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YAGRGRAM #85 - SUMMER 2020

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view & print this YAGRGRAM in color at <http://www.yagrs.org>

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Memos from Lee Doyel

Dear Members,

I pray all of you are in good health and coping the best you can with all that is taking place through out the country. I know it looks bleak but I would urge you to keep the faith. This country has survived crises in the past. A prior pandemic, flu epidemics, two world wars, a cold war (which our group and generation won), a great



depression, dust bowl, economic resissions, etc. I don't know exactly what the future holds for the YAGRS Association but plan on it continuing. In what form I don't know. I am still exploring the possibility of combining with the Mariner/Marlin Association which is the Navy sea plane group. This matter was addressed in a previous YAGRGRAM (#84). They also cancelled their 2020 reunion but have yet to schedule a 2021 location.

When they do I will attend it and confer with their leaders.

At present our 2021 reunion is still on in Colorado Springs. The anonymous benefactor is still onboard.

Hopefully the schedule will remain the same although some modification may be necessary. It looks like there may be a Covid-19 vaccine(s) available in time for us to get it before our reunion. Maybe they will prioritize us "old people" and put us at the head of the line.

2021 Reunion - Hotel Information

Reunion dates, including the pre-reunion tours, are Tuesday June 1 - Saturday June 5

The hotel is the:

Colorado Springs Marriott
5580 Tech Center Dr.
Colorado Springs, CO 80919
719-268-4218
1-800-932-2151
Mention YAGRS. Rate code is YAGYAGA

Room rate is \$139.00 a night plus 10.25% room tax. LAST DAY to book a room is Friday, April 15, 2021.

NOTE: This is 6 WEEKS before the reunion dates as compared to the usual 4 weeks. Booking after that at the YAGRS rate is at the hotel's discretion.

Due to the decline in attendance, we have only blocked 50 rooms, which is for 100 persons. Since the major expenses for this reunion are being paid by an anonymous benefactor, we may need to ask for additional rooms. However, it is up to the hotel to expand the block of rooms at their discretion. This could be a problem as Colorado Springs is a large tourist attraction and rooms are in great demand. So I cannot emphasize enough to reserve early. Its first come first served.

2021 Tours

There is no registration form with this YAGRGRAM due to the tours not being scheduled as dates have not been determined for them. The tours will in all probability be the same as before (see YAGRGRAM #83), just with different dates. The 2021 registration form will be in the next YAGRGRAM.

Ship Coordinator Update

Although I have asked in the past for the coordinators to send me their phone numbers, please do so again. Also if you have not, please add me to your ships email list so I can verify that my info has been forwarded to your ship members.

The ships coordinators was set up to keep the membership informed of items of interest and activities of the Association. It has worked well since its inception. That is until now. However it may have become somewhat calcified. I started to get an indication this last summer and fall when not all the coordinators were forwarding the information to their members. It became more noticeable this winter and especially this spring with the virus situation. I was forced to cancel the 2020 reunion because of it. I was able to reschedule it for the first week of June 2021 at the same hotel in Colorado Springs. I put this out to the coordinators for distribution. However it became evident some coordinators were not forwarding the info for some unknown reason. I knew this as people who I knew were on a coordinators list were calling me about the status of the reunion and when asked they reported they had not received a notice from their coordinator. I do not know the reason for the lapse of those coordinators. Perhaps my information went to their junk mail, coordinator not checking email regularly, illness, the spouse has stopped doing it, etc. I know it was not a change of email address as none of the coordinators addresses bounced.

I do not maintain a "master list" of email addresses for the Association. I have acquired a lot of the membership's email addresses but they are not organized any fashion. As you coordinators know I furnish you new emails from individuals as I receive or come across. The job is very simple and only requires you to maintain a group list and merely forward it to your group. I require nothing else other than forward the message in a timely manner which requires very little time or effort.

Ron Stasiak is no longer able to serve as coordinator for the USS Interceptor (AGR-8), so I will serve as coordinator. I am asking all of you USS Interceptor AGR-8 members to please send me your name and email address so I can compile a ships list for the new coordinator.

Also a reminder, please add me yagrs16@cox.net to your ships email distribution list if you have not already done so.

