



Radar Picket Ships

YAGRGRAM #34

Fall 2004

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

San Francisco, CA

May 19, 20, 21, 2005

YAGR'S 10th reunion San Francisco, CA (San Mateo).

The days and dates are
Thursday May 19, 2005
Friday May 20, 2005
Saturday May 21, 2005

Our host hotel will be the:

Marriott San Mateo
1770 South Amphlett Boulevard
San Mateo, CA 94402
To make your room reservations, call
1-800-556-8972

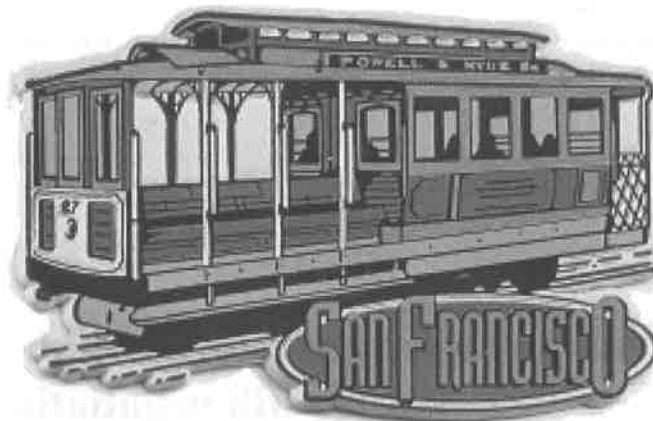
Make sure you tell them that you are with YAGR'S military reunion group to get the group rate.

Our group rate is \$79.00 a night for a single/double room.

The Marriott is all set up for receiving room reservations for YAGR'S at this time. We ask that you reserve your room as soon as possible. Doing so will enable us to arrange for more rooms to be set aside for YAGR'S, if needed.

You can view the hotel on their web site at
<http://www.sanmateomarriott.com/>

The San Mateo Marriott has 476 guestrooms and plenty of space for our hospitality room and banquet room, so once again we will not have to worry about any space limitations. Parking is free for overnight guests. The hotel has a free shuttle from the San Francisco Airport to the hotel. We will also be able to utilize the hotel's free shuttle to take us to nearby locations of the hotel and also to connect us with Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), which will get us into San Francisco.



The projected reunion schedule

Wednesday May 18, 2005: (Optional)

Pre-reunion tour.

Thursday May 19, 2005:

Day one of the reunion, hospitality room open.

Friday May 20, 2005:

Reunion group tour

Bus tour of San Francisco.

Tour of SS Jeremiah O'Brien with lunch on board.

Saturday May 21, 2005:

Mens meeting.

Spouses/Guests breakfast/penny social/contest.

Evening banquet.

Sunday May 22, 2005: (Optional)

(A) Post reunion cruise on the SS Jeremiah O'Brien. or

(B) Post reunion tour of Sausalito, CA.

Don't forget, make your room reservations now!!!!

Optional Pre Reunion Tour.

Wednesday May 18, 2005.

We will board a luxury motor coach for a narrated tour of scenic San Francisco and Marin Counties and the Cameros wine region in Sonoma and Napa Counties. The Cameros region is host to a dozen wineries and more than 6,500 acres of vineyards. Sonoma and Napa counties' Mediterranean climate makes them the premier wine grape growing provinces of North America.

To provide you with as broad an experience as possible, we are scheduled to be visiting 3 wineries: Gloria Ferrer, Madonna Estates and Viansa, where we will have lunch.

Group Tour.

Friday May 20, 2005.

See what the locals see up close. Once around town, hitting all the hot spots, from Fisherman's Wharf to the Palace of Fine Arts, including the Presidio, Golden Gate Bridge, Cliff House, Seal Rock, Twin Peaks, Mission Dolores, Nob Hill, Union Square, Chinatown and North Beach.

Once the San Francisco tour ends, we will go on board the S.S. Jeremiah O'Brien. The O'Brien is tied up at pier 45 (Fishermans Wharf).

