

THE FOUR PIPE PIPER

The World War II Newspaper of the
USS *John D. Ford* (DD 228)

RAMONA HOLMES

HELLGATE PRESS



ASHLAND, OREGON

THE FOUR PIPE PIPER

Published by Hellgate Press

(An imprint of L&R Publishing, LLC)

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Hellgate Press

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Ashland, OR 97520

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Cover & Interior Design: L. Redding

ISBN: 978-1-954163-13-3

Printed and bound in the United States of America

First edition 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To my father, Charles C Holmes MM2c,
and his friends on the USS *John D Ford* (DD 228).
Thanks for your service.

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PREFACE

MY FATHER'S GARAGE WAS filled with tools and treasures. No car could ever fit in that garage. There was a room built on behind the garage to store more things: canning jars, vases, books, boat equipment and more tools. Behind that room was another room where my father stored memories. He did not share these things with us, though as curious children, my sisters, and I knew there were boxes of old photos and memorabilia from World War II.

When Dad died and we sorted through things there were many boxes of these memories that went to museums and libraries. One box had several editions of a mimeographed newspaper, the *Four Pipe Piper*. They were old and interesting, but I was not sure where they should go. I put them in my office and figured I would eventually decide what to do with them.

When I retired from teaching, I pulled out lots of old projects and found several things from Dad, including these newspapers. I still did not know much about the context of these papers, so I started digging. I needed information about World War II, the USS *John D Ford*, and her crew.

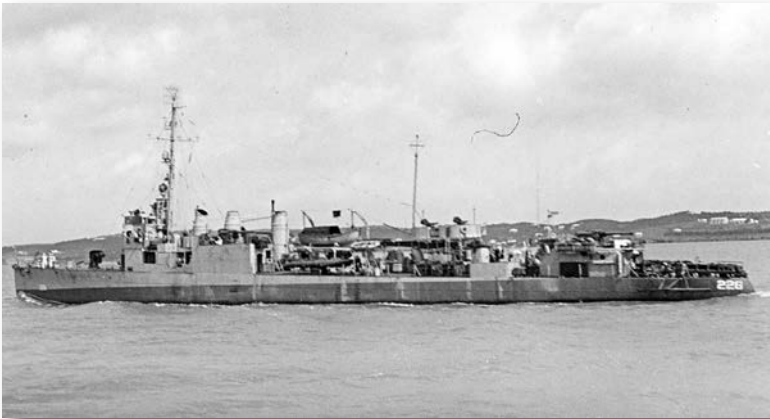
There are several good sites for researching US Naval history, including the NavSource History and the U.S. Naval Institute Archives. One especially helpful source was the Destroyer History Foundation which was established and maintained by Dave McComb. The site is now maintained by his widow.

More information about the Ford was found on the Facebook page "USS *John D. Ford* (DD-228)," created by Greg (Chip) Dogwill, son of Marion Dogwill S2c. Through this page I was able to find Richard

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Sheehan, son of William Sheehan, reporter for the *Four Pipe Piper*, who has many fascinating photos of his father and the crew aboard the Ford and ashore. From the Facebook page I also located James Boulton who had carefully researched his father who served aboard the Ford in the Pacific. You can read about James Boulton's time on the Ford in "Luckiest Sailor: (2017)." Next, I found Ken Mullin whose father, J. Daniel Mullin, wrote a book about the *Ford* in the Pacific and was aboard the *Ford* through the end of WWII. Mike Coughlin, son of Michael Coughlin, provided many interesting artifacts. I also got to speak with Paul Dieters and his father, Herman Deiters, who, at age ninety-seven, may be the last living sailor from the *Ford*.

Many thanks to all who have helped find photos, stories, and history. Thanks to Charles Holmes and the rest of the crew aboard the USS *John D. Ford* whose stories are woven into the newspapers.



USS *John D Ford* (DD 228)

CHAPTER ONE

THE USS *JOHN D. FORD* (DD 228): One Tough Little Destroyer 1920-1947



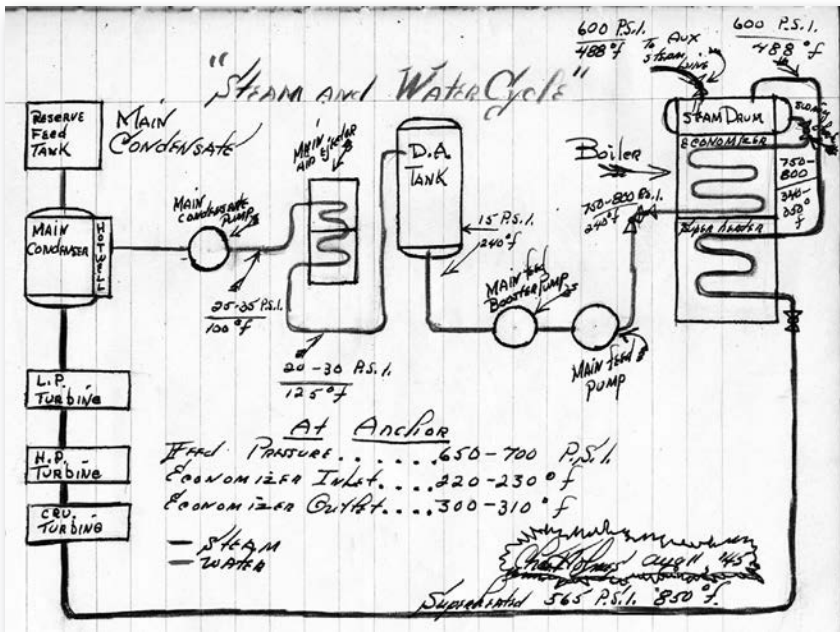
IN FEBRUARY 1945, World War II was still raging in Europe and the Pacific Ocean. Aboard the USS *John D. Ford* (DD 228), the young seamen needed to keep alert and ready to man their stations. The men read every book, magazine, and *Our Navy* that was onboard

