



The only U.S. Merchant Ship to sink a
 German Man-of-War during WWII



The plaque we donated to the Fredericksburg Museum is in memory of the brave American Merchant Mariners who fought and died in the service of their country during World War II. In World War II, the United States Merchant Marine provided the greatest seafight in history between the production lines at home and the fighting forces scattered around the globe.
1 in 26 mariners serving aboard merchant ships in WWII died in the line of duty, suffering a greater percentage of war-related deaths than any other U.S. service.

HOME CHAPTER OF THE AMMV NATIONAL PRESIDENT EMERITUS: A.J. WICHITA

Mariner's Medal	Combat Bar	Combat Bar with Silver Star	Defense Medal	Atlantic War Zone Medal	Mediterranean War Zone Medal	Pacific War Zone Medal	World War II Victory Medal

CHAPTER PRESIDENTS: FRANK KODELJA – RICHARD BORCZAK – CHARLES ULLRICH – WILLIAM BENTLEY –
 A.J. WICHITA – JOHN McSPADDEN – AL D'AGOSTINO – JOE CAMPERSON

2016 MEETING SCHEDULE -- 4TH SATURDAY'S:
JANUARY 23 -- APRIL 23 -- JULY 23 -- OCTOBER 22

BREAKFAST 09:00 -- REGULAR MEETING 10:30 A.M.
AMERICAN LEGION #379 -- 1245 N. INDUSTRIAL BLVD., BEDFORD, TX 76021

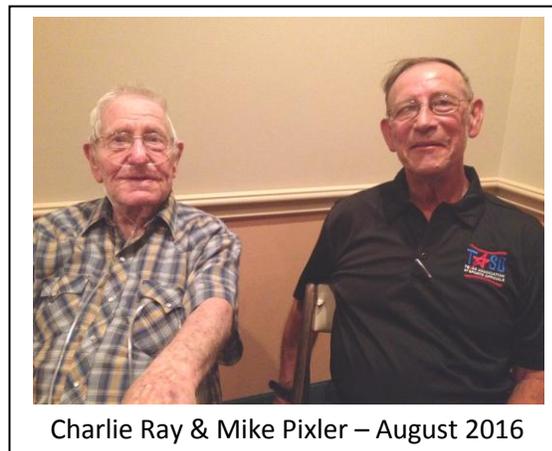
THIS IS NOT YOUR SKIPPER SPEAKING...

Hello members – written by Sandy Moran [newsletter editor],
 School has started and the streets are quieter which makes our commute easier whether it's to the store or a doctor – hmm really? We can only hope.

As mentioned in last month's newsletter, we lost one of our members Ruby Pixler. My husband and I stopped by the viewing and took a snapshot of Mike and the patriarch of the Pixler family, his uncle Charlie Ray Pixler, also a member of this chapter. There was a lot of family and friends around paying their respects.

While looking for stories of interest, I came across a biography of Don Ellwood (AMMV Indiana Chapter) from the Justin Oral History Center website.

<http://www.justinmuseum.com/famjustin/musmilhis.html>



Charlie Ray & Mike Pixler – August 2016

Due to the dates of some of the biographies, it almost appears that the site is no longer active; however, it does show the last copyright as 2015. When you read John Justin's comments in the box below, he has included an invitation to submit stories. So I have sent an email to him and will wait and see if I get a response. If so, we may be interested in adding some of our biographies to his website.

Justin Oral History Center

U.S. Navy, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine Biographies

This page is a series of links to biographies of members of the U.S. Navy, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine. The Stories below have been submitted to me by service members or their families by email. If you have any such stories to submit please email me below. Thank you and enjoy.

At the very bottom of the page I will also include some obituaries I may find from time to time.