While we are on the O'Brien, we will have a box lunch and a tour of the ship.



Optional Post Reunion Tours.

Sunday May 22, 2005. (Option A)

Cruise on the S.S. Jeremiah O'Brien. The cost is \$125.00, which includes a day cruise on the O'Brien, bus transport from the hotel to the ship and back to the hotel.

Sausalito, CA Tour. (Option B)

As an alternate to those of you who do not want to take the O'Brien cruise, we have arranged a tour to Sausalito, CA. Sausalito is across the bay from San Francisco, and I am told is very picturesque.

Our bus will take us from the hotel to pier 41 to pick up the ferry for a short ride across the bay to Sausalito.

Sausalito offers the Mediterranean-style charm of a seaside village tucked amongst the hills on the Bay. Step aboard a Blue & Gold Ferry for a smooth, quick ride to this delightful community. Art galleries, shops and gourmet restaurants provide hours of browsing, shopping and dining. Experience the uniqueness Sausalito is known for around the world.

Lunch will be on your own.

Alcatraz

To pass along some information to those of you who plan to take a tour to Alcatraz, I have been told that you should plan to get your tickets 30 days or so in advance.

One of the tour companies that goes to Alcatraz is

Blue and Gold Fleet

Web site: www.blueandgoldfleet.com

Phone number: [415] 705-5555

**The reunion registration form will be sent out with the next YAGRGRAM.
We are still negotiating costs for a few items.**

Spouses/Guests



This year's contest will be to decorate a tote bag.

In 1955 the first radar picket ship was commissioned. S-o-o, our theme will be the "Fabulous Fifties." Rock and roll - American Bandstand - the possibilities are endless. Decorating a tote bag has lots of advantages. It's easy to pack in your suitcase going to the reunion and it can be filled with souvenirs returning home. Start to plan your entry now. You could be the winner! It appears that we can expect more first timers at this year's reunion than we normally see. The following information will tell you what to expect.

The Saturday morning spouses/guests function is as follows. We start off with our breakfast followed by the bag contest and ending with a raffle.

We ask everyone to bring an inexpensive gift for the raffle (something you would like to win). Raffle tickets are given to all spouses/guests at no cost. The winner of the tote bag contest is voted on by all at the breakfast.

USS Outpost AGR-10

Thanks to Eugene (Gene) Juba (AGR-10, 1956-58) who sent is an original builder's plaque (16" X 11") from the SS Francis J. O'Gara (USS Outpost AGR-10).



When I received the plaque that Gene sent, I was a little surprised to see that it was made out of bakelite. Checking with a couple of sources. I found out that all of the Liberty Ships had a brass builder's plaque placed on them, but some of the ships had additional ones made that would be placed in various locations. These were made out of other materials. So while we do not have the brass builder's plaque, we still have an original plaque that was on the SS Francis J. O'Gara.

SS Francis J. O'Gara

I knew that the O'Gara had an interesting story as being the only Liberty Ship that was named for a living person but I did not know the full story. So with a little research I found the following article. While it is interesting, it is also very disturbing.

On July 2, 1944 the SS Jean Nicolet, a U.S. Liberty Ship, was steaming along in the Indian Ocean, loaded with materials for the China Burma-India (CBI) Theater of War. She had set sail from San Pedro, CA. on May 12, and made a stop at Fremantle, Australia for bunker oil, stores, and to discharge some of the cargo. It departed from Fremantle on June 21, bound for Colombo, Ceylon, where it would pick up orders, prior to proceeding to Calcutta, India. Its cargo consisted of heavy machinery, trucks, steel plates, landing barges, steel mooring pontoons and some general wartime cargo. At 7:09 PM, ship's time, on this date, she was located in position 3.28 South, 74.30 East, or about nine hundred miles south of Ceylon. She was suddenly hit by two torpedoes which were fired from the Japanese submarine, I-8. The first torpedo hit between number two and number four holds on the same side. Minutes later the captain ordered all to abandon ship as he feared it might capsize, due to heavy listing to starboard.

