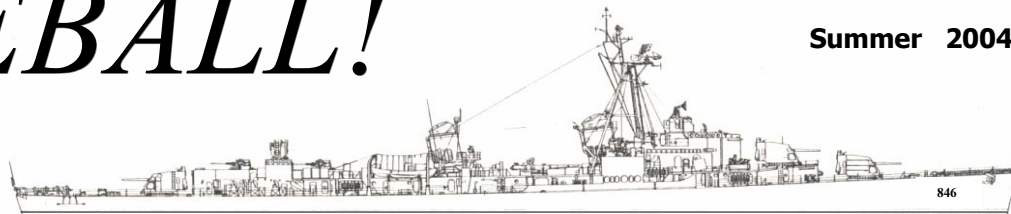


# FIREBALL!

Volume 13, No. 3

Summer 2004



The Newsletter of the USS Ozburn (DD846) Association  
Dedicated to perpetuating the memory of a gallant Marine and the history of a fine ship

## FROM THE BRIDGE

Since this country was founded it has been blessed with heroic Americans who know the meaning of duty and honor and are willing to serve in the armed forces. They serve fully aware that they may be asked to make the ultimate sacrifice to protect our way of life. Of the wars that we have faced, some were popular and the country's support for the troops was overwhelming. In the unpopular wars, we as a nation may not have been as grateful to our troops as we should have been.

With the current controversy over the war in Iraq, I have to ask, was Germany a better place to die than Iraq? Does it really matter where a soldier is wounded or killed? What is important is the fact that these brave men and women, in dangerous situations every day, serve with courage.

I would like to take this opportunity to ask you to sincerely thank all the military personnel serving our country both at home and overseas. Pray for their speedy return home and for a lasting peace in Iraq that will bring an end to this war.

Through the efforts of the reunion committee and by vote of the membership, Charleston, SC has been selected as the site of the next reunion. The Radisson Hotel Charleston Airport will be our temporary headquarters and the dates established are September 28 through October 2, 2005. Located only 15 minutes from historic Charleston, a city founded in 1670, it is said by some to be a "living museum."

I would like to thank Bob Whitten and his committee for a job well done.

Rudy Boff, President

## ITS OFFICIAL

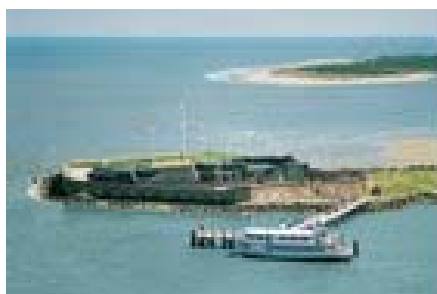
## REUNION 2005

## CHARLESTON, SC

September 28 through October 2

The choice of Charleston, SC for the next Ozburn reunion is exciting news. Although the itinerary and activities have not yet been finalized, this location should prove to be an excellent choice for our seventh reunion. From all accounts, Charleston has a reputation for being a visitor-friendly city with a wide variety of attractions together with southern hospitality.

Plantations, gardens and opulent homes offer a fascinating glimpse into the historic and natural beauty of the area's antebellum culture and history. From Fort Sumter where the first shots of the Civil War were fired to Patriots Point, the site of a more modern military museum there is surely something to hold the attention of everyone. Lets all make this the best attended reunion to date.



Old Fort Sumter



Patriots Point



Medal of Honor Museum

## Korea, summer 1952

Following is a little known event that occurred in the Sea of Japan. War had been raging up and down the Korean peninsula for over two years and Task Force 77 continued air operations against Communist forces ashore. On Wednesday 6 August 1952, Ozburn, now serving her second tour in the war zone, was a member of the eight destroyer screen of the task force centered around the carriers Essex (CV9) and Boxer (CV21). On the 04-08 watch that morning flight operations commenced and Ozburn was assigned plane guard duties with Boxer. Eight combat sorties had been launched without incident when suddenly at around 0600, heavy smoke was observed by watch standers billowing downwind

