

# The Day Book

Volume 3, Issue 5

July-August 1997

A Newsletter for the Supporters of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum

## On Guard in Arctic Waters

### Two Norfolk Destroyers and the Infamous PQ-17 Convoy, 1942.

by Gordon Calhoun

The Norfolk destroyers USS *Rowan* (DD-409) and *Wainwright* (DD-419) are not the typical heroes of World War II naval histories. These two

*Rowan* and *Wainwright*, like many World War II destroyers, packed quite a punch for their size. Each was armed with four five-inch guns, several machine

guns, several torpedo tubes, and depth charge racks. Commissioned in 1938 and 1940, *Rowan* and *Wainwright* were called into their first combat action in the frigid Arctic waters near the top of the world in the spring of 1942.



The Norfolk-built and based destroyer USS *Wainwright* (DD-419). The 1570-ton destroyer was a well armed vessel equipped with four five-inch dual purpose guns, eight torpedo tubes, eight machineguns, and depth charge racks. She began her combat career in 1942 on the most dangerous convoy route of the war. (U.S. Navy photo)

warships only displaced 1,850 and 1,500 tons respectively. Their size pales in comparison to the 45,000-ton battleships and aircraft carriers which almost always gain the attention of print and television media.

Despite their small displacement,

When the destroyers' orders came down, the British Royal Navy was under severe strain. England requested that the United States send heavy naval units to the North Atlantic and the Navy responded with Task Force 99 (TF 99). This powerful squadron included a newly commissioned aircraft carrier, two battleships, two heavy cruisers, and seven

99 had arrived in Scapa Flow, Scotland, 17 convoys had successfully made the journey to Russia. The 18th convoy, titled PQ-17, was forming up in Iceland.

Up to this point in the campaign, German opposition to the convoys had been relatively light. A few merchant ships had been sunk by *Kriegsmarine* destroyers and U-boats. However, by early 1942, the *Kriegsmarine* began to take the Murmansk convoys more seriously. The main weapon in the German arsenal was the 41,000-ton battleship *Tirpitz*. Secondary ships

The Home Fleet's task was to keep surface units of the *Kriegsmarine* (the German Navy) contained in their ports and away from convoy routes. Specifically, the Home Fleet had to protect the convoys enroute to the Soviet Union. Since the Soviet Union had been invaded in late 1941, the United States and Britain had been sending war material to the northern ports of Murmansk and Archangel to aid them in their fight against the Germans. By the time TF

*On Guard continued on Page 6*

#### Inside The Day Book

Director's Column.....	2
St. Julien's Creek Annex.....	3
Volunteer News & Notes.....	5
Upcoming Events.....	9
The Museum Sage.....	10

# Making Friends

## The Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

If you have visited lately, you know the Hampton Roads Naval Museum is hopping. The third graders have come and gone. Their teachers evaluated our educational program and the museum received high scores. Hopefully, this pilot program will become a regular part of the third grade curriculum for Norfolk's public schools. Thanks to all those docents who made "Life at Sea" so much fun for the children.

Fresh from our success with the third grade pilot tours, we now turn our attention to the Time Traveler program. The Hampton Roads Naval Museum is one of nearly 100 Virginia museums, historic sites, and areas participating in this learning program for school children. When children visit a Time Traveler site, they will be introduced to some aspect of the Commonwealth's history. Most of the participating institutions have developed special programs for the students. In our case, Educator **Bob Matteson** has produced a scavenger hunt. He has been testing the hunt on



David and Julie Eisenhower talk with HRNM director Becky Poulliot, HRNM docent Hunt Lewis, and Lt. Tom Whalen while on their visit to the museum during the NATO Azalea Festival (Photo by Bob Matteson)

both children and adults and has even stumped some of our volunteer docents. Come and try it!

Time Travelers is part of the Virginia History Initiative, a collaborative effort to highlight and strengthen the Commonwealth's educational and cultural offerings. Governor George Allen and his wife

Susan launched the initiative and Time Travelers earlier this year. Students earn credit for visiting the sites by having a passport stamped; in our case they receive a sticker. After visiting six sites, the students receive a T-shirt. The program lasts until November.

The museum is also easing its way into the summer by setting aside one afternoon each month to share the scuttlebutt. In this case, the "Scuttlebutt Summer Series" permits staff and volunteers to share their research findings with any and all takers. So, buy a cold drink at the Galley Restaurant and join us under the Celebration Pavilion. See page 9 for the speaker's schedule.

The museum continues to participate in community happenings. During April's NATO Azalea Festival week, we were fortunate to have two very special guests: **David and Julie Eisenhower**. What a pleasure for docents and staff to share our museum's treasures with a family that played such a pivotal role in 20th century military history. The Eisenhower visit prompted some television coverage which is always beneficial.

*Making Friends continued on page 4*



### About *The Day Book*

*The Day Book* is an authorized publication of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum (HRNM). Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official view of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy or the U.S. Marine Corps and do not imply endorsement thereof. The HRNM is a museum dedicated to the study of 220 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

*The Day Book's* purpose is to educate and inform readers on historical topics and museum related events. It is written by the staff and volunteers of the museum. The newsletter takes its name from a 19th century Norfolk newspaper.