until the pages fell apart. A group of these young sailors put together the *Four Pipe Piper* to give some news about the world beyond their ship and to provide some comradery onboard. Reading these old newspapers, seventy-five years later, we can still hear their voices amid stories from the crew working aboard the USS *John D. Ford*. Information about the ship sets the scene for the stories in the newspaper.

Destroyers are sometimes called “tin cans” or “greyhounds.” They followed the torpedo boats which were used in the Spanish-American

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War of 1898. Destroyers were designed to be torpedo boats that could cross the ocean. The first United States destroyer was the USS *Bainbridge* (DD-1) commissioned in 1902. In 1916, President Wilson signed the "Big Navy Act" providing 500 million dollars to build ten cruisers, thirty submarines, and fifty destroyers over the next three years. This new group of destroyers are referred to as "flush deckers" because they eliminated the raised forecastle to solve a weak point in heavy waves. They also were known as "four stackers" or "four pipers" because of the four smokestacks that went to the two engine rooms. This is where the newspaper got the name the *Four Pipe Piper*. This complex system of steam and water required skilled engineers, machinist's mates, and water tenders. The young enlistees on the *Ford* worked hard to learn the various systems as shown in this drawing from Machinist's Mate Second Class (2c.) Charles C Holmes.



The USS *John D. Ford* (DD 228) was a United States Navy Clemson-class destroyer built in 1919 and commissioned December 30, 1920. The ship was named for Rear Admiral John Donaldson Ford (1840-1918), an officer in the US Navy during the Civil War and the Spanish-American War. The *Ford* weighed 1,190 tons and was 314 feet long with a 32-foot beam. She had the four smokestacks of a “four pipe piper.” She was designed for a complement of 100 officers and enlisted sailors, though there were often 120 on board in war time. She was initially placed in the Atlantic and trained in the Caribbean.

In July 1922, the *Ford* sailed to Manila Bay as part of the Asiatic Fleet. She worked out of Manila and protected United States’ interests in the waters by China and Japan. The *Ford* was on patrol in Chinese waters prior to World War II. Japan declared war on China in 1937 and began aggressively moving into Chinese areas, expelling the British and Americans from East Asia. The *Ford* helped Americans evacuate from Beijing and began patrols in the Philippines. The *Ford* was in the Philippines when Japan moved in there, so she headed to Manila to help.

Captain Jack Slaughter joined the *Ford* as a junior officer in 1939 and became the commanding officer in 1940 at the young age of twenty-six. The *Ford* was in Manila on December 7, 1941 when they received word that Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and the United States declared war on Japan. The *Ford* was able to help sink four enemy transports and a patrol boat before escaping to Indonesian waters in Surabaya. Japan began air raids on Surabaya while the *Ford* continued to battle in Indonesia against the Japanese attacks. The ship became part of ABDA (American British Dutch Australian) forces protecting the valuable natural resources in SE Asia. They were in numerous battles in Indonesian in early WWII. After a seven-hour battle in the Java Strait, only five Allied ships were hit but many enemy ships were sunk. This battle was a great morale booster.

Several far less successful battles ensued in Indonesia including the disastrous Feb. 18, 1942 Battle of Bandung Strait. As a Clemson Class destroyer, the *Ford* was smaller than the Japanese destroyers and had

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only four guns with a range of four miles, compared to the Japanese destroyers with six guns that had a range of 11.5 miles. Many of the American torpedoes were not tracking correctly or did not explode. The *Ford* was low on ammunition and supplies and had to outrun enemy ships to reach Australia. There was no backup support from the US to bring more ships or planes to their aid. After fighting against these tough odds, the *Ford* and the USS *Pope* were the only US naval boats to escape from Indonesia during the ill-fated battles of the Asiatic fleet in 1941, and both destroyers needed major repairs. These grueling battles took a heavy toll on the young crew members. They had made close friends on the other Asiatic Fleet ships with whom they explored the ports and played baseball. Many of their friends were now prisoners of war (POWs), missing in action (MIA), or dead. After repairs in Australia, the ships continued to battle in Indonesia and along the coast of Australia. The *Ford* received a Presidential Unit Citation for action in the Java Campaign Jan. 23-March 1, 1942, and the crew members received Bronze stars and Philippine ribbons. Detailed first person stories of the amazing exploits of the *Ford* in the Pacific are told in *Another Six-Hundred* by J. Daniel Mullin (1984).

* * * *

At the time that World War II started in Europe, there were 170 destroyers in the US Navy. These destroyers were stationed in the Atlantic (91), the Pacific Coast of the Americas (21), Pearl Harbor (45) and the Asiatic Fleet (13 including the *Ford*). Seventy of these destroyers had been built before 1922. There were also 42 older destroyers that had been modified as minelayers, minesweepers, seaplane tenders and transports. At the beginning of WWII, the British had 184 destroyers with 52 being built, Japan had 68 destroyers with 64 being built, and Germany had 22 destroyers with no more being built (as they were focusing on submarines). The United States was rapidly building more destroyers as the war continued. In 1940, Roosevelt loaned 50 destroyers to the UK in exchange for leases on land for bases in the Caribbean. The US continued to build more ships.

