

## USS HOLT (DE 506)

**“HOLT HAPPENINGS”** - A Newsletter for and about the crew, their families and friends.

Vol XIII, No. 1

JANUARY 2003

**THE SHIP'S BELL** (By Bob Hoover - with a “touch” of Hemingway from his wife, Ellen)

Victor Blue was a many-sided person. He could be the very serious heir of a fine old fighting sea-going family, at one time a buffoon; at another time a promising young jurist at the Florida Bar. But, on a steaming, sweltering summer morning in New Orleans in June 1944, I learned Blue was also a mystic!

The HOLT had been delivered to the Algiers Naval Base in New Orleans by the DeFoe Shipbuilding Company of Bay City, Michigan. As Stores Officer, I had been assured that all of HOLT's equipment, not provided by the builder, would be set on board upon arrival in New Orleans. Senior Storekeeper, Clarence Olson and I both knew that whatever gear was missing in Bay City was likely to be out of stock in New Orleans as well. Meanwhile, Blue told us quite clearly that our full allowance of gear must be on board - no alibis.

The prospective Commanding Officer continued, “There are two items about which I am very particular. The first is three silver dollars to place under the base of the mast at the time the mast is stepped” - (Olson and I breathed easier - we knew that could be done at the District Federal Reserve Bank of New Orleans). “The second item”, Blue went on, “is our ship's bell.” I explained in rueful tones that there was a shortage of ships bells (we had been so informed by Supply Officers in both Bay City and at the Algiers Base). The Captain-to-be countered

fiercely, emphasizing that no self-respecting officer in any navy would put to sea without her bell; that the battleship SOUTH DAKOTA and the smallest yard tug each had its bell; and that Providence would not look kindly on any ship, or its master, that embarked on its duty tour without that ancient warning and ceremonial device. Thus, Blue the mystic, believed in his soul that a ship underway without a bell was tempting Fate itself.

This was not superstition; it was the mystic tradition of the sea. For those landlubbers who understand this not, don't bother to read on. The rest is not for you. Blue would have his bell, no ifs-and-or-buts. "Hoovah" he bellowed, "I want a bell for the HOLT and you shall see that I get it!" Gratuitously, I saluted and muttered, "Aye, aye, sir." Olson made one of those straight-faced silent snickers that every true sailor knows how to deliver.

No trouble getting the three silver pieces from the bank. The more difficult task was ahead. Stores Officer and Storekeeper went back to the supply base at Algiers. We were met with frustration everywhere we went. "Why in hell do you need a bell? You've got a whistle ain't chew?" "There's a war going on. The U S of A is making ships and tanks, not bells." In desperation, we requested an audience with the Supply Officer-in-Charge. We told him we couldn't go back to the ship without a bell; that both our navy careers were at stake. (This wasn't telling the whole truth because, for some unaccountable reason, our Captain-in-waiting could be impressively grouchy, but never mean or unjust. Olson and I really wanted to please the "Old Man" (age 33).

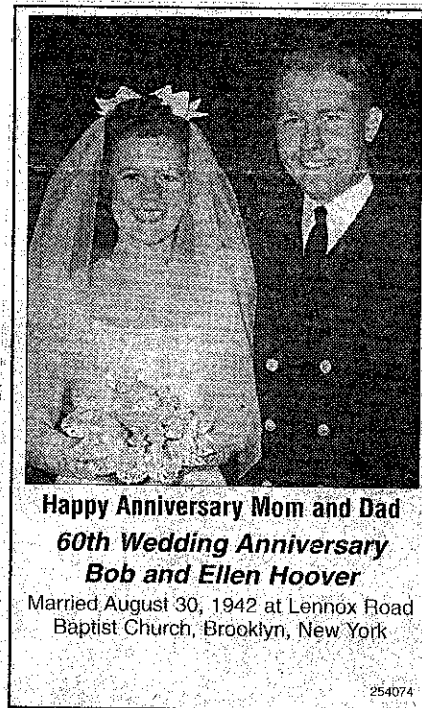
Anyhow, the sainted Supply Officer saw our predicament and he promised to do what he could. "Leave it with me", he said. We had no choice and little hope of ever getting our bell. Crestfallen and down-hearted, we returned to the ship. Once aboard, the gangway watch said the Supply Officer-in-Charge, three stripes and all, had been there with a large crate to be delivered to me personally. A note from our friend-for-life, the Supply Chief, explained that, as a last resort he had made a call to the receiver's warehouse of the bankrupt Panama Central Railway. "Yes", they had said, "they had a railroad bell - send a truck." The Supply Officer picked up the merchandise and cut quickly through all the red tape involved in getting a distressed stock item onto the navy list without formal bidding, and thereafter, delivering it to the ship-of-the-line.

