



YAGRGRAM #71 - SPRING 2015

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Don't miss our upcoming 20th Annual YAGR Reunion in Charleston SC.

Registration deadline is March 29, 2015. Details and registration form in this YAGRGRAM

In this YAGRGRAM

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2016 reunion announcement

Charleston Reunion Shirt Detail

YAGR newspaper clipping

Charleston Reunion hotel, tour & registration details

Reunion registration and shirt order forms



ALERT- ALERT

If you have not reserved a room at the Charleston Plaza Hotel ([843-747-1900](tel:843-747-1900) or [888-747-1900](tel:888-747-1900)) do it quick. **WE ARE RUNNING OUT OF ROOMS.** We have increased the number of rooms reserved for YAGRS once already. However, the hotel may not be able to give us an additional increase, especially as it gets closer to the reunion time, as other groups/organizations are also booking.

Looking Back - Lee Doyel

The following is a letter I sent to members of my ship (USS Tracer (AGR-15)) on the occasion of the inaugural dedication of the YAGRS exhibit onboard the USS Massachusetts (BB-59) in May 2002. I felt it appropriate to share it with all the YAGR membership on this 20th reunion.

Dear Shipmates,

As this reunion approached I began mulling over that 10 year period from the mid 50s to the mid 60s when the ships we were on "were out there" on the ramparts watching and waiting. Waiting for something that, think God never came.

In retrospect you always wonder if you really had much effect in the big picture, especially since the Navy was never enthusiastic about the barrier program. Our tours were in what was termed a "cold war" although there were "hot areas" like the Cuban crisis, recon planes shot down, Vietnam, etc. Some have labeled the cold war, and I believe appropriately so, as WWII. It was world wide and covered a span of 40 years. We were out there on the barrier waiting for WWII to begin, not realizing we were in WWII.

How significant were we in keeping the cold war cold? Who knows? Perhaps in the future as the Russian archives become more open and available we will learn exactly where we were on their priority list. Because we were early warning, I suspect it was near the top. I would like to think we were a big deterrent at the time. Anyway we can claim it. To my knowledge no Russian aircraft got through undetected.



Out there on those lonely patrols and endless night watches you could do some serious thinking. When it came down to it, I think deep down most of us knew we were expendable. If we disappeared, you knew the war was on. You realized just how vulnerable you were when on a mid watch a surface radar contact would come close aboard and couldn't be seen and then disappear. You soon learned that those mysterious contacts were probably submarine snorkels . . . whose, we never knew.

I think it is appropriate that the exhibit be on a battleship. A battleship is at the other end of the ship spectrum from a cargo ship and as such, the exhibit will be exposed to more people. The purpose of the exhibit has several purposes. One is to let people know how critical radar was and still is. Radar was the most powerful and persuasive weapon in WWII and crucial in the Battle of Britain. The exhibit also pays tribute to those men who were the lonely sentries in the back waters of the Navy and whose purpose was to sound the first alarm.

The space also allows those sailors and officers who served aboard these ships to share memories and efforts and to acquaint others with the ships and the cold war warriors that manned them. Additionally, I hope it serves as a "Bravo Zulu" (well done) testimonial to those men who stood those long and lonely vigils on the Pacific and Atlantic barriers between 1955 and 1965. It also allows us to pass on a legacy and be remembered. Hopefully we have earned the right to be remembered.

In Memory of Gail Miller

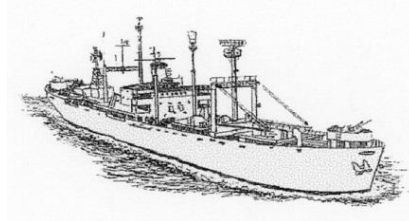
Gail Miller, wife of YAGRS founder Harry Miller, died on 17 November 2014 after a short stay in an extended care facility. She was a helpmate and an avid supporter to Harry in his establishment of the YAGRS Association. She complimented his leadership by being the leader of the ladies breakfast for many years at YAGR reunions setting quality standards for the breakfast activities. She shared Harry's vision regarding the Association and performed many of the clerical duties associated in the administration of the Association. She will be sorely missed by all.

Her funeral was celebrated on Monday, 24 November 2014 at the Bellows Funeral Chapel and was interred with Harry at the Rhode Island Veterans Cemetery in Exeter, RI. Association members present were as follows: Henry Mackay (AGR-12); John Hemminger (AGR-2); and Roland Cote (AGR-10). Thank you Gail for your support and contributions to YAGRS over the years.



SEA STORIES

send your sea stories to
mel.harder@snet.net



submitted by Bruce Bailey, USS Scanner, AGR-5

I just received the book, "The Guardian Class Radar Picket Ships," and I too, have a sea story about an incident during my underway training in San Diego about late 1960 or early 1961.

I was on the USS Scanner (AGR 5) from June 1959 to October 1961.

