

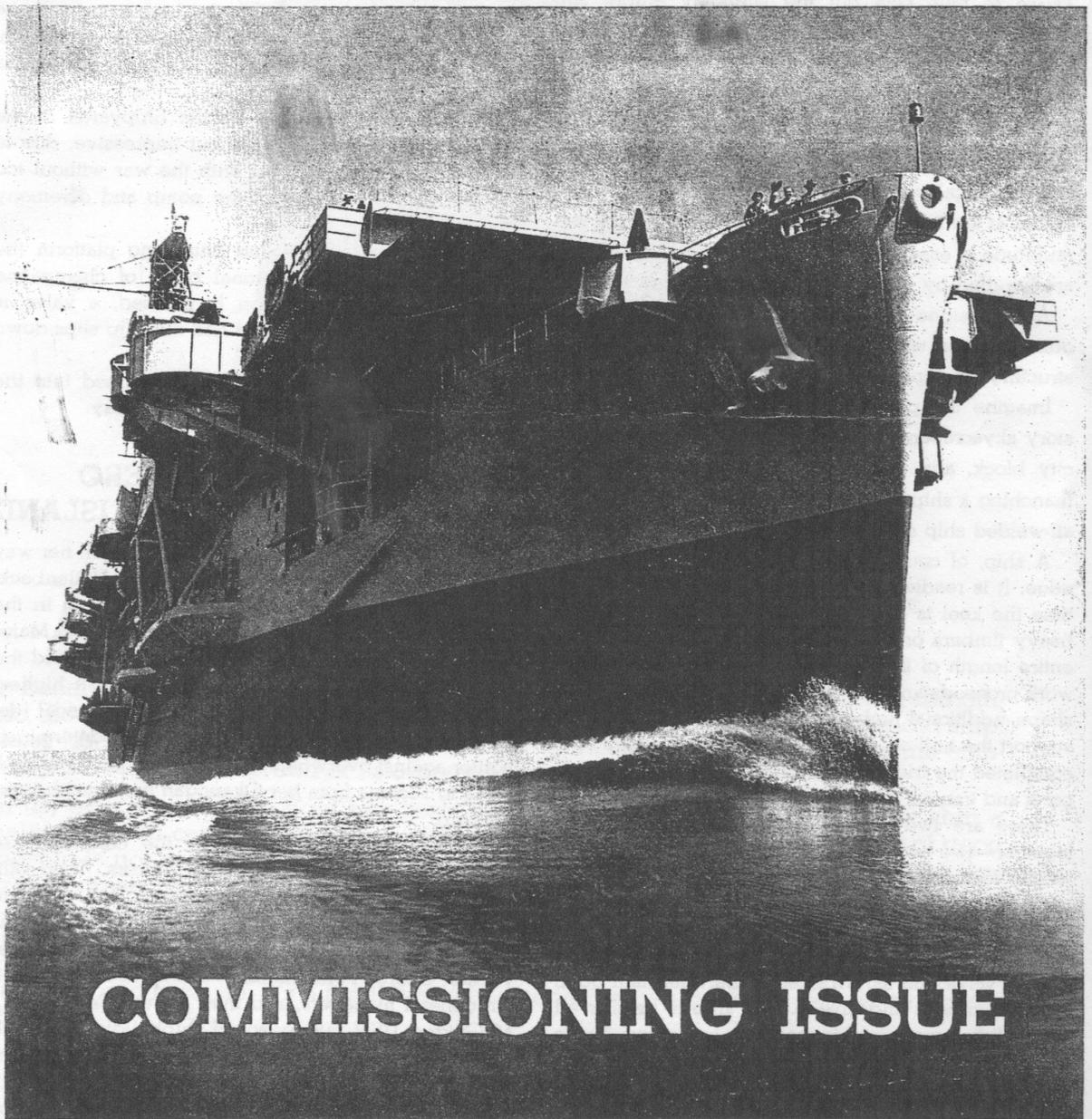
CHIPS

OFF THE OLD BLOCK

Vol. II, No. 1

U. S. S. BLOCK ISLAND

30 December 1944



COMMISSIONING ISSUE

Launching Ceremony Was Rich in Tradition

It was an exciting moment when the triggers were released and the great hull of the new Block Island slid into Commencement Bay at her launching at the Tacoma plant of Todd Pacific Shipyards.

This launching was one of the most critical moments in the life of the ship. So effortless was the operation that spectators at the ceremonies were aware of little else but the strangely empty slip where the ship had been built and the ship itself floating off in the distance.

