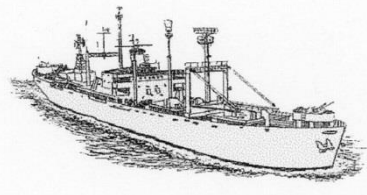


Dues Fund Established

At the Tucson reunion a member gave a check to set up a fund for widows that want to keep in touch with the Association and receive the newsletter but can't afford the dues. If anyone knows of a widow (or significant other) who cannot afford dues contact the treasurer, Armand Lamarche (arlmarche@aol.com). He will work out the details. Many thanks to the donor.

The address on newsletter envelope indicates your current (or delinquent) dues status. If you have thrown it away without checking and wish to know your status, email the Secretary, Mel Harder, (mel.harder@snet.net), or call 860-653-2444, if you do not have the internet.

If you want to know if a check has been received or cleared, contact the Treasurer, Armand Lamarche (alamarche@verizon.com) or call 978-671-9578 if you do not have the internet



Sea Stories

Send your sea stories to Mel Harder, Secretary at mel.harder@snet.net

A Mid Watch to Remember

submitted by David Crestin, USS Protector

It was 1963. I was the deck officer on the bridge of the USS Protector during the mid-watch. We were underway on an extremely dark, hot summer night offshore of the Virginia Capes. At about 0230, I noticed a contact on the radar scope that appeared to reflect a steady bearing and decreasing range. I woke the captain, LCDR. Herman Eugene Goebbles, per standing orders if a vessel was coming within one mile of our ship. The skipper seemed not too happy about being awakened when he asked me what the problem was. I told him a vessel was closing on us and I could see her port running light. He got out of the sack, dressed, and came onto the bridge. The first thing he did then was to light a cigarette, which, with the night so dark blinded everyone including him. Because it was a hot summer night, the port holes were open and their covers secured to the overhead to allow a cooling breeze aboard. Each heavy brass cover was held against the overhead by a U-shaped "dog" that allowed a threaded bolt to slide into it and be tightened down. Goebbles was 6'6" tall. While blinded by his lighting the cigarette, he walked forward to scan the horizon when we all heard a loud "BOING!" as his forehead came into direct contact with the forked dog of a port cover. The air turned blue with curses, as all of us, knowingly, silently chuckled. At least I did, but I couldn't help it. However, what goes around comes around. When the collision threat was dealt with, Goebbles finally regained his composure, walked over to me and said loud enough for the sleeping crew below decks to hear: "Crestin, port wine runs red," and stormed off the bridge. He got me. I had called the green running light on the oncoming vessel the port side. My pride was hurt and I was embarrassed in front of the bridge crew. On the other hand, I got a certain satisfaction out of the event. At breakfast, there sat the captain at the head of the table with two beautiful red lumps in the middle of his forehead. No one dared say a word.



submitted by Bill Ivie

USS Vigil AGR-12

In the 1950's the US Navy was assigned the task of extending the DEW Line seaward. To accomplish this task the Navy looked for a ship that would offer a stable platform for all of the electronics and radar that would be needed to be carried aboard ship. The type of ship decided on was World War II Liberty Ships, the best type would be the box-aircraft type (Z-ECS-S-C5). In 1954 the conversion of these ships started. This new class of ship would be called the Guardian Class and they would be classified as YAGR. At the end of these conversions in 1959 there would be sixteen (16) of these ships eight (8) home ported at Treasure Island, CA and eight (8) at Davisville, RI.

After these conversions the ships did not change their outward appearance much, except for their distinct radars-one of which was a special SPS-17A antenna designed specifically for these ships. However the interior was something else. The most powerful and modern air and surface radars and communications equipment were installed; as not only would these ships extend radar coverage seaward, they would track and direct aircraft, report weather conditions and numerous other tasks. Because these ships would spend so much time at sea, usually 60 to 70 percent each year (220 to 250 days), the Navy realized that habitability would be a prime concern. So living conditions were nothing like any other Navy ship. The Officers had their own private state room; CPO's shared a state room with another CPO; 1st class PO's shared a state room with 4 men and the crew had CPO type bunks with mattresses. The crew's berthing compartments on some ships were set up to create 4 man cubicles by using lockers to form them. On some ships the berthing compartments were even air-conditioned. This was unheard of at the time in the Navy. The mess decks were not unlike a civilian restaurant, and the food rivaled shore base galleys. The mess decks were done in cheerful colors and on many ships, turned into the unofficial crew's lounge, even though there was a space designated as a crew's lounge in another part of the ship.

