

# Scuttlebutt

A quarterly publication of the USS Samuel  
B. Roberts (DD-823) Shipmates Association

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**Holiday Colors Aboard the Sammy B Courtesy Jim Antenucci**

A rather unique summer is quickly passing into memory. We may not have been able to participate in our usual activities but I am sure, that as Robert's veterans, we found ways to amuse ourselves and enjoy the season. Maybe there were no large gatherings, sporting events, or concerts, but we celebrated the good weather and the good life with family and friends. Could one ask for more?

One more year and it will be time to get together for our Boston area reunion. Due to the virus organizing this reunion is more difficult than in the past but all is coming together nicely and the event, details of which and sign-up sheets for will be included in the next issue of this newsletter. Activities will include tours to Salem, Gloucester, historic Boston, and either the JFK Library or Concord/Lexington. There will also be a free picnic on the river, a sail on a 65' schooner and a group dinner at a landmark area restaurant. This might well be the most exciting reunion to date. Start making your plans for October 4 – 8, 2021. See you there!

Enjoy the contents in this newsletter. The contributors work hard to provide a fun and informative issue each quarter. If you have photos or memories of the Roberts, send to the editor so all our shipmates might enjoy.

# Honor Roll

**Add**

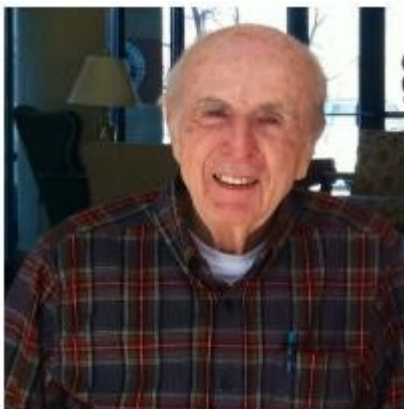


# From the Presidents Desk

Greetings fellow shipmates. To say this summer has been an unusual one would be putting it mildly. This pandemic is something I can be confident in saying that no person alive has ever experienced or ever wants to experience again. As I write this I sincerely hope that all the Roberts' shipmates are in good health and coping.

It seems hard to believe that by the time this issue goes to press the next reunion will be but a year away. I want you all to know preparations leading to another great reunion are progressing nicely. Jim Norton will give a brief synopsis of the event in this issue and will provide complete details in December's offering.

The recent Covid 19 outbreak on USS Roosevelt and the support showed the Captain by his crew I found quite moving. It started me thinking about the effect the Captain has on his ship. During my tenure on Roberts I served under three Captains and three XO's. Each Captain had different expectations and as a result morale and the very feeling of the vessel changed each time the Captain did. The majority of my tour was under Captain Ray Ward. In my opinion he was the ultimate professional officer. He conducted himself as the Captain even in his relationships with the crew. The ship was run to the highest standards of the Navy with definite separation between officers and crew. One always acted properly whenever he was around. I respected him and watched my P's and Q's when near him. He commanded respect from the crew and got it. To say I would go to the nines for him is not 100% true. However, soon I would witness a different Captain.



**Captain Raymond E. Ward** served under him.

When I first became a member of the Roberts Association I was surprised that Captain Ward and one of my XO's were also members. I remembered him from our Navy days but initially shied away from making contact. However, I found out quickly that the best thing about reunions is that one gets to meet and associate with all. Rank nor rate are no longer detriments. During those reunion encounters I got a whole new picture of Captain Ward. He was just a regular ex-sailor there to recall his Navy days and share the stories from that important part of his life. He was just like all of us.

The Captain was a delight to talk to and he remembered fondly his days aboard Roberts. It took me until a reunion all those years later to discover the he was just another Navy man doing his job. I realize now that he was a Captain doing what Captains are supposed to do and I am glad to have

Till next time I ask all of you to emulate the Lone Ranger and "Wear your masks."

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# Bird Droppings

## By Don Eagle

New words in our vocabulary include “sequestering” and “quarantine.” And by now I, for one, am ready to head out to sea again. Have had to cancel a Minnesota fishing trip with my sons, and feel like a speakeasy bouncer when someone knocks on my door. Open the little eye hole and ask “who is it?”

Imagine if you will, what it would be like to turn back the clock to the time you were 20-something and a crew member on the Roberts. Firstly, you’d be able to negotiate those narrow passageways with ease. (my wife recalls a reunion where she overheard two shipmates discussing how they used to make the passageways bigger, because now they were much too narrow). Secondly, that towel you used to wrap around yourself to go to the shower has somehow shrunk. Thirdly, you might have a hard time figuring out just what the hell you were.

For instance. Here’s a few of the newer and more exotic ratings they’ve developed, changed or merged in the intervening years.