Questions or comments can be directed to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum editor. *The Day Book* can be reached at (757) 322-2993, by fax at (757) 445-1867, or write *The Day Book*, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, VA 23510-1607. The museum can be found on the World Wide Web at <http://naval-station.norfolk.va.us/navy.html>. *The Day Book* is published bi-monthly with a circulation of 1,200.

### HRNM Staff

**Director**  
Becky Poulliot  
**Curator**  
Joe Judge  
**Education Specialist**  
Bob Matteson  
**Exhibits Specialist**  
Marta Nelson  
**Museum Technician**  
Ofelia Elbo  
**Assistant Curators**  
Lt. Tom Whalen  
Tom Dandes BTCS (SW)  
**Editor of *The Day Book***  
Gordon Calhoun  
**Director, HRNHF**  
Maj.Gen. Dennis Murphy,  
USMC (Ret)

# Hampton Roads' Hidden History: St. Julien's Creek Annex

by Joe Judge

The history of the Navy in Hampton Roads has many great attractions, like the duel of the ironclads USS *Monitor* and CSS *Virginia*, or the departure of the ships participating in Operation *Torch* in 1942. It also has smaller stories that are present in places that we drive by.

Workers at the magazine assembled and broke down cartridges and made small caliber shell cases. They loaded the shells with black powder, and with an explosive known ominously as "D."

Originally, St. Julien's was a part of the nearby Norfolk Naval Shipyard. Around the turn of the century it had

began to use TNT in shells which was more readily available. Working at St. J's was not for the faint hearted.

By the time of World War I, St. Julien's had expanded to 175 buildings on 215 acres. St. Julien's was now an independent command having separated from the shipyard. The facility, known in 1917 as the "Naval Ammunition Depot," participated in one of the largest American projects of World War I: the North Sea Mine Barrage. Allied navies were struggling with German U-boat successes. The U.S. Navy concocted a plan where mines would be placed in the North Sea to pin the U-boats in Germany. At St. Julien's, 1,200 enlisted personnel loaded mines with TNT 24-hours a day. These valiant workers labored in TNT dust inside a building designed to hold 4 million pounds of explosive. The facility assembled over 100,000 of these 300-lbs electric contact mines without one single accident. See the article entitled "Another Nail in the Kaiser's Coffin" in Vol. 2 Issue 2 of *The Day Book* for more information on this operation. Besides the mines, workers continued to load and assemble various kinds of naval gun ordnance.

Like military facilities everywhere, December 1941 brought immense changes to St. J's. During the war, over 4,000 civilians worked at the Depot, including 1,300 women. Additional officers, Marines, and sailors brought the workforce to over 5,000. Ammunition of all different calibers, from 20mm ammunition used in anti-aircraft guns to the monster 16-inch battleship shells, was assembled. An average of 12,500 tons of ammunition was shipped from St. J's each day. In 1945, a new dock was completed. Up to 24 barges could now be docked at the Depot.

The dangerous work at St. J's continued during the Korean and Vietnam War. The Depot kept up with the demands of the fleet while employing far less people than in World War II. For example, during the conflict in southeast Asia, St. J's had about 900 employees. St. J's continued

*St. Julien's continued on page 4*



*Workers repair railroad tracks at the Naval Ammunition Depot at St. Julien's Creek, Jan. 9, 1939. For many years, this facility manufactured and stored much of the Atlantic Fleet's ammunition. This activity has since been moved up to the Yorktown Naval Weapon Station. Today, St. Julien's is the headquarters of the U.S. Navy's Inactive Fleet and several other Naval activities. (HRNM photo)*

These places are out of the way, but are still important and rich in history. Such a place is St. Julien's Creek Annex in Portsmouth, Virginia. Recently the staff had a chance to visit this place for the first time.

St. Julien's Creek Naval Magazine sprang to life on 48 acres on the southern branch of the Elizabeth River in 1897, just in time for the Spanish American War. The job of "St. J's," as the facility is delightfully known, was ordnance.

ten buildings and two small docks, each about 100 feet in length. Ordnance was moved among these buildings on man-powered rail carts, running on small gauge tracks. It was only in 1906 that it was considered safe to use mules to assist in moving these cars. In 1911, the magazine began to use hydraulic presses to load shells, a change from manual loading techniques in which weights were dropped into the projectile cavity to compress the load. In 1916, the facility

*St. Julien's continued from page 3*

to function as a shell loading plant, becoming an annex of the Naval Weapons Station Yorktown in 1970. In that same year, St. J's 73-year safety record came to a sudden end with a major accident. This accident convinced the Navy that facility was too close to residential areas for safety, and all ordnance production handling and storage facilities were transferred up to Yorktown.

Today St. Julien's Creek covers about 500 acres and is home to over 20 Naval activities including the Shore Intermediate Maintenance Activity and the Headquarters of the Navy Inactive Fleet (see side-bar). St. J's is still serving the Navy and the after 100 years.

