

The 820 Newsletter

World Wide Web Edition



Volume 5, Number 3

Ltjg Robert Baldwin, Editor

August, 1998

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SHIP'S OFFICE

Reunion 1999 Planning It's never too early to start planning. A number of our Association's Western members have wanted to hold our annual reunion "West of the Mississippi" for some time. Well, thanks to Johnny Skillen, we have crossed the father of waters and will be holding the annual gathering in Arkansas. Now's your chance for a large Western membership turnout. Your editor hastens to add he is a transplanted midwesterner (South Dakota, Missouri, Kansas), who grew up just outside (thank God) the beltway in Virginia, and now considers himself an "Easterner." I have no Eastern prejudices against -as some in close proximity to high places in Washington, DC claim- the great state of Arkansas and plan to attend. In fact one of my favorite great-aunts lived in that state and we used to visit her there. Anyhow, Johnny is working hard on the event to be held April 21-24, 1999. The gathering will be held at the Best Western Pines, 2700 E. Harding, Pine Bluff, AR, 71601, 870-536-8640. Rooms will be \$48 per night. You can contact Johnny at 912 E. 2nd St., Pine Bluff, AR, 71601-4570, phone 870-534-9527. Complete information will be found in the February 1999 issue of "The 820 Newsletter."

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Reunion DE-695

This year's DE-695 reunion was held June 5-8 in Columbia Falls, Montana reports Dan Schmocker the 695's newsletter editor; it was a great one. Next year the original RICH's reunion group will hold their meeting in Pinehurst, SC. If you are in the region during the June 5-8 period (they hold it each year to coincide with the date

-June 8, 1944- that the ship was sunk) drop by I'm sure the crew of that gallant ship would welcome you. When we find out the exact location we will include that information in "The 820 Newsletter."

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[Annual Dues](#)

If you haven't sent in your annual dues (\$15) to the USS RICH DD/DDE-820 REUNION ASSOCIATION please do so ASAP. Send your check to:

Hoot Gibson, President
USS Rich Association
PO Box 506
Pinopolis SC 29469

Help keep our association strong!

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[Some Naval WEB Sites](#)

Tin Can Sailors:	http://www.plateau.net/usnndd
Greyhound Navy:	http://www.inetworld.net.:80/txo/index.html
US Navy Online:	http://www.ncts.navy.mil/nol/
Gearing Class models:	http://www.sherus.com/bad/gearing.htm
Destroyer pictures:	http://www.telebyte.com/windjammer
The Goat Locker:	http://members.tripod.com/goatlocker/cpoemail.htm

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[TAPS](#)

We regret to inform our shipmates that **Bobby Frank Owens** who served as a **BT2** in the RICH from 1955 to 1958 passed away August 6, 1997. He was born in 1937 and is survived by his wife, 3 children and 2 grandchildren. Bobby remained in the Naval Reserve, retired with the rank of Chief Petty Officer in the CBs, and was buried with full military honors. He worked in Atlanta, GA at the Center for Disease Control for 37 years. For those wishing to contact his wife the address is: 4105 Anniston Rd., Lithonia, GA, 30058.

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ON THE MAIN DECK

Watch Out for the Recoiling Hawse Pipe

If you have ever wondered, and I'm certain all but the Snipes have, how the Hawse Pipe Recoils here it is:

"Section I. General Considerations: All modern Hawse Pipes recoil when fired. In the case of a pipe having no recoil, the force acting on the mount, due to firing, is the product of the area of the bore and the effective powder room pressure.

Section II. Cycle of Operation: To obtain a clear understanding of the operation of the hawse pipe, go to the forecastle deck where you can look the ship directly between the eyes. This will enable you to see the scuppers and the scupper cams. When the anchor chain is let out, it trips the scupper cams, and by means of the missing link, passing through the bollards, operating shaft, seat pin, head chain, and the diagonal bilge, the scuppers are given a precessional gyroscopic rotation which causes 11 degrees of drift in the scuppers.