We had a difficult time executing many of the drills the FTG inspectors gave us, for example we couldn't really set Condition Zebra as we simply could not bolt down some of the hatches to our lower decks, like movie hold or ships lounge. Then, during our precision anchoring drill we approached the drop-anchor spot but even with back full we just chugged ahead nearly a mile, out of our assigned drop point. So needless to say the FTG inspector failed us on this one too. Our CO told the FTG we tried but one can't stop this kind of ship like a destroyer. Apparently none of the FTG inspectors had ever conducted a precision anchor drill on a freighter, which we really were.

But the most embarrassing incident happened during our final test, the ABC (atomic, biological, chemical) exercise, wherein we were supposed to break out geiger counters and check for hot spots after an "atomic bomb" had been detonated and we were in the path of fallout. One small problem. Geiger counters were not in our inventory, thus FTG had us make one from a small piece of wood. We drew dials on it and the FTG inspector on the bridge designated me as monitor because as QM3 I was free to do this chore along with keeping the log.



Now comes the embarrassing part: I was told to walk around the pilot house, waving this piece of wood and slowly saying "TICK - TICK" and when the inspector mentioned to me where he wanted a "Hot Spot" to be I was to say in a loud voice "TICK_TICK_TICK" and call the decon team to that spot. Everyone in the pilot house, including the CO couldn't hold back a smirk and laugh at my antics and I was red faced but the inspector kept me at it until the drill was over. My new nickname, aside from Beetle (as my last name is Bailey) became TICK TICK for about a month after we left San Diego. The FTG team decided to pass what we could do and let us go. Probably as glad to be rid of us as we were to be rid of them.

ship's coordinators - Ship's coordinators maintain an email list that is used to forward memos from the chair and advance notices of reunion plans to crew members. If you wish to be included, send an email to your ship's coordinator.

AGR-1	Frank St Mark	smarks117@hotmail.com	AGR-9	Frank Mahaffey	bnf@att.net
AGR-2	Ralph Rappuhun	rrappuhn@aol.com	AGR-10	Paul Langenus	plangenus@cox.net
AGR-3	Chuck Parker	chuckparker@gmail.com	AGR-11	George Sleeper	gsleeper@roadrunner.com
AGR-4	Steve Mierzejewski	smjm@bex.net	AGR-12	Jesse Germany	jgermany31@gmail.com
AGR-5	Bob Werstler	rdwerst@sbcglobal.net	AGR-13		
AGR-6	Lee Doolittle	tleedoo@u.washington.edu	AGR-14	Joe Jackson	jacksonj@pldi.net
AGR-7			AGR-15	Lee Doyel	mldoyel@cox.net
AGR-8	Ron Stasiak	ronstasiak@rocketmail.com	AGR-16	Frank McNamara	ec2sc1@comcast.net

Memo from Lee Doyel, Chair

In addition to needing ship's coordinators for the USS Picket (AGR-7) and USS Interdictor (AGR-13) I need someone to notify various websites of the dates and location of our reunions. Presently Frank Pulaski (web master) is temporarily doing it. He has a list of the various web sites and the process is very simple. Just forward the reunion information to the web site and they post it. The information and process can be "boiler plated" where you just put the information down and hit send. Check with Frank for details and how easy it is.

Membership - Mel Harder, Secretary: as of 1/22/15 we had 466 current members. The total member count by crew list is a little higher as some crewed on more than one ship.

Current Membership by Ship

48 - Guardian AGR-1	44 - Outpost AGR-10
37 - Lookout AGR-2	34 - Protector AGR-11
37 - Skywatcher AGR-3	41 - Vigil AGR-12
45 - Searcher AGR-4	12 - Interdictor AGR-13
28 - Scanner AGR-5	13 - Interpreter AGR-14
14 - Locator AGR-6	33 - Tracer AGR-15
14 - Picket AGR-7	18 - Watchman AGR-16
28 - Interceptor AGR-8	17 - YR-65
25 - Investigator AGR-9	

Crew Lists

I update information (address, phone etc.) on the crew lists as I receive it. Prior to May 31, when memberships expire and dues payments are due, I send the crew lists out for printing. I order printed, stapled and trifolded crew lists for each ship based on the number of current YAGR members for that ship (see above). These crew lists are mailed out with the membership cards as dues are received over the next membership year. If you would like the most current crew list for your ship, email me at mel.harder@snet.net.

Dues Payment - Mel Harder, secretary

dues are \$17/year - make checks out to YAGRS ASSOCIATION

mail to Armand Lamarche, Treasurer, 3 Finnway St., North Billerica MA 01862

The current membership year ends May 31, 2015. The highlighted date on your address label is the date your current membership is good through. If that date is **5/31/14** or earlier, please update your membership by making a dues payment. Upon dues payment, you will receive a new membership card and crew list. Please complete the information below and send with dues payment. You may pay for more than one year.