The old ordnance facility still has a mystery: its name. Despite the efforts of many history sleuths, the origin and meaning of the name "St. Julien's" has never been conclusively discovered. A common, but unproved, story credits the name to a man named William Julien who once lived in the locality. Whether he was so good as to merit a title of saint, or perhaps so bad to earn it ironically, is lost in the mists of time. 

## The Fleet Who Waits: The Navy's Inactive Ships

One of the many commands headquartered at St. Julien's Creek Annex is the Headquarters of the Navy Inactive Fleet known to locals as "the sleeping fleet" or "the ghost fleet." The fleet, consisting of ships kept in a reserve status by the U.S. Navy for future use, had its origins at the end of World War II. The Navy established the Atlantic and Pacific Reserve Fleets to preserve selected ships. Preserving ships, more commonly known as "mothballing," was not a new concept. The early U.S. Navy would frequently mothball their wooden frigates in times of peace, for example. However, never were so many ships mothballed at once as they were after World War II.

During the wars in Korea and Vietnam, ships from this fleet were reactivated for use in the Pacific. More recently in the 1980's, the great World War II battleships *Iowa* (BB-61), *New Jersey* (BB-62), *Missouri* (BB-63), and *Wisconsin* (BB-64) all emerged from

retirement for a few years.

In 1966, the Naval Sea Systems Command took responsibility for the ships. The reserve fleets were renamed "Naval Inactive Ships Maintenance Facilities" or NISMFs. The Officer in Charge of NISMFs is headquartered at St. J's. The men and women of the Navy Inactive Fleet Maintenance Program put the great warships to sleep and install and maintain their life support systems. These life support systems include surface preservation, fire and flood alarms, dehumidifiers, and other systems that monitored 24 hours a day.

There are no sleeping ships actually located at St. J's. The 189 ships, 78 inactive service craft, and 51 active service craft are located in seven facilities around the country. Two of these facilities, Ft. Eustis and Portsmouth, are in Virginia. The other five facilities are in Philadelphia, PA; Beaumont, TX; San Pedro, California; Bremerton, Washington; and Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. -J.J.

*Making Friends  
continued from page 2*

Summer is the time to relax with family and friends. Do not forget to bring yours to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum for a tour or a special program. Also, watch the mail for information on the annual museum friend's cookout. If you have any idea, call me. We are forming a cookout committee.

Finally, I would like to recognize the museum's own BTCS (SW) Tom Dandes. While his official status in the Navy on hold, BTCS Dandes held his retirement ceremony in the museum's Great White Fleet/Jamestown Exposition gallery during the Memorial



BTCS (SW) Thomas M. Dandes is "piped over the side" during his retirement ceremony held in the museum's Great White Fleet gallery. (Photo by Bob Matteson)

Day weekend. Senior has been with the museum a little over two years serving as the museum's leading

chief petty officer, assistant curator, and residential mechanic. The museum staff can not thank him

enough for keeping the museum together in one piece. He will difficult to replace.

*Susky*

# Volunteer News & Notes

## *Time Travelers Program*

As it was mentioned in the Director's column, the museum is participating in the Virginia History Initiative's Time Travelers program. Docents need to be aware of the specifics of how this program works.

Participants in the program will have a newspaper-like passport. We



*The Time Travelers logo*

have some extra copies of this passport if visitors would like one. Bob has developed a scavenger hunt for the students to complete. Upon completion, they will receive one of the "I Stood Watch at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum" stickers as a passport stamp. If you have any specific question or if problems come up, contact either Becky or Bob.

## *New Volunteer*

Anne Prince is the newest person to volunteer for the museum. Anne is no stranger to the Navy as she served for eight years as a yeoman chief petty officer in Washington D.C. She served from 1943-1951. She and her husband Ellis have three grown children, one of whom is a vice-president of the National Hockey League, and live in Norfolk. Please welcome her to our extended museum family.

## *Volunteer Events*

Two events for the volunteers are currently in the planning stage. The first one is the annual summer picnic. At the June 10 docent meeting, a committee was formed to brainstorm ideas and to get things rolling. Current committee members are Gene Hanlin, Margaret Godfrey, Gurley Ritter, and Harold Anten. Gurley will explore the Norfolk Yacht and Country Club as a possible site. If you have ideas, let us know. The only prerequisite is that the

Turpin, and museum director Becky Poulliot are the current members. If you would like to help out on either one of these events or have ideas, please contact Becky.

## *Animals in the Navy Exhibit*

Some of you might be aware that the museum is planning to install a temporary exhibit on animals in the U.S. Navy. We are planning to open this exciting new exhibit sometime in the fall.

Not familiar about the differences between a kukoo and a bear? The staff



*Downtown Annapolis, MD. A volunteer committee is currently planning an overnight trip to this city. (Photo provided by the Anne Arundel County Visitor and Convention Bureau)*

cost should be contained at \$10 or less per person. Let's make this year's cookout a successful one.

The second event is a proposed overnight trip to Annapolis, MD. This trip would provide an in-depth tour of the Naval Academy and its museum along with other historic places. A committee for this event has been formed to work on the details of the trip and how much it will cost. Sally Tobin, Gurley Ritter, Preston

of the museum will be giving classes to educate the docents about the history of animals in the Navy and about the kind of material that will be on display. Look for details in the mail.

