



Radars Picket Ships

YAGRGRAM #25

Summer 2002

C/O Harry Miller, 230 West Forest Ave Pawtucket, RI 02860-3318 (401) 724-7278 e-mail YAGR@MSN.COM



Newport, RI Reunion

The 7th annual reunion went on without any major problems. We had 194 men in attendance from all 16 ships and both YR's. Also we had 147 spouses/guests who accompanied the former crewmen, for a total of 341 people. This was the largest reunion by far. If you missed this reunion, you missed a good one!

Monday our pre-tour to Plymouth Plantations and Plymouth, MA (the Mayflower) had 95 people who enjoyed the sites and seeing how the Pilgrims lived in the 1600's. And, not to be forgotten, they had the chance to see Plymouth Rock.

The first official day of the reunion (Tuesday) saw a very busy and crowded hospitality room in the hotel. Many chose to sit by the pool. Thankfully the weather was good. Some of us renewed old acquaintances with shipmates we have not seen in over 40 years, while others greeted each other and caught up on what has happened since the last reunion. Not to be outdone by them, the spouses/guests got right into the spirit of things.

Wednesday we boarded 7 buses for the ride to the Battleship Massachusetts located in Fall River, MA for our memorial service and the dedication of our exhibit.

With the sound of a bagpiper playing "Amazing Grace" we remembered our deceased shipmates by casting a wreath to the waters in their honor. This was followed by a 21 gun salute with the ships 5"50 guns and the playing of TAPS. There weren't too many dry eyes on the fantail of the Massachusetts that day.

On a lighter note, at the conclusion of the memorial we all moved to our exhibit. Judging by the comments, the men who worked on the exhibit did an outstanding job.

Thursday, the men held their meeting while the spouses/guests had their buffet breakfast. That night we used 6 buses to go to our banquet. We had a good meal, good music and a good time.

Friday was spent saying our good-byes and making plans to meet each other at our next reunion in Pensacola, FL.

YAGR'S 8th Reunion Pensacola, FL

YAGR'S will be holding its 8th reunion in Pensacola, FL on Thursday May 15, Friday May 16 and Saturday May 17, 2003.

The host hotel will be the

Holiday Inn, University Mall

7200 Plantation Rd.

Pensacola, FL 32504

National Reservation Line 1-800- 465-4329

Tell them you are with YAGR'S and give them the 3 digit code of "YAG".

Or you can call the hotel direct at 850-474-0100.

Our room rate is \$63.00 per night.

While the details are not set at this time, at least you know the dates and the hotel. In the next YAGRGRAM the reunion registration and itinerary will be given, but it will no doubt follow all other reunions. Day one will be for checking in; day two we have our group tour; and day three the men's meeting and spouses/guests function will be held in the morning, and that night we will have our banquet. Also most likely a pretour will be set up for the early arrivals on Wednesday May 14.

50/50 Raffle

\$2,418.00 worth of raffle tickets were taken this year. Roy Wagner (AGR-14, 1958-61) was this year's winner. His share of the raffle was \$1,214.00. He in turn donated \$214.00 towards the exhibit on the Massachusetts. We thank him for his donation. The other \$1,214.00 will be set aside for use for our exhibit on the Battleship Massachusetts.

A Thank you goes out to all of you who participated in this year's raffle.

Pictures

I want to thank
Tom Chaffin (YR-65)
Yvonne Cote
Phyllis Hooper
Frank Pulaski (AGR-4)
for the pictures that are in this YAGRGRAM.

Donations

Tom Chaffin (YR-65, 1959-62) has donated \$570.00 towards the Battleship exhibit. Tom and the other YR crewmen who have worked on board the ship, have done off site work and have donated money, are just as important in our ongoing efforts on the Battleship as those of us from the Radar I Ships.

Tom was presented with a lithograph of the USS Guardian AGR-1, circa. 1955 at the Thursday night banquet. This lithograph was taken from a painting done by Ken Charon, Jr.

USS Interpreter AGR-14

Richard Shook (AGR-14, 1958-59)
has started a web page for the
USS Interpreter AGR-14
http://www.angelfire.com/mo3/agr_14/

Spouses / Guests

at the reunion



Once again we had a successful spouses/guests breakfast. It's true the room wasn't ideal but we made the best of it and had a good time in spite of it.

It appears our favorite food is c
Some people decorated their tee shirts with healthy food; but in the end, candy won out. Donna Schrawder won with her candy wrapper tee shirt. She got to take a "Taste of Rhode Island" home with her as her prize.