Cryptologic Technician	Mass Communications Specialist	Operations Specialist
Missile Technician	Culinary Specialist (mess cook)	Navy Counselor
Information Systems Technician	Personnel Specialist (personnelman)	Legalman
Logistics Specialist (mailman, storekeeper)	Hull Maintenance Technician	Electronics Technician (radioman)

Signalmen were absorbed into the Quartermaster rating in 2003.

Disbursing Clerks were merged into Personnel Specialists in 2005.

Boiler Technicians were merged into Machinist Mates in 1996.

Ratings such as Yeoman, Quartermaster, Damage Control, EM, EN, and MM are still around. Desultory names such as ‘deck ape’ and “snipe” have gone by the boards, and in today’s world, users would be chastised in the press and more than likely picketed, if not outrightly sued.

The number of people needed to man a ship has decreased since you and I were swashbuckling our way through history. It seems the SBR FFG had only 195 officers and crew, while the 823 had somewhere around 280. Maybe we just had more to do. A few other things have changed too. Remember watching movies either on the fantail or on the mess deck? The old projectors and actual film that came aboard in the big cans? Well, with new technology, that’s a thing of the past. Or how about the ship’s library – a well worn collection of perhaps 25 paperbacks tucked into a corner of the messdeck. Remember heading for the phone booth as soon as you docked? Notsomuchanymore. GPS satellite navigation? Recording your Navy experiences in a journal? Well, laptops and cell phones sort of took care of that. Buy Apple.

Anyway my friends, I’ll get back to the coronavirus, and kind of put two different time periods together. So, if you have a full-on personnel inspection today, and have to have everybody five feet apart, the amount of available railing space on our dear 823 means we’d be dropping quite a few guys overboard at the end of the fantail. And can you imagine coming across the quarterdeck in your blue camo’s and wearing a mask? Absurd. Or how about them there little blue “X’s” spaced five feet apart? The chow line would be like ---forever. And foreign ports? Forget it.

And now, something really serious: With the last name of Eagle, my name is connected in some strange way with payday. I mean how many times on payday have I heard the expression “today the Eagle -----? Well, for me, that could be a daily experience. But for you, well maybe you could come up with something nicer. You know, something like “The Navy is just handing me this money with an Eagle (our great national symbol) emblazoned on it” or isn’t “the Eagle flies” a great expression of patriotism.

Anyway, stay safe, sequestered, and wear you bandito mask.

**Don**



**Historic Boston Navy Yard**

# Of Ships and Shoes

## Jim Antenucci

Pandemic time – haircut #2

This reminded me of a special haircut I received as a young ensign in the SBR barbershop. Y'all remember it of course - starboard side, main deck, near after officer's quarters. The sea story begins with an impassioned emissary, MMC Olivo, who comes on behalf of the M division. "They are not washing the fart sacks. We know because we can smell them." I was expected to get the Pork Chop, Ensign Totten, to fix this health and morale issue. Well, off I went as requested and put the ship's serviceman on report to his department head. Mission accomplished. Except, the next time I went for a haircut, I realized that the same sailor who cut the hair also ran the laundry! Oh, Oh!



Pat A. giving Jim A. a trim

As they say, "he saw me coming" and I got the haircut for the ages. Well I didn't get treated badly after that cut. I think the barber and I had a good laugh and good trims after that.

At reunions I tried to identify the SH as Bill Peters but he said, "Not me, I was a storekeeper."

The second Pandemic memory exercise came as a result of the racial unrest in June. It brought to mind the three African-American sailors I encountered during my three and a half years from August '62 to December '65 on the Roberts: SM2 Sam Crawford, SD1 Knowles, and PN3 Simmons. Where are they now? Were there more?"

What struck me most about Sam Crawford was that he was a pleasure too be around. We didn't have much interface; he being on the signal bridge and I usually on the bridge for watch-standing. My few experiences with him were always professional and always good.

SD1 Knowles ran our wardroom pantry. I was the mess caterer for a long time and we had to work closely together. Complaining officers; "Why can't we have more ice cream at breakfast?" "We should never have Welsh Rarebit on the menu again." I would create a menu. Knowles would bring it to fruition. Thankfully we worked well together. He was a large sailor and spoke in staccato-like phrases. He knew we were both under watchful eyes – the CO, especially the XO, and all the other officers.

I have two funny memories of SD1 Knowles. On a story replenishment off Sardinia, just before exiting the Med in December '63, R.F. Paul, the XO, put out the word that all breakfast would cease at 0700 prior to setting the sea detail. Knowles was sent by the XO to after officers country to make sure we all knew. He came into the shower room and told me that if I didn't relieve the watch by 0700, XO says, "don't stop by the wardroom for breakfast." Arrived at 0655 and got quite a scowl from the Exec.