Nothing was left to chance in the ticklish launching program. The behavior of the ship at launching must be predicted in advance. The weight must be estimated, calculations made to determine ship behavior at the moment she enters the water; there is a multitude of essential details to be worked out. These are handled by the hull technical department.

After designs are completed and details worked out, craftsmen take over, to spend more weeks constructing the apparatus.

Imagine the problem involved in moving a fifty story skyscraper, lying on its side, the distance of a city block, and you get some idea of the task of launching a ship the size of the Block Island—largest all-welded ship class in the world.

A ship, of course, is built in place at the water's edge. It is readied for its launching almost from the time the keel is laid. The keel is laid upon rows of heavy timbers or keel blocks. These blocks run the entire length of the ship in the exact center. As the work proceeds and the hull begins to mushroom into shape, additional timbers or bilge cribs are placed to support the hull on either side. When construction is completed the trick is to lift the ship from these supports and transfer it to the sliding ways.

There are two sets of launching ways—four altogether—two on each side of the ship placed about twenty feet apart. They are called ground ways and sliding ways. The ground ways are stationary and run the length of the ship, extending well out into the water. The sliding ways are placed on top of the ground ways and sandwiched in between is a good half inch of wax and grease. The ship is transferred to the sliding ways and is ready for launching. These sliding ways go with the ship on the greasy trip and are picked up in the water and used again and again.

Transferring the weight of the ship from keel blocks and cribbing to the sliding ways is accomplished by

driving several hundred feather tipped oak wedges between the sliding ways and the hull.

On the day of launching—June 10, 1944—the Block Island was actually lifted by this means about half an inch off the keel blocks and cribbing. With wedging completed, keel blocks are knocked out and the ship rests entirely on the sliding ways.

The launching rites themselves have a background of 4000 years of colorful history. Human sacrifice, the spilling of blood, incantations by high priests—these little extras marked the ceremonies of early launchings. The gods, it was hoped, would be propitiated by such trappings.

The launching at Todd Pacific Shipyards of the BLOCK ISLAND was simple but impressive, due to the necessity of getting on with the war without too many frills. Thus much of the pomp and ceremony was eliminated.

Upon the gaily festooned launching platform the sponsor breaks the traditional bottle of champagne against the prow, a button is pressed, a valve is tripped, triggers are released and the ship slips down the ways to the sea.

Thus was the BLOCK ISLAND launched into the waters of picturesque Commencement Bay.

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MOTHER OF MARINE HERO SPONSORS NEW BLOCK ISLAND

The christening bottle sending our ship on her way June 10, 1944, was swung by Mrs. E. J. Hallenbeck, mother of Major Gregory Boyington, missing in the south seas after shooting down 25 Jap planes. Major Boyington, 31 year old Marine ace, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award. The citation accompanying the medal described him as a "superb airman and determined fighter against overwhelming odds." Mrs. Hallenbeck came to Tacoma from her Okanogan home to christen the ship.

Besides the sponsoring party the colorful ceremonies were attended by naval officers, Todd officials and guests. Among these were R. J. Lamont, president of Todd Pacific, and Mrs. Lamont. O. A. Tucker, vice president and general manager, and Mrs. Tucker; George F. Kachlein, Jr. and A. B. Terry, assistant general managers, and their wives; Captain J. L. McGuigan, USN, supervisor of shipbuilding, Tacoma area, and Mrs. McGuigan and daughter, Miss Ann McGuigan.

The Todd shipyard band under the leadership of Joe Rausch enhanced the impressive ceremonies.

CAPTAIN HUGHES' MESSAGE



Captain F. M. Hughes

On behalf of the officers and the crew of the BLOCK ISLAND, I wish to thank the officials and the employees of the Todd Pacific Shipyards Inc. for this great and splendid ship. Many long hours have been spent in its planning, fabrication and building, and the company has just reason to be proud of its accomplishment.

On us, who are going to fight her, rests the responsibility of giving this new ship a personality that will carry her on through her future life. Just an ordinary feeling of good comradeship is not enough. We must imbue into her an indomitable ship's spirit; one that will carry her over her many future obstacles and trials; one that will instill into each of us a love of our ship and a feeling of pride of being a member of her crew. A spirit that will breed confidence in her prowess to fulfill her mission when we contact the enemy. In all, it's a spirit that consists of determination, confidence built from knowledge of our profession, and faith in our cause. It's a spirit that makes one feel we can't be beat because we won't be beat.

In addition to this, we have a more solemn obligation, for on us has fallen a very singular and solemn heritage—that to perpetuate the name "BLOCK ISLAND." This is indeed a big responsibility and one I know we shall accept with a determination that will not let us fail.