The *Ford* left Australia for Pearl Harbor on May 2, 1942. From there she began convoy service between Pearl Harbor and San Francisco. The *Ford* added more sailors (including *Four Pipe Piper* editor CC Holmes) and became a convoy escort and antisubmarine patrol in the Pacific. The small, older arms on the *Ford* were not useful against Japanese aircraft but were well suited for antisubmarine work. On June 4, 1943, the ship transited the Panama Canal and headed to Trinidad. The *Ford* became part of the Tenth Fleet for anti-submarine warfare (ASW). They protected United States convoys from German U-boats anywhere in the Atlantic. The *Ford* traveled for a year in the North and South Atlantic with ports in New York, Norfolk, Charleston, Trinidad, Guantanamo Bay, Recife Brazil, Reykjavik, Casablanca, and the Azores.

The USS *John D Ford* was in Europe in January 1944 where it helped sink the German submarine *U-554* near the Azores. On March 29, 1944, it was attached to DesRon 29 in the Atlantic Fleet and headed out from Gibraltar Harbor at ten knots when they heard a one blast on the starboard and all engines backed up. They sighted a ship on starboard and backed up with all engines. They heard two blasts and changed all engines forward, right full rudder. At 0059 they were rammed on starboard by HMS *Kingston Agate* Y88, a British trawler retooled for war duty. All engines stopped and they found the after compartment and steering engine room were flooding. They changed speed to five knots on port engine and managed to head back to Gibraltar and reached Detached Mole on their own steam. They mustered the crew and found one man missing, Seaman First Class (S1c.) Warren Kenneth Kressel, and began a search from their motor whale boat. Six men were treated on the ship for injuries and two, Michael Coughlin and Harold Terrents, were sent to the British Military Hospital in Waterton Gibraltar for serious injuries.

The *Ford* was towed to the British Navy Yard in Gibraltar. Three more men were taken to the Gibraltar Hospital for treatment: Isaac Cordova, Phillip Cashman, and John Sipielka. The main compartment of the ship flooded and much of the sailor's gear was destroyed. The

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men were taken to a British Receiving Ship where they drew emergency supplies. They received a “kit” such as the one provided for Charles Holmes. His “Survivor’s Kit List” (see image below) from the British supplies included one jumper (sweater), trousers, a British cap, two summer “vests” (shirts), two cotton flannels, two “B.J. collars” (British), one silk scarf, one belt, a razor, a toothbrush, a shaving brush, two towels, “soap tooth” (toothpaste), a hairbrush, two “drawers” (underwear), an “overall suit,” boots, and a jersey (t shirt).

Survivors Kit List. Class 1:

Name HOLMES, C.C. Rating MM2C
 Off. No. 454155 East Ship J.D. Ford

The undermentioned articles of clothing have been issued gratuitously to the above mentioned rating by H.M. Cormorant.

Date Paymaster Captain

Min. Kit.	ARTICLE	In man's possession	Issued
1	Jumper, Serge		1
1	Trousers, Serge		1
1	Cap		1
1	Cap Ribbon		
2	Vests <u>Summer</u>		2
2	Cotton Flannels		2
2	B.J. Collars		2
1	Black Silk Scarf		1
1	Waistbelt		1
1	Oilskin Coat		
1	Razor		1
1	Shaving Brush		1
1	Tooth Brush		1
2	Towels		2
1	Comb <u>SOAP TOOTH</u>		1
1	Hair Brush		1
2	Drawers		2
2	Socks		2
1	Overall Suit		1
1	Boots		1
1	Jersey		1
6	Handkerchiefs		

Signature C.C. Holmes



CC Holmes in borrowed British gear

Seaman First Class Kressel was not found and was declared dead after ten days. This was a chilling reminder for all of the crew as to how dangerous their job was at sea. Memorial services were held for him aboard the *Ford* on April 9, 1944. The British helped retool the ship and her sailors and the *Ford* returned to Norfolk for further repairs. The well-loved Captain of the *Ford*, Captain Jack Slaughter changed ships in Boston. Lieutenant (Lt.) Thomas Alexander Watkins became Commander of the *Ford* May 21, 1944 and remained in charge through the end of the war.

On June 2, 1944, the *Ford* headed toward Brazil. On the way, the sailors crossed the equator where they held a “Shellback Ceremony”