YAGR to AGR

For years I heard various accounts as to why our ships were initially named YAGRS and subsequently shortened to AGR. One story was since the Navy was limited to a certain number of capital ships (sea going) it could not add anymore without approval of Congress. As with most situations (especially with lawyers) there is always a "work around" way. Therefore the ships were put in the Commissioned Service Craft category. That is, in port yard craft. That is some yard craft at 450 feet and 10,000 tons. Imagine sailing that around within the port among all the other ships.

While going through old files I came across an inactivation ceremony service announcement for Radar Picket Squadron ONE (RadRon 1). There was no date as I only had the inside portion of the notice but it was probably in August 1965 as that was when the last of the West coast ships went to Susin Bay (San Francisco) for storage. That brochure confirmed that the ships were initially designated "yard craft." It also noted that there was a YAGR Division ELEVEN which included the first four ships (AGR-5 to 8) to on the West coast. The East coast had a Division 21. These divisions ceased when the commands were made squadrons. In 1958 they were officially removed from the service craft category after three years as yard craft. The inactivation brochure order of service included flag rank officers from the Navy and NORAD for the ceremony.

YAGR Association plaque installed

The Radar Picket Ships of the YAGRS Association has been recognized with a plaque that has been installed on the Veterans Memorial Wall atop Mount Soledad, La Jolla, California. The plaque for Veteran: YAGRS Association is located on the JJ wall, West side, Row 2, Number 2. A larger photo of the plaque can be found in YAGRGRAM #84.

Ship's Store update

Inventory of ship's store items as of 07-31-20 is as follows:

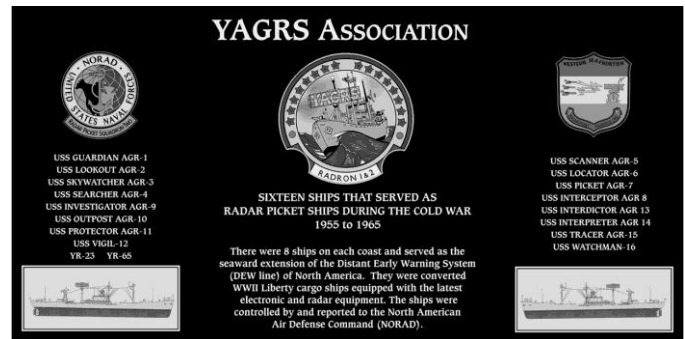
- 0 Coffee cup with the YAGR logo - \$15
- 2 Drink coasters with YAGR logo - \$5
- 10 YAGR Challenge coins - \$10
- 1 Cigarette lighter with AGR-10 logo - \$20
- 0 Black baseball cap with YAGR logo
- 1 One each ship's hats Dark blue color - \$20
AGR-4 AGR-15 AGR-7
- 45 Three inch diameter YAGR logo patches (\$5) that can be sewn on hats, garments, etc.

Ships patches, 4" diameter - \$10

- | | |
|----------|------------|
| 10 AGR-1 | 4 AGR-11 |
| 0 AGR-2 | 0 AGR-12 |
| 1 AGR-3 | 6 AGR-13 |
| 10 AGR-4 | 6 AGR-14 |
| 4 AGR-5 | 1 AGR-15 |
| 6 AGR-6 | 5 AGR-16 |
| 4 AGR-7 | 2 RADRON-1 |
| 1 AGR-8 | 3 RADRON-2 |
| 6 AGR-9 | |
| 0 AGR-10 | |

Hat pins of all the ships logos and RadRons 1 & 2 in these quantities - \$5.00

AGR-1 Guardian	72	AGR-9 Investigator	71	RadRon-1	124
AGR-2 Lookout	51	AGR-10 Outpost	53	RadRon-2	44
AGR-3 Skywatcher	68	AGR-11 Protector	77	YAGR Div-21	53
AGR-4 Searcher	68	AGR-12 Vigil	34	RadRon 1 & 2	6
AGR-5 Scanner	64	AGR-13 Interdictor	88	(YAGR logo)	
AGR-6 Locator	22	AGR-14 Interpreter	79		
AGR-7 Picket	86	AGR-15 Tracer	75		
AGR-8 Interceptor	85	AGR-16 Watchman	72		