Everyone abandoned ship safely in lifeboats and rafts. The radioman, Augustus Tilden, sent out a radio message before leaving his post that the ship had been torpedoed in the above position. Both Calcutta and Ceylon acknowledged this message, which eventually would save twenty-five lives. Shortly after the ship was abandoned, the submarine surfaced. It was dark so the sub used its powerful searchlight to locate the boats and rafts. The survivors were threatened with machine guns and ordered to come alongside by a Japanese who spoke perfect English.

Someone slipped over the side from one of the rafts, but he was seen, and ordered to get back on the raft. All men were ordered to swim to the sub. Five of the survivors on the far side of the raft were not discovered, so they did not board the sub. They were four Armed Guard men and an Army enlisted man. One of the men forced to swim to the sub was William M. Musser, a seventeen-year-old messman, from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, who was making his first trip to sea. After boarding the sub, William was escorted towards the bow; and as he walked forward, one of the Japanese sailors swung him around and hit him over the head, as Musser fell, the Japanese sailor kicked his body over the side. Next in line was Richard L. Kean, a nineteen-year-old ordinary seaman from Portland, Oregon. As he climbed from the lifeboat to the sub's deck, he was searched and then they removed his life jacket. They bound his arms behind his back, and the man who was leading him forward, suddenly turned with a bayonet in his hand and plunged it into Kean's stomach. As Kean doubled over with pain, he was struck in the head with a rifle butt and kicked over the side into the water.

As each survivor boarded the sub, they were immediately roughed up, searched, had their life jackets removed and all their valuables, shoes and ID tags taken from them. They were bound with rope and wire with their heads bowed and on their knees. Any one who raised his head, or made a noise of any kind was beaten with iron pipes and cut with bayonets. Some of the men vomited and their blood poured on to the sub's deck. Captain David Martin Nilsson, Gus Tilden, the radioman, and Francis J. O'Gara, the purser, were taken to the conning tower and shoved below. They were never seen again by the other survivors.

While this was going on, the sub cruised the area, looking for other lifeboats or rafts that they might have missed. The sub then commenced to shell the Nicolet which was still afloat. As the sub cruised around, a wave came over the deck of the sub, washing three of the men overboard, whose hands were still tied behind their backs. Carl Rosenbaum, fireman, and seaman George Kenmore Hess survived, but Lt. Morrison R. Miller, U.S. Army, was never seen again. Lt. Miller had suffered a broken arm when abandoning the ship, so his chances of surviving were slim. In the meantime, a gauntlet of ten to fifteen Japanese was formed on the after deck behind the conning tower and those held on the fore deck could not see what really was happening. They could, however, hear the horrible screams of the men who were forced to go through the gauntlet. The Japanese were armed with steel stanchions, bayonets and rifles. Waiting at the end of the line was a huge man, holding a rifle with both hands, bayonet fixed. If any of the Nicolet crew survived to the end of the gauntlet, he was impaled on the bayonet of this man and his body heaved overboard like a side of beef. Three men survived this torture by jumping overboard halfway through the gauntlet. Even though their hands were still bound, they decided they would take their chances in the ocean, regardless of sharks. All three suffered wounds from bayonets and steel pipes. Two of them were from the Merchant crew. Charles E. Pyle was the first assistant engineer and Harold R. Lee was a messman. The third was Robert C. Butler, U.S.N. technician.

While all this torture was going on, those on the fore deck were unaware of what was happening on the after deck, where one by one the men were led to the slaughter until there were about thirty men left alive on the sub's deck. At this time, the

diving siren sounded and the Japanese crew were ordered below. An aircraft had been reported on the sub's radar heading in the direction of the submarine.

