

The 820 Newsletter



The Official Publication of the USS Rich DD/DDE-820 Association
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Ring Up Flank Speed!

Set your course for 34n42, 80w47... the Beaufort Holiday Inn...

...which also the Liberty Port for the 9th Annual Ship's Company Reunion! Hosts Dave and Mary Beth Dore are busy preparing for our arrival and making fast all the loose ends.

The Dates: **April 17-18-19-20-21, 2002**
The Place: **Holiday Inn**—2001 Boundary St—**Beaufort, SC**
The Cost: **\$60.00 per person** for the 5 days (plus motel)
The Events:

WEDNESDAY... Check in and greet old shipmates and friends. Find out who and what's happening in our **HOSPITALITY ROOM**. Sit and entertain each other with stories of past exploits and reunions. Bring your Sea Stories!

THURSDAY... Sightseeing and just plain visiting then a **Bar-B-Que**, South Carolina style at the **U.S. Naval Hospital's Heritage Club**.

FRIDAY... Sightsee some more. There's plenty to see and do in historic Beaufort. Then you'll be treated to **Sarge's Lowcountry Supper** at the **Dataw Island Marina**.

SATURDAY... The day begins with the association's **Annual Business Meeting**. The afternoon is just another day to enjoy the local South Carolina sights. The evening begins with the **Cocktail Party**, our traditional **Memorial Service**, a superb **Banquet** and the fun-filled action of the **Auction**. Don't forget to bring something from your hometown for the auction.

SUNDAY... Time to be underway for our homeports. Last minute visits for some. Others will stay the day and headout Monday.

HOLIDAY INN—BEAUFORT

2001 Boundary St - Beaufort, SC
Phone 843-524-2144 Fax 843-524-1704

Rates for the USS Rich 9th Annual Reunion

Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun
17 18 19 20 21

\$60.00 per night—Double Occupancy

You *must* use Reservation Code **NNR** to receive this rate and your reservation must be made on or before May 16, 2002

*"Nothing could be finer
than to be in Carolina..."*



Our Lives, Our Fortunes, and Our Sacred Honor

by *Caleb Baruch Paxton*, a Junior at The Lima Christian Academy and son of shipmate *David E. Paxton*, IC3 (68-70)

On Tuesday, September 11th, 2001, at 10:00 AM, United Airlines flight 93 crashed 14 miles south of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. On board the Boeing 757 were 45 people, four of whom were hijackers. There have been numerous cell-phone calls reported of passengers on the flight calling friends and relatives to say goodbye, once they realized they were being hijacked. Many of the callers vowed to do all they could to keep the hijackers from successfully hitting their target. Names of callers include Todd Beamer, Jeremy Glick, Thomas Burnett, Jr., and Mark Bingham.

When I think of the passengers that were on United Flight 93 I think of bravery and courage. I think of the sorrow of their loved ones. I think of loyalty and patriotism for America. I think of victory and loss, and American pride.

The passengers that were on that flight are the heroes of September 11th, but they are not alone. Thousands of firemen, policemen, and other American citizens in New York City and Washington, DC gave their lives on that day of infamy to save others.

These men and women also gave their lives for generations of Americans to come. If the people on United 93 had not ended their days on earth fighting the terrorists, many lives on the ground would have been lost. Probably even one of our greatest symbols of freedom would have been destroyed. Children would have grown up fatherless, or motherless, or orphans. The people on that flight looked ahead to the future of America. They saw the devastation of a great landmark and the deaths of hundreds of lives, and they prevented it.

In my book, and in the book of American history, the passengers on United Flight 93 are heroes, as well as all the firemen, policemen, the people who were lined up out the door and around the street corner in New York waiting to give blood, and so many others who did what they could to help other Americans, our nation, and our nation's future on September 11th.

As I turn through the pages of our history I see the images of so many men and women who devoted their lives to America. I see our forefathers signing the Declaration of Independence, and, to support it, pledging to each other their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. I see George Washington kneeling in the snow at

Valley Forge praying for guidance. I also see our forefathers establishing the United States Constitution, in order to secure the blessings of liberty to themselves and to their posterity. I see the Star-Spangled Banner after the battle at Fort McHenry, and it is still there! I see Abraham Lincoln delivering the Gettysburg Address where so many valiant men had fallen. I hear him declaring that those who died did not die in vain. I see the men falling dead on the beaches of Normandy. I see our soldiers raising our American flag over Iwo Jima, after thousands of their fellow soldiers were slaughtered before their eyes. I see prisoners of war being tortured in Vietnam, and I hear them vow to return home with honor.

These men are my heroes, and I will never forget what they have done for me and for our country. They have secured my freedoms and safety in America. I have never had to worry about being invaded by Communists. I have never had to worry about having a bomb dropped on my head; nor have I ever fled for my life to hide in some remote place.