Past reunion hat pins in these quantities - \$5.00

25 - Newport - 2002

23 - Philadelphia - 2004

3 - San Francisco - 2005

9 - St Louis - 2006

46 - San Diego - 2009

3 - Lancaster - 2012

20 - San Antonio - 2014

15 - Charleston - 2015

44 - Branson - 2016

40 - Norfolk - 2017

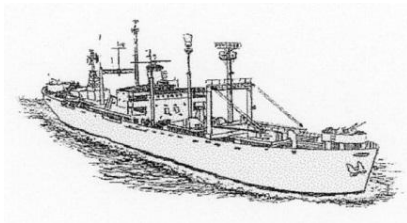
45 - New Orleans - 2018

5 - money clips with an AGR ship profile in red on it. \$5.00

5 - key chains with the YAGR logo on it. \$5.00

High quality photo copies (suitable for framing) of the YAGRS Legacy (\$25), YAGRS Association (\$35) and the 16 ships surrounded with their logos (\$25) will still be available as the vendor has them on file and can be ordered at any time. See samples on the web site (yagrs.org) on the left hand side. All orders are first come first served and prices include postage

Please include a mailing address with all orders.



Sea Stories

If you have a sea story or incident that happened on your ship it can be published in the YAGRGRAM. Email (or snail mail) to Mel Harder at: mel.harder@snet.net, or mail to Mel Harder, Drawer N, East Hartland CT 06027

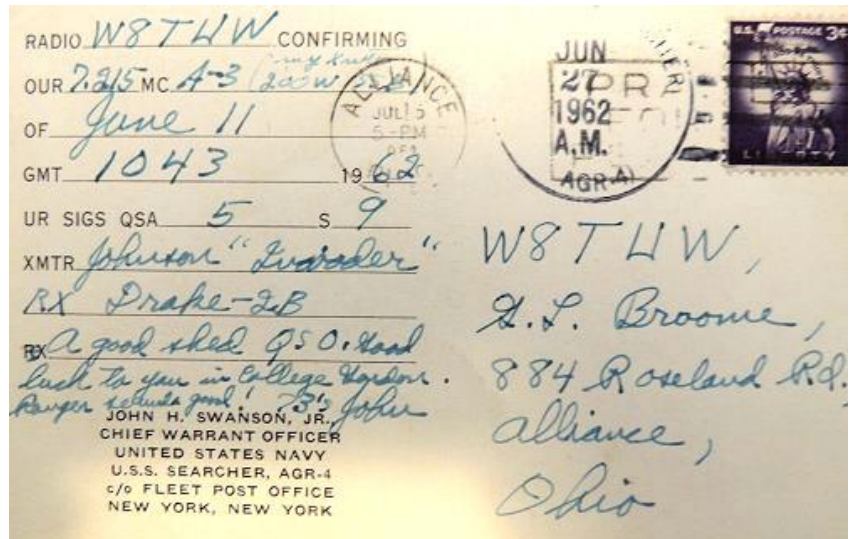
Submitted by Gordon L. Broome, ETR2, USS Searcher (AGR-4)

During the Covid-19 home quarantine, cleaning out my basement and “HAM SHACK”, I ran across this old QSL card, and thought this might be a little trivia for the YAGRGRAM.

While serving aboard the USS Searcher (ARG-4) as an ET in 1962, my Chief Warrant Officer, John H. Swanson, discovered that we both had Amateur Radio Licenses. Mine was only a novice license at the time. I had gotten interested in it back in 1954, when I witnessed transmissions between a “ham” friend conversing with the “Kon Tiki” while in the Pacific between South America and Easter Island. He was on just the right wavelength which only he could make contact. He then would relay information to National Geographic in Washington DC. I got hooked and worked on my novice license that year. I received my next



license (conditional General – with call sign W8TUW), aboard the Searcher, at sea, in 1962, through John (W3PWO), a licensed examiner. We applied for a maritime ham license for the ship and was assigned the call letters “W9HXP/MM. With approval from the ship, we set up a station in the aft part of the ship above the shipfitters shack. We made contacts with stations all around the world. We also “phone patched” a lot for shipmates to be able to converse with family members on Sundays. An example of that was when a shipmate became a father while we were at sea. He was able to talk to his wife at the hospital with their newborn with the help of a ham operator in his hometown. We did a lot of communications like that on Sundays. When I was discharged that same year I kept in contact with John at sea until he retired to his home in Annapolis, MD where he set up his own ham shack with his wife Bernice. We kept in contact until he moved to a retirement home in Arizona and passed away years later. Your webmaster Frank Pulaski (ham call WT1B) and I tried to contact him while he was still alive to say we were having these great YAGR reunions but were unsuccessful. Attached is a QSL card, which is exchanged to verify that two hams made contact, of a contact I had with John aboard the Searcher in 1962. (notice the 3 cent stamp). Hope to see you guys in 2021.



