that his biography is as powerful,

moving and compelling as the publishers contend, but consider it quite a considerable story of a lad from an inner city Melbourne suburb who went to sea.

My introduction to '*The Jerseyman*' came through the good work of Val Poss, recent office holder in the USS *Houston* Association, who had introduced me to Bruce DeWald and then further contact was made with Command Master Chief Tom Helvig, USN (Ret.) and to his previous Jerseyman articles on *Perth* and *Houston*. So yes, once again, I feel the 'Secret Ray Parkin Society' is out there and flourishing, helping to weld the link and camaraderie between the two ships as strong and unflinching.

Pattie Wright

Blackburn, Victoria, Australia

Editor's Note: Bill Stewart celebrated his 92 birthday this past July and we called him at home again in Kansas to relay a "*Gedday*" from Pattie Wright. Bill said that he had known two Australian POW's from HMAS *Perth*, **Petty Officer Freddie Parker**, and **Petty Officer Lasslett**. "*They were good people and we got along really well with the Australians*". Stewart spent 42 1/2 months as a POW, most of it working as an electrician in the Ohasi mines at the Northern end of Honshu. He said that the mines were about 25 km from Kamaishi where the huge Japanese steel works, now known as Nippon Steel, are located.

For those interested in more about the Bridge on the River Kwai, The History Channel offers a documentary DVD about the building of the bridge by the POW's during World War II. The documentary is a grim reminder of what they went through, and according to Bill Stewart, the Hollywood movie version, which won 7 Academy Awards, was nothing but fiction. It was later estimated that at least 25% of the POW workers died from overwork, malnutrition and jungle diseases. The History Channel DVD describes the extreme violence and horror experienced by thousands of the Australian, British, Dutch and American (ABDA) POW's, with many not surviving what became known as '*The death railway-bridge*'... - TH

THE IOWAN HISTORY LETTER 4Q-2012

USS IOWA

In Remembrance of the Fallen Sailors of Turret 2



Almighty God, you call each person to his or her particular vocation. We are thankful for those who felt the call to serve in the armed forces; especially those who selected to serve in the United States Navy.

We are reminded that there is no greater act of devotion than one human being give his or her life for another human being.

We solemnly remember before you all those who have given their lives in order for others to live free to worship you, serve you, help others by building a better life for all. We remember the 47 sailors who lost their lives 23 years ago while serving their nation. Only you can provide the solace and ease the pain that family members and friends have carried with them to this day.

Give us the will and the determination to honor their sacrifice by doing our part in maintaining USS IOWA as a shrine not only memory of their sacrifice, but also for all those who heard the call to serve our nation in USS IOWA.

Chaplain James P. Nickols, CAPT, USN (Ret.)
Williamsburg, Virginia

Disclaimer:

The Iowan History Letter is an independent online magazine, and produced as a keepsake journal for Battleship Iowa museum volunteers, former crewmen of USS *Iowa*, and for our readers. *The Iowan History Letter* is not sold, subscriptions are not offered, and all credited photos, cartoons and stories are the sole property of their authors.

Wherever possible, *The Iowan History Letter* requests permission, properly credits, and identifies the source of photographs, stories, or quotations. If crediting errors, or any possible copyright infringements are found, please let us know and corrections will be made.

Front page masthead photo is courtesy of :

Sherry Wiggins Pleasanton Military Families, Warriors Watch Riders

Tom Helvig, CTRCM, USN (Retired, 1953-1975)
Command Master Chief 1974-1975
Volunteer Writer/Editor *The Iowan History Letter*
68 Boothby Drive
Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054
email: THelvig@aol.com
© 2012 All Rights Reserved



The Iowan History Letter
is a supporter of the
Historic Naval Ships
Association - HNSA