Meet the People at Todd's

The United States is proud of her production lines. She is doubly boastful of our friends at Todd's Tacoma Shipyards who are responsible for the construction of the Block Island. Thrice awarded the coveted Army and Navy "E", they have consistently met the quality standards set for her, challenged the obstacles of material procurement, labor shortage, have met the date lines, have no sooner wiped their brows after the job, "well done," when the word has come through to immediately lay the keel for another "big one". Who are these people? CHIPS OFF THE OLD BLOCK would like to introduce you to:

Mr. Claude Wood, a machinist in the big machine shop, blind for seven years of his life. Operation after operation failed to restore sight which had been snuffed away by a pebble from under the wheel of a speeding automobile. A woman in California, fatally injured in an accident, willed her eyes to Wood. The operation was successful; today Mr. Wood is responsible for some of the most delicate machine work you see aboard the Block Island. . . .

The mother of a famous pilot of a Flying Fortress over Germany is working in yard labor, helping to keep the yard clean so that others can build the ships. She's an important part of the over-all ship-building plan. . . .

The father of five boys fighting on the war fronts working alongside the mother of eleven children. In a nearby building an 85 year oldster who built ships in Scotland too many years ago to remember, keeps ship fittings in order for the crafts. Over in the auditing department, Mrs. Jewell Greening, the mother Lt. Col. Charles Ross Greening, inventor of the 15-cent bomb sight for the first raid on Tokyo and now a prisoner in Germany. . . .

Mr. Grover Ashcroft, who for 22 years operated an elevator in Tacoma's courthouse. He's now on the production front and through labor-management suggestion has produced a machine that saves hours and money in ship construction. . . .

The sister of Hugh Thompson, Metropolitan opera singer, also on the Todd production front; helped build the Block Island. So did Eugene Linden, director of the Tacoma Symphony orchestra.

Mr. James Cole, 63, a shipfitter, who helped fabricate the Block Island. So did his four pretty daughters, Mrs. Mary Des Camp, 22, a welder; Florabelle Cole, 18, a burner; Mrs. Fannie Free, 23, electrician helper, and Mrs. Ruby Gerard, 29, welder.

These are the men and women of Todds. The people who are going to share in a large part of the great victory to come. It is the contention of CHIPS that you "couldn't know a better bunch."

TODD WORKERS PRESENT PLAQUE AT COMMISSIONING

A colorful feature at the commissioning of the U. S. S. Block Island was the awarding of a bronze plaque by the men and women who built her. Designed by the noted Tacoma artist, Edward J. Garrison, it proved one of the most interesting and beautiful features of the ceremonies today. The presentation, which included a fund for the ship's welfare unit also, was made in behalf of the workers by Mrs. Jewell Greening, Todd employee, whose heroic son, Lt. Col. Charles Ross Greening made the 15-cent bomb-sight for first bombing of Tokyo and is now held prisoner in Germany.

Indicative of the good will existing between those that build the ships and those who sail them, the plaque will hang aboard the Block Island. Interesting to note is the fact that the plaque bears the inscription, THE FIGHTING BLOCK ISLAND. With that title in mind, the Block Island goes to sea.

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WITCH'S BROOM AT MASTHEAD AS ANCIENT CUSTOM REVIVED

A little known but ancient custom took place aboard the Block Island during her trials and speed tests shortly before her commissioning at the Todd Pacific Shipyards Tacoma plant. It was the hoisting of the "witch's broom" to the ship's main mast.

The quaint custom harks back to the days of wooden ships and iron men. In early days a newly launched ship, usually a square rigger, sailed out to sea on her trial run manned by a skeleton crew from the shipworkers who built her. The rest of the workers remained ashore, perched along the ways, on buildings and high poles, awaiting the ship's return over the horizon.

If the trials were successful a galley broom was run up the masthead, bristles up—a signal to the anxious workers ashore that the ship they'd built had been accepted by the owners for whom she'd been built. The first to sight the broom high on the masthead let out a great shout, taken up by others, and a spontaneous rejoicing and merry-making followed which lasted far into the night.

A returning ship sans a witch's broom meant there were bugs in construction and a subsequent hauling up of the vessel for more work.

This picturesque custom took place on the trials of the Block Island. And when she returned from her runs, proudly adorning her masthead was the witch's broom, attesting to the fact that the workmen had made a clean sweep.