A Navy Bugler by Joseph Walsh

I was aboard the Searcher from '60-'62. There were many stories I could relate This is only one of them.

When I graduated from Officers Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island, I requested duty on a carrier or cruiser out of San Diego or a destroyer home-ported in Hawaii. Did I get any of my requests? Negative, negative. I was assigned to a ship home-ported in Davisville, Rhode Island, just across the Narragansett Bay from OCS. It was an old Liberty ship built in 1945 to carry war materiel from our East Coast to wherever they were needed. It is not clear if that particular ship ever made war cruises, but it was in mothballs when the Navy acquired it in 1954, gave it the mysterious name *Searcher*, and assigned it to picket duty in the North Atlantic as part of the Distant Early Warning Line, designed to detect Soviet bombers during the Cold War. It was fitted with sophisticated electronic search and tracking equipment used to locate, track and report enemy aircraft (bogies) and direct high-speed interceptor aircraft in event of enemy attack. That is what the book said anyway. Sailors aboard her described the duty as boring, numbing, and tedious. There was an occasional run into a hurricane to add a bit of adventure. *Searcher* was 441 feet by fifty-six feet by twenty-four feet and painted dull Navy gray. GR4 was on her bow. With the extended radar antenna, she looked like a giant hippopotamus that had been stabbed with an array of giant swords. She was not the sleek naval vessel imagined in my dreams. After eight weeks of Communications School, I reported for duty as the ship's Communications Officer. I was the green ensign among thirteen officers



and 133 enlisted men. As the Junior Officer and lowest level commissioned officer on board, Navy tradition made me the SLDO, *shitty-little-duty officer*. No naval training is needed to know its meaning. The Commanding Officer of the vessel was Lieutenant commander R.T. Bailey, a graduate of the Naval Academy who was the embodiment of all the bad captains you have read about in books and seen in movies. He was short and slight, bandy legged with a voice that sounded like a cast reel spinning. “WEEELL, Mr. Walsh, I trust your duty here will be successful and result in no bad marks on your Fitness Report. Communications is very important duty aboard MY ship; and if YOU or your men screw up and negate my making Commander with my own Destroyer, I WIILL HAVE YOUR ASS!” He made me feel welcome and warm all over! The Executive Officer (XO), the number-two officer aboard ship, was Lt. Harvey Rogers, a graduate of the Merchant Marine Academy and a “yes” man all the way. The rest of the complement of officers included three lieutenants, three lieutenants junior grade, two warrant officers and another ensign who had reported two weeks earlier. His name was Don Baldwin, and we became fast friends. Naval tradition demands that Junior vessels must render honors to Senior vessels when underway. While entering and exiting port at Davisville, *Searcher* regularly passed vessels going in and out of Newport. With the exception of garbage scows, they were all senior to our ship. Intent upon letting other ships know who he was, especially in the destroyer community, Bailey decided to eschew traditional piping. Instead he wanted a bugle used! William Bates, “Billy Boy,” was a quiet, soft-spoken, young man from West Virginia. Sometimes when I was Officer of the Watch, he was Quarter Master of the watch, performing ship control, navigation and bridge watch duties. He had a keen interest in navigation and longed to pass the test for QM3. I helped him with his studies whether we were on or off watch. He was a bright, fast learner. He said that if he got his “crow” (made third class) he might even make the navy his career. His ambition motivated me to work with him even more. Then he met his wet Waterloo. Bailey would only sign off on his request to take the third-class exam if he would take lessons in how to play the bugle! Billy Boy asked me if I knew if that kind of condition was allowed. I didn’t know but would find out. Later that week, I was summoned to the Captain’s quarters. On my way up the ladder, I wondered if my radioman had screwed up, or perhaps it was just me again! I was relieved when the Captain indicated he wanted me to get ahold of a bugle for QM Bates. He had noticed that I had taken an interest in Bates’ advancement. He didn’t like it when I inquired what a bugle had to do with the QM3 exam. “WEEELL, Mr. Walsh, if you knew anything at all about early Naval history, you would *not* have needed to ask that questions That’s the problem with you OCS officers. Check NAVPERS 10137B.” I went to the ship’s office and asked for the document. The First Class in charge murmured, “That’s funny, Mr. Walsh. The Captain said you might ask for this.” The document was the “Manual for Buglers.” I read the introduction and realized I was having an “*Oh, shit*” moment. The manual indicated that the bugler was a seaman under the direction of the Quarter Master. If no seaman was qualified to play the instrument, the Quarter Master was to be the bugler. The document was dated 1919. *Son of a bitch*, the old man was correct! I returned to the CO and informed him that I had read the document and that technically he could require QM Bates to learn to play the instrument. “WEEELL, Mr. Walsh, it is a *kind* of communication, isn’t it?” When we docked at Davisville, my shipmate Don and I decided to spend a day in Newport at our favorite pub, “The Sailors’ Arms”. Upon our return to the ship, we’d simply have to report, “No JOY,” meaning we hadn’t been able to find a bugle.” However, before disembarking, the Captain had summoned me to his quarters to say presciently, “WEEELL, Mr. Walsh! Don’t think that you and your buddy can head to Newport for a day of drinking on my dime. Think carefully. If you guys come back without a bugle and I smell any liquor on your breaths, just ease yourself into hack for the entire time we are in port.” HACQ, pronounced hack, is an acronym for *House Arrest, Confinement to Quarters: Unofficial punishment where an officer is confined to his stateroom*. On the way to Newport, we considered the old man’s threat. Where could we find a bugle in Newport? At the *Sailors’ Arms*, Big Bob, our favorite bartender, was up to the task. He suggested we try The Salvation Army. We downed a few more Virginia-Gentleman bourbons and were on our way. At the Salvation Army, we explained our plight to the lieutenant in charge. She graciously said, “Take one of our old bugles before we throw it out.” We gave her a donation for her mission and still had enough to enjoy a couple more VGs before heading back to Davisville. Salvation was in our hands and hearts. Our success did not translate to success for Billy Boy however. Frequently at night, I could hear him down in the bowels of the ship practicing the rendering of honors and, God help us, reveille. He had not tried playing any tunes while still in port. However, the first morning at sea at 0600 he played reveille with sputtering exertion and then haltingly followed with the standard: *Now reveille*,