Source: <http://www.justinmuseum.com/famjustin/usnbio.html>

Besides Don Ellwood's biography, I will add some of the other names listed on this website in case you recognize these WWII Merchant Mariners and want to read their stories:

Leslie Russell **Fales**, Merchant Marine; Harold E. **Flockhart**, Merchant Marine (*updated 3/11/04*); Magnus **Hagen**, Chief Engineer, Merchant Marine (*new 7/15/01*); Martin H. **Kopp**, Merchant Marine; Nelson **Napp**, SS Exchequer, Merchant Marine; William F. **Nesser**, Merchant Marine (*updated 3/14/99*); Howard Stanley **Rivet**, Oiler, S.S. Alamar, Merchant Marine; Harold Frank **Schmidt**, Merchant Marine (*updated 12/26/99*); Johanus "John" **Schryvers**, MV Poelav Bras, POW, Dutch Merchant Marine; Leo V. **Williams**, Merchant Marine (*new 1/10/01*)

Biography of Don Ellwood -- Ablebodied Seaman, Merchant Marine, WWII Senior Chief Quartermaster, United States Navy, Korea Vietnam Cold War

Part 1 of 2 [continued next month in the October 2016 issue]

I was 13 yrs old when I was sitting in my classroom of high school in Toledo, Ohio on the morning after Pearl Harbor was attacked and President Roosevelt's voice came on our speakers to announce that war was declared. Every boy that was 18 jumped up and yelled that they were going to enlist & ran out of school.

So for the next 3 years, I volunteered to work on the farms to help out and even trained with the American Legion members to train us boys in military drills so that we knew what to do when we were old enough to enlist. When I was old enough to get a Social Security card, I got a job at the Chevrolet Parts Division as a part time machinist trainee drill press operator during the summer of 1944.

It was in September of 1944 after becoming a senior in high school, that I saw an advertisement in the Toledo Blade newspaper that the U.S. Maritime Service was looking for boys 16 1/2 and 17 yrs of age to be trained as merchant marine seamen. My father, having served in the Naval Reserves and as a ordinary seaman on the Great Lakes when he was younger, didn't take too much persuasion on my part for me to enlist. So after passing my physical exam, I was sent by train in Detroit with other boys my age group to Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, N.Y. where for three months I was trained to stand lookout watches, steer a ship, learn the nomenclature of the ship, shoot a 20mm cannon, and how to launch a lifeboat. I received my seaman's passport & documents in mid December 1944 and after reporting to the Sailors Union of the Pacific for a ship, I was assigned to the S.S. James Whitcomb Riley, a Liberty ship, for duty as an ordinary seaman.

I was assigned to the 4 to 8 watch section that had two older professional seamen in it that didn't exactly like my wearing a "Navy" type of uniform when I went ashore on liberty. But after awhile, I was accepted as by January 1945 hundreds of ships were having young boys like me serving on ships that had been wearing Navy type of uniforms after reporting aboard. I guess that as long as we did our jobs and were not a hindrance, we were accepted. The thing is, if we were not filling out the vacancies ship board who else were they going to get?

Our first voyage to Liverpool, England was in a convoy that was attacked by German submarines and we could hear & feel the explosions of the depth charges going off in the convoy. After 15 days, we arrived safely and my passport was stamped and I went into town to experience what war has done to a city. I met several girls and a boy my age who took me home to meet his parents. I always remembered those days. It was my first time having the famous "fish & chips" snack in a rolled up newspaper.

It was sometime in this period that we heard that President Roosevelt died.

After arriving back in New York, then I went home to visit my parents & 2 younger brothers. I felt so much older and I visited my high school and some of my teachers. When I arrived back aboard ship, I noticed that our #2 hatch was fitted out with troop type bunks and two large steam kettles, yet when we got underway for Swansea, Wales, we didn't take on any troops. Upon arriving in Swansea, Wales and off loaded some of our cargo, I went ashore and while in a small dept. store, I noted that there was a wireless station there that I could send a message back to my prents in Toledo. So I sent the message that I was alive & well.

After getting underway for Cherbourg, France, which by this time was not too long after the "D" Day invasion, we tied up at the former German submarine large reinforced concrete pens, and in a hour or so later, our soldiers marched 500 German POW's to our ship to be loaded aboard. This was the purpose of our #2 hatch bunks & steam kettles. But these prisoners were boys ages 12 & 13 and men old enough to be grandfathers. After having to leave everything in their possessions on the dock, they were taken aboard and we got underway with the Army soldiers as guards. This now meant that we had the entire ship's crew, the Navy's Armed Guard gunners unit, and now 500 prisoners & guards aboard.

Instead of taking a northern route to return to New York City, we took a southern route that took us just north of the Azore Islands, which when we were there, we encountered a hurricane. It was my first experience to see how high the seas can get and with not much ballast to keep our hull in the water, we were like a cork bobbing around. Even with the

shrieking high sound of the winds, I could hear the screams of terror from the prisoners that we had pad locked in the hold. There were not enough life boats & life rafts to accommodate the prisoners and our crew.