*(Korea, continued on page 7)*



## Taps for Shipmates

H. Barr Palmer LCDR (51-52) 21 May 2004

Marion J. Parker ET3 (51-54) 7 December 2003

May they rest in peace

### Bulletin Board of General Interest.

1. **Annual dues.** Dues in the USS Ozborn Association are \$10 per year, a figure that has remained constant since the founding of the Association way back in '92. Where else could you find such a value? This \$10 gets you into a super exclusive organization based on camaraderie and good will, opens the doors to fun and frolic at the biennial reunions and not the least of all, a subscription to a cutting edge newsletter and web-page. All hands are urged to keep track of their own dues situation and if you know of a former Ozborn sailor who is not a member, urge him to sign up for a hitch. The membership IS the Association and without your support, the organization will fade into obscurity. Keep the dues coming in and promote YOUR Association.
2. **Ship's Store.** The store is again in full operation. A full line of quality items are available under the direction of Rudy Boff. He will be overjoyed to take your orders either by mail or from the web page. Don't be out of uniform at the next reunion, get your caps and jackets now.
3. **Web page.** The web page is still undergoing reconstruction. Recently, a web page editor/constructor has been engaged to up-date and rearrange the Ozborn web site. Stay tuned!
4. **Plaque at Fredericksburg.** The committee to investigate the feasibility of placing a plaque, in honor of the USS Ozborn at the Admiral Nimitz Pacific War Museum in Fredericksburg, TX, reports that preliminary input data has been accumulated and decided upon. A recommendation to President Rudy Boff will be forthcoming shortly. (Submitted by Committee chairman Paul Logan)
5. **HELP WANTED.** As of 07/15/2004 the association database of members contains **61** entries with erroneous address. In addition, there are **163** entries of shipmates who have made contact with the Association, in one way or another, but have never taken any follow up action. Recording Secretary Bill Jones is seeking anyone who is willing to help the Association in locating these AWOL members and convince them to sign up. Bill's addresses can be found in the adjacent column entitled "Officers of the Association." He will provide help and guidance to any volunteers for this worthwhile task.
6. **Ship Prints available.** Veramar Naval Products of San Diego, CA maintains a vast collection of naval ship prints that are executed on high quality artists paper together with a wide variety of charts and posters with nautical themes. Photos of Ozborn, both pre and post FRAM, are available. Email address is, <http://www.veramarnavalproducts.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc>. This notice is provided for information only and is not an endorsement of the products. (Submitted by Bill Jones)
7. **Newsletter distribution.** Beginning with this issue, future editions of the Fireball! will be sent only to those members who are current with their dues (Charter and Honorary members excepted). In the past, at least one and sometimes two mailings were made to all hands on the muster list during the 2 year cycle between reunions in the hope that some of the non-dues payers might sign up in order to attend a forthcoming reunion. There is no indication that this practice has resulted in any increase in the membership. So, in the future, if you do not receive a newsletter, one reason is that you have not paid your dues. The other main reason a newsletter may not be received is the lack of a proper address. Prompt notice of change of address together with up-to-date telephone number and email address will greatly enable timely distribution of the Fireball!. This process will result in a significant saving in printing and mailing costs.

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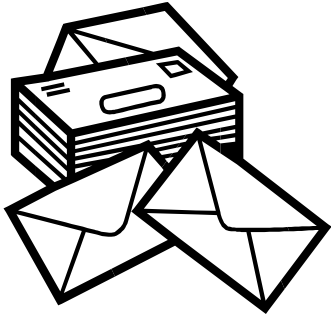
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Email: caker5@msn.com

#### Past President

**Robert Whitten, Jr. (50-52)**  
Cupertino, CA  
**W.D. Minter (52-55)**  
Texarkana, TX

## MAIL CALL



From **Steve Jones SM3 (70-71)**

Upon returning from a West-Pac Cruise (1979-1971), we encountered engine trouble and limped into Midway Island where there was a dock, if you could call it that. We tied up and were given liberty to visit the island but to be alert to

return immediately when the ship's horn was sounded. We never had such an historic and eventful visit to this famous island. On the shore opposite our ship's mooring we saw blown up rusting hulks of liberty boats, LST's and other landing craft. It really put things in perspective when you consider those men fighting for the shore and the high ground. We could not believe that the metal and corrosion and the rust had not taken further damage to the hulks. Another quite different sight was to walk that old Air Force landing strip and see all the Goonie birds nesting and raising their chicks on the strip. As we approached the nests the mother birds would stand their ground beside their ugly chicks and pop their bills in defiance to our presence. The birds were quite large and none were in the air, they just stayed on the ground and walked around. Later on, I learned that it is quite a feat for these large birds to get airborne with their huge bodies and long, slender wings.