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★ FROM THE EDITORS—

CHIPS is here, fellows. Once more he is to be your shipmate. In the past, a pretty good source of dope and scuttlebut, he'd like to be that and more on this new tour of duty. He can—provided all interested hands keep the contributions coming in. If you keep us well supplied there's no reason CHIPS can't be the best sheet in the Fleet. In the meanwhile, with a happy heart and a brand new seabag he's just announced to the Officer of the Deck:

"SIR, I WISH TO REPORT MY RETURN ABOARD!"

It may be noted that this commemorative edition bears the notation, "Volume Two." Plank-owners of the first BLOCK ISLAND remember well the beginnings of "CHIPS OFF THE OLD BLOCK" which constituted Volume One of this paper.

The name was chosen and the first issues came out within a few weeks after CVE-21 was commissioned. At that time, though, no one realized how extraordinarily apt that title might become.

Among those who worked on the first CHIPS were John W. Price, Yeoman 2/c; Billie Ray Keller, Radarman 3/c, who was noted for his cartoons; E. M. Courtney, Yeoman 2/c; Lt. R. L. Swift, Lt. (jg) E. D. Charpie, and a large number of division reporters and columnists.

Followers of Buz Sawyer and Roscoe Sweeney in the comics remember, too, that Roy Crane, creator of those characters, spent some time aboard the B. I. studying carrier life and operations before he started drawing the popular new strip. Scuttlebut even has it that Roscoe Sweeney had his prototype in some aviation rate on the BLOCK. Mr. Crane donated an unforgettable original cartoon to CHIPS while aboard.

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★ THANKS TO—

CHIPS is indebted to Mr. Howard Wood, editor of the Todd's sheet, the KEEL. Much of his excellent copy appears in your first edition of CHIPS. Your editors openly confess that had it not been for Mr. Wood's interest, skill and experience, the Block Island's commissioning issue would have been a total loss.

The same goes for Dammeier Printing Co., who have produced such an attractive first copy . . . and for the handsomely drawn masthead to the new CHIPS: thanks to artist Roy Miller, specialist XVA, 2/c, working under the direction of Lt. (jg) H. Primeaux,

USNR, in the Visual Aids Department, CVE Pre-Commissioning School, Bremerton.

For the whole ship's company, CHIPS speaks in expressing our gratitude to Mrs. W. C. Gilbert, wife of Captain Gilbert, commanding officer of the Pre-Commissioning Detail, and to the ladies of the Navy Wives and Mothers organizations for their devoted labors in preparing surgical dressings to equip the battle dressing stations on the new ship.

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★ CONGRATULATIONS TO—

Lt. Commander and Mrs. R. S. Knowles on the birth of a son, Christopher Morton, weight 6 lbs. 8 oz., Tuesday, December 19. On behalf of the officers and men, CHIPS takes great pleasure in saying, "Welcome Aboard."

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COMMISSIONING PRAYER

Reprinted from the Commencement Bay, the commissioning prayer as spoken by Chaplain G. G. Lacy. We liked it so much your editors saw fit to print it here.

"They that go down to the seas in ships,
that do business in great waters;
These see the works of the Lord, and his
wonders in the deep." (Psalm 107:23-24)

"God is our eternal home—let us pray—

"Eternal Father, strong to save, make each one of us grateful for the opportunities to serve in this great day.

"O God, Who alone spreadest out the heavens and rulest the raging sea, and hast compassed the waters with bounds until day and night come to an end; be pleased to receive into thy almighty and most gracious protection the persons of us thy servants, thy sons, and the ship we are commissioning and in which we shall serve.

"Preserve us, the precious cargo, from the dangers of the deep and from the violence of the enemies, and enable us to do the work of a man that may fall to each upon our tour of duty; that for the inhabitants of our dear land of home and for all mankind there may be enduring peace and freedom to be thy sons;

"And that in due season we may return to our homes, with a thankful remembrance of thy mercies; and finally, having passed the sea of this troublous life, may enter the haven of eternal rest; through Him, Who is our only Refuge and Saviour, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

Sketches Pad

ENS. L.C. Ramsey Jr.