Fortunately, after 5 days of riding the storm out in the "safe" western semi-circle, we came thru safely and entered N.Y. city harbor to off load the prisoners & guards.

I had previously heard stories from the older merchant marine seamen aboard about the trips to Murmansk, Russia and how few ships made it to Russia & back, So when I saw, what I thought was cargo in the warehouses that had the stamps for Russia, I signed off and after spending a week ashore working in fast food restaurants for meals and pay, I signed on a tanker leaving for Texas and then the far Pacific. This time, there was no Navy ship escort going with us. We loaded AvGas in the holds of the ship and P-38's fighter aircraft anchored to our main deck superstructure. Then off we went to the Panama Canal and where I & my buddy went ashore in Panama City for a few hours. Next morning, we went thru the Canal and for the next 15 days, we had good weather when we arrived at Guam & unloaded our cargo & planes.

About mid way back to the Panama Canal, our ship's radio heard the radio broadcast about atomic bombs being dropped on Nagasaki, Japan.

And while transiting the Panama Canal a second bomb was dropped. It was when we were in the Gulf of Mexico that we heard the WWII was over and a few days later, we moored in Mobile, Alabama. I signed off the ship and decided to take train to Los Angeles to meet my Mother, my stepfather, and my half sister who lived there. It was there in Los Angeles, that I joined the Army Transport Service and was assigned as an ordinary seaman on a Army hospital ship, the USAH Shamrock.

By this time our Government issued a plea to all merchant marine seamen to stay on the job because we had to bring home our troops and to continue to supply the troops remaining overseas and our Allies. So I listened to our government's pleas and stayed on the job. (Boy, did we ever get shafted by our so called "Grateful" government by denying us veteran status.) ... *[continued next month]*

Source: <http://www.justinmuseum.com/oralbio/ellwooddbio.html>

SOURCE: American Federation of Government Employees [AFGE]

The VA's Uncertain Future

September 09, 2016

On September 7, the House Committee on Veterans Affairs held a hearing on the controversial "Commission on Care" recommendations to dismantle the VA health care system.

The Commission on Care was a panel of political appointees who were brought together to recommend improvements for the VA. But the Commission's true goal quickly became apparent as it barely tried to hide its intentions. Their initial "Strawman Report" proposal called for completely dismantling the VA health care system under a BRAC-type process. It would supplant care traditionally provided by VA hospitals by providing veterans with a voucher, then tossing veterans into the for-profit health care system. The Strawman report recommended closing 160+ VA medical centers, 1,000+ VA community health clinics.

In AFGE's statement for the record that was provided to the Committee for this hearing, AFGE stated: "Although the Commission did not formally adopt the controversial 'strawman' proposal, the impact would be very similar. Both would dismantle our veterans' only specialized integrated health care system and incur unsustainable costs that will inevitably lead to lower quality care and fewer health care services for fewer veterans.

"Both would also destroy veterans' true source of 'community care': care provided within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) that is closely coordinated with VA vet centers and Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) benefits and employment services. The Commission's description of non-VA care as 'community care' is a misnomer. Veterans strongly prefer to receive their care from the VA over the private sector according the Vet Voice Foundation poll and other recent polls."

A Not-So-Subtle Agenda

The hearing came just days after the Committee's chairman, Rep. Jeff Miller, alleged that AFGE stood in the way of reform. Miller is the same lawmaker who has repeatedly tried to strip VA employees' workplace rights in the name of 'accountability.' Miller penned a similarly impulsive, fiery rebuttal after a Washington Monthly article exposed how the "Commission on Care" seemed to be rigged toward dismantling the VA.

In an Op-Ed that ran in The Hill this week, AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr said that lawmakers should thank, rather than attack, VA employees and AFGE members.

"Instead of pointing fingers at the people who care for our veterans the most, we should be empowering them," wrote Cox. "These are the men and women who risked their careers to do the right thing for veterans."

"We can't allow someone's self-interested privatization agenda to deprive veterans of the oversight they deserve, and their caregivers the rights that keep the system honest," he added.

Cox cited the whistleblowing of Dr. Michelle Washington, a Wilmington Veterans Affairs Medical Center psychologist. In 2011, Washington noticed that wait times at her facility were not matching up with the appointments on the books. She spoke up and testified before the Senate. Then, she was retaliated against by VA managers.