The penny social raffle was a success (especially for Carol Ann Caruso). There were lots of really great prizes. Many people donated home-made crafts. Unfortunately, because we bring everything to the table at the last minute, we didn't have a chance to find out who made them. I'm sure the person who won the American flag afghan was really happy with her prize. (See the picture on this page.)

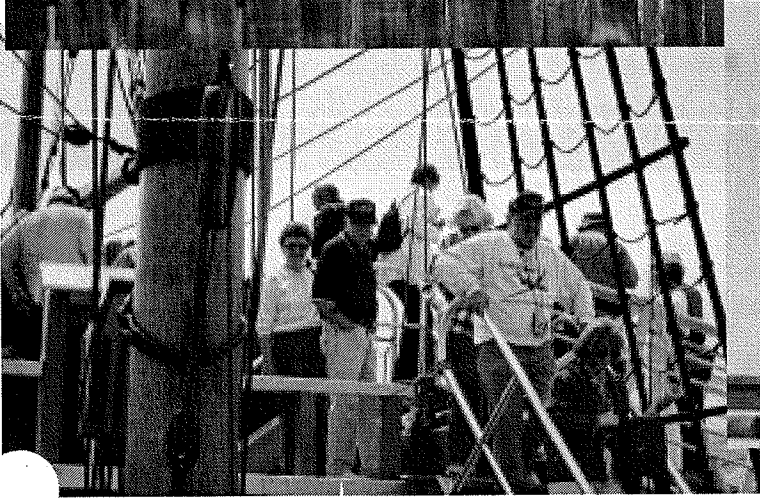
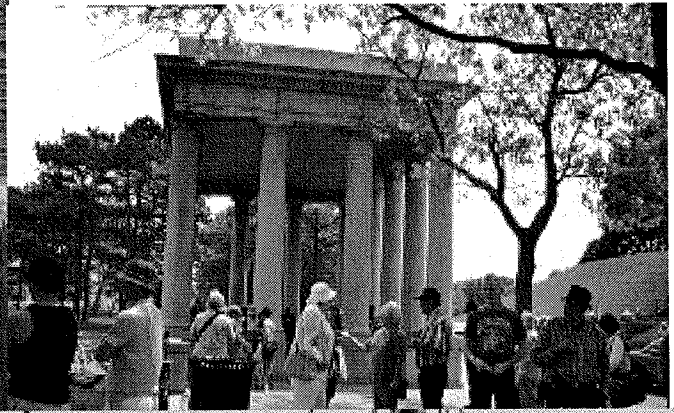
Thanks to all the "runners" who brought the items to the microphone and to Judy Bosnengo who delivered the prizes (and she had to use a cane to boot!).

The recipe book is coming along (not as fast as I had hoped.) I will keep you informed of its progress.

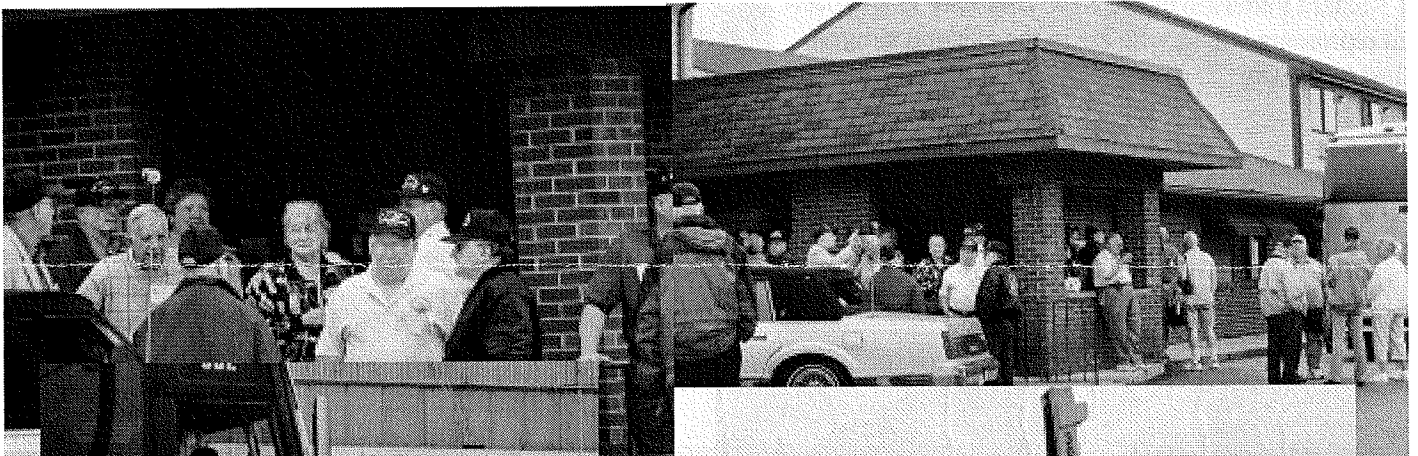
Next year's contest: decorate a hat that represents your home State. You have a whole year to come up with a prize winner — and a hat is easier to parade around in than a tee shirt.