Five or six hours later the engine problem was repaired and the horn sounded. We clambered aboard and were on our way home. I was a very short timer then, had 20 days and a wake-up to go.

I enjoyed my time on the Oz. She was quite an impressive sight to see.

From **Jack Blonsick ENS (50-51)**

Ship Handler Anonymous:

I have always considered Charlie Akers the best ship handler in the business and I have witnessed a few dock wallopers in my day. I want to reveal what I saw one day when on the USS Perry (DD 844) in Pensacola. While in the process of getting underway one morning for plane guard duties all hands attention were drawn to the captain's wife, a voluptuous blonde, who had come to the pier to see the ship off. The skipper ordered all ahead one third on the engines. When nothing seemed to happen he ordered an increase in power as he waved to Mrs. Gorgeous and blew her a few kisses. At this point we noticed that he was pulling the dock bollards into the bay. Oooops, forgot to take in the lines. I don't know if it was an "ooops" or an "oh \*\*\*\*".

Weird sea duty 1950

After shelling Fankochi Point, Korea and going ashore at Inchon, we walked over to Wolmi Do, stepping around the dead body of a Korean soldier. Soldiers were uncovering a cave that had been flamed by a flame thrower and closed by a bull-

dozer. It was a bit stinky from the burned NK soldiers that had been sealed inside. Next to me was a dead Marine with a blanket thrown over his body, an M-1 with bayonet in the ground and his dog tag attached to the trigger guard. At this point, Commodore Roeder looking out over the Han River exclaimed, "What a great spot for an Officer's Club!" I said, "Should I put this Marine on report?" The Captain, Charlie Akers looked at me and said, "Don't push it, Jack." I didn't.

Following are the letters received following notification of the death of Barr Palmer who served as Executive Officer of Ozbourn from 1951 to 1952. He was one of the Charter Members of the Association.

From **Charlie Akers CO (50-52)**

Hello Shipmates,

It is my sad duty to report that Barr Palmer, Ozbourn's Executive Officer in 1951, passed away on May 21, 2004.

Harold Barr Palmer was an exceptional Naval Officer. He was one of the few active duty reserve officers to be promoted to the grade of Captain and he served in many challenging assignments prior to his retirement from the Navy. As Executive Officer of the Ozbourn he was famous for getting the job done with no hate and discontent. Barr was a key member in the original group of shipmates who formed the USS Ozbourn Association and has been recognized for his contribution to the Association on that occasion. Barr, we your shipmates from the Ozbourn, will miss you.

From **Warren Zschach RD2 (52-55)**

I reported aboard in 1952 when Bill Fargo was in command and I believe that Barr was the XO. I will remember Barr for being one of the small group who had the vision to start the Ozbourn Association. What fun we have had over these past years, establishing and strengthening friendships all because of that group's actions. Now Barr joins W.D. (Minter) and other shipmates who have gone before us, trading sea stories on their last duty station. Think of these shipmates when you raise your flag this Memorial Day. Barr will be missed. May they all rest in peace.

From **Jack Blonsick ENS (50-51)**

I regret the passing of a fine Officer and Exec. He was such an improvement over his predecessor. He never seemed presumptuous and always seemed reasonable. Farewell shipmate, until we sail together again.....

From **Harold Barr Palmer, II**

On behalf of our entire family, we thank you for the very kind words about our father and you are welcome to include the letter of Dad's passing in the Fireball.

As mentioned, the family will gather in Portland, OR on July 2 to put Dad in his final resting place... next to the most important lady in his life...our mother.

Editors note: Please see Mr. Palmer's letter on page 6

## TIN CAN IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Ever hear about the tin can that nearly sank a president?

For this story we have to travel back to WWII and the ship in question is USS William D. Porter (DD-579), a Fletcher Class destroyer, commissioned in July 1943. After trials and shakedown operations in the Atlantic the ship was assigned to the destroyer screen that would accompany the new battleship USS Iowa across the Atlantic in November 1943. On board Iowa was a large delegation of dignitaries that included President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Secretary of State, Cordell Hull and many of the country's top brass. They were headed for the Big Three Conference in Tehran for high level talks with Churchill and Stalin.