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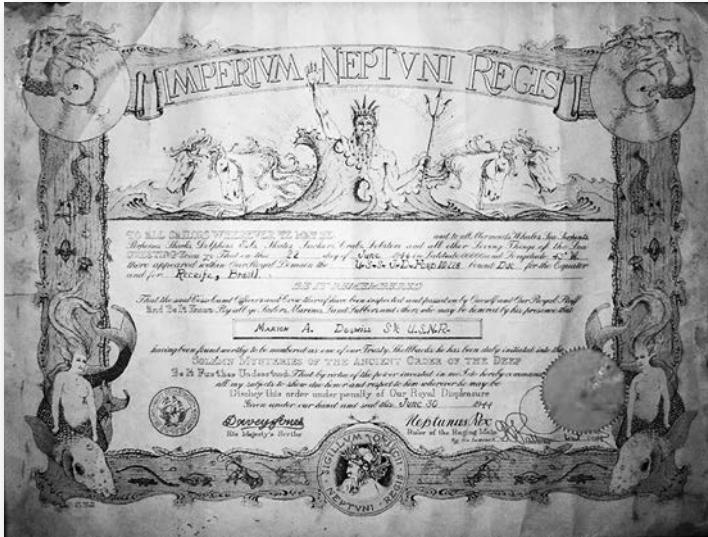
on June 22, 1944. The script for the ceremony was borrowed from the USS *Trenton* 1935 and 1938 versions.(Copies of these scripts are in the appendix.) This ceremony for “Crossing the Line” has been part of sailor traditions for over 400 years. The tradition turns “Pollywogs” (sailors who haven’t crossed the equator) into “Shellbacks,” trusty sons and daughters of Neptune. No class difference is made between officers and crew, only Pollywog or Shellback, so Lt. T.A. Watkins was a Pollywog along with the young crew members and took part in the same initiation.

The Navy version that the *Ford* sailors used began with an evening appearance of King Neptune and his court (costumed Shellbacks) the night before the crossing. The Pollywogs were expected to entertain the court. The next day the Pollywogs had to appear before the court and prove their trustworthiness to Neptune and then be thrown in salt water. Those sailors received certificates of this event. A video of the event on another ship can be seen on YouTube titled “Neptune’s Realm-The Bizarre US Navy Equator Initiation Ritual.”



Shellback ceremony with *Ford* crewmembers

Torpedoman Herman Deiters remembers being on the *Ford* as she crossed the equator. He was at his torpedo station when, to his surprise, one of the veteran crew members grabbed him and took him below. According to Deiters, he was “smeared up with grease and really old garbage. Then we had to kiss the belly button of a really big, black sailor. The Southerners didn’t like it, but they had to, or they would get beat up.” Deiters said it was quite an ordeal to go through, but he is glad he got his Shellback status.



1944 Shellback certificate, courtesy of Marion Dogwill

The *Ford* successfully crossed the equator and many new Shellbacks arrived in Recife, Brazil. They had time for some liberty there and rested before heading back across the equator.

The *Ford* was in the Atlantic during the timeline of the *Four Pipe*

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Shore leave for CC Holmes (left)
and friends in Recife, Brazil

Piper newsletters, Feb. 19, 1945 to April 18, 1945. During those months, they traveled to Casablanca, Horta Azores, Bermuda, Norfolk, New York, Trinidad, and Guantanamo. World War II was blazing, and the ship was immersed in the war effort. The *Ford* received four battle stars during WWII.

After World War II, the USS *John D. Ford* was reclassified as miscellaneous auxiliary ship AG-119 July 1945. The ship headed back to Norfolk where the sailors were able to join other ships or discharge to return home. The *Ford* was decommissioned on November 2, 1945 and sold as scrap metal on October 5, 1947 to Northern Metal Co., Philadelphia, PA.

Just below the heading in each issue of the *Piper* is the quotation: "99.44-it floats." That is the old slogan from Ivory soap that reminds people that Ivory soap is 99.44% pure soap and that it floats. The *Four Pipe Piper* may not be 99.44% pure, but this mighty little destroyer sure did float!

CHAPTER TWO

THE *FOUR PIPE PIPER*: Newspaper for the USS *John D. Ford*

“**F**OUR PIPER” IS A Navy term for a destroyer with four funnels, such as Clemson Class destroyers like the USS *John D. Ford* (DD 228). The *Four Pipe Piper* was a newspaper run by the crew and officers, for all aboard the *Ford*. The purpose of the *Piper* was described by Commanding Officer Thomas A. Watkins in the second issue where he notes, “While this paper will not fulfill any important military mission, it will serve as one more weapon against the monotony of routine watch standing and operations, and as such, it can play a large part in the life of the ship.” The paper was a weekly publication beginning February 19, 1945, and intended to come out on Saturdays.

There had been Navy newspapers on other ships before. The *Ford* staff used *The Trenton Skeeter* issues of April 8 and 20, 1935 as models for producing a newspaper. An old copy of another newspaper, the November 1945 *K NEWS* from the USS *Knox* was also in the archives of Charles Holmes. These are included in the series of documents in the appendix. The newspapers were typed and then mimeographed on legal or standard size paper. The staples that held the papers together have now completely rusted over. It is amazing that

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the newspapers have survived over the years. Seven of the *Four Pipe Pipers* that survived are reprinted in this book along with information about some of her sailors to provide a backdrop for these stories.

The *Piper* staff included the following:

Editors:

- Harold Stowell, WT 3c. (Water Tender third class) (volumes 1:1 and 1:2)
- Charles C. Holmes, MM2c. (Machinist's Mate second class) and Co-editor Marvin Ellis Luther Y1c. (Yeoman first class) (volumes 1:3-1:8)

Reporters:

- Radio: Kenneth Francis Meeks, RM 2c. (Radio Mate Petty Officer second class)
- Torpedo: Gilman Ernest Savage S 1c. (Seaman first class)
- FWD Fr. Room: Joseph Kravchenok, F 1c. (Fireman first class)
- AFT Fr. Room: Otis Ivan Branstetter, WT 2c. (Water Tender Petty Officer second class)

Engineers:

- Arnold Pickering, E3c. (Electrician third class)
- Deck: William Francis Sheehan, S 2c. (Seaman second class) Don David Cox S 2c, Gerald Underwood CM 2c. (Carpenter's Mate second class)
- Comm: Elmer L. Sowers, SC 1c. (Ship's Cook first class)
- Wardroom: Lieut. R.H. Hamilton and Ens. Pierre Richard Vallet (lieutenant and ensign are junior officers)
- Sports Editor: Michael Joseph Coughlin, F 2c. (Fireman second class)
- Cartoonist Charles C. Holmes, MM 2c. (Machinist's Mate second class) and Richard Francis Catlin, S 1c. (Seaman first class)
- Secretary: Charle Clifford Ogle, Y 3c. (Yeoman third class)

The *Piper* was written for and about the officers and crew of the *Ford* in 1945. There is scant information available about most of the ship's crew and officers of the *Ford*. There are some stories from newspapers and others from the families of the men. Short biographies of a few of the newspaper staff and some of their shipmates gives a glimpse into the lives of these very young men who were writing a ship's newspaper while fighting a war.

Charles C Holmes, MM 2c., Editor and Cartoonist (1919-2010)

This set of newspapers was found in the archives of Charles C Holmes MM 2c., who was the cartoonist for the *Four Pipe Piper* Vols. 1:1 Feb. 19, 1945 and 1:2 Feb. 24, 1945 (edited by H. Stowell WT 3c.), as well as both the co-editor (with W.E. Luther, Y1c.) and cartoonist for Vols. 1:3, 1:4, 1:5, 1:6, 1:7, and 1:8.



Charles Holmes was the ninth out of ten children of Estonian immigrants, Oscar and Adele Holmes (originally Kolm). The family lived in Portland, Oregon, when World War II broke out. Holmes told how he heard the song "The Sinking of the *Reuben James*" by Woody Guthrie. He followed the story as it told of the USS *Reuben James* (DD-245), which was the first US Navy ship sunk in October 1941. The song originally listed the names of all the 115 sailors that died when she sank, including several sailors from Portland that Holmes knew. He immediately joined the Navy with the goal of being on a destroyer.

Charles, his five brothers, one of his sisters, four brothers-in-law, and one nephew were all active in the service during WWII. Charles joined the Navy in 1941, along with his five brothers and one of his sisters. No

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surprise that they joined the Navy as this was a very patriotic family from a long line of sea-going Estonians with great respect for the US Navy.

Charles Holmes began with training in 1941 at Naval Air Station (NAS) San Diego, California, and at NAS Tongue Point, Oregon. Holmes was received on the *John D. Ford* on June 30, 1942 as S2c. (Seaman second class) leaving from San Francisco, California. He earned ratings of AS (aviation support equipment technician), MM2c. (Machinist mate second class), S1c., F1c. (Fireman), and SM (Signalman) 2c. He received several medals in the American Arena: World War II-Victory Medal, European-African, and Asiatic-Pacific.

Holmes was an athletic young man who was active as a banty-weight boxer on the ship. He was a strong swimmer who loved to dive. On board the *Ford*, he often would dive from the boat into ice cold water to earn a 25-cent bet. Holmes said of his experience, "My five brothers and one sister and I came through WWII alive and with no injuries. My tour of duty was not easy; it had its dangers. I was more than lucky. I am glad I did my sea duty on destroyers. There are fond recollections and friendships, travel experience, long crossings, convoys, submarines, and unfriendly aircraft that were a part of life. It seems like a hundred years ago. I was much luckier than most of my classmates. Fifty years later I am able to write about the positive side. I do remember the shipmates and would do it again." (Holmes, 1994: 124).

Holmes left the *Ford* in June 1945 and went to Norfolk, Virginia, for engineering classes. He finished his enlistment as WWII wound down and received an honorable discharge from the Navy in the US Naval Personnel Separation center in Shelton, Virginia. He took his \$239.36 of final pay and headed back to Portland, Oregon. Charles met Charlotte Vanebo at a USO party in Portland and married her soon after that. He worked in construction, as a county sheriff, and then received degrees in education (San Francisco State) and administration (Portland State University). They moved to Salem where Charles worked for Chemawa Indian School teaching wood shop, metal shop, and art until his retirement. Charles and Charlotte had three daughters, Christine Anderson, Ramona Holmes, and Juanita

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Article about the Holmes family in WWII,
from a 1944 issue of the *Portland Oregonian*.
Charles is in the lower left-hand corner

Holmes; and grandchildren Carl Anderson, Carol Holly Anderson, Justin Holmes Hunter, and Brandon Paul Holmes Hunter.

Charles Holmes rarely talked about his experiences in the war. He was proud of his work in the Navy, but always hoped that there would

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be no more war. He saved these *Four Pipe Piper* newsletters, a few other WWII papers, and a hand-built model of the USS *John D. Ford* tucked away in a back room. The newsletters were only found after he died in 2010. These newspapers tell the story of life toward the end of WWII on a destroyer—with the worries of war hidden among the antics of young sailors.

Ralph James Boylan, FC 2c. (1919-1944)



Ralph Boylan was Fire Control second class on the *Ford* in both the Pacific and the Atlantic. He was born in Merced, California, to Bessie McGarvin Boylan and Irish immigrant Christopher James Boylan. His father died when Ralph was only ten and his mother supported the family as a teacher. Boylan was an outgoing young man with pale green eyes. He and his friends would hot wire his mother's Model T to go out in the evening. His older sister was married and had two little girls at the time

that Boylan enlisted in the Navy in 1939. Boylan boarded the USS *John D Ford* in April 1940 and headed out in the Pacific. He sent pearls home to his mother and sister from the Amas (Japanese pearl divers) in the Pacific. He was on the *Ford* when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and was a key member of the crew in the Battle of Java Sea. Mullin (1984, page 131) quotes Boylan amid these key battles on the phone to Captain Mack, saying, "We've lost suction." Boylan, and all 120 men aboard the *Ford*, earned the Philippine Ribbon with one Bronze star for service at the Battle of Balikpapan.

