



## HISTORY OF THE DENNIS THE MENACE PLAQUE

By Larry Bohn

During the 5th cruise, one of the officers thought up the idea of increasing the esprit de corps of the crew by having a competition aboard to design an emblem or insignia, if you will, indicating the Chewaucan's value to the 6th fleet. The entries were to be voted upon by the entire crew. The winner was to receive a fifth of Seagram's VO at the Christmas party which was to be held ashore at the EM club in Naples.

The thought of winning a fifth of VO held no interest for me so I wasn't spending any time thinking about the competition. One evening while in the mess hall playing checkers with one of the electricians known as "Hurricane" Lucas, the subject of the competition came up. Hurricane made the statement that we ought to have "Dennis the Menace" for an emblem because we were a menace to the fleet. I said that I thought that was a great idea and asked him if he was going to enter that idea in the competition.

His reply was, "Who, Me? Hell, I can't draw."

I came back with, "Well, I can. Why don't we get together and work up a design and enter it together?"

"Sounds good to me." said Hurricane and the design group of Lucas-Bohn was immediately formed.

We quickly agreed on several points: First, whenever you saw a cartoon of Dennis the Menace, his dog "Ruff" was always with him so obviously, Ruff had to be part of the emblem. Second, the 6th Fleet operated almost entirely within the confines of the Mediterranean area so somehow that had to be included in the scheme of things. Third, we should represent our fueling activities by equipping Dennis with a beach bucket filled with black oil and a squirt gun, also filled with black oil, and have him shooting at toy ships floating around him.

The final design found Dennis and Ruff standing on a globe that was 3/4 submerged in water with small models of an LST, Submarine, Destroyer, and Supply ship floating near the globe. The portion of the globe that was showing above the water depicted the Mediterranean Sea. A pair of airplanes, a twin engine flying boat and a P2-V, were flying in circles around Dennis and Ruff. Overhead in Shaded block letters was the name USS CHEWAUCAN, under which, also in shaded block letters, AOG-50.

Original rough draft of emblem complete with smudges, blots and wrinkles.



Only two other emblem ideas were submitted and when the final vote was taken, we won it hands down. It was rumored that Captain Lynch wasn't too pleased with the concept of the Chewaucan being a menace to the fleet. Although he never said anything to me personally about it, I imagine that he wasn't. Before the competition, it was suggested that the winning emblem would be incorporated into a letterhead for stationery to be made available in the ship's store and possibly some sort of badges or shoulder patches could be made up, not for official wear of course, but perhaps for a baseball cap or the back of a jacket. As soon as the final vote was made, the entire idea was dropped, and we heard no more about a ship's emblem.

As we entered the door of the EM club for our Christmas party, our bottle of VO was waiting for us. Everyone at the party was also given a number upon entry for a door prize of another bottle of VO. Although I normally never win anything, when the number for the door prize was drawn, it was my name that was picked.

Needless to say, both Hurricane and I had lots of "friends" during the party. The first bottle was basically shared with the rest of the shipfitters and electricians. The second bottle was passed around to the wider circle of friends, and we never saw it again, but altogether it was a fine party.

Although there was no more talk of a "ship's emblem," I wasn't ready to let it drop yet so in the following evenings, I painted up an emblem on a two foot square panel of plywood. I had no trouble finding enough

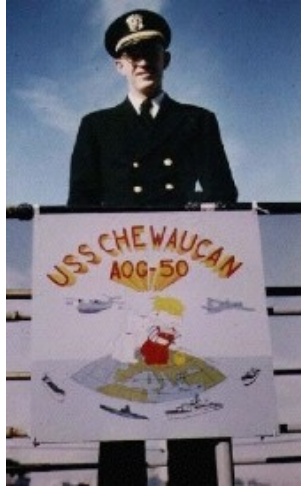
colors in the paint locker to be able to mix up whatever I needed for the job except for one small problem. At that particular time there was absolutely no black paint on board. I found this hard to believe as there were a number of places on the ship that needed frequent touch up that were black. Regardless of the fact that we should have black aboard, there was absolutely none available. I didn't need much, a quarter of a cup would have been plenty, but none is none, so the fact that I didn't need much was of no help at all.

As always though, if you don't have what you need, figure out a way around it. Knowing that the basic ingredient in the pigment of black paint is carbon black, I decided to make my own paint. A quarter of a cup of linseed oil became the vehicle for my black paint. The flame from an acetylene torch with acetylene only turned on is full of soot especially if the flame is turned low. The soot could easily be collected by directing the flame against a piece of scrap sheet metal, then scraped off and mixed into the linseed oil. Within a half hour of conceiving the idea of making my own black paint, I was using it to put the finishing touches on the emblem.

Once I finished the emblem, the next question was, "What do I do with it." What I really wanted to do was to paint one about 10 feet in diameter (it would have adapted to a round emblem easily) on each side of the smoke stack. A few of the destroyers had special insignias on their stacks so I felt that the Chewaucan ought to have one too. I asked Mr. Lewis to tell Captain Lynch that I would be happy to paint it on the stack during my free time, but the offer was graciously declined. When I tried to use the argument that if destroyers had them, we should too, I was told that the destroyers that had their own insignias were squadron leaders, and the insignia was approved by CINCLANT while we weren't squadron leader of anything, and the insignia wasn't even approved by the Skipper. I really wasn't at all surprised. I doubt that I would have approved it either if I had been Skipper.

Just to record the fact that the emblem existed, I hung it on the catwalk rail one Sunday morning. As I was preparing to take a photo of it, who should I see coming out of the wardroom door and forward on the catwalk but Captain Lynch all dressed up in his dress blues obviously getting ready to go ashore. I had purposely stayed clear of the subject of the emblem with Captain Lynch personally as I could understand his feelings about it and didn't want to put him on the spot by having to say no to me so I was a bit apprehensive about what would happen next.

When he saw what I was doing, as he walked forward, he hollered at me, "Hold up Bohn." This did nothing to allay my apprehensions. When he got to the sign, he stood behind it, turned towards me and gave me a big smile. "Now take it" was all he said.



Because of the fact that nothing ever came of the emblem, I never bothered to contact "Hank Ketcham" to obtain permission to use his copyrighted characters in our emblem but I've a very strong idea that he would have been pleased as I've heard that he was an old navy man himself.

If I were Paul Harvey, I'd now say, "and now, the rest of the story."

For 47 years, I have assumed that there was no rest of the story but in truth, there was.

In October of 2004, I was lucky enough to be able to attend the first "All Chewaucan Reunion." It was a great success for all of us attending. We were asked, prior to the reunion to bring old photos taken aboard ship and other Chewaucan memorabilia to share with the others so naturally, I did as did many others. One of the pieces of memorabilia brought by someone else was a "shirt patch" of Dennis and Ruff exactly as Hurricane and I had originally planned it. I found out that it had been produced, with the blessings of Hank Ketcham, in two different versions for four years after I left the ship. It was phased out after that when the Chewaucan left the 6th fleet and became "The galloping ghost of the Carolina Coast" based in Charleston.

The second version included the words "SOLANT AMITY" to commemorate a good will round trip around the bottom of Africa to the Red sea and back which terminated the many years the Chewaucan had spent in the Mediterranean.

The next phase is to find one on e-bay or some other place. I really ought to have one of my own.