On the night before they left Norfolk, the Porter had wiped out railings, life rafts, the ships boat and numerous other equipment when her anchor scraped the



The Jonah

side of the ship moored alongside, but this was only the beginning of her career of mayhem and mishaps that would dog the ship for the rest of her service life. Twenty four hours later, the four ship convoy consisting of Iowa with her big brass on board, Porter and two other destroyers and under strict radio silence set off, bound for North Africa.

While transiting a known U-boat operating area a sudden, tremendous explosion rocked the convoy. All of the ships commenced anti-sub maneuvers until the Porter sheepishly admitted that one of her depth charges had fallen off her stern and exploded. Shortly thereafter, a freak wave inundated the ship, carrying away everything topside that wasn't lashed down, including a sailor who went overboard and was never found. Minor equipment problems also added to the woes of Porter's skipper.

(See Porter on page 5)

## OZBOURN SHIP'S STORE

OPEN 24 HOURS

*Rudy Boff, Proprietor*



**CAP, Cotton Twill**  
**Dark Navy color with Brilliant Gold letters; Black leather closure with plain back.**  
**One size fits all**  
**Item # C01**  
**\$14. ea**

**With "Korea" embroidered on back: Item # C01K - \$15. ea**

**With "Vietnam" embroidered on back: Item # C01V- \$15. ea**



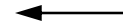
**MUG, coffee 11 oz.**  
**Embossed with Ozboourn patch design and destroyer silhouette**

**Item # M01**  
**\$8 ea., 2 for \$12/ 6 for \$30**



**PATCH, shoulder**

**Item # P01**  
**Original design**



**Item # P02**  
**Revised**



**\$6. ea**



**FRAME, license plate**

**Item # F01**

**\$5. ea**

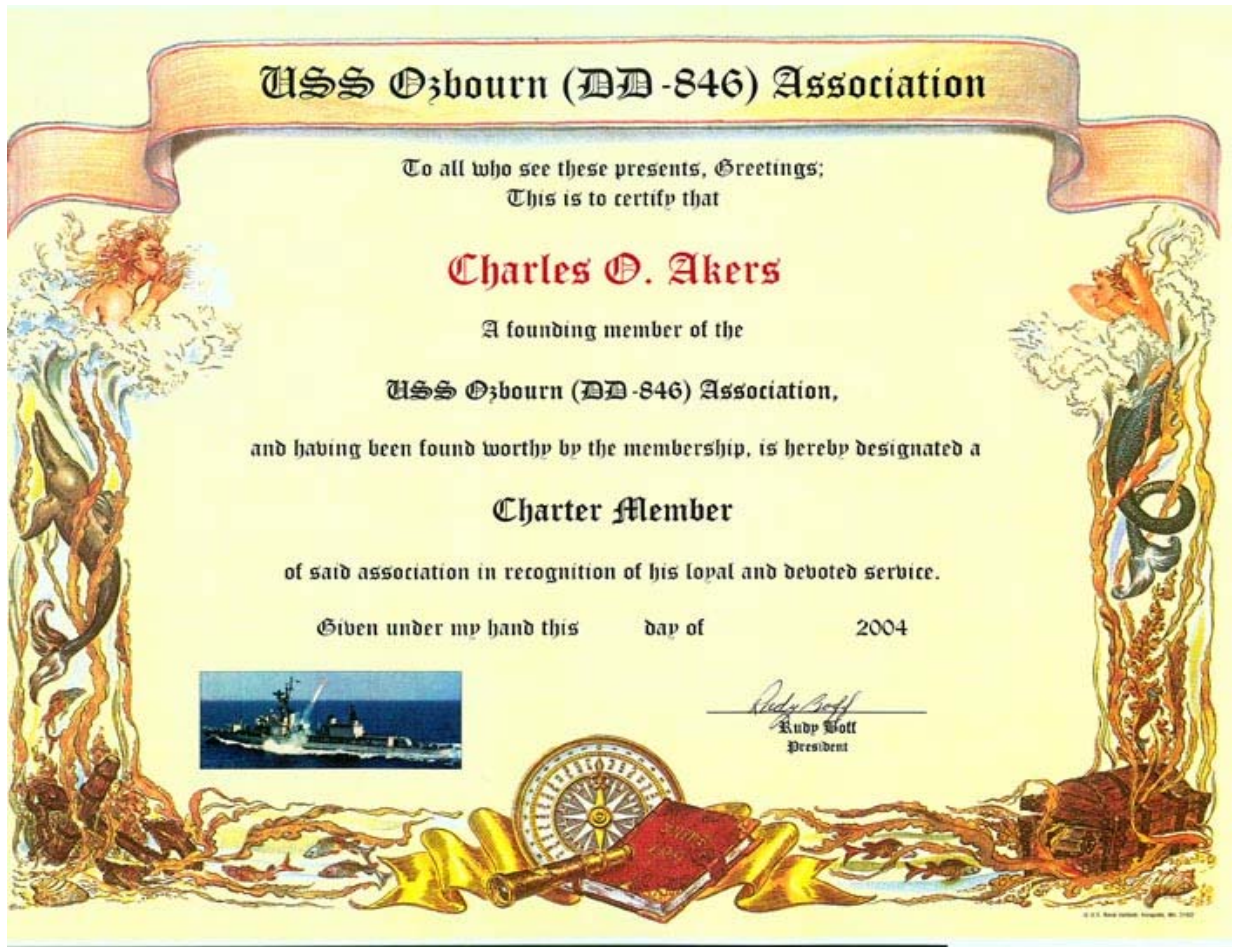
All merchandise is of highest quality. Windbreakers, Jackets and T-shirts are available by special order. Contact the store manager. Checks or money orders ONLY please, made payable to USS Ozboourn Association. Orders may also be placed from the webpage.