When this action takes place, the breech bolt lock is depressed by the firing pin, which is attached to the chain stopper spring, revolving the projectile around the stern post. The recoiling buffer lug is caused to go into a translational motion on the mainmast which is secured by an interrupted screw in the chain locker. Before disengaging the interrupted screw from the chain locker, the rammer man is advised to remove his rammer shoes and secure them to the fish davit. Other ships in the fleet, seeing the rammer man's shoes at half-mast on the fish davits, are obliged to acknowledge by displaying their pelican hooks, that such ship is privileged vessel, and to keep clear until the process of recoil is consummated."

This explanation is so much better than those your editor received at bootcamp in Bainbridge or at OCS in Newport he just had to include it lest it be lost forever in sea lore obscurity.

(Taken from: The Sideboy, United States Naval Reserve Midshipman's School, Columbia University, New York City, July 1943.)

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"NOW THE CREW OF THE MOTOR WHALEBOAT LAY AFT"

Everyone of us, no doubt, has gone ashore on liberty or was conveyed to other destinations in the RICH's motor whaleboat. How many of you recall what she looked like? Over the 820's lifetime she probably had several "Marks" of the standard Navy whaleboat issued to her.

The following information and diagram is from "BOATS of the United States Navy 1960." Published by The Floating Drydock Co. "

A Navy boat is defined as an uncommissioned waterborne unit of the Fleet, not designated as a service craft, and capable of limited independent operation. It may be assigned to a shore station or a fleet operating unit." It should be added, with some exceptions, that it be painted haze gray. The full description of the boat used in the mid 1950s was: 26' Motor Whaleboat MK 2 (Magnetic).

It did have a certain magnetism didn't it with a nice deck line sweep from stem to stern?

More official Navy specifications:

Purpose. To transport personnel and for use as a lifeboat.

Capacity. 22 men including crew

Crew. 2-3 men (usually 3; coxswain, bowhook and engineer) and sometimes a very junior Ensign as boat officer.

Length overall. 26' 3/8", Beam. 7' 4 5/8", Draft 2' 4" loaded.

Full load displacement. 8,850 lbs. (open) or 9,070 lbs. (canopied -RICH's was so in the mid-50s))

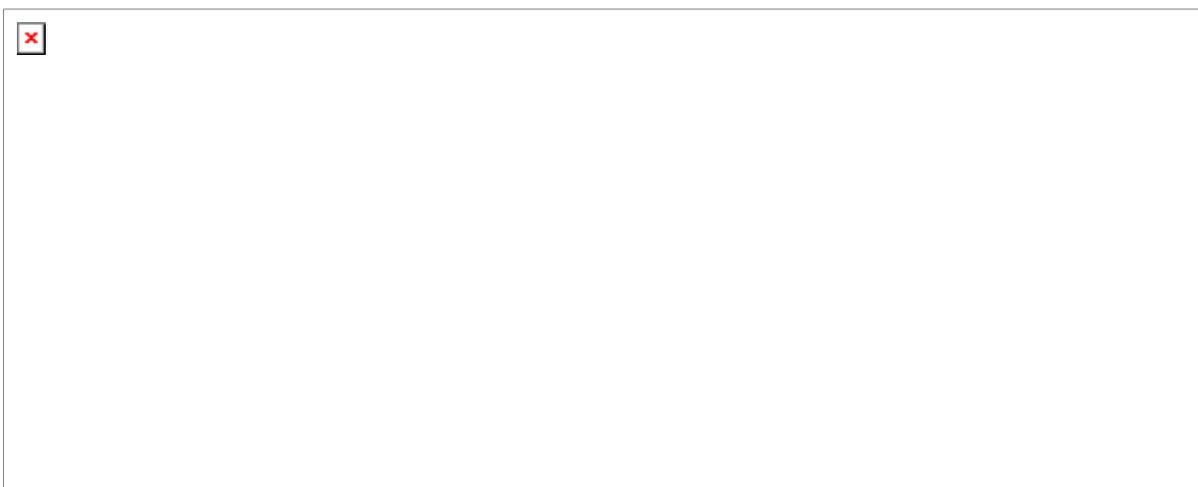
Hoisting weight. 5,550 lbs. with 2 crew, 6,450 lbs. with 8 man life saving crew.