SEE YOU ALL IN PENSACOLA!!!

Pre tour Plymouth, MA

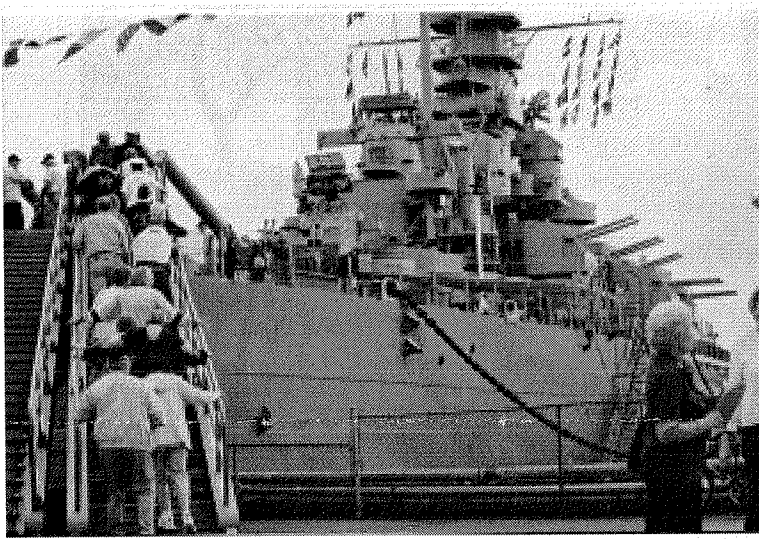


Waiting for the buses to depart for the Battleship Massachusetts



**Memorial Service And Dedication Of Radar Picket Ship Exhibit
On Board
The
Battleship Massachusetts**

May 29, 2002

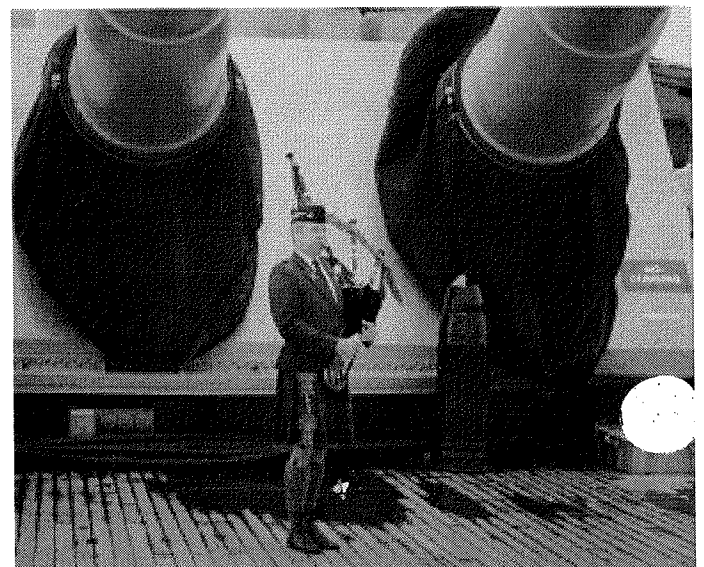


4 PEOPLE WERE CHOSEN TO CAST THE WREATH.

- (1) Rear Admiral Thomas Patterson represented the USS Guardian AGR-1, the first Radar Picket Ship in commission
- (2) Harry Henzen represented the USS Tracer AGR-15, the last Radar Picket Ship that was in commission
- (3) Marion Hinman represented our loved ones who waited for our return from sea.
- (4) LT Richard Patterson of the New York City Fire department represented those who are in the existing struggle against terrorism.