## *Finally...*

We would like to thank Ann Vernon, the director of education at the Chrysler Museum, for speaking to us about designing tours for young children at the June 10 docent meeting.

### *On Guard Continued from Page 1*

included two heavy cruisers, 13 destroyers, a few torpedo boats, and 10 U-boats. The *Luftwaffe* reluctantly released a few squadrons of FW-200 Condor spotter aircraft and HE-111 and JU-88 torpedo bombers. The Germans began receiving reports of the formation of another Murmansk-bound convoy in Iceland and decided to make an example of it.

Thirty-three merchant vessels, 22 of which were American, assembled in Reykjavik, Iceland in early June, 1942. Well aware of the possible threat that German forces posed, the Allies created three squadrons to provide protection for PQ-17.

The first squadron consisted of seven destroyers, two submarines, two specially modified anti-aircraft vessels, and a Catapult Merchantman vessel. The latter ship was a merchant vessel with a catapult and Hurricane fighter. This squadron would provide close escort for the merchant vessels. The second squadron consisted of the heavy cruisers USS *Wichita* (CA-45) and *Tuscaloosa* (CA-37), HMS *Norfolk* and *London* with *Rowan*, *Wainwright* and the British destroyer HMS *Somali* providing escort. This squadron was called Cruiser Squadron 1 (C.S. 1). If the Germans sortied their surface vessels, the ships of

C.S. 1 would be the first ones to offer assistance to PQ-17. The final squadron was the Home Fleet itself and would sortie from Scapa Flow. The Home Fleet consisted of two battleships, including USS *Washington* (BB-56), an aircraft carrier, three cruisers, and 12 destroyers. The fleet would trail about 300 miles behind PQ-17 and intercept *Tirpitz* if she offered combat. In addition, the Allies also sortied nine British, Free French, and Russian submarines to watch the Norwegian coastline.

*Kriegsmarine* was well aware of the convoy's departure. However, the Germans did not get an exact fix on the convoy until July 1, five days after it had left Iceland. U-boats from the *Kriegsmarine's Gruppe Norde* spotted the convoy moving at eight knots just north east of Jan Mayen (a small island group about 300 miles northeast of Iceland) in the late afternoon. FW-200 aircraft confirmed the U-boats sighting. Heavy fog worked to the Allies' advantage as it made it difficult for



*Weighing in at 41,000-tons and armed with eight 15-inch guns, the German battleship Tirpitz was a major concern of Allied planners. The presence of this warship forced the Allies to sortie at least two battleships with every convoy heading for the Soviet Union. (U.S. Navy photo)*

The individual merchant ships had their own armament mainly anti-aircraft weaponry. Sailors from the U.S. Naval Armed Guard manned them. The armament, however, was not adequate as it averaged out to one four-inch gun and four machine-guns for each ship. To make up the difference, the Armed Guard unpacked tanks being delivered to the Russians in order to use the tanks' 37mm guns.

The convoy cleared Iceland, loaded with tanks, ammunition, aircraft parts, and raw materials. The Home Fleet left Scapa Flow on June 26, 1942. This set the stage for a major showdown.

German air reconnaissance spotted the Allied battleships north of Scotland on June 28. German intelligence had reported the formation of PQ-17 in Iceland for some time and the

German aircraft and submarines to continue tracking the convoy. The Germans were also confused by sightings of a home-bound Allied convoy (QP-13) and had trouble distinguishing the difference between the two. However, they correctly assumed the path of PQ-17 even with sketchy reports. With the convoy spotted, the Germans put their plans into action.