Now I turn over a new page in our history, and the ink on it is still wet. On this page are the pictures and names of the heroes of September 11th, 2001, people in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania. On this page is the image of New York firefighters raising The Stars and Stripes over the rubble that was once the World Trade Center. On this page is the name of President George W. Bush, who has reminded us that the advance of human freedom depends on us, and that this generation will "lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future." He has assured the American people that "we will not waver, we will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail" in our new war against terrorism.

Together we have seen the heroes of our past. We have listened to what they said, and now we face the blank pages of America's future. It is our duty to fill in those pages, but what actions of ours could ever fill them in properly? Even if we aren't the President, even if we are not politicians, or if we don't ever fight in a war, there is still so much we can do to benefit America's future, and thereby fill in those blank pages. We can follow in our heroes' footsteps. We can fight for our freedoms. We can protect the Constitution to the best of our ability. We can support our troops. We can give blood. We can fulfill our voting responsibilities. We can pledge allegiance to a land that's free. We can be ready to fight against evil, as the passengers and crew on United 93 were called to do. And -- so Americans of future generations can enjoy the blessings of liberty we have enjoyed -- with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we can pledge to each other "our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."



Editorial from a Romanian Newspaper..

Why are Americans so united? They don't resemble one another even if you paint them! They speak all the languages of the world and form an astonishing mixture of civilizations. Some of them are nearly extinct, others are incompatible with one another, and in matters of religious beliefs, not even God can count how many they are.

Still, the American tragedy turned three hundred million people into a hand put on the heart. Nobody rushed to accuse the White House, the Army, the Secret Service that they are only a bunch of losers. Nobody rushed to empty their bank accounts. Nobody rushed on the streets nearby to gape about. The Americans volunteered to donate blood and to give a helping hand.

After the first moments of panic, they raised the flag on the smoking ruins, putting on T-shirts, caps and ties in the colors of the national flag. They placed flags on buildings and cars as if in every place and on every car a minister or the president was passing. On every occasion they started singing their traditional song: "God Bless America!"

Silent as a rock, I watched the charity concert broadcast on Saturday once, twice, three times, on different TV channels. Willie Nelson, Robert de Niro, Julia Roberts, Cassius Clay, Jack Nicholson, Bruce Springsteen, Silvester Stalone, James Wood, and many others whom no film or producers could ever bring together. American's solidarity spirit turned them into a choir. Actually, choir is not the word. What you could hear was the heavy artillery of the American soul. What neither George W. Bush, nor Bill Clinton, nor Colin Powell could say without facing the risk of stumbling over words and sounds, was being heard in a great and unmistakable way in this charity concert.

I don't know how it happened that all this obsessive singing of America didn't sound croaky, nationalist, or ostentatious! It made you green with envy because you weren't able to sing for your country without running the risk of being considered chauvinist, ridiculous, or suspected of who-knows-what mean interests. I watched the live broadcast and the rerun of its rerun for hours listening to the story of the guy who went down one hundred floors with a woman in a wheelchair without knowing who she was, or of the Californian hockey player, who fought with the terrorists and prevented the plane from hitting a target that would have killed other hundreds or thousands of people. How on earth were they able to bow before a fellow human? Imperceptibly, with every word and musical note, the memory of some turned into a modern myth of tragic heroes. And with every phone call, millions and millions of dollars were put in a collection aimed at rewarding not a man or a family, but a spirit which nothing can buy.

What on earth can unite the Americans in such a way? Their land? Their galloping history? Their economic power? Money? I tried for hours to find an answer, humming songs and murmuring phrases which risk of sounding like commonplaces. I thought things over, but I reached only one conclusion.

Only freedom can work such miracles!

Uniform Chuckles

The old Navy Chief finally retired and got that chicken farm he always wanted. He took with him his life-long parrot named Swabby.

The first morning at 0430 hrs. Swabby, squawked loudly and said, "Reveille, Reveille, all hands up! Heave out and trice up! The smoking lamp is lit, get up you squids, now Reveille!" The old chief told the parrot, "We are no longer in the Navy. Now go back to sleep."

The next morning, Swabby did the same thing. Again the Chief told him, "If you keep this up, I'll put your bird ass in the chicken coup." The following morning the parrot did the same thing and found himself out sleeping with the chickens.

At 0600 hrs. in the morning the Chief was awakened by one hell of a racket in the chicken coup. He went out to see what was the matter. When he opened the door he saw that Swabby had about 30 white chickens at attention in formation, and on the ground lay 5 badly bruised, and beaten brown chickens. The parrot was saying, "By God, when I say fall out in dress whites, I don't mean khakis!"



Three sailors spent the afternoon in a bar drinking and telling sea stories.

As evening approached, they realized that it was time to go so they signaled the bartender and told him they wanted to pay their tab. The bartender left and returned, saying the total bar bill was \$3.00.