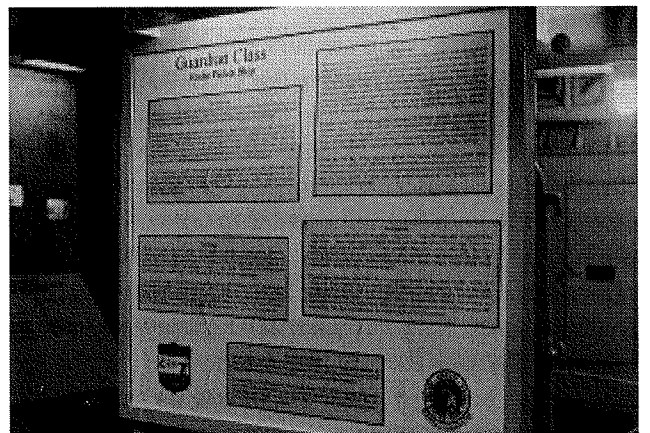
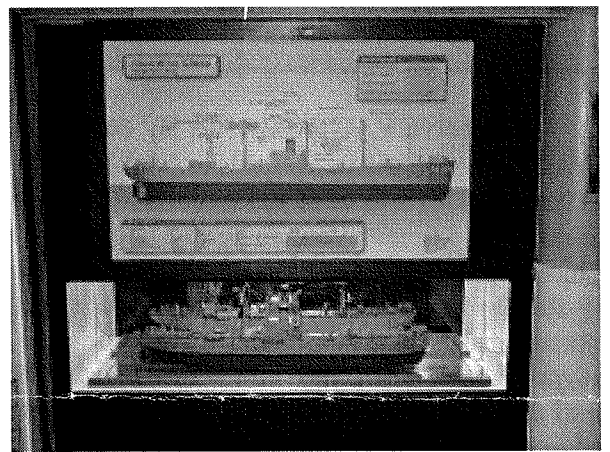
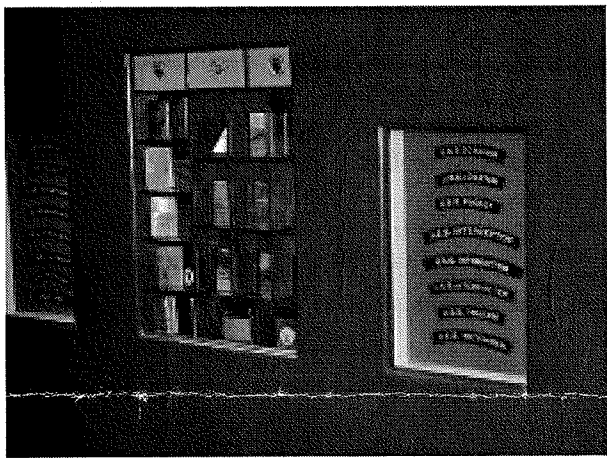
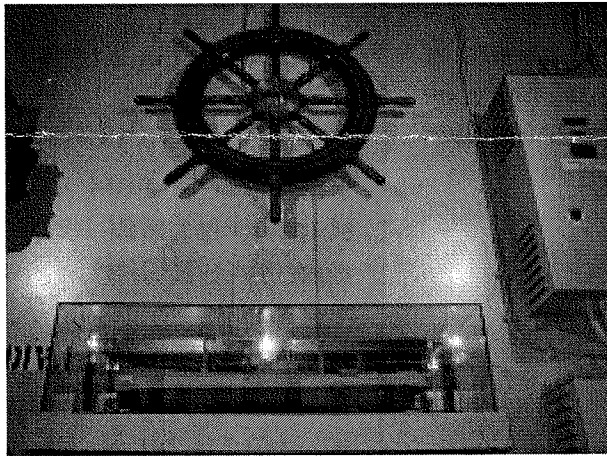


**IN CASTING THIS WREATH WE HONOR AND REMEMBER
OUR DECEASED SHIPMATES. MAY THEY REST IN PEACE.**



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June 1, 2002 - May 31, 2003

YAGR'S Dues

Dues are being accepted for the above YAGR'S year

Dues are \$17.00 the first year you pay your dues and \$15.00 each following year. If you have paid your dues, there will be a date above your name on the mailing label. If there is no date, your dues are not paid.

If you have paid your dues and there is not a date on the label or you have not received your membership card and your updated list of former crewmen from your ship/ships, please get in touch with me.