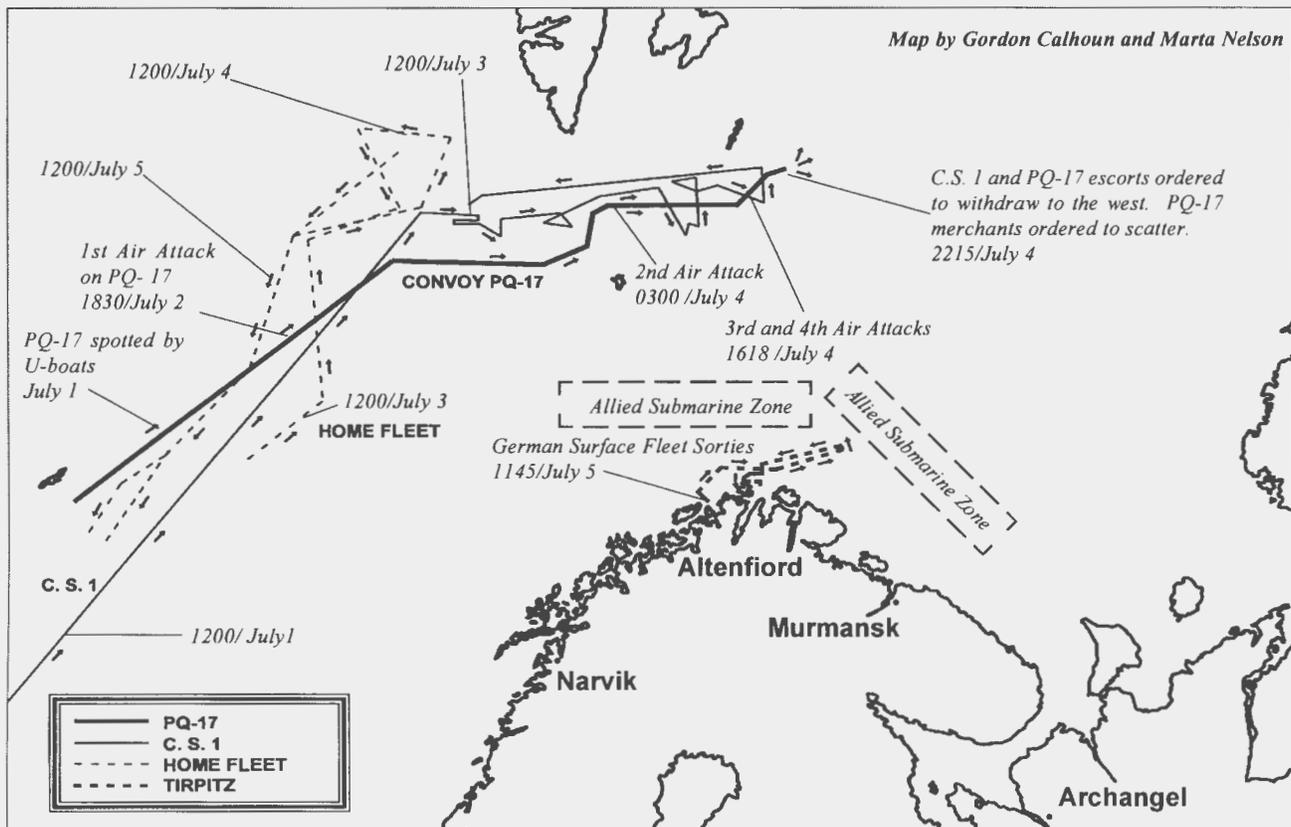
At the same time the U-boats picked up the trail of PQ-17, C.S. 1 steamed out of Seidisfjord, Iceland at a brisk 18 knots. C.S.1 planned to meet up with PQ-17 northeast of Iceland and to follow them within extreme visual range. British intelligence, specifically the ULTRA code breaking project, picked up radio traffic that said the Germans had spotted PQ-17 and had scrambled torpedo bombers to intercept.

British intelligence transmitted a warning to C.S.1 the next morning, July 2, but not to PQ-17. The C.S. 1

*On Guard continued on Page 7*



*Lacking adequate anti-aircraft guns, enterprising U.S. Naval Armed Guard sailors rolled out M-3 Lee-Grant tanks that were meant for the Russians onto the decks of the merchant ships during the PQ-17 operation. (U.S. Navy photo)*



**On Guard continued from page 6**

commander ordered *Rowan* to join PQ-17 and transmit the message of a pending attack visually so as not to break radio silence. Twenty minutes later *Rowan* went to general quarters and accelerated to 30 knots. She arrived too late to give the advance warning.

Eight JU-88 torpedo bombers attacked PQ-17 just as *Rowan* joined the convoy. *Rowan* added her four five-inch guns and several machine guns to the convoy's anti-aircraft screen and succeeded in shooting down one of the bombers. None of the bombers scored any hits. PQ-17 had survived her first test. With the bombers driven off, *Rowan* pulled along side the convoy's tanker, SS *Aldersdale*, and refueled. Once the refueling was complete, *Rowan* took up station about 2,000 yards in front of the convoy.

Throughout the rest of the day, six of the nine U-boats in the area tried to work their way into firing position. Constant harassment by PQ-17's escorts prevented them from getting a shot off.

The next morning C.S.1 recalled *Rowan* from PQ-17. Fog rolled in that morning and a few icebergs were spotted, but overall the weather was unusually

calm. At 1420, spotters aboard *Wainwright* noticed two FW-200s shadowing PQ-17 and C.S. 1. The German aircraft followed the two squadrons for over five hours and even tried to down one of the American cruiser's spotter aircraft. *Wainwright* opened fired on one of the Condors and drove it off. But the Condors had succeeded in transmitting the location of PQ-17 and a second aircraft attack was launched. This time, 26 HE-111 and JU-88 attacked the ships on PQ-17's starboard side. The attack aircraft never got a clear chance at any of the merchant vessels due to the fog and low cloud cover. Bombs were dropped but no ships were hit.

While the Germans attacked PQ-17 with U-boats and aircraft, the *Kriegsmarine* ordered the surface ships to move to a more northern location. The change of base operation ran somewhat afoul when one cruiser and three destroyers all struck rocks while coming out of their Norwegian ports. The decision was made to go without them. *Tirpitz*, two cruisers, and accompanying destroyers and T-boats (German torpedo boats) moved up to the North Cape of Norway to wait.