Place your orders with:

**Rudy Boff**  
**1036 Connor Rd.**  
**Pittsburgh, PA 15234-1033**  
**Tel: 412 833 0572**  
**Email: boffrud@juno.com**





Copy of the Charter Member Certificate presented to Charlie Akers. Identical certificates were also presented to Barr Palmer and Robert Whitten, Jr. The three were founders of the USS Ozbourn Association. See January 2004 edition of the Fireball for biographical sketches of the three recipients.

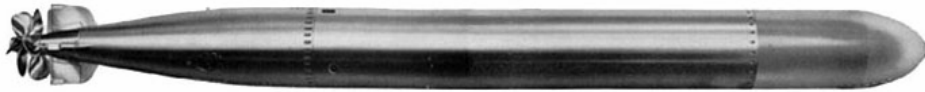
*(Porter continued from page 4)*

The morning of 14 November found the convoy just to the east of Bermuda with moderate seas and pleasant weather. The president asked to see a demonstration of anti-aircraft defense measures so the Iowa launched a number of weather balloons as targets and all the ships participated in an impressive display of AA gunnery to the delight of Roosevelt and all the brass. Meanwhile, down on the torpedo tube

mounts the crew watched and waited for an opportunity to do some practice shots of their own on the big battleship steaming majestically only 6000 yards away. Part of the job of the torpedomen involved ensuring that the primers used in the launching sequence were installed for actual combat and removed during drills. Once a primer was installed, on a command to fire, it would explode the impulse charge and launch the torpedo at

the target.

On this particular morning the man responsible to perform this check had forgotten to remove the primer from torpedo tube # 3. Up on the bridge, a new torpedo officer, unaware of the danger, ordered a simulated firing run and commenced the firing sequence. Fire 1, Fire 2, and then Fire 3. There was no



**The Weapon**

Fire 4 as the unmistakable whooooooooooshing noise made by a successfully launched torpedo drowned out all other sound for the moment as 825 pounds of torpex was on the way to the target, the battleship Iowa.