Hoisted by davit located port side aft of number 2 stack.

Construction. Round bottom wood frame, caravel (i.e., smooth sided) planked.

Speed. 7 kts. full load displacement, Fuel Capacity 28 gallons, Range 110 nautical mi. at full power and full load.

Engine. 4 cyl. diesel, 25 hp. at 1430 r.p.m., Navy type DA, Navy type cylinder head, direct sea water cooled, 24-volt electrical system. Propeller. one 18" dia. by 25" pitch by 1 3/8" bore, right hand rotation.



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[TOM HEGELE'S LOG](#)

In the last Newsletter we left Tom's description of the RICH's whereabouts and doings underway in the VaCapes Op Area in May of 1964. We'll pick up his log from there:

Tuesday, 12 May 1964. Underway in VCOA. Made 10 simulated missions with DASH, all good "hits." More transfers and T & Ls.

Wednesday, 13 May 1964. Underway in VaCapes. Conducted DASH flight ops. Made several T & Ls and 10 simulated missions. JP-5 fuel is very low.

Tuesday, 14 May 1964. Underway in VaCapes. DASH S.Q.T. is half over. Ran my first man overboard drill,

while at the conn. First time was fair, second time got the bird. Vital to stop the screw on the side nearest the victim and kick the stern away from the person, otherwise the cavitation may suck the person under and keep him there.

Friday, 15 May 1964. In port NORVA. Routine day. Worked on DASH.

Saturday & Sunday, 16 & 17 May 1964. Weekend Duty.

Monday, 18 May 1964. Underway to VaCapes. Spent entire day calibrating the Mark 25 sonar and NC-2 plotter. Ran Engineering drills. Sonar continues very poor. SONAR is critical to DASH ops. Without a good picture of where the "enemy" is everything else is a crap shoot.

Tuesday, 19 May 1964. Underway in VCOA. Conducted ASROC and DASH S.Q.T. with USS RUNNER (SS-476). Fired one ASROC and scored a hit. Fired two torpedoes from Helo -first one was a physical hit. Second one a scored hit. Crew was outstanding. Complimented the DASH detachment crew on their performance. Morale is high.

Wednesday, 20 May 1964. Underway in VCOA. Fired a Z-6-G and Z-21-G. Overall score was 55. Ran Engineering drills.

Thursday, 21 May 1964. Underway in VCOA returning to NORVA. Ran Engineering drills. Docked at 1115 and started to prepare for Administration Inspection. Duty Day.

Friday, 22 May 1964. In port NORVA. Routine day. Preparing for Administration Inspection. Captain's Inspection.

Saturday & Sunday, 23 & 24 May 1964. Weekend Leave.

Monday, 25 May 1964. In port NORVA. Spent day inspecting 2nd Division spaces and rechecking logs. Took over 3rd Division and talked with the leading petty officers about their jobs. Mid grade petty officers are the ones who do the work and make things click. Listen to them when it comes to equipment.

Tuesday, 26 May 1964. In port NORVA. Duty Day. Collected some money for Navy Relief. Checked all spaces. Most still needed much work. Drilled the Honor Guard for one and a half hours in the afternoon. Here's hoping.

Wednesday, 27 May 1964. In port NORVA. Received Administration Inspection today. DesRon 2 conducted the personnel and compartment inspections. Officers from the USS FURSE (DD-882) did the rest. I presented the Honor Guard and 2nd and 3rd Divisions. Everything went better than I expected, but not as good as I had hoped.

Thursday, 28 May 1964. In port NORVA. Routine day in port. Was made Welfare and Recreation Officer. Attended AdminInsp critique this afternoon. Most of the grades were good. Received deployment schedule. "Officer X" behaved very poorly during the critique. Objected to every comment about the engineering units. Commodore finally had to call him down in front of everyone at which point "Officer X" buried his head in his arms on the wardroom table. This emphasized by ROTC Leadership training at Oak Ridge Military Institute: "Praise in public, censure in private" Poor form on the part of both men. "Officer X" should not have been so vocal and the Commodore could have had his chief of staff take "X" out of the room for a private discussion. (Editor's Note: The name of the actual officer was expunged by the Editor in order to avoid reopening an obviously embarrassing moment for all. In education, we call this situation a "Teachable Moment." The keeper of this log clearly had recognized this perfect example of "how-not-to-do-it" and clearly benefited from the opportunity of this "learning experience" 'Nuff said!)