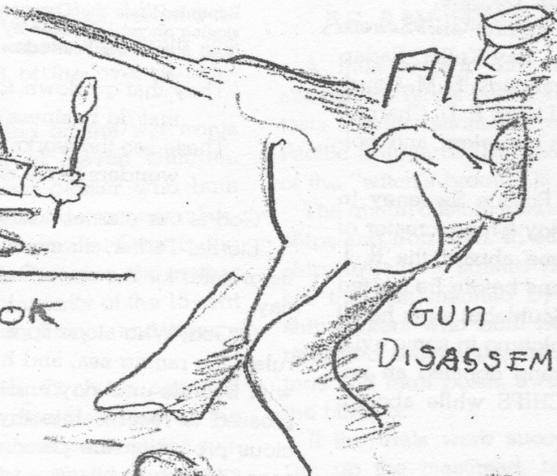
H. Comdr. Gilman



Jitterbugs at Y.M.C.A. Bremerton



Mess Cook



GUN DISASSEMBLY



"V" girl



CUE OFFICE

MEDALS AND DECORATIONS

Presented by

REAR ADMIRAL J. J. BALLENTINE, USN



Legion of Merit

Captain FRANCIS MASSIE HUGHES, USN
Commander DELOS EDWIN WAIT, USN

Navy and Marine Corps Medal

Chief Carpenter CLARENCE MEYERS BAILEY, USN

Bronze Star Medal

Commander JASPER LESTER CUSTER, USNR
Lieutenant Commander GEORGE RICHARD GRONVOLD, USNR
Lieutenant Commander ROBERT STINCHFIELD KNOWLES, USNR
Chief Boatswain's Mate ARTHUR PRICE, USN
Aviation Machinist's Mate 2/c ALEXANDER CULBERSON, USNR
Aviation Machinist's Mate 2/c DON ARLO TAYLOR, USNR
Aviation Machinist's Mate 3/c LEONARD LEROY JOHNSON, USN

Commendation Ribbon

Boatswain's Mate 1/c ELLIS CHARLES CHURCH, USN
Carpenter's Mate 1/c EMIL GEORGE BAZZINI, USNR
Shipfitter 2/c JOSEPH DURAN LAGO, USNR
Coxswain HAROLD ROY SIMMS, USNR

U. S. S. BLOCK ISLAND (CVE-106)



Roster of Officers

Captain F. M. HUGHES, USN
Commanding Officer
Commander D. E. WAIT, USN
Executive Officer

Comdr. J. L. CUSTER	Lieut. (jg) S. G. PARADINSKI
Lt. Comdr. G. R. GRONVOLD	Lieut. (jg) E. S. ENLND
Lt. Comdr. J. M. GILMAN	Lieut. (jg) J. L. GAFFNEY
Lt. Comdr. W. A. HOOD	Lieut. (jg) R. L. WARREN
Lt. Comdr. F. A. BALLARD	Leit. (jg) L. J. BRENNER
Lt. Comdr. R. S. KNOWLES	Lieut. (jg) J. S. MONTALDO
Lt. Comdr. A. V. DENNISON	Lieut. (jg) S. L. SCHARF, JR.
Lt. Comdr. C. S. WEIL	Lieut. (jg) F. H. OSHLO
Lt. Comdr. W. T. HANCOCK	Lieut. (jg) R. H. CUMMINGS
Lieut. R. S. HALL, JR.	Lieut. (jg) H. E. FREEMAN
Lieut. H. D. ENGLAND	Lieut. (jg) A. W. HAM
Lieut. J. R. TANNER	Ens. J. F. KENNEDY
Lieut. J. A. BARNETT	Ens. W. F. HARRIS
Lieut. I. H. HOUSTON	Ens. R. M. LEVERSEE
Lieut. R. L. SWIFT	Ens. L. E. TARLOW
Lieut. G. C. SPEIR	Ens. W. J. BRAULT
Lieut. G. A. MACINNES	Ens. G. N. HADDEN
Lieut. H. L. MCELHANEY	Ens. H. L. LINDQUIST
Lieut. P. M. HARRIS	Ens. L. C. RAMSEY, JR.
Lieut. H. W. TAYLOR	Ens. R. F. HATFIELD
Lieut. H. E. FOSTER	Ch. Elec. A. J. BREEN
Lieut. A. F. BALLBACH	Ch. Mach. H. S. KORAB
Lieut. C. D. CAIRNS	Ch. Carp. C. M. BAILEY
Lieut. G. E. DEELEY	Bosn. F. M. POWELL
Lieut. F. VIERSON	Gunner E. A. BYRD
Lieut. (jg) W. H. RODIEK	Radio Elec. A. G. DUGGAN
Lieut. (jg) D. D. DALY	Mach. D. T. BLOOMER
Lieut. (jg) E. D. EACHUS	Mach. R. K. RALSTON
Lieut. (jg) H. L. THOMPSON, JR.	Ship's Clerk A. N. WHITWELL
Lieut. (jg) H. N. IRONSIDE	Pay Clerk L. A. KEEBLER
Lieut. (jg) J. F. VON BARM	Pharmacist F. H. DOOLEY

FROM

U. S. S. BLOCK ISLAND
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, Calif.

TO _____