Those left on deck, with their hands tied behind their back, were left to drown. Seventeen of these men drowned or were killed by sharks. Thirteen survived this ordeal by swimming in the shark infested waters all night, some still with their hands tied while others were able to get free by themselves, or were freed by a Navy Armed Guard who had concealed a knife in his jumper. He cut as many free as he could as the sub disappeared below the surface. Apparently the aircraft was answering the call which Tilden had made before he abandoned ship. Many of the survivors were in the water thirteen to fourteen hours without any support.

The next morning, at about 8:00, July 3, the survivors saw a Liberator plane approaching the scene. It dropped a small rubber dinghy made to hold four people. Eventually seven men ended up in this dinghy. An hour or so later, three more planes (PBY's) appeared overhead, looking for survivors, and then disappeared without doing anything to help. On July 4, at daylight, another Liberator appeared overhead. Then a ship was seen approaching. It was HMS Hoxa, on her way to rescue survivors. Seven men were found clinging to the small dinghy, thirteen others were rescued from rafts and dinghies and three others were found clinging to wreckage. They were all taken to Addu Atoll of Maldive Islands group and landed there on July 5 where they were interrogated by the British Intelligence.

They left Addu Atoll on July 12, 1944, aboard the HMIS Sonneti, and arrived in Colombo on July 14. On July 27, they were flown to Calcutta, India, where the three Army men were assigned to their duties. The ten Merchant Marine crewmen and ten Naval Armed Guard were eventually taken to Bombay by train. At Bombay, they boarded the U.S. Army Transport, General William Mitchell. They finally got back to the States, landing in San Diego, California on October 6, more than three months after their horrible ordeal. Of the hundred men that sailed aboard the SS Jean Nicolet, only twenty-three survived. Thirty-one Merchant Marine seamen were lost, eighteen U.S. Navy Armed Guard never made it back and twenty-seven passengers met their doom.

Francis J. O'Gara was found alive in Ofuna prison camp near Yokohama, Japan after the end of the war. He had been

declared dead by the U.S. Navy. He even had a Liberty ship named for him. He was the only living person who was to see his name on a Liberty ship, which was the SS Francis J. O'Gara, built June, 1945, in Panama City, Florida.

After the I-8 submerged, O'Gara spent forty-four days at the submarine suffering frequent beatings, and denial of food a... water most of the time. During this time, he got a glimpse of Captain Nilsson and Gus Tilden, the radio operator. The I-8 reached Penang on August 15, where he and Captain Nilsson were taken ashore. He never saw Gus Tilden again, but O'Gara got a glimpse of Captain Nilsson, through a window in his cell. He was returned aboard the I-8 on September 15 and eventually ended up in Yokohama on October 9, 1944. Captain Nilsson was left behind when O'Gara was taken from Penang to Japan. Nothing is known of his fate. In the opinion of O'Gara, Captain Nilsson was also put on board a sub to be transported back to Japan and the sub was sunk enroute by the U.S. Navy.

The commander of the I-8 sub was a brutal, sadistic madman named Tetsunosuke Ariizumi. He had been named "The Butcher" by the British Royal Navy because of several other atrocities he had committed against Allied Merchant and Navy gun crews, similar to that of the Jean Nicolet.

Toward the final days of World War II, Ariizumi was a flotilla commander and was on the I-401, which was the largest submarine ever built at the time, a boat of 5000 tons equipped with three catapult planes. Subs of that class were called undersea aircraft carriers. At this time, he proposed using the I-401 and three other subs of that class to destroy the Panama Canal. When his plan was scrapped in favor of attacking Ulithi, an atoll of the western Caroline Islands, he was infuriated. Upon receipt of the Japanese emperor's surrender orders, the I-401 proceeded back towards Japan and was surrendered to the U.S. Navy submarine USS Segundo. Five of the Segundo's crew were put on board as guards.