To help avoid boredom on these long periods at sea, each ship came up with ingenious ways to entertain the crew. During periods at sea, fishing tournaments would be held, shooting practice, skeet shooting, swim call and, of course, sun bathing on the southern stations would help pass the time. As they were converted freighters, there was plenty of space aboard ship. All ships had a movie theater set up in one of the cargo holds. The other cargo holds were put to good use as basketball courts, archery ranges, weight lifting rooms, libraries, wood working shops, volley ball courts or anything else the crews could come up with. One ship even had a small swimming pool. Even with all the above, it was still tedious and boring duty.

I served aboard the USS Vigil AGR-12 from March 1963 to January 1964, in Davisville, RI. I came aboard as an ETRSN and made ETR-3 while aboard. There were 5 ET's: Jan Murray, ET3; Pettit, ET3; Clifton, ETRSN; Abear, ETN3 and me plus one ETC. Our ship was anything but relaxed with the Master-AT-Arms, a BM1 named Large, and he fit the name. I believe he had a great dislike for Operation Department personnel.

We had four radars: SPS-10, (Navigation) SPS-8 (Height Finder), SPS-17A, (Air Search) and SPS-5, (Surface Search). We had about 6 SPA-8 radar repeaters and one SPA-4 repeater on the bridge. We had Tacan, IFF, UQN Weather receiver, Depth sounding equipment, navigation equipment and much Communication gear that kept us very busy.

I have many good memories during this time. I was married to my high school sweetheart in October 1963 and we had an apartment in Providence, RI. This was my first assignment out of "A" school and I learned a lot about electronics onboard this ship. I remember vividly when I put on my 3rd class crow. I had a shirt with the crow on it and at midnight I put that shirt on and admired my new rank. Of course I also have some memories that are not so good. Our in port periods were 8 days for a short in port and 14 days for a long in port. Our cruises (Pickets) were 27 days and 35 days in duration.

Dues Payment - mail dues payment to Armand Lamarche, Treasurer, 3 Finnway St., North Billerica MA 01862

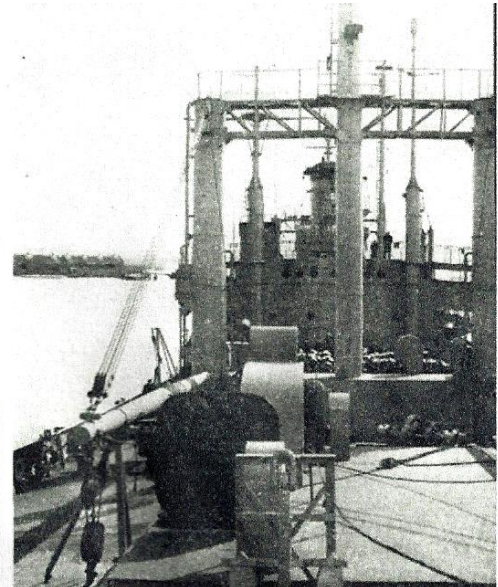
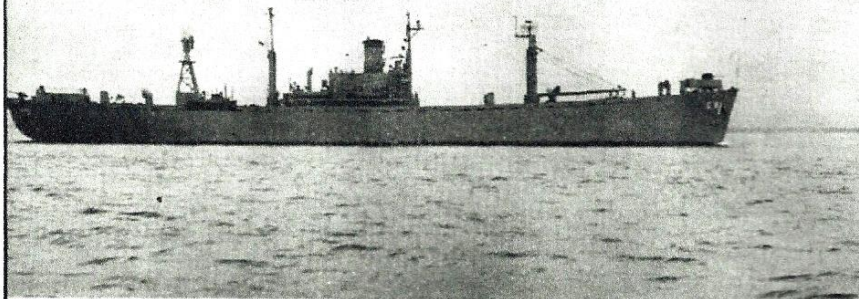
Dues are \$17 per year. The current membership year ends May 31, 2014. The highlighted date on your address label is the date your membership is currently paid to. If that date is **5/31/13** or earlier, your dues are tardy. Please complete the information below and send with dues payment. You may pay for more than one year. Make checks payable to YAGR'S Association.