reveille! All hands heave out and trice up. Reveille, reveille. The guys were used to the standard language call, but not its being preceded by a poorly played bugle call. Billy Boy and his new toy being used to rouse them was not at all popular. The next time the Captain wanted a call to General Quarters he ordered me to have Billy Boy play it on the bugle. I told him that our enlisted men were not used to manning their battle stations accompanied by a bugle call. The captain countered: "Destroyer sailors *know how* to do it!" Although the effort was halting, Bates played a reasonable GQ, and the crew manned their battle stations. However, I heard a lot of bitching and snide remarks about the bugle call. After securing from GQ, Bates approached me with a look of panic on his face. "Mr. Walsh, I cannot find the bugle. After playing GQ, I left it on the watch stand and now it's gone. I checked with the chief master-at-arms (the equivalent of a chief of police in civilian life), and he said he would have his men search for it, but I knew it was gone. The guys hated that thing. Billy stuttered, "What will I tell the Captain?" I told him not to worry that I would think of something. I did not have much time. That wheedling cat-like voice snarled over the ship's internal communications system: "Mister Walsh and Mister Baldwin to the Captain's Quarters on the double." The old man's face was beet red. "Weeell, okay, *who* did it? *Whooo* did it? You two characters are going to find out double quick. That bugle went overboard just to make *me* look bad! Well, I'm *not* going to have it! For some reason, you two shit heads are liked by the men. So find out or you will be in hack for the rest of the cruise and in port after that! You'll be allowed to leave your quarters for watches and meals only. If you guys love you so much, they may be *wiiilling* to give up one of their own!" The XO spoke up from the rear of the room. "Captain, these two officers were the ones who obtained the bugle in the first place. Why not just order them to get a replacement? Meanwhile, pass the word that if the new one goes missing, you will hand down effective and efficient punishments." The captain pondered the suggestion and agreed to the idea. There was one caveat; no one present was to tell anyone else about this meeting. It was the first time I wanted to kiss a Commanding Officer. As we exited, the Captain called the Engine Room and summoned a welder to his quarters. The next time I was on the bridge, I noted that a combination safe had been welded to the bulkhead near the Quartermasters' table. The *Searcher* returned to Davisville with no bugle reveille and no bugle rendering of honors. Before the ship had been secured to the dock, the Captain came over the loudspeaker: "After the unfortunate incident with the ship's bugle, a safe has been welded to the bulkhead on the bridge. It will have a *twenty-four* hour watch while in port! Ensigns Walsh and Baldwin will be responsible for purchasing another bugle. Should that bugle suffer an unfortunate disappearance, the ensigns will be placed in hack for their remaining tours on the *Searcher!*" As we were disembarking, Quartermaster Bates gave us \$12.50 that he had collected for the *Billy-Boy* fund. Baldwin and I reported to the *Sailors' Arms* to plan our next move. A few Virginia-Gentleman bourbons would assist our creativity. The lieutenant at the Salvation Army was not as sympathetic as she had been previously. She suggested we buy a bugle at the going rate. Baldwin tried his charm and negotiated diligently, but she would not budge. It cost us fifty bucks, a long way from the amount in the *Billy Boy* fund. Upon departing Davisville, the Captain did not order the bugle used to render honors. However, Billy had to play *Reveille* each morning we were steaming to get on station. *Searcher's* speed was stately. We were doing ten knots and our station was six-hundred miles from port. During the next GQ, Billy play well. Practice was perfecting! Then he came to us in fresh panic. He had placed the bugle in the safe, but had failed to spin the lock. After GQ was secured, he found the bugle safe in the safe, but the *mouthpiece* was missing. The Captain called for an immediate all-officers meeting. Technically, the bugle was *not* missing, and he had not mentioned the mouthpiece. The XO and all other officers agreed. The Captain *had* to sign off on QM Bates request for the third-class test. Subsequently, Bates passed his exam, made QM3 and ultimately was transferred to a carrier on the West Coast. The Captain made Commander, received a transfer, and was given a Destroyer out of Newport. On his first exercise in the North Atlantic, Bailey ran his ship up the rear of a Carrier during General Quarters. Ensign Baldwin made Lieutenant Junior Grade, stayed aboard the *Searcher* and was on her when she lost her single screw during a gale, 450 miles ESE of Cape Cod. A US Navy tug had to take her in tow. Me? I also made LTJG and was transferred to the *Greenwich Bay*.