USS Searcher AGR-4

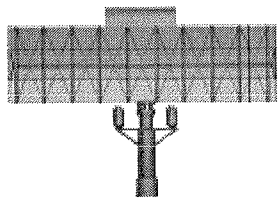
James R. Buzbee
603 Clubhouse Rd.
Rio Delmar, CA 95003
831-662-2636

is looking for information on his father, Herman who died in the engine room fire on board the Searcher in 1955.

Crew List Of Found Crewmen For Ships.

An updated list of found crewmen for your ship/ships is sent to you when you send in your information request form when we first contact you and when you pay your dues each year as per the dues notice above. These are the only times the list will be sent out to you.

Also please let me know if you do not receive the list. I cannot state this enough. It is your responsibility to let me know if you do not get it.



NOTE

Orders for hats and other ships store items will be taken with the next YAGRGRAM.

If you placed an order for anything from the ships store and have not received it, let me know. Everything has been shipped that was ordered.

Receive YAGRGRAMS By e-mail

YAGRGRAMS will be available in Adobe Portable Document format (PDF) to those of you who would like to receive it via e-mail 2 or 3 times a year. To be able to open the text and graphics that all YAGRGRAMS have, you must have **Acrobat® Reader** installed in your computer. Adobe Systems Incorporated makes **Acrobat® Reader** available at no charge to anyone who wishes a copy, and permits further distribution of this software. No endorsement or warranty is implied or expressed.

<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>

Once you have it and are sure you have it working properly, you will be able to receive the YAGRGRAMS by e-mail.

To be added to the e-mail list

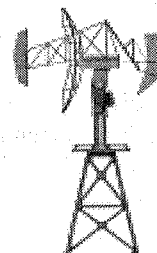
1. Make sure everything is set up on your end properly.
2. Send me an e-mail message saying that you want to be added to the list with your full name and ship served on. Please at this time have only this information in the e-mail message.
3. Once I receive your message I will send you a reply message in a PDF format. This way we will both know that you are able to receive and open the YAGRGRAM.
4. If you are having a problem, please do not ask me to try

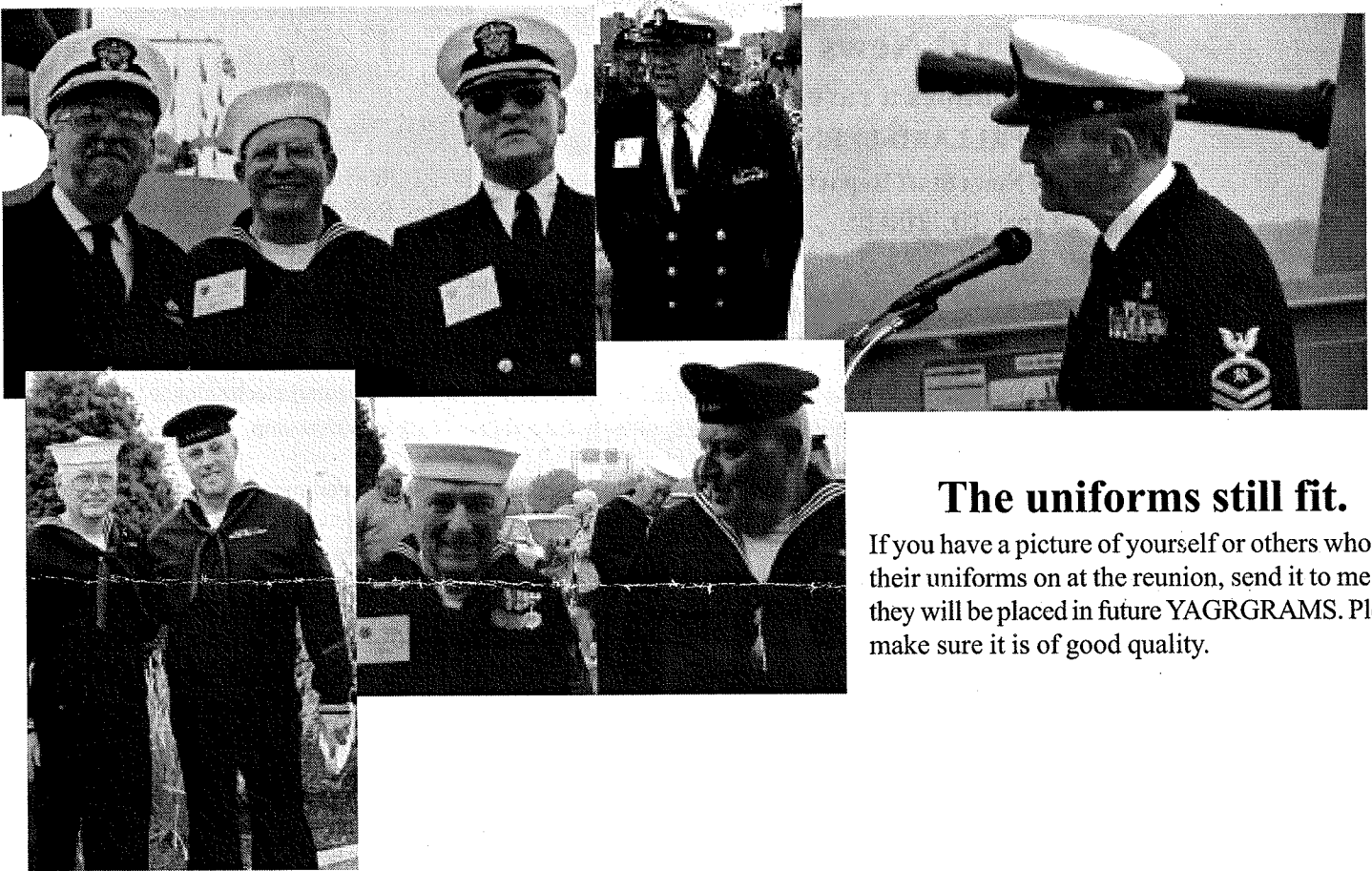
to troubleshoot what is wrong. I am not a computer person and you probably know more about computers than I do any way.