One of the ship's officers who witnessed the event, later described the next few minutes as what hell would look like

if it ever broke loose. Pandemonium broke out on the bridge as the torpedo streaked toward some of the most prominent figures in world history. Initially there was some reluctance to admit what had happened but as the terrible reality sunk in people began racing around, shouting conflicting orders and attempting to warn the flagship of impending

danger. Finally, they decided to break radio silence and the radio operator transmitted a signal for the Iowa to turn right. The Iowa operator, more concerned about radio procedure, requested the offending station to identify itself first. Finally after what seemed an eternity, the Iowa commenced evasive maneuvers and trained all of her guns on the unlucky tin can, probably thinking that the Porter was part of an assassination plot. Within moments of the warning there was a tremendous

*(Porter, continued on page 8)*

## HAROLD BARR PALMER, II

June 15, 2004

Mr. Thomas M. Perkins  
USS Ozbourn Association  
2240 Pine Tree Drive SE  
Port Orchard, Washington 98366

Dear Mr. Perkins,

It is with great sadness that I inform you of the passing of my father, one of the three Charter Members of the association. I called Charlie and Becky Akers to let them know personally. The following obituary appeared in both San Diego and Portland, Oregon newspapers:



H. Barr Palmer, 86, died peacefully Friday, May 21, 2004. He was born November 18, 1917 in Tacoma, Washington, the son of Dr. C. Harold and Erma Palmer. He attended Roosevelt High School in Portland, Oregon and the University of Oregon at Eugene. He was a member of the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity.


He received his commission in the Navy in 1941. After serving in the South Pacific during WWII, he returned to Portland, Oregon where he and his brother Hal raised Arabian horses on Sauvie Island. Recalled to active duty in 1950, he served as the Executive Officer aboard the USS Ozbourn in the Korean theater. After completing a distinguished career in the Navy, he retired as a Captain in 1966. Although preceded in death by his wife Margery, they were both active golfers at Rancho Santa Fe Golf Club for many years. He was an active Rotarian and recognized as a Paul Harris Fellow.

Captain Palmer is survived by his son Skip Palmer of Overland Park, Kansas; daughter Carol of Carlsbad; California and daughter Nancy of Ramona, California. He was blessed with six grandchildren, two great-grand sons, and dear friends who enriched his life in many ways.

Inurnment will be at Skyline Memorial Gardens, Portland, Oregon on July 2nd. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Vitas Hospice Charitable Fund, 9566 Granite Ridge, Suite 300, San Diego, California 92123.

Having served as a young commissioned officer in Vietnam, I am a member of the Blackhorse Association (former members of the 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment) and have deep appreciation for the wonderful camaraderie that has been developed and shared by the members of the Ozbourn Association. We are all so proud that our father played a role in helping to form the organization. As he would say to each of his former shipmates, "CARRY ON!"

Best Regards,



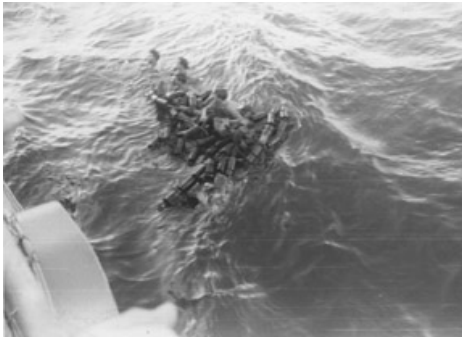
(Korea, continued from page 1)

from Boxer. Almost immediately the screening vessels were alerted to be on the lookout for swimmers in the water. On the Boxer, a gasoline tank on one aircraft in the hangar deck had exploded and in a matter of seconds the entire area was a raging inferno as the fire jumped



**Boxer on fire in the distance**

from one aircraft to another. At the time, the ship was making 30 knots and on deck there were 58 combat loaded aircraft. The Boxer crew immediately set about jettisoning explosives, ship's speed was reduced and the firefighting parties fought valiantly trying to prevent the fire from spreading. They were hampered by exploding shells and the explosion of a 500 pound bomb in the hangar deck. The smoke was extremely thick, enveloping the entire ship and at one point the engineering spaces became almost untenable and two fire rooms had to be abandoned. Sixty three sailors, who were trapped by the flames, went over the side and the plane guard ships immediately closed the carrier to pick up the



**Ozbourn comes alongside a floater net**

survivors.

On board Ozbourn, the main battery director crew with their 24 power optics spotted numerous men in the water clinging to floater nets and coached the bridge watch to the proper location for pickup. Meanwhile, the motor whaleboat was

lowered and they began searching and picking up men as well. Many of the men in the water were not wearing lifejackets and their only means of floatation was the floater nets or whatever flotsam they could find in the water.