Friday, 29 May 1964. In port NORVA. Routine day in port.

Saturday & Sunday, 30 & 31 May 1964. In port NORVA. Weekend Duty. Stood two quarterdeck watches.

(To be continued)

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[THE LOSS OF THE USS RICH \(DE-695\)](#)

The most popular movie of this summer is "Saving Private Ryan." As you know this is a story -and just a story- about the trauma and sacrifices associated with an infantryman's war on the Normandy beaches of D-Day, the 6th of June 1944, and events immediately following that day.

Your editor did see the movie but while doing so I couldn't help but recall the real trauma and ordeal of the sailors of our namesake ship the USS RICH DE-695 two days later on the 8th of June off UTAH beach. The National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, MD holds many of the Navy's WWII records including those termed an "Action Report." These official reports are accounts of an action written immediately following that action by the commanding officer or officer in charge.

Your editor, while working on a book on WWII naval history, was examining other ships' Action Reports of that era and so decided to look-up that of the first RICH. What follows, I am sure you might agree, is a compelling true story of what could have been told about the courage and sacrifice of countless sea service personnel like those of the "695" off those same Normandy beaches. In the past, most of the adulation and focus has been centered on the infantrymen who breached Hitler's vaunted West Wall on the 6th of June. In this and succeeding issues of the 820 Newsletter that Action Report (since declassified), will be run in serial sections. It was written by the ship's CO, LCDR Edward O. Michel, Jr. in an English hospital where he was recovering from wounds he incurred during the sinking.

COVER SHEET: ACTION REPORT USS RICH DE-695. NO SERIAL. Dated: 1 July 1944.
Classified (at the time) SECRET. LOSS OF SHIP - REPORT OF. Sunk by underwater
explosion in Baie De La Seine, France. During Invasion of Normandy, 8 June 1944.
79793

SECRET U.S. Naval Base Hospital No. 12
Navy 814
c/o Fleet Post Office
New York, N.Y.
1 July 1944

From: Commanding Officer, USS RICH (DE-695)
To: The Secretary of the Navy
Via: (1) Commander, Task Group 125.8.
(2) Commander, Task Force 125
(3) Commander, Task Force 122

- (4) Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe
- (5) Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet

Subject: Loss of Ship - Report of

- Reference (a) Article 841(3), U.S. Navy Regulations
- (b) Article 712, U.S. Navy Regulations

1. The USS RICH was sunk by underwater explosions on June 8, 1944, in an approximate position Latitude 49° 31' N, Longitude 1° 10.5' W. The following report on the loss of this vessel is submitted as required by reference (a):

(a) USS RICH was acting as close screen for heavy ships of the Bombardment Group of Task Force 125 in Operation Neptune off "UTAH" beach on the coast of Normandy in compliance with Commander, Task Force 125 Operation Order 3-44 from June 6 through June 8, 1944. On the morning of June 8th this vessel had resumed station on patrol to seaward of USS NEVADA, QUINCY, TUSCALOOSA and HMS BLACK PRINCE, after have been on screening station the previous night.

(b) About 0845 orders were received by visual dispatch from Commander, Task Group 125.8 in TUSCALOOSA to proceed to the vicinity of Fire Support Station No. 5 to stand by USS GLENNON, which had struck a mine. All times related herein are approximate only as the ship's log was not recovered. Events related after the second explosion (Para. (e) below) may not be a complete picture of happenings due to the stress of circumstances. In most cases they are the Commanding Officer's own observations, but have been clarified and to some extent amplified by subsequent questioning of other survivors, each of whom has but a limited and incomplete picture of the event. The following is the best account of events that can be compiled at present due to the fact that survivors were widely scattered, and this report is being written from a hospital with limited facilities for obtaining full information.