"Three dollars," they gasped, and one said, "Surely you must be wrong, it has to be more than \$3.00, we've been here all afternoon, we must have had 10 beers apiece."

"That's right" said the bartender, "thirty beers at ten cent's apiece, that's \$3.00."

The sailors were amazed that the beer was so cheap, but the bartender went on to explain. "You see," he said, "I won the lottery and I wanted to open a bar where folks could come and drink for a reasonable price and have fun. So I use my lottery winnings to subsidize the cost, and that's why drinks are so cheap."

The men nodded, but one of them asked the bartender, "Those two guys over there, they've been here for two hours and they haven't had anything to drink, what's going on?"

"Oh those guys" the bartender replied, "they're Army soldiers, and they're waiting for happy hour."





The Incredible Saga Of The "Willie D"

Submitted by Wendall E. Calloway, RM1 (61-62)

The "*Willie D*" created havoc from the time she was commissioned until her unusual, and perhaps, charmed demise. From November 1943 until her bizarre loss in June 1945, the American destroyer **USS William D. Porter (DD-579)** was often met with the clever greeting, "Don't shoot, we're Republicans!" when she entered port or joined other naval ships. The significance of this expression was almost a cult secret of the United States Navy until the story resurfaced and received wide publicity after a ship's reunion in 1958.

Half a century ago, the "*Willie D*," as the **Porter** was nicknamed, accidentally fired a live torpedo at the battleship **IOWA** during a practice exercise on November 14, 1943. As if this weren't bad enough, the **IOWA** was carrying *President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Secretary of State Cordell Hull* and all of the country's World War II military brass to the "big three" conferences in Cairo and Teheran. *Roosevelt* was to meet with *Stalin* of the Soviet Union and *Churchill* of Great Britain, and had the **Porter's** successfully launched torpedo struck the **IOWA** at the aiming point, the last 50 years of world history might have been quite different. Fortunately, the **Porter's** warning allowed the **IOWA** to evade the speeding torpedo, and historic events carried on as we know them.

The **USS William D. Porter** was one of hundreds of big war-built assembly line destroyers. Although smaller than current destroyers, they were powerful and menacing in their day. They mounted a main battery of five dual-purpose 5-inch, .38 caliber guns and an assortment of 20mm and 40mm AAA guns, but their main armament consisted of 10 fast-running and accurate torpedoes that carried 500-pound warheads.

The **Porter** was placed in commission on July 6, 1943, under the command of *LCDR Wilfred A. Walter*, a man on the Navy's career fast track. In the months before she was detailed to accompany the **IOWA** across the Atlantic in November 1943, the **Porter's** crew members learned their



trades; but not without experiencing certain mishaps that set the stage for the "big goof".

The mishaps began in earnest with the mysterious order to escort the pride of the fleet, the big new battleship **IOWA** to North Africa. The night before it left Norfolk, Virginia, the **Porter** successfully demolished a nearby sister ship when she backed down along the other ship's side and, with her anchor, tore down railings, a life raft, the captain's gig and various other formerly valuable pieces of equipment. The *Willie D* suffered merely a slightly scratched anchor, but her career of mayhem and destruction had begun.

The next event occurred just 24 hours later. The four-ship convoy, consisting of the **IOWA** and her secret passengers, the **Porter** and two other destroyers, was under strict instruction to maintain complete silence as they were going through U-boat Deeding ground where speed and silence were the best defenses. Suddenly, a tremendous explosion rocked the convoy and all of the ships commenced anti-submarine maneuvers. The maneuvers continued until the **Porter** sheepishly admitted that one of her depth charges had fallen off the stern and detonated in the rough sea. The safety had not been set as instructed. *Captain Walker's* fast track career was fast becoming side-tracked.

Shortly thereafter, a freak wave inundated the **Porter**, stripping everything what wasn't lashed down and washing a man overboard who was never found. Next, the engine room lost power in one of its boilers. And, during all this, the captain had to make reports almost hourly to the **IOWA** on the *Willie D's* difficulties. At this point, it would have been merciful for the force commander to have detached the hard luck ship and sent her back to Norfolk. But that didn't happen.

The morning of November 14, 1943 dawned with a moderate sea and pleasant weather. The **IOWA** and her escorts were just east of Bermuda when the President and his guests wanted to see how the big ship could defend herself against air attack, so the **IOWA** launched a number of weather balloons to use as antiaircraft targets. Seeing more than 100 guns shooting at the balloons was exciting, and the President was duly proud of his Navy. Just as proud was Chief of Naval Operations, *Adm. Ernest J. King*, large in size and by demeanor a true monarch of the seas. Disagreeing with him meant the end of a naval career. Up to this time, no one knew what firing a torpedo at him would mean!

(Continued)

The conclusion of the saga will appear in the next issue of the *820 NEWSLETTER*.