The U.S. Navy reported that the I-401 was entering Tokyo Bay on August 31, 1945, at about 4:00 PM and Ariizumi had committed suicide and his body thrown overboard. Thus ends a chapter about one of the most heinous atrocities committed against our Merchant Seamen and Armed Guard Gun Crews.

* *Taken from the following sources: Report made by Lieutenant-Commander L.A. Seward, RNR, a staff officer of the Royal Naval Intelligence; The Voyage Report, SS Nicolet, National Archives.

We're looking for your dues !

Dues are now due for YAGR'S. Our year for dues purposes runs from June 1, 2004 to May 31, 2005.



If you have paid your dues, there will be a date above your name on the mailing label on the envelope this YAGRGRAM came in. If there is no date, your dues have not been 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.

Dues are \$17.00 the first time you pay them and \$15.00 every year after.

Make checks payable to YAGR'S



Well, another familiar US Navy fixture is gone.... "Skivvy wavers" have been declared on the way out. Announced by the Navy in early November of 2003, the **Signalman (SM)** rate will be totally phased out by September of 2004. Signalmen are being asked to select another rate, and the Navy is hopeful that at least 10% will select **Quartermaster (QM)**.

Quartermasters will be trained to handle the visual communication tasks that are now handled by Signalmen.

50 Years

2005 marks fifty years since the first radar picket ship, the USS Guardian YAGR-1, was commissioned. Also in 1955 the USS Lookout YAGR-2, USS Searcher YAGR-3 and USS Searcher YAGR-4 were placed in commission. (You all know the YAGR was changed to AGR in 1958).



U.S.S. LOOKOUT (AGR-2)

LIBERTY SHIP: SS CLAUDE B. KITCHIN

BUILT BY:	J. A. JONES CONSTRUCTION CO, PANAMA CITY, FL
KEEL LAID:	05 APRIL 1945 (HULL #8139)
LAUNCHED:	24 MAY 1945
SPONSORED BY:	MRS. F. D. BURGE
PLACED IN SERVICE:	25 JUNE 1945
PLACED IN RESERVE FLEET:	22 OCTOBER 1945



USS LOOKOUT (AGR-2)

CONVERTED:	17 AUGUST 1954 AT CHARLESTON, SC
COMMISSIONED:	05 MARCH 1955 AS YAGR-2 AT CHARLESTON, SC
HOMEPORT:	03 MAY 1955 AT NEWPORT, RI 01 OCTOBER 1957 AT DAVISVILLE, RI
RECLASSIFIED:	28 SEPTEMBER 1958 AS AGR-2
DECOMMISSIONED:	12 JULY 1965
DISPOSITION:	23 NOVEMBER 1970 SOLD AS SCRAP

The Lookout was assigned to RADRON TWO as a radar picket vessel on the Atlantic seaward perimeter of the contiguous net established around the continental United States to give advanced warning of a surprise air attack.

YAGR'S Exhibit

Onboard the Battleship Massachusetts

Fall River, MA

Work Weekend.



August 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 2004

A group of 10 former crewmen formed a working party to expand our exhibit, make repairs to one of our displays and to work on a special project we took on for the battleship.

On Friday August 20, 5 men came on board early.

Don Batty	(AGR-9, 1963-64) came in from Connecticut
Tom Giardina	(AGR-3, 1961-63) came in from New Jersey
Henry MacKay	(AGR-12, 1962-64) came in from New York
Harry Miller	(AGR-11, 1962-64, YR-65, 1964-65) came in from Rhode Island
Lee Mowan	(AGR-11, 1962-64) came in from Indiana (Lee has the distinction, or maybe the misfortune, of coming in the furthest to work on our display).

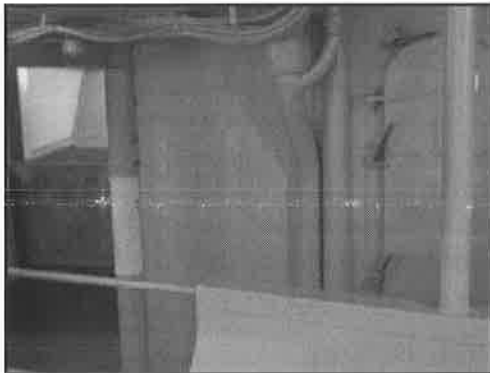
The others came in on Saturday August 21.