"She had some of her duties as a psychologist removed, and for the first time, received negative performance evaluations," Cox said in his Op-Ed. "Upset managers wanted to exact revenge; and if not for the protection offered to her by her union, AFGE, Washington could have continued to face hostile working conditions, or even lose her job."

Three years later, the wait list crisis at the VA became front page news. Ever since, lawmakers like Miller have used it as a jackhammer to drive his privatization agenda. That agenda was largely constructed by the Koch Brothers' fake veterans group "The Concerned Veterans of America" that had a seat on the Commission on Care. The Koch Brothers' greedy health care CEO buddies would reap tremendous financial benefits from veterans' war wounds, and they'll stop at nothing to get a piece of the action.

What's Next for the VA?

The VA has been outperforming the private sector for years. But it still has a lot of work left to do to ensure veterans get the care they need and employees are shown the dignity and respect they deserve. But the VA is improving every day.

Since 2014, the VA has hired nearly 14,000 healthcare providers, opened 3.9 million square feet of clinical space and offered 20 million additional provider hours of care for veterans. Veterans now report 90% satisfaction with getting timely appointments. And that's just a few of the success stories at the VA (see more below). The Joint Commission, a highly respected independent organization, made surprise inspections of nearly 200 VA facilities across the country. Their report concluded what we've long known: Veterans Affairs hospitals are superior to private-sector hospitals in providing care to our wounded warriors.

And veterans agree. In a 2015 poll by the VetVoice Foundation, 64% of all veterans prefer the VA over for-profit providers. Those who return from war don't just find quality health care at the VA — they find a community.

The big question that remains is whether lawmakers will acknowledge that the VA has long been the best healthcare system in the world. Or, will they continue down the path of selling veterans off to the for-profit health care industry?

We believe that the promise we made to veterans for their sacrifice is too sacred to break. And, we'll be watching what lawmakers cook up next. ... [to read the complete article, please click on link below.]

<https://www.afge.org/article/the-vas-uncertain-future2/>

World War II: Capture of U-505- American sailors secure U-505 on June 4, 1944. US Naval History & Heritage Command

By [Kennedy Hickman](#)

Updated May 18, 2015.

Capture of U-505: On May 15, 1944, antisubmarine task force TG 22.3 consisting of the escort carrier USS *Guadalcanal* and the destroyer escorts USS *Pillsbury*, USS *Pope*, USS *Chatelain*, USS *Jenks*, and USS *Flaherty* departed Norfolk for a patrol near the Canary Islands. Commanded by Captain Daniel V. Gallery, the task force was alerted to the presence of U-boats in the area by Allied cryptanalysts who had broken the German Enigma naval code. Arriving in their patrol area, Gallery's ships searched fruitlessly for two weeks and sailed as far south as Sierra Leone. On June 4, Gallery ordered TG 22.3 to turn north for Casablanca to refuel.

At 11:09 AM, ten minutes after turning, *Chatelain* reported a sonar



contact located 800 yards off its starboard bow.

As the destroyer escort closed to investigate, *Guadalcanal* vectored in two of its airborne F4F Wildcat fighters. Passing over the contact at high speed, *Chatelain* confirmed that it was a U-boat and turned away to set up an attack run with its depth charges. Buzzing overhead, the Wildcats spotted the submerged submarine and opened fire to mark the location for the approaching *Chatelain*. Surging forward, *Chatelain* bracketed the U-boat with a full spread of depth charges.

Aboard *U-505*, the submarine's commander, Oberleutnant Harald Lange, attempted to maneuver to safety. As the depth charges detonated, the submarine lost power, had its rudder jammed to starboard, and had valves and gaskets break in the engine room. Seeing sprays of water, the engineering crew panicked and ran through the boat yelling that the hull was breached and that *U-505* was sinking. Believing his men, Lange saw few options other than to surface and abandon ship. As *U-505* broke the surface it was immediately peppered with fire from the American ships and aircraft.

Ordering boat to be scuttled, Lange and his men began to abandon ship. Eager to escape *U-505*, Lange's men took to the boats before the scuttling process was complete. As a result, the submarine continued to circle at about seven knots as it slowly filled with water. While *Chatelain* and *Jenks* closed to rescue the survivors, *Pillsbury* launched a whale boat with an eight-man boarding party led by Lieutenant (junior grade) Albert David. The use of boarding parties had been ordered by Gallery after a battle with *U-515* in March during which he believed the submarine could have been captured.