The second memory I have of SD1 Knowles was of him leaving the ship after our deployment with a large box of cartons of cigarettes. My reaction was, "I didn't know he smoked that much." Naive! Last but not least is PN3 Simmons of the ship's office. He offered a sage piece of advice in 1964 and I remember it still. "Mr. Antenucci, you should not use a colored ink when signing any official entry or business letter. Dark blue or black only." That was the end of teal ink for me. Good advice PN3 Simmons.

## October, 2021 Boston Reunion Teaser

Our next Roberts Association reunion will be held in the Boston, MA area next October 4-8. Events scheduled should appeal to all. Due to the Corona virus, the events listed below might require some revision but we are advertising with a high degree of confidence. Our base of operations, located directly on the Neponset river, is the Best Western Adams Inn in Quincy, MA. A rate of \$90 per night which includes a full American breakfast daily insures affordability. Complete booking details will be provided in the December issue of the Scuttlebutt.

Tours and activities you can look forward to as part of the reunion package include:

Salem, MA - The name of Salem is inextricably linked to the Witchcraft Hysteria of the 1690's. But Salem also has a glorious maritime history and splendid architecture. The cemetery, dating to 1634, is located just to the rear of the Witch Museum as are some of the finest eighteenth century homes in America, evidence of the enormous wealth amassed by Salem's ship captains. Our bus will drop us off near the museum and leave us on our own in this very pedestrian friendly city.

Gloucester, MA – We will visit Gloucester, MA, located on Cape Ann and one of the oldest (1623) and most important fishing ports in the country. You will have the opportunity to see the boats come in and unload the day's catch. Walk the streets of this quaint village and explore its galleries, shops, restaurants, and beautiful coast. Have a fantastic fresh seafood lunch overlooking the harbor as you sip a cool one.

Thomas E Lannon – A special treat awaits us in the guise of a two-hour cruise on the schooner Thomas E Lannon. Find yourself relaxing on the deck of this beautiful 65 foot schooner as she sails out of Gloucester Harbor on a light southwesterly breeze. Fulfill the dream of a lifetime and honor those who have passed during an on-board ceremony.

Group Dinner – If Covid conditions relax, anticipate a group dinner at the Gloucester House or similar restaurant. An attempt will be made to negotiate a limited menu with fixed pricing. A traditional New England lobster bake sounds good to me.

Boston City Tour – We will tour historic Boston by motor coach. We will experience the Old South Meeting House where the Boston Tea Party Ship may be hosting a re-enactment of the debate which sparked a revolution. We will also visit the Old North Church, Paul Revere's House, Boston Common, Beacon Hill, past the "Cheers" bar, to the State House. There will be time for shopping at Boston's own Quincy Market/Faneuil Hall before returning to our hotel for an afternoon surprise.

Old Fashioned Picnic - You will enjoy an old fashioned hamburger, hot dog, and barbecued chicken picnic, with all the fixings, hosted by the Association and held in a gazebo overlooking the river. Save your appetites the day of this free event.

Charlestown Navy Yard – We will be dropped off near "Old Ironsides" and afforded the opportunity to tour USS Constitution as well as several maritime and naval museums. Many of us spent time at the yard during shipboard overhauls. Discovering the changes should be fun.

Our regular events and activities will not be neglected. A welcoming cocktail hour and buffet is slated. So is social interaction in the hospitality room, as well as our banquet and all that entails. Hope you are all anticipating.

# This and That



Holiday on the Sammy B courtesy Jim Antenucci



Jerry Whitehurst courtesy Carol Whitehurst



Navy couple 1918



Baseball 1918 Flu Pandemic



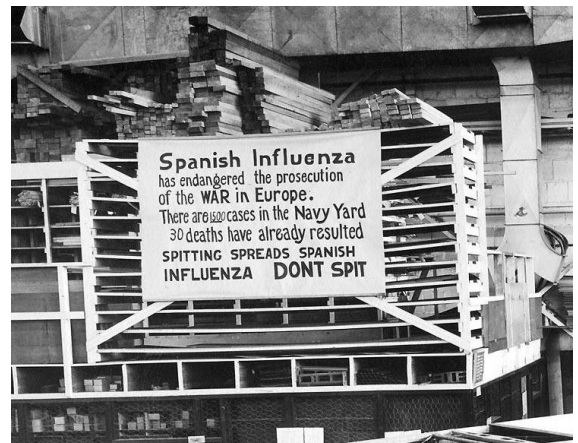
1918



"Now I'll go over it once more, Melvinton . . . In the Navy, when the captain says, 'Weigh the anchor . . .'"