Roland Cote	(AGR-10, 1961-63) came in from Massachusetts
Jack Floyd	(AGR-11, 1962-64, YR-65, 1964-65) came in from Massachusetts
John Hemminger	(AGR-2, 1960-61) came in from Rhode Island
Tom Manning	(AGR-4, 1955-57) came in from Massachusetts
Al Nannini	(AGR-15, 1960-62) came in from Rhode Island

Splitting up into 4 groups, we started the various projects. Lee Mowan tackled the long ongoing problem we have been having with the lighting of the history of radar display. I am happy to say that we have solved the problem. All it took was ripping out all of the old lighting fixtures and replacing them with new ones. One big headache out of the way. As a note in regards to the radar display, the battleship had it on board but it was in storage. Seeing that it would fit in with our exhibit, they loaned it to us.

Tom Manning, along with a little advice from Lee, wired the lights for the plotting board. Jack Floyd supplied (at no cost to YAGR) sockets, switches and wire for the board.

Roland Cote, Tom Giardina and Al Nannini extended a section of the radar room that we have built. This addition will house the computer and monitor that will display information about the ships and their mission so that the viewing public will better understand what we did during the cold war. The video for this is in the process of being put together.



Added section of radar room room (to the left of water tight door).

All along we have had plans to add to the front of the radar room display. So, this weekend we built the addition to it. We were originally going to finish the wood deck, but this bulkhead had to be built first so that we could figure out just where the deck would end.

The primary purpose for this addition is to house a video monitor that will be positioned so that the visitors to our display will be told the mission of the Radar Picket Ships. It will also give us some extra bulkhead space for signs, photo's, etc.



Side and back view of extended radar room going up to overhead.



It took Lee 3 full days to get the lighting on the history of radar display to a point that we now have all the information panels back lighted. He had to remove all of the old lighting fixtures and replace with new lighting. This was no easy task as the fixtures were never meant to be removed.

This upgrade on the lights was necessary as the radar display is one of the first things that is seen when you enter the YAGR'S exhibit so it was very important to have the lights in working order.

Special Project

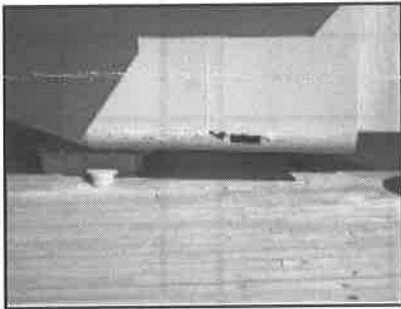
Battleship Massachusetts

YAGR'S took on a special project for the Battleship Massachusetts. This project was to replace a rusted section of 1/4" plate duct work that is on the side and underneath the battleship's #1 turret. The duct work was completely rusted out; and, to be honest, was an eyesore that the visitors could not miss as they approached the turret.

Roland Cote, John Hemminger and Harry Miller worked on this job for a few weeks preceding our work weekend. John, Henry MacKay, Don Batty, Jack Floyd and Harry worked on the project during our work weekend. All told we spent a total of 187 man hours to complete the ripping out and replacing of 50 square feet of duct work.

The work included cutting out a section of duct, replacing the same with new plate by fitting, forming and welding it on the turret. Most of this work was done with a 17" working height between the deck and underside of the duct which made it even more difficult.