(c) RICH proceeded at full speed via Fire Support Channel No. 1. General Quarters were sounded and Condition ABLE set. There were two AMs some distance ahead and enroute a visual dispatch was received from CTG 125.8 to follow in the wake of these sweepers. It is believed these vessels were not sweeping at this time, but RICH closed in their wake, about 1000 yards distant at the point of turn into Fire Support Area Three.

Here, RICH slowed to maneuver, there being several PTs and MLs in the vicinity. Upon closing GLENNON the RICH stopped and the motor whale boat was lowered and sent asking what could be done, to which she replied our assistance was not needed. One AM had made GLENNON'S starboard bow and one was backing into position to pass a tow. Seeing no help was needed immediately, RICH was turned close under the stern of the GLENNON and came up her starboard side, close aboard, taking station just ahead of the AM which was passing the tow. Our boat seemed to be of no use to the GLENNON so recall was hoisted and preparations made to hoist it aboard, members of Repair I and II taking station to accomplish same. All personnel topside were instructed to keep a sharp lookout for drifting mines and for enemy planes which GLENNON had warned were in the vicinity.

(d) At this time (about 0920), as later deduced by the fact that all clocks had stopped) a heavy explosion shook the ship and staggered personnel as a mine exploded approximately fifty yards on the starboard beam. The ship at that moment was on a heading of about 180° T about 300 yards ahead of the AM engaged in passing a tow to the Glennon, in the fire support channel, and in waters through which the AM and the RICH had passed shortly before.

All light and power were temporarily lost due to tripping of circuit breakers. Sound-powered

telephone communications were lost temporarily also, but this, it is believed, was due to personnel shock as bridge talkers reported all stations in about a minute. Word was passed to enginerooms and repair parties to check and report any damage. The quartermaster was interrogated closely and stated that degaussing coils were definitely and positively set for a southerly heading at the time of the explosion, but were off now due to loss of power; a moment later he reported degaussing coils again energized.

Three depth charges with arbors were blown from their projectors into the water, but did not explode, and two were blown to the deck. Orders were given to check the setting of all depth charges on safe. Repair parties reported there was no visible damage, and the forward engineroom reported light and power regained, ready to answer all bells, and that only minor damage to gauge lines and instrument glasses had been sustained.

(e) An estimated three minutes after the above described explosion, a second underwater explosion occurred aft and directly under the ship. Bridge personnel were thrown to the deck and upon recovering it was observed that about fifty feet of the stern had been blown completely off and was drifting slowly away. It is believed that this break occurred aft of the deck house between #3 3"/50 gun and the 1.1/75 gun, and appeared to be a clean and complete break across one frame (about the middle of C-202-L).

A few personnel were observed to be moving about on this after section and others were observed in the water, in the process of being picked up by the ship's boat, and by small craft in the vicinity. Some debris and casualties were observed on the main section of the ship from the break forward to the stack. Two of the three torpedoes ran hot in their tubes. Word was passed to all stations with which there were still communications to report the extent of damage sustained, and orders were given to check all depth charge settings again, attempting to pass this word by voice to the stern section also. The only report received was from the Damage Control Officer to the effect that compartments forward of engineering spaces had suffered only minor damage. There was a sag about three feet in depth at the main deck across the ship in the vicinity of No. 2 engineroom, which might indicate the ship's back was broken there.

Later check with survivors indicated that of the engineering spaces, only No. 2 engineroom was making water, and that only to a limited extent, through the after bulkhead and around seachests. It is believed that at this point the ship might have been saved with the assistance of tugs. With this thought in mind, the Communications Officer was ordered to prepare to dispose of confidential and secret publications, and the Radio Technician was ordered to stand by to actuate IFF and radar destructors.



Credits: Profiles of DE: "Destroyer Escorts of World War Two. " 1995. The Floating Drydock. Sailor on Liberty: "United States Destroyer Operations in World War II." 1953. Theodore Roscoe. U.S. Naval Institute. Artist: LCDR Fred Freeman, USNR.

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