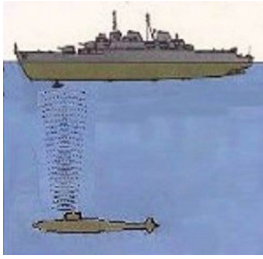
"Your promotion becomes effective when you do!"



1918







# Echoes

Jim Norton



It is difficult during this part of our history to engage in any dialog without Covid-19 working its way into the discussion. As bad as the current flu virus is, it got me to thinking about an even worse one. The Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-1920 killed 17-50 million people worldwide. 500,000 to 850,000 perished in the US and what made this flu variant unique is that unlike most strains that kill the very young and very old, this variety took the lives of those in the prime of life (15-40 avg age at death). It arrived with the returning doughboys and lasted through four separate waves. The second in late 1918 was the deadliest.

The US Navy transported many of the World War 1 troops home from Europe and was exposed early. Navy medical professionals were overwhelmed trying to fight the virus. Treatment was essentially non-existent and medical personnel were forced to rely on quarantine or infectious disease stations as brave Navy doctors, nurses, and hospital corpsmen cared for the daily needs of the patients.

In 1918, Navy and Marine patients totaling 121,225 were admitted at Navy medical facilities with influenza. Of these patients, 4,158 died from the virus and sick patients spent over a million sick days in the facilities recuperating

During the peak of the 1918 influenza pandemic, the US Navy operated over 40 hospitals in almost every corner of the globe. Navy nurse Josie Brown, who served at Naval Hospital, Great Lakes, described what happened in many of these facilities.



*“The morgues were packed almost to the ceiling with bodies stacked one on top of another. The morticians worked day and night, You could never turn around without seeing a big red truck loaded with caskets headed for the train station so bodies could be sent home. We didn’t have the time to treat them nor take their temperatures. We didn’t even have time to take blood pressure.”*

*“Treatment included giving them a little whiskey hot toddy which was all we had time to do. Patients would have terrific nosebleeds with the influenza. Sometimes the blood would just shoot across the room. One had to get out of the way or someone’s nose would bleed all over them.”*

The thing to remember is that despite the severity of the 1918 pandemic, it passed and normalcy returned. The same will happen with this incarnation.

**Jim**

# Famous Tin Can Sailor

There have been many famous Tin Can Sailors through the years. Ernest Borgnine, Henry Fonda, and H. Ross Perot to name just a few.

Last August I was asked to produce an award video about Mr Perot's son H. Ross Perot, Jr. In visiting his office in Dallas I learned about his father serving on board the USS Sigourney (DD-643), a Fletcher class destroyer. Ross Perot entered the US Naval Academy in 1949 and graduated in 1953. He then served aboard the Sigourney at the very end of the Korean War.

Though he later became a billionaire he never forgot his fellow veterans in championing their causes, especially Vietnam veterans.

These images are part of a special museum dedicated to his many veteran's causes and achievements.



*Tom Swantz*



The following is the first in a series of letters written by Ensign Charles Fox to his parents during our WesPac deployment of 1965/1966.

Oct. 27, 1965

Dear Mom and Dad,

*The partition between Heaven and Hell on this ship is nothing but a quarter inch of sheet metal. I just climbed out of an engine room at 135 Fahrenheit, because the ventilation was down, into a night cool and beautiful. It is impossible to appreciate a sunset until you see it reflected off every surface from where you stand to all points of the horizon. It is reflected off the water, the roll of the wake, the clouds, and even the wet deck. It is like being in a many sided jewel permeated with the soft light of the setting sun and highlighted by the glitter of the stars.*

*We had a fire in one of the switchboards today and had to secure power and roast for a couple of hours in the after engine room until it was fixed. My leading electrician is like a man possessed in an emergency. His reflexes seem more important to him than his electrical knowledge. I think he has more of that knowledge in his veins than in his head. Watching him when there is work to be done in a hurry is like watching an acrobat. Clamoring around a burning switchboard, hot with 440v, in a metal engine room, drenched with sweat, is very different than seeing Augie Goeltz wiring lighting fixtures in a house.*

Love  
**Charlie**

-----

Some fight in the air or on the ground.  
But the salty waves is where I'll be found.  
Like the mariners so long ago.  
I will strive to be a seaman 4.0.

It may be a carrier or a destroyer.  
Where I will be a worthy warrior.  
I may send off a plane to beat the foe  
Or protect the fleet from a sub below.

I may transport a squadron of F-18's  
Or a battalion of devil dog marines.  
On many lands my eyes may feast  
From Europe, Asia and the Middle East

Be it battleship, carrier, frigate or can  
For God and country I will stand.  
When my time is done and battles fought  
I'll gladly bear the title "Old Salt."





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