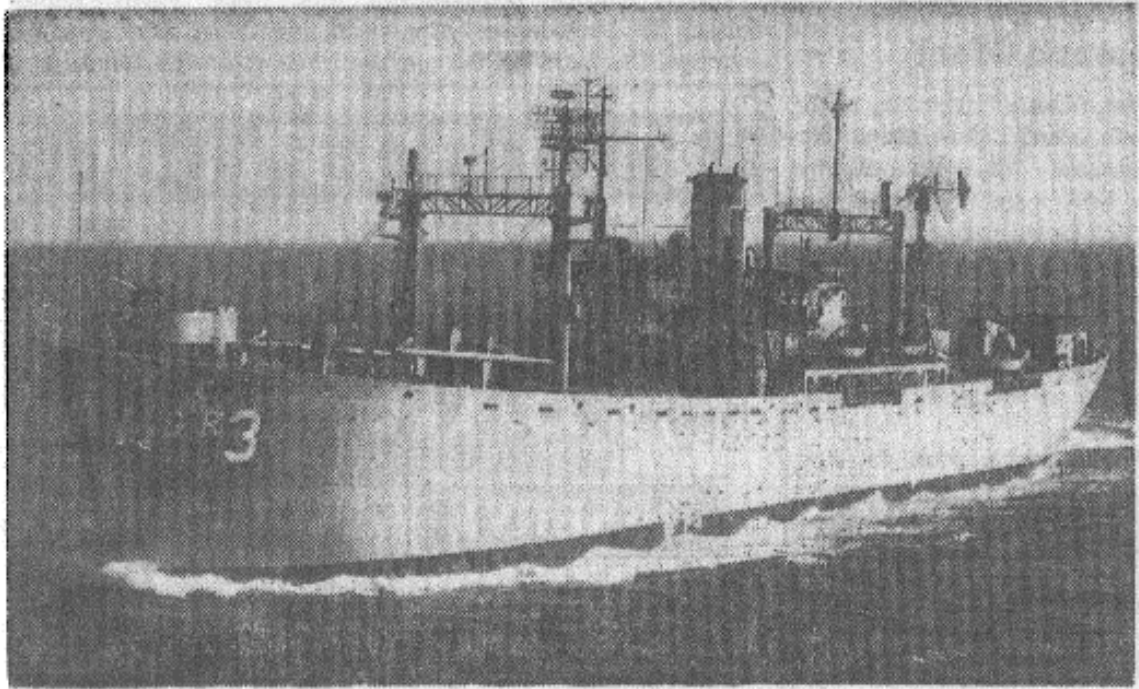
If your mailing label is **5/31/13** or earlier, this will be your last YAGRGRAM. So please send a dues payment along to treasurer Armand Lamarche.

Name: _____ Ship: _____

Address: _____

amount enclosed: _____ Phone: _____ email: _____

I don't know what newspaper this article came from. Mel Harder



Calling it a career? The radar picket ship, USS Skywatcher.

—Navy Photo

Grueling Duty Will End Soon on 11 Picket Ships

By JOHN N. RIPPEY

Some of the most grueling but unglamorous duty in the U. S. Navy will soon end for eight tired Liberty ships and three slim destroyer escorts that now operate from Narragansett Bay.

They are radar picket ships that will be deactivated after a decade of service as part of the electronic barrier against bomber attack.

The eight converted Liberties operate from Davisville and the three destroyer escorts from Newport. They steam to positions 300 to 350 miles off the coast, the Liberties on posts from Cape Cod to South Carolina, the destroyer escorts reportedly farther south.

Until recently, the veteran World War II Liberties remained on their sea stations for three and a half weeks, then came back for two weeks in port.

In bad weather, the time at sea could seem interminable, especially for the radar destroyer escorts, which bob like corks in heavy seas.

Lt. (j.g.) Richard M. Hardy, operations officer for Radar Picket Squadron Two, which consists of the eight converted Liberties, said in comparison to typical destroyer duty, the old freighters had the advantage of always returning to their home port where families and girlfriends wait, while destroyers are not at sea for such long periods but are away from home port for longer periods of time, frequently on foreign duty.

Lieutenant Hardy said the Liberties also have the advantage of more space for individual crew members and for communal activities.

For instance, he said they have libraries and in one hold they have a woodworking shop for those so inclined. In another hold is a gymnasium laid out with a basketball court. The men can also play volleyball.

The operations officer said some of the hold space is filled with ballast so that the Liberties will not roll so much. The ships must be relatively stable for maximum efficiency of the radar, he said.

The old Liberties have had

their troubles, however. For instance, the Searcher was damaged by a six-hour fire in 1955. In 1959 one of her boilers was disabled by leaking tubes and she had to be towed to Boston. Last year the ship lost a propeller at sea and had to be towed to New York.

Life aboard a radar destroyer escort is much more constricted, and it can be much more uncomfortable.

At one time many more radar destroyer escorts operated out of Newport, but in 1960 the Navy dropped a line of pickets that operated much farther to seaward than the present ships, as technology advanced. The missile age and further technological advances have not put the carrier forces out of business, the Navy announced yesterday.