Something to keep in mind:

When receiving the YAGRGRAM, it can take a few minutes to download to your computer.

So far 24 people have requested to receive the YAGRGRAM by e-mail. For this to work we will need more of you who want in.





The uniforms still fit.

If you have a picture of yourself or others who had their uniforms on at the reunion, send it to me and they will be placed in future YAGRGRAMS. Please make sure it is of good quality.

The Herald News Battleship Cove unveils Cold War defense exhibit The Herald News Staff May 29, 2002

FALL RIVER — The embers of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had barely cooled when the Soviets challenged U.S. Military superiority by detonating their own atomic device on Aug. 29, 1949. As the threat of long-range Badger bombers loomed over the consciousness of the American public, top armed forces strategists agreed that early detection was the key to national survival. Radar picket ships, designated YAGR/AGRs, were part of an integrated air defense early warning system to warn the United States of Soviet air attacks. Extending across Alaska, Northern Canada, Greenland, and the North Atlantic, this system was headquartered in Colorado Springs in a secret bunker in Cheyenne Mountain.

At 10 a.m. today, Battleship Cove will unveil New England's first interpretation of these covert Cold War relics at a premiere that will include a crew members' reunion, memorial and wreath-casting ceremony and 21-gun salute on board Battleship Massachusetts.

Designed by Harry Miller and funded by the national YAGR Association in Pawtucket, RI, this exhibit will be introduced by Battleship Cove's chief preservation officer, Commander Stafford Morss. "The YAGRs represented a critical component of this nation's air defense in the Cold War," said Morss, who served on board the picket ship Protector during the tumultuous April 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. "Given the events of the last year, one must not underestimate the importance of the advance warning provided by such surveillance."

Converted from mothballed World War II Liberty cargo ships, the YAGR/AGRs were evenly divided into two eight-ship squadrons, with four designated ocean stations off the Atlantic coast and four stations off the Pacific Coast. East Coast ships were home-ported at the Navy Construction Battalion Base at Davisville, Rhode Island. The Pacific Coast ships operated out of San Francisco Bay. Manned by 165-man Navy crews skilled at fighter interception tactics, the ships were under the administrative control of the Eastern and Western Sea Frontiers. North American Air Defense Command was assigned operational control.

Equipped with three massive high power radars, extensive radio communications and an airplane-homing beacon, YAGRs engaged in battles against Strategic Air Command bombers testing NORAD air defense capabilities with penetration tactics including electronic jamming and deception. In the early 1960s, barely a decade after their inception, land-based and submarine-launched ballistic missiles rendered these venerable vessels obsolete. By 1966, all the ships were out of commission, replaced by massive shore-based radars, thus ending an intriguing chapter in American naval history.