ship's coordinators - Ship's coordinators maintain an email list that is used to forward memos from the chair and advance notices of reunion plans to crew members. If you wish to be included, send an email to your ship's coordinator. We still need a coordinator for the USS Picket (AGR-7).

AGR-1 Frank St Mark smarks117@hotmail.com
AGR-2 Ralph Rappuhun rrappuhn@aol.com
AGR-3 Chuck Parker chuckparker@gmail.com
AGR-4 Steve Mierzejewsk stevejackie43@gmail.com
AGR-5 Bob Werstler rdwerst@sbcglobal.net
AGR-6 Lee Doolittle tleadoo@u.washington.edu
AGR-7
AGR-8 Ron Stasiak ronstasiak@rocketmail.com

AGR-9 Frank Mahaffey franknbets@gmail.com
AGR-10 Paul Langenus plangenus@cox.net
AGR-11 George Sleeper gsleeper@roadrunner.com
AGR-12 Jesse Germany jgermany31@gmail.com
AGR-13 Richard Willhite willys55nut@comcast.net
AGR-14 Joe Jackson jacksonj@pldi.net
AGR-15 Lee Doyel mldoyel@cox.net
AGR-16 Frank McNamara ec2sc1@comcast.net

Dues Payment Form - dues are \$17/year

Make checks out to YAGRS. Mail to:

Ray Ostrowski, Treasurer

123 Barbara Dr., Newburg NY 12550

Ray can also be reached at: e-mail: rayrosie@hotmail.com

phone: 845-565-6243 cell: 845-245-5707

Current membership year ends May 31, 2020. Highlighted date on address label is the date your current membership expires. If that date is **5/31/19** or earlier, please update your membership by making a dues payment. Upon dues payment, you will receive an updated membership card and crew list. Please complete the information below and mail to Ray Ostrowski with dues payment.. You may pay for more than one year.

Name: _____ Ship: _____

Address: _____

amount enclosed: _____ Phone: _____ email: _____

YAGR'S BOOK ORDER - from Joe Maurer, USS Vigil

Cost is \$22.00 each including postage.

No. Ordered _____ Total Amt. Due _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ email _____

Detach and keep for receipt:

Paid to: Joe Maurer, 2127 S. Bristol Drive, Marblehead, Ohio 43440

E-mail: runinmuck@yahoo.com