Boylan continued aboard the *Ford* when they transited to the Pacific through the Panama Canal in June 1943. He earned his Shellback certificate when they crossed the equator in June 1944. Boylan was com-

ing home for his last leave before his enlistment was up in December 1944. The C-47 that carried a full load of sailors from Alameda NAS crashed into San Francisco Bay because a clip was not removed from the tail control surfaces. He is remembered fondly by his nieces Paula and Carla and grandnephew Ryan.

Otis Ivan Branstetter, WT 2c. (1920-1976)

Otis Ivan Branstetter was Water Tender second class and Aft Furnace Room Reporter for the *Four Pipe Piper*. After the war, he married Lydia Branstetter and lived in Morgan County, Tennessee, until his death in 1976.

Michael Joseph Coughlin, F 2c. (1925-1971)

Michael Coughlin was born and raised in Salem, Massachusetts, where he was an outstanding athlete. He was an outfielder on the high school baseball team and a right guard on the 1941 Salem High State Championship football team. His two brothers enlisted right after Pearl Harbor, so on his seventeenth birthday he enlisted in the Navy. His reason listed was "Patriotic." Enlisting at seventeen required that he drop out of high school and get his mother's signature. He entered service in Boston and did boot camp at Newport, Rhode Island.



Coughlin joined the *Ford* on February 18, 1944 in the Atlantic as Fireman second class. He was aboard the *Ford* on March 19, 1944 when there was a collision near Gibraltar with the HMS *Kingston Agate*. Coughlin was asleep in the aft living compartment when the ship was hit. One man was swept to sea and died while many others had injuries. The most seriously injured man was young Coughlin. His right arm was trapped under a steel beam

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which kept him from being swept out. His injuries were severe enough that he was taken to a hospital in Gibraltar. When the *Ford* was set to sail, Coughlin was told to stay at the hospital in Gibraltar. He begged Captain Slaughter not to leave him there. The captain cared deeply for every member of the crew and took the young man into his own cabin to make the trip across the Atlantic to Boston where Coughlin could recover from injuries in the United States over the next months. Coughlin was back on board the *Ford* on January 15, 1945 as Fireman second class. Coughlin had a depth of sports experience and was an enthusiastic sports reporter for the *Four Pipe Piper*. When the *Ford* docked in New York, May 1, 1945, Coughlin was taken to a Naval Hospital for additional treatments. He served on the USS *YTB 539* until he was medically discharged March 5, 1946 due to recurring issues from his previous injuries. The scars in his right arm and right leg were there for life.

After the war Coughlin worked for the US Postal Service until his death in 1971. He married and had four children, two sons, and two daughters. His children enjoyed his love of sports with him. He was playing baseball in the back yard with his two sons when he suffered a fatal heart attack. His son, Michael Coughlin Jr, followed in his father's footsteps and served in the military. He has saved his father's medals and model of the *Ford*.

Herman Deiters TM 2c. (1924-2021)

Herman Deiters was born in Jerome, Arizona, and moved to Los Angeles with his mother when his father died. Deiters graduated from Theodore Roosevelt High School in Los Angeles. When Pearl Harbor was attacked, he joined the Navy. He reported to duty on the *Ford* in 1943 along with his friend John Thomas. They both completed their torpedo training in Norfolk, Virginia. They quickly became close friends on the *Ford* with Charles Holmes, and went on leave regularly with him. Deiters said he and Thomas loved to drink and carouse around and counted on Holmes, who did not drink much, to get them back safely.

After World War II, Deiters went back to Los Angeles and married



Torpedo mates: Herman Deiters
is seated, closest to flag

Jeanie. He was in the Naval Reserve and was called back up for the Korean War. He served on the USS Irwin, a Fletcher class destroyer during the Korean War. He returned to Los Angeles and attended University of Southern California where he majored in Geography and Chemistry. His children Paul, Mark, Theresa Marie, and John Thomas were born there. He lived in Fullerton, California,

and worked in sales until his retirement. He often traveled to Seattle for work and stopped along the way to visit with shipmate, Charles Holmes in Salem, Oregon. Herman Deiters died March 11, 2021, at the age of ninety-seven, in Fullerton, California.

William “Billy” F Denton, MM 1c. (1919-1977)

Billy Denton enlisted December 1939 in St. Louis. He was on the *Ford* during the Java Campaign and received the Philippine Ribbon with one Bronze Star. He reenlisted and reported for duty on the *Ford* September 5, 1942 from Mare Island. After the war Denton married an Australian and lived there where his first child was born. They moved to the United States and lived in Killeen, Texas, where his son, also Billy Denton, was born. Denton reenlisted in 1948 and served in the Korean war.