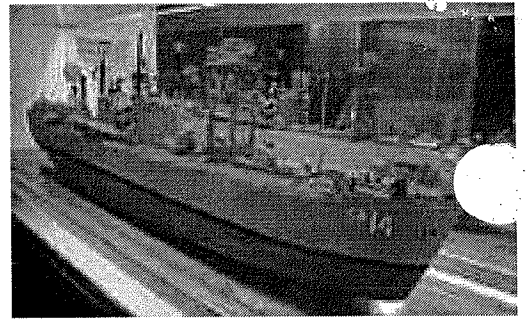
The Herald News

Battleship Cove exhibit honors a rare breed of Sailor

DEBORAH ALLARD-BERNARDI,

Herald News Staff Reporter

May 30, 2002



Herald News Photo by OMAR BRADLEY

FALL RIVER — While people today are well aware that war strategists are working with sophisticated electronics to predict terrorist attacks on the United States, many may never have heard of an older form of early detection — a radar picket ship.

On Wednesday, Battleship Cove unveiled its new picket ship exhibit and held a crew member reunion and memorial service for the sailors who worked on those ships. There was also a 21-gun salute, "Taps," a wreath-laying and a Korean War veterans color guard display.

Radar picket ships, called YAGRs (pronounced Yagers), were used for about a decade in the 1950s and '60s as an early warning system to predict Soviet air attacks on the United States. The ships were equipped with radar, communication equipment and homing beacons, sophisticated for their time, which tracked air travel all over the country. The men often went out to sea for 30 to 35 days at a time, spending their lives below decks. "I was in the operations department," said Captain Albert Nannini, who served aboard the YAGR USS Tracer from 1960 to 1962 — his first duty aboard a ship.

"We were very busy monitoring air traffic," Nannini said. "We might not see the sun for 30 days." Working with a small crew, Nannini said they were like a family living on a large ship. Below decks, they had a swimming pool and a room with a volleyball court. He went on to say that because YAGR ships were unseen and not too many knew about them, it was like they didn't exist, not even to the Navy. "We operated independently of the Navy," Nannini said. "When we went to sea we were under the operation of the Air Force. (The Navy) didn't know we existed." With the permanent exhibit aboard the Battleship Massachusetts, however, the existence of YAGR ships and sailors has now been immortalized.

"They were the silent heroes of that era of the cold war," said Capt. Ernst M. Cummings, USCG (Ret.), executive director of USS Massachusetts Memorial Committee Inc., at the ceremony.

Radar picket ships saw their demise early on. Technological changes came quickly. Barely a decade after the picket ship's inception, land-based and submarine-launched ballistic missiles rendered the ships obsolete. By 1966, all of the radar picket ships were out of commission. They were replaced by massive shore-based radar units, ending their chapter in American history.

Many of the men who served aboard those ships were present with their families at Wednesday's ceremony, some dressed in original uniform. There were 345 attendees who turned out for the unveiling.

The exhibit was designed by Harry Miller, founder of the YAGR Association and former crew member of the radar picket ship USS Protector and funded by the national YAGR Association in Pawtucket, R.I. "It is something all of us can be proud of," Miller said. "It's the only exhibit of its kind aboard a museum ship." Miller and 15 picket ship crew members worked for the past three years to develop phase 1 of the exhibit. Located on the second deck, port side forward, the exhibit consists mostly of model ships and photographs, giving the viewer an idea of how these ships contributed to the country's safety.

"The YAGRs represented a critical component of this nation's air defense in the Cold War," said Cmdr. Strafford Morss, USNR (Ret.), and Battleship Cove's chief preservation officer. Morss was an engineering officer from 1960 to 1962 on the USS Protector. "At sea, life was smooth and rough, hot and cold, wet and windy, clear and foggy, but never dull," Morss reminisced.

Rear Admiral Thomas Patterson, representing the USS Guardian, AGR-1, the first radar ship in commission, remembered the day he received his assignment to serve aboard the YAGR. "I received (my orders) in August of 1954," Patterson said. "Not too many people knew what a YAGR was. I drove out there, and there she was, a liberty ship." Patterson said he typically spent 35 days on the ship and five on port. "We'll be remembered on this fine ship," Patterson said. "We did our job the best we could."

According to Miller, the second phase of the exhibit will include a radar room, photos, plaques, programs and ship relics. Considering a minor class, Miller said no one really knew about or cared about radar picket ships. "It gives the public a better idea of what (picket ships) were," Miller said.