While the rescue operations were taking place, back on the Boxer the fire fighters continued their uphill battle against the flames and exploding munitions. Finally after four to five hours it was concluded



**Coming aboard after a harrowing swim**

that the fire was under control, crewmembers that had been trapped were safe and those that went over the side had been rescued.

Total casualties was determined to be 8 dead, 1 missing, 1 critically injured, 1 serious burn case and 70 overcome by smoke. Of the 63 that had gone over the side all were rescued, 32 by Stembel (DD 644), 18 by Ozbourn and the remainder



**A solid deck underfoot at last**

by helicopter and other ships. Eighteen aircraft were destroyed or damaged.

After the fire was out and the damage assessed it was determined that while Boxer could be restored to a condition in which it could operate aircraft, higher authority decided that the ship would return to Japan to get rid of the duds, receive replacement aircraft, make minimum repairs and return to the line.

Ozbourn photos courtesy Mel Hargrove

and Bill Jones.

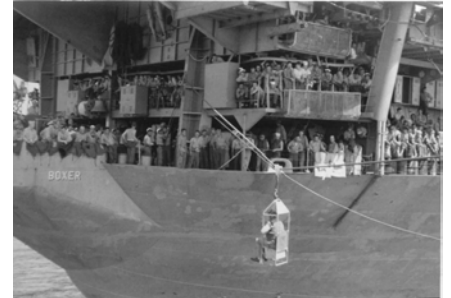
Following photos were taken from the collection in the USS Boxer Association website courtesy of Riley Morton. (See [www.ussboxer.com/Remember\\_when](http://www.ussboxer.com/Remember_when))



**Stembel whaleboat searches**



**Survivors gather on deck of Stembel**



**Going home after a long day**



**Boxer after the fire**

An outstanding website.



**Thomas M. Perkins**  
**USS Ozbourn Association**  
**2240 Pine Tree Dr. SE**  
**Port Orchard, WA 98366-3454**



### **The Stars and Stripes Forever**

*(Porter, continued from page 5)*

explosion just aft of the battleship as the torpedo had been detonated by the wash kicked up by the Iowa's screws.

The crisis was over and so was the career of the Porter's skipper as shortly



**The Target**

thereafter the entire crew was placed under arrest and sent to Bermuda for trial per orders of Admiral Ernie King who had witnessed the entire episode. It was the first time that a complete ship's crew had been arrested in the history of the U.S. Navy. The ship was surrounded by Marines when the ship docked in Bermuda and held for several days as the closed session inquiry attempted to determine cause for the incident. The torpedoman who inadvertently left the primer in the impulse chamber finally confessed

that he had not checked the tube prior to the launching and had then thrown the used primer case over the side to conceal his mistake. The whole incident was chalked up to an unfortunate set of circumstances and placed under a cloak of secrecy. Someone had to be punished of course and the Captain and several ships officers and sailors eventually found themselves stuck in obscure shore assignments. The torpedoman was sentenced to 14 years hard labor but President Roosevelt intervened, asking that no punishment be meted out for what was clearly an accident.

The William D. Porter was banished to the Aleutian Islands where it remained into late 1944 when she was reassigned to the Western Pacific. The "Willie D", as she came to be known didn't leave quietly in the middle of the night however. On the day of departure she somehow managed to lob a 5 inch shell into the flower garden of the base commandant.

Joining the Philippine invasion forces she distinguished herself by shooting down several attacking Japanese aircraft. Regrettably, after the war, it was reported that she also shot down three American planes.

In April 1945 the destroyer was assigned to support the invasion of Okinawa. By now, the greeting "Don't Shoot, We're Republicans" was commonplace and the crew had become used to the ribbing. The crew of her

sister ship USS Luce was not so polite in its salutations after the Willie D accidentally riddled her side and superstructure with gunfire

On 10 June 1945 the hapless Porter's luck finally ran out. Hit by kamikaze aircraft off



**The end of the Willie D**

Okinawa, she rolled over and sank. After everything else that had happened, it was almost as if the ship decided to let her crew off. Not a single man was lost in the sinking.