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Marion Anthony Dogwill, S 2c. and Petty Officer 1c. (1925-1998)



Marion Dogwill was one of four children born in Hamtramck, Michigan, to Polish immigrants Vincent and Mary Dogwill. He was eighteen in November 1943 when the horrors unfolding in World War II and patriotism led him to enlist in the Navy. He came aboard the *Ford* on Feb. 26, 1944. He was onboard in time to “cross the line” to become a Shellback en route to Brazil. He later achieved the ranks of Coxswain and Petty Officer 1c. He earned the American Theatre medal, the Victory Medal,

and the European Theatre medal. He wanted to stay in the Navy as a career but came home to Michigan to help his mother and siblings. He married Genevieve Gecewicz in 1949 and had three children, Gregory (Chip), Terry, and Jacqueline. Dogwill owned and operated a Mobil gas station for many years and eventually spent several years as a foreman at Federal Mogul & Chrysler.

Dogwill enjoyed travel, fishing, photography, and rock hounding. His love for rocks eventually led him to jewelry making in his spare time. He was an active member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars until his death in 1998. His son, Chip Dogwill, created the Facebook page about the *Ford* in his father’s honor.

John Daniel Mullin, GM 1c. (1915-2008)

J. Daniel Mullin was born May 8, 1915 and grew up in Brooklyn, New York. He enlisted in the Navy at age eighteen. He served as Gunner’s Mate 1c on the USS *John D. Ford* in the Asiatic Fleet as part of the horrendous battles against the Japanese in the early days of World War II. He wrote the impressive story of those battles in *Another Six-Hundred* (1984). He earned the Philippine Ribbon with one Bronze

Star for his service at the Battle of Balikpapan. He stayed with the *Ford* in the Atlantic and became Ensign for the ship in February 1945. Mullin stayed in the Navy after World War II advancing to Chief Petty officer and serving in Korea before retiring in 1957. He earned a BS in Education with science teaching field at Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina. He



worked as a writer for an environmental engineering firm and wrote instruction books for the Army for water testing. He stayed in touch with his shipmates and was friends with Captain Slaughter and Vice Admiral Mack his whole life. His son, Ken Mullin, maintains the web site (www.anothersixhundred.com) for his father's book.

Irving J. "Henry" Mate, MM 2c. (1914-2004)

Irving Mate was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He enlisted in the Navy in 1936 and joined the USS *John D Ford* in the Asiatic Fleet. While there, he earned the Philippine ribbon with one Bronze star for his part in the Java Campaign. He stayed on the *Ford* through WWII and the Korean War. He married Doris Mosier in 1945 who died in 1963. Mate continued in the Navy until retirement in 1966. He later married Donna Polzkill. At his death in 2004, Mate had two children, five step-children, four grandchildren, twenty step-grandchildren, two great grandchildren, and seven step-great grandchildren.



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Carroll John Nowotenski, MM 2c. (1915-2003)

Carroll Nowotenski was born in Wallingford, Connecticut, in 1915 to parents Walenty and Pauline Nowotenski. He had four sisters. He joined the Navy and served as machinist mate second class aboard the USS *John D. Ford*. He was on the ship in the Atlantic. His bunkmate was Kressel, the sailor swept overboard who died in the March 1944 collision. Nowotenski wrote about the church services for the *Four Pipe Piper*. The *Piper* congratulated Nowotenski for moving from MM 3c. to MM 2c. in the first issue, 19 February 1945. After the war, he put his machinist skills to work for thirty years for Pratt and Whitney aerospace company. He worked there in the experimental design shop until retirement. He was married to Helen Nowotenski and had a daughter, Carole Campbell, and a granddaughter, Heather Campbell.

Charles Clifford Ogle, Y 3c. (1923-1964)

Charles Ogle worked as a lofts man for a shipping company in Florida. He joined the Navy in 1943 and was Yeoman third class on the *Ford* and the secretary for the *Piper*. On March 3, 1945, Ogle put in for Amphibious duty, so he left his post as the *Piper* secretary and headed to training. After the war, he worked as a securities agent in California and then joined the US Marines to serve in the Korean War. He married Violette Ogle and had two children. He received flight training in the Civil Aeronautics Administrative War Training Service. Following the Korean War, he worked in California as a builder and developer. On August 12, 1964, he took off from Oakland International Airport flying his Cessna 210 A. He did not file a flight plan or notify the tower. He has not been seen since then. His father hired an investigator who found that Ogle had planned to go to Nevada. In 2007 the remains of several planes were found in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, one which may have belonged to Ogle. His disappearance remains a mystery.

Gilman Ernest Savage, S 1c. (TM) (1926- 1997)

Gilman Savage was a Torpedo mate and the reporter for the “Torpedo Gang” to the *Piper*. He was born June 10, 1926 to Gilman and Evelyn Savage. He was the eldest of nine children who were raised in Sanford, Maine. His father had been a radio communicator in WWI and received significant injuries along with the aftereffects of mustard gas. Knowing the full impact of what war can do, young Savage enlisted in the Navy at seventeen while he was still a junior in high school. He joined the USS *John D Ford* on May 3, 1944 as Seaman first class. Even as a young sailor who had not finished high school, he wrote articles for each edition of the *Four Pipe Piper*.



After the war, he returned to Sanford, earned his GED, and married Yvette Berthiune. They had three daughters and moved to Orlando Florida. Savage worked at Grants Department Store and later Martin Marrietta. He was a gentleman, avid golfer, and fisherman. He had a serious heart attack at age fifty-nine. Even though Savage was all alone at the time, he was a strong survivor, so as he collapsed, he called 911. When the medics got there, he had no heartbeat, but with quadruple bypass surgery Savage lived to be 71.