HOLT was probably the first ship in the long annals of the U. S. Navy ever to put to sea with a railroad bell mounted on her flying bridge! And who knows, was it not in great part, at least, the three silver coins beneath the mast, and the tolling of that railroad bell which brought us through the trials of Mindoro, Lingayen Gulf, Legaspi, Tarakan, Okinawa and Leyte Gulf? Ask not, sailor man, for whom the Bell of kind Providence tolled - It tolled for you! And was it not Victor Blue who pulled the lanyard?

And that's why I thirsted for the bronze Swedish bell raffled off by Bill Morgan at the last HOLT reunion. But next best thing to winning the prize for myself, was to see it go to Randolph Cowart, our ever faithful shipmate and barber.

**GOOD NEWS!!**

This photo of Bob & Ellen Hoover made 60 years ago. They were married August 30, 1942 at Lennox Road Baptist Church, Brooklyn, New York



Rod Sutherland (Son of Don & Edie Sutherland) was married to Judy Allen on July 12, 2002. If you recall, Rod proposed to Judy during the HOLT banquet in Jacksonville last April. Congratulations and may you have a long and happy married life.

Jeff Cope (Son of Glenn & Helen Cope), married Dana Baker on December 28, 2002. Jeff is the computer guru who originated and maintains the HOLT web site. If you have not visited the site lately, I encourage you to do so. It can be accessed at [www.usholt.com](http://www.usholt.com). There is a lot of HOLT data maintained on the site. Plans are to make it even more meaningful by adding additional data of historical interest. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please get in touch with Jeff at [REDACTED] or you can drop him a note. His address is



### **TIDBITS FROM HERE AND THERE**

**“Anyone who has served aboard a Navy Ship knows that two heads are better than one.”**

**“Middle age is when broadness of the mind and the narrowness of the waist change places.”**

**“Cooking with wine is great, even when you don’t put it in the food.”**

**“If you look like your passport picture, you probably need the trip.”**

**“Once over the hill you pick up speed.”**

*Anon*

### **2004 REUNION**

**The planning for the 2004 reunion is still “a work in progress.” Walter Johnson’s daughters, Sandy Oliver and Judy Mansur are working with the hotels in Boston to get a favorable deal. Hopefully, this will come to fruition in the near future. As you are aware, the group voted for Boston by a margin of one vs. San Antonio, subject to getting a reasonable deal. We expect the hotel to make a proposal within the next few weeks so we will have a starting point for negotiations.**

### **IN MEMORIUM**

**We have learned of the deaths of two of our shipmates (thru the social security death index). They are:**

**Edward G. Cornett (Yoeman 3/c)**

**Martin T. Shaughnessy (Radarman 3/c)**

## USS HOLT DE 706

The sixth biannual reunion of the USS HOLT DE 706 was held April 24-28, 2002, at the Marriott Hotel, Jacksonville, FL. We had 20 of our old WWII shipmates present, with a total of 65 including spouses, children, grandchildren, and friends.

A highlight of the reunion was a visit to the USS BOONE FFG 28 at Mayport. Despite tight security we were able to go ahead with the planned tour which was well received by all hands. We were impressed

with the quality of the crew, their knowledge of their ship and equipment. Their professionalism and enthusiasm was obvious as they took us on the tour of the ship and explained various operations.



Pictured above, left to right: Seated—Randolph Cowart. Standing—Bill Morgan, Al Bogan, John MacGauley, Paul Pickett, Glen Cope, Al Gebauer, John Steinhauser, Don Fredette, Bob Hoover, Al DeHart, Al Boorman, Karl Nease, Gannett Howard, Bob Schieferstin, George Burke, Oak Ramsey, and Jay Decker.

A visit to St. Augustine and its many sights concluded the tours. Most of the time was spent in the Hospitality Room catching up on each other's life. Two of the shipmates, Al Bogan and Bob Cooper, attended for the first time.

**This article, with photo appeared in a recent issue of DESA News (the newspaper of the Destroyer Escort Sailors Association).**