The morning of July 4 started with a rude awakening for PQ-17. A lone HE-111 broke through the cloud cover at 0300, surprised the escorts, and dropped a torpedo on the convoy. The torpedo passed by two merchant ships and eventually struck home on the Liberty ship SS *Christopher Newport*. The torpedo crippled *Newport* and was eventually sunk on purpose by friendly fire. *Wainwright* spotted several more Condor aircraft throughout the day and fired at a few at extreme range. With C.S.1 about ten miles behind, two columns of HE-111 attacked PQ-17 at 1618. Convoy gunners downed three of the aircraft with no hits on the merchant vessels.

*Wainwright* detached from C.S. 1 and joined PQ-17 just as a second wave of aircraft began to make their run. This time six HE-111 attacked, but once again were driven off by accurate fire without lost. *Wainwright* placed herself at the front of the convoy ready to break up any further attacks. A third wave came later that evening, except this time, *Wainwright* herself was the target. Seeing that *Wainwright*'s position at the head of the convoy would cause problems, the

**On Guard continued on page 8**

### ***On Guard Continued from page 7***

Germans had decided to get rid of the American destroyer. Six bombers broke through the low clouds and released their bombs. *Wainwright* pulled a hard turn to starboard at flank speed to avoid the attack. All bombs missed.

At 1820, the Luftwaffe made one final run. Twenty-five HE-111 armed with torpedoes approached PQ-17 from both the north and south. *Wainwright* steamed out at 32.5 knots to meet the southern attack head on. She opened fire at long range forcing the pilots to drop torpedoes earlier than they would have liked. Only one plane of the group dropped its torpedo inside *Wainwright's* screen. The planes from the northern approach had more success as they hit the SS *William Hooper*, SS *Navarino*, and the Russian tanker *Azerbaijan*. The Russian tanker exploded in a huge mushroom cloud, but survived the attack. *William Hooper* and *Navarino* did not survive and their crews abandoned their respective ships.

This was the last attack of the day and the ship crews of PQ-17 thought things were going very well. However, a few hours after this attack, C.S. 1 received

### ***To: Commander Cruiser Squadron***

### ***Cruiser Force Withdraw to Westward at High Speed Owing To Threat From Surface Ships...Convoy is to Disperse and Proceed to Russian Ports... Convoy Is To Scatter.***

**-Order from the First Sea Lord to C.S. 1 and PQ-17 instructing escorts to withdraw and merchants to scatter, July 4, 1942.**

one of the most infamous messages of World War II: "Cruiser Force Withdraw to Westward at High Speed Owing to Threat From Surface Ships-Convoy is to Disperse and Proceed to Russian Ports-Convoy is to Scatter." The order was received with a tremendous amount of shock and disbelief. The campaign was going very well and now they were ordered to abandon the merchant ships for no apparent reason. Upon confirmation of the order, *Wainwright* and the six British destroyers changed course to 270 degrees, accelerated to 25 knots, and rejoined the cruisers.



*With the American and British escorts ordered west, a lone British merchant vessel is easily picked off by a German U-boat during the latter stages of the PQ-17 operation. (U.S. Navy photo)*

What had happened was this: British intelligence in London had been monitoring German radio traffic throughout the entire PQ-17 operation. One morning, the German radios went silent for an hour and a half on July 4. The First Sea Lord of the Royal Navy Sir Adm. Dudley Pound noticed this during one of his rare visits to the operations room. He came to the conclusion that the Germans had gone radio silent and that their surface squadron had sortied out of Norway. The operations officer Cmdr. Thomas Denning disputed the conclusion, pointing out that none of the Allied submarines had a visual sighting of German surface vessels. Pound demanded that Denning show him proof that the German vessels were still in port.

Denning said he could not produce such evidence. Pound instructed that the order to scatter the convoy be given. He then went back into his office and closed his door. It should be noted that Pound was in poor health at the time of this decision. He frequently complained of severe headaches which caused him to sit in his office for long periods of time trying to cope with them. He died of a brain tumor one year later.

The German commanders were just as surprised as their American and British counterparts. The Germans first suspected that they had sunk an Allied cruiser and

that the U-boat and air attacks were more successful than previously reported. Upon receiving reports of *Wainwright* and the British destroyers withdrawing, the *Tirpitz* squadron received orders to attack on July 5. All U-boats and aircraft in the area were also ordered to attack.

The merchant ships scattered in all different directions, but many did not make it to port. Over the next six days, U-boats and aircraft attacks easily sunk 20 merchant ships. It was one of the great massacres of World War II. The German surface vessels came out about 200 miles, but the *Kriegsmarine* began to receive reports of submarines in the area and ordered the squadron back.

In all, 22 ships were sunk out of the 33 ships in PQ-17. Only three were lost under the protection of the convoy system and this can be attributed in large part to the two Norfolk destroyers. Eleven ships made it, including the Russian tanker *Azerbaijan*.

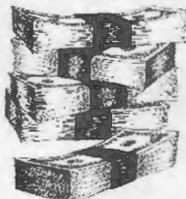
The Murmansk convoy route was suspended pending further review. *Rowan* and *Wainwright* cruised south to meet up with Task Force 34 and Operation *Torch*. Later in the war, *Rowan* would be sunk by German E-boats (a rough equivalent of the American PT boat) off the coast of Italy.