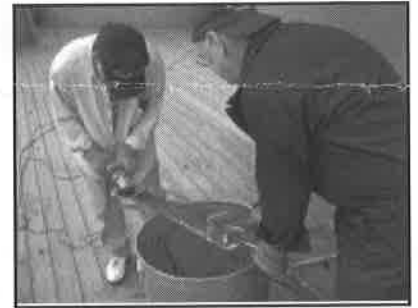
The restoration work that we have done to date is only a small part of the work that is needed to restore the duct on the turret to its original shape. Doing this work has had a dual purpose: first needed repairs were made, second it gave the staff of the battleship a way to see the extent of the damage not only to turret #1 but to help estimate the work that will be needed to repair the ductwork on the other 2 turrets as well.



Duct work that was in need of repair.



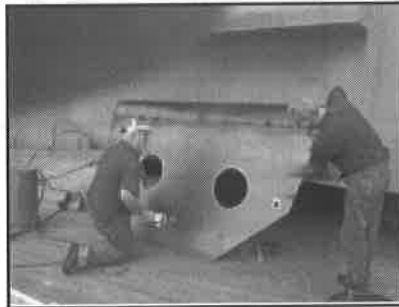
Harry Miller cutting out rusted section of duct that returns under the turret.



Roland Cote and John Hemminger grinding steel brackets.



John Hemminger grinding duct section and Jack Floyd cutting steel plate.



Henry MacKay and Jack Floyd grinding slag off of the new steel plate. Holes are for clean out.



Plate lifted into place.

YAGR'S exhibit

Post work weekend work.

September 8th found 4 men were busy on our exhibit. Roland Cote, John Hemminger, Jack Floyd and Harry Miller started installing the wood deck in front of the radar room. The deck sections were put in place and the seams between the sections were taped and caulked. The modular sections of decking were made earlier. We did have to close the exhibit for one week so that the caulking could cure properly. The following week we set about applying coats of polyurethane on the deck for protection. After one coat of sealer and 4 coats of poly and installing clips to hold the deck in place, we now can say another project is complete with the exception of painting the newly installed clips.



John Hemminger taping joints in wood deck.





If you have placed an order for an item and you have not received it yet, please get in touch with us.

All of the ships' emblems, RADRON ONE, RADRON TWO hat/lapel pins are in color and are approx. 1 inch in diameter.

Two new pins USS Guardian AGR-1
USS Interceptor AGR-8



Lapel/hat pin silhouette of a picket ship is in color and is 1-1/2 inches long.

Hat specialty devices AG, BM, BT, DC, DK, GM, IC, EM, EN, ET, HM, *HT, MM, MR, MS, QM, RD, RM, SH, SK, SM, YN, are on hand, but in a limited quantity. As I run out of them I will then have to order more. This could take up to 6 weeks to receive. Specify device desired.

*New Shipfitter Rating



ITEM	EACH		QUANTITY		SUB TOTAL
HAT HULL # _____	\$19.00	X		=	
DENIM SHIRT HULL # _____ SIZE _____ SIZE _____	S, M, L, XL \$33.00 XXL \$35.00	X		=	
HAT/LAPEL PINS \$4.50 EACH OR ANY TWO FOR \$8.00					
YAGR'S LOGO HAT/LAPEL PIN		X		=	
RADRON ONE		X		=	
RADRON TWO		X		=	
GUARDIAN AGR-1		X		=	
SKYWATCHER AGR-3		X		=	
LOCATOR YAGR-6		X		=	
INTERCEPTOR AGR-8		X		=	
PROTECTOR AGR-11		X		=	
TRACER AGR-15		X		=	
RADAR PICKET SHIP PIN 1-1/2" LONG		X		=	
PO1, PO2, PO3 CROW FOR HAT PO _____	\$4.50	X		=	
HAT SPECIALTY DEVICE SPECIFY DEVICE _____	\$4.75	X		=	
COFFEE CUP	\$15.00	X		=	
MAKE CHECKS OUT TO YAGR'S SHIPPING IS INCLUDED			TOTAL		\$ _____
YOUR NAME					

Note: All orders must reach me by October 30, 2004. This is when orders placed with our suppliers. It can take up to six weeks after that for you to receive your order.