William F. Sheehan, S 2c., Deck Reporter (1925-1972)

William Sheehan was born on the Fourth of July 1925 in Boston. He had two brothers and one sister. Both of his brothers were in the Army in WWII and retired after many years of service. Sheehan was Deck Reporter for the *Four Pipe Piper*. He was friends with many other writers and appeared frequently in the reports of escapades on shore and aboard the ship. After his time in the Navy, Sheehan worked

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in electric supplies sales. He married Mary Heaney in 1953 and they had six children. Sheehan and his friends built the Thomas P McKeon AMVETS post in Dorchester, Massachusetts, which served many veterans. Unfortunately, Sheehan died of surgery complications at the young age of fifty-two. His son, Richard Sheehan, has a large collection of photos from the time that his father was on

the *Ford*. He also has a carefully handwritten list of all the arrivals and departures of the ship from September 17, 1943 to April 21, 1945, including the time that the *Four Pipe Piper* was written.

Captain John “Jack” Sim Slaughter (1914-2017)

Captain John Slaughter was born and raised in Muskogee, Oklahoma. He went to Central High School in Muskogee during the Great Depression. Knowing he could not afford college, Slaughter went to the Naval Academy in Annapolis. He earned a bachelor's degree in engineering in 1937 and was commissioned as an ensign. He started as a young ensign aboard the USS *Chester*, a cruiser stationed in Long Beach, California. He married in 1939 and took his bride with him to the Philippines where he joined the USS *John D, Ford*. He was with her in Manila when Pearl Harbor was attacked. A quick series of wartime promotions brought him to captain at the young age of twenty-seven. He led the *Ford* through the terrible Battle of Balikpapan, the Java Campaign, and safely brought the *Ford* to Australia. Those aboard at that time earned the Philippine Campaign Ribbon with one Bronze Star.

Slaughter was a well-loved captain on the *Ford*. He stayed commander of the ship as they went through the Panama to convoy in the

Atlantic. He was moved to the USS *Wells* in May 1944 and Lieutenant Thomas Alexander Watkins came aboard as commanding officer for the *Ford*. Slaughter stayed in the Navy and commanded the USS *Northampton*. He retired in 1967 after thirty years in the Navy with the Silver Star, Bronze Star, and a Presidential Unit Citation.

Elmer Lee Sowers, SC 1c. (1919-unknown)

Elmer Sowers was the Comm reporter for the *Piper*. He enlisted in Kansas and joined the *Ford* soon after that. He was on the *Ford* in the Philippine Campaign and earned the Philippine Campaign ribbon with one Bronze Star for that service. His duty was up in 1943 but he reenlisted and remained on the *Ford* as Ship's Cook First Class (SC 1c.) through the end of World War II. He met WAVE Florence Kowalewski in New York during the war. They married Dec. 22, 1945 in Atchison, Kansas. They moved to Washington where Sowers was serving in the Navy. This small amount of information was gleaned from muster logs and newspapers.

Gerald Underwood, CM 2c. (1919-2015)

Gerald Underwood was born in Pig-gott, Arkansas, the fourth of ten children. He played on the Mohawk football team and graduated from high school in 1940. After graduation he enlisted in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and served in Winona, Minnesota. He enlisted in the Navy in 1942 and served on the USS *John D. Ford* until the end of WWII. He was Carpenter's Mate Second Class (CM 2c.) and one of the three deck reporters for the *Piper*. After the war he went to Detroit, Michigan, to look for work and married Janet Still in 1950. They went to New York where he

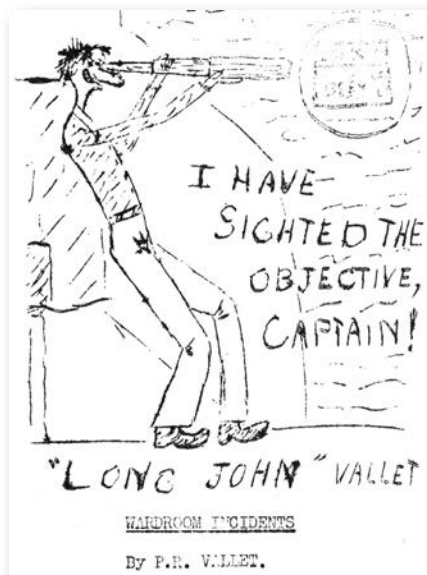


Gerald Underwood (*right*)
with his brother Hershel

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worked in the New York Central Railroad and then back to Detroit for more railroad work. He retired in 1980 and moved with his wife to Palm Bay, Florida. He was active in veteran groups there until his death, March 31, 2015.

Pierre (Peter) Richard Vallet, Ens. (1924-2008)



Piper cartoon by CC Holmes

Pierre Richard Vallet, also known as "Long John," was Ensign on the *Ford* and Wardroom reporter for the *Piper*. He was born in New York and went to New York State Maritime Academy, graduating in 1944. He enlisted in the Navy and served on the *Ford* as engineering officer. After the war he returned to New York where he married Muriel (Mimi) and worked in the insurance industry. After retirement they moved to Sandhill Cove in Palm City, Florida, where they lived until his death in 2008.

Each of these men appear in the stories found in the *Four Pipe Piper*. Their personalities shine through in their nicknames, cartoons, and anecdotes. Matching the brief biographies of the men with the stories in the newspapers will help the ship and her sailors of 1945 come back to life.