Eight months ago, the museum unveiled "Local History. World Events." as its new tag line. *Wainwright* and *Rowan* are two prime examples of what this phrase means: two small Norfolk-built warriors that found themselves in the middle of a historic contest. 🚢

# HRNM's Upcoming Special Events

August 8

## One Man's Trash...



4 Sale,  
Cheap!

## Is Another Man's Treasure.

Come HRNM docent and Civil War interpreter **Ralph Preston** talk about collecting Civil War memorabilia, share some of his greatest finds, and tell you about the one that got away! **Monday, August 11** on the Nauticus Celebration Pavilion at 3 p.m. Admission is free. Call 322-2987 for more information.

September 23

Which Best Describes  
Hampton Roads in  
World War II?



Join HRNM Director **Becky Poulliot** as she explores the World War II Home Front in Hampton Roads. Did we accept the military with open arms or try to kick them off our grass as the sign suggests? **Tuesday, September 23** at 3 p.m. on the Nauticus Celebration Pavilion. Admission is free. Call 322-2987 for more information.





## The Name Game

Instead of the usual “Sage Stumper” question for this issue, the Sage would like to propose a different sort of competition. It seems like every time you turn on the television, you see an ad for an award show. Well, the Sage would like to announce the creation of his own award show for the names of U.S. Navy ships. Readers, please respond. Listed below are nine categories. Each category has a general explanation of what the Sage is looking for in that award.

The name must come from a U.S. Navy vessel (or Confederate vessel), past or present. The winner for each category will have his or her name printed in the next issue.

**Best Overall Name**—The U.S. Navy has used some pretty cool and slick sounding names that just seem to roll off the tongue when you say them.

**Most Patriotic**—U.S. ships are both symbols and defenders of our freedoms and rights. As a result, some ships have been given a name to reflect our national pride.

**Most Confusing**—Some ships have had more than one name given to them or have had their name changed several times.

**Hardest to Pronounce**—Ship names come from all different areas of American civilization. As a result, some are pretty hard to pronounce.

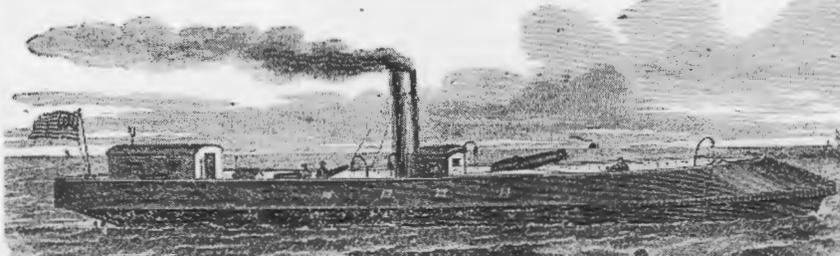
**Most Ironic**—Some ships are given a name that simply does not match the career or mission of the ship.

**Most Unlucky**—Some ships do not achieve the glory that is sought by every sailor. Some ships are so unlucky we would just rather forget about them.

**Most Lucky**—On the flip side, some ships could do no wrong no matter how sticky the situation got.

# The Museum Sage

## Sage Stumper VI: The Lost Ironclad of Hampton Roads



The United States Revenue Service cutter Naugatuck. Also referred to as E.A. Stevens, Stevens Battery, and Ironsides. (HRNM photo of a May 15, 1862 Harper's Weekly Engraving)

The question for this particular stumper was to name the third ironclad brought to Hampton Roads in early 1862 by the U.S. Navy to help contain the ironclad CSS *Virginia*. The answer is the ship that is pictured above. This gunboat is referenced four different ways: *E.A. Stevens*, *Naugatuck*, *Stevens Battery*, and *Ironsides*.

The concept for this vessel dates back to the 1840s when the Stephens brothers proposed a steam-powered ironclad vessel. The U.S. Navy expressed interest in the vessel. The two brothers put their house up as a final guarantee to the Navy that the vessel would be finished and work. This vessel was called the *Stephens Battery*. Unfortunately, the brothers grossly underestimated the cost of the vessel and the available maritime technology. As a result, the vessel was never finished.

With the outbreak of war in 1861. The Stephens brothers saw a chance to build another ironclad. Using their own money they bought a coastal steamer called *Naugatuck*. They tinkered with and modified the vessel and eventually gave it to the U.S. Revenue Service, the forerunner of the Coast Guard, free of charge. The Revenue Service, in turn,

loaned the vessel out to the Navy.

Even though this vessel was referred to as an ironclad by many writers of the day, in turns out that this vessel was not armored. The upper hull of the ship was made of a very thick piece of white cedar, while the lower hull was made of iron. An interesting engineering feature of the vessel was its ability to lower itself three feet in the water using pumps and storage tanks. The Navy must have thought the gunboat to be an ironclad as it was stationed with the ironclads USS *Monitor* and *Galena* to wait for *Virginia*.