Nearing *U-505*, David led his men aboard and began gathering German code books and documents. As his men worked, *Pillsbury* twice attempted to pass tow lines to the stricken submarine but was forced to withdraw after *U-505*'s bow planes pierced its hull. Aboard *U-505*, David realized that the submarine could be saved and ordered his party to begin plugging leaks, closing valves, and disconnecting demolition charges. When alerted to the submarine's status, Gallery dispatched a boarding party from *Guadalcanal* led by the carrier's engineer, Commander Earl Trosino.

A **merchant marine chief engineer with Sunoco before the war**, Trosino quickly put his expertise to use in salvaging *U-505*. After completing temporary repairs, *U-505* took a tow line from *Guadalcanal*. To stem the flooding aboard the submarine, Trosino ordered that U-boat's diesel engines be disconnected from the propellers. This allowed the propellers to spin as the submarine was towed which in turn charged *U-505*'s batteries. With electric power restored, Trosino was able to use *U-505*'s own pumps to clear vessel and restore its normal trim.

Aftermath: With the situation aboard *U-505* stabilized, *Guadalcanal* continued the tow. This was made more difficult due to *U-505*'s jammed rudder. After three days, *Guadalcanal* transferred the tow to the fleet tug USS *Abnaki*. Turning west, TG 22.3 and their prize set course for Bermuda and arrived on June 19, 1944. *U-505* remained at Bermuda, shrouded in secrecy, for the remainder of the war.

The US Navy's first capture of an enemy warship at sea since the [War of 1812](#), the *U-505* affair led to some concern among the Allied leadership. This was largely due to worries that if the Germans were to know that the ship had been captured they would become aware that the Allies had broken the Enigma codes. So great was this concern that Admiral Ernest J. King, the US Chief of Naval Operations, briefly considered court martialing Captain Gallery. To protect this secret, the prisoners from *U-505* were kept at a separate prison camp in Louisiana and the Germans informed that they had been killed in battle.

In the fighting for *U-505*, one German sailor was killed and three wounded, including Lange. Lt. (jg) David was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for leading the initial boarding party, while Torpedoman's Mate 3/c Arthur W. Knispel and Radioman 2/c Stanley E. Wdowiak received the Navy Cross. Trosino was given the Legion of Merit while Gallery was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. For their actions in capturing *U-505*, TG 22.3 was presented with the Presidential Unit Citation and cited by Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, Admiral Royal Ingersoll. Following the war, the US Navy initially planned to dispose of *U-505*, however it was rescued in 1946, and brought to Chicago for display at the [Museum of Science & Industry](#).



A German Enigma code machine similar to one found aboard *U-505*.
(Image courtesy of [royalnavymuseum.org](#))

To read complete article, go to:

<http://militaryhistory.about.com/od/worldwari1/p/u505.htm>

MISSION: "MARITIME TALES OF THE SEA" MEMORY BOOK A historical mission to get our memory books placed in libraries and schools across the U.S. and beyond to educate each new generation on the role the Merchant Marines played during WWII in winning the war. Everybody should be interested in achieving or meeting this mission.

⇒ **Reminder: You only have to have a dedication to the WWII Merchant Marine cause to become a member. ** Invite your family & friends to join!**

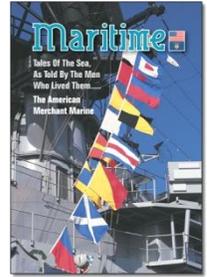
"Maritime Tales of the Sea" is available as a PDF on a CD Rom for \$15.00.

If you want to order a hard copy, please go to the following locations:
www.amazon.com www.barnesandnoble.com www.trafford.com/

SS Stephen Hopkins Chapter Dallas/Fort Worth, TX Book Committee thanks you.

In a few short years when we're gone, the story of the WWII Merchant Mariners will probably be forgotten... **Let's work together to keep this from happening.**

For more information, please call Al D'Agostino (817) 299-8708
or email dag299@tx.rr.com



Please continue sending your activities for our newsletter to let everyone know what you have been up to. Either email your info to dagassoc@tx.rr.com or call Sandy with some tidbits in your life: 817-299-8708 -- Wednesdays only.

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