Name: _____ Ship: _____

Address: _____

amount enclosed: _____ Phone: _____ email: _____





ON THE ALERT—USS Picket (YAGR 7) and USS Interceptor (YAGR 8), shown at commissioning, are part of picket team.

YAGRs Stand Ocean Sentry Duty

PERHAPS THE MOST UNUSUAL of the recent additions to today's "Navy of Tomorrow" are the YAGRs—Ocean Radar Station Ships.

They are the clumsy, awkward—but vital—ex-Liberty ships of World War II which underwent conversion and provided an economical answer to an urgent need—a mobile means of extending our Continental Air Defense System seaward.

Last year, when the Navy was required to bolster its contributions to CONAD, the mass-produced merchantmen were taken out of moth-balls and converted for off-shore screening and advance warning duties.

The first of these were *uss Guardian* (YAGR 1), *Lookout* (YAGR 2), *Skywatcher* (YAGR 3) and *Searcher* (YAGR 4), which now comprise YAGR Squadron 21, based at Newport, R. I.

At present there are eight YAGRs in service. The latest are: *uss Scanner* (YAGR 5), *Locator* (YAGR 6), *Picket* (YAGR 7) and *Intercept* (YAGR 8) operating out of San Francisco.

Like the DERs, the YAGRs while on station, are under the operational control of the Commander Naval Forces, Continental Air Defense Command. When not on station the YAGRs are under the administrative command of either the Eastern or Western Sea Frontier Commander. (The DERs are under ComCruDes or ComDesLant while not on station.)

Although having the same basic

mission, the YAGRs differ considerably from the DERs. During conversion, the Liberty ships were converted solely for radar picket duties and are no longer capable of being utilized as merchantmen.

"Conversion," in the case of the DERs, meant primarily the addition of communications and electronics detection devices, enlarging the Combat Information Centers and redesigning compartments necessary for the job of extending the nation's early warning system beyond the reaches of shore-based radar. With these modifications and added equipment the DERs took on a new role, but did not lose their capabilities of performing the diversified duties for which they were originally built.

The WW II Liberty ships were selected for conversion to ocean radar station ships because there was no immediate need for their use as cargo carriers. Their wide and deep 10,000-ton-capacity cargo holds were ideal for installing large amounts of electronics detection equipment and building spacious living compartments.

During conversion, former storage spaces became enlarged CICs, air and surface radar masts replaced cargo booms, overhead lighting gave way to indirect fluorescent fixtures, air conditioning and additional communications equipment were added.

Habitability was the keynote of the conversion of the ex-merchantmen in order to give officers and crews of the YAGRs modern living conditions and features of shore-

based facilities during long periods of patrolling on lonely stations.

Messing compartments, with four-man tables and colorful inlaid linoleum, have taken on the appearance of modern restaurants. Officers and CPOs have individual staterooms, while POIs share four-man compartments. Other crew members have double-deck "chief-type" aluminum bunks, individual bunk lights and roomy lockers.

Two former cargo holds are now utilized for handball, archery, volley ball, table tennis, weightlifting and even a golf driving range. Hobby shops include woodworking equipment and a photographic darkroom.

The ocean radar station ships even have permanent motion picture theaters which are also used for divine services and assembly halls.

To insure greater stability and to help keep sensitive electronics equipment on an even keel, 6000 gallons of water have been sealed in the double bottoms.

With the new distilling systems now in use, the inconvenient rationing of water—common to most ships at sea—is unheard of aboard the YAGRs. Their enlarged distilling systems are adequate to assure enough fresh water so that usual conservation steps are not required.

The YAGR men like their duty. The crews of ocean radar station ships boast that, while performing tough and vital sentry duty on the high seas, they have the best living and recreational facilities in the Fleet.

—H. George Baker, J01, USN.