The vessel arrived in Hampton Roads in April, 1862. *Naugatuck* exchanged shots at long range with *Virginia* on April 11, 1862 to no results, and later with the guns of Ft. Darling during the Battle of Drewry's Bluff where its gun accidentally exploded during combat. Not very impressed by the vessel, the Navy returned the “ironclad” back to the Revenue Service where it served for twenty years as a revenue cutter. Today, the brothers name is enshrined by the college they founded: The Stephens Insitute of Technology in New Jersey.

Congratulations to **Hunt Lewis, Ed Cox, and Jean and Gaylord Lockett** for correctly answering the question.

## The Sage is Going Global!

We are proud to announce that the museum's web page is getting a major overhaul. Thanks to **Carl Alverson**, who heads the Recycling Program at Naval Station Norfolk, we are now able to add many more things to our page.

This include more pictures of the museum gallery, updated information on museum events, and articles and pictures from the current issue of *The Day Book*, including “The Museum Sage” column.

The address is: <http://naval-station.norfolk.va.us/navy.html>.

## *From the Archives: Three Italian Ships*

In early 1804, Capt. Edward Preble's Squadron captured three Italian ships off the coast of Tripoli that had attempted to run the American blockade of the Barbary Coast country. All three ships were impounded, subject to review by American Admiralty courts. One of the principal Admiralty courts was and still is located here in Norfolk. One of the three vessels, the *Transfer*, became a commissioned vessel in the U.S. Navy until sold by the Admiralty court in Norfolk for \$611 in 1812.

Before they were taken back to America, however, the owner of the these three ships, one Gaetano Andrea Schembri of Valette, wrote a memorial (an official document stating certain facts) to Preble demanding his ships back. Schembri tried everything to convince Preble to release the ships.

First, Schembri tried to drop a few names. He mentioned that he was a good friend with the Bashaw of Tripoli (whom the United States was at war with) and with a senior agent of the Royal Navy in Malta. Then he tried to

***This seems to suppose a sufficient reason why you should interfere in the Affairs of the U.S. of America-Insolent Medlar!***

***Do you know, that your ill timed officiousness served only to raise the sordid expectations of a Barbarian? No! You do not exactly comprehend the extent of the mischief you have done.***

***-Capt. Edward Preble's personal response to Italian merchant Gaetano Andrea Schembri***

make the case that his ships were not carrying any military goods. Finally, he tried to appeal to Preble's sense of "Justice and humanity."

Preble was furious with the demand. We have printed an excerpt of Preble's response at right.

*The editor would like to thank Karen Johnson for contributing to this part of the Museum Sage. Ms. Johnson is a librarian with the U.S. District Court in Norfolk and is currently working on a book about the history of this court.*

*To Gaetano Andrea Schembri,*

*Some time since I received Your Memorial setting for the "deep Interest" you had in three Vessels, The Transfer, Cruifiso & the Madona di Catapoliana, captured by the U.S. Squadron blockading the Port of Tripoly.*

*This Memorial Sir, I consider nothing more or less than an appeal to my humanity-However grateful to my feelings as an Individual to realize the wishes of the unfortunate, I cannot violate the important trust placed in my hands by an act of pusillanimity.*

*The three vessels as above named were captured not only in the act of violating the laws of Blockade, but in a most flagrant violation of a passport given by myself to his Excellency Governor Ball for the purposes of bringing from Tripoly, a number of Bullocks...to my astonishment & distress learned that an instrument given in the fullest confidence and from the most honorable motives was, by you, prostituted to the most infamous purposes.*

*The Transfer sailed from Malta for Tripoly with a Passport as above alluded to; but was laden with military stores...The SSmo Cruifiso sailed from Malta with my passport, but laden with Planks, Nails, building stone, Flax, Hemp, and bale Good. Independent of which, there was found secreted under the Transom Ceiling, a large number of letters directed to different persons in Tripoly...The Madona de Catapliana knowing of the Blockade of Tripoly, Sailed from Smyrna laden with Naval & Military Stores for account of the Bashaw of Tripoly. Favored by the weather, she arrived in that Port and delivered her cargo & sailed from thence laden with live stock directed to the Tripoline Consul at Malta.*

*In all respects these vessels have been conducted in direct violation of the Blockade. I have now only to make a few general remarks on the motives by which you have been governed.*

*You have prefaced your appeal with the circumstances which only exist in Idea. You arrogate to yourself the possession of the "confidence and esteem of the Bashaw of Tripoly": and the "particular acquaintance of Mr Wilkie His Majesty's Commissary for the Fleet at Malta"-This seems to suppose a sufficient reason why you should interfere in the Affairs of the U.S. of America-Insolent Medlar! Do you know, that your ill timed officiousness served only to raise the sordid expectations of a Barbarian?-No-You do not exactly comprehend the extent of the mischief you have done.*

*In conclusion I have to observe that all your vessels shall be subject to trail by the Admiralty Courts of my Country-In addition to which I would advise you to be cautious in again interfering in the affairs of those who will not fail to detect your duplicity & want of common Honour & honesty.*

*I am not uninformed of your late attempt to supply our Enemy with powder while he was not only Blockaded, but actually besieged-*

*Edward Preble*

-G.C.



Capt. Edward Preble (HRNM photo of a U.S. Naval Academy Museum painting)