Commander of the Continental Navy

Commodore Esek Hopkins (April 26, 1718 – February 26, 1802) was the only Commander in Chief of the Continental Navy during the American Revolutionary War. He was also an accomplished merchant captain and privateer.

Early Life and Career
Esek Hopkins was born in Scituate, Rhode Island. Before the Revolutionary War he had sailed to nearly every quarter of the earth, commanded a privateer in the French and Indian War, and served as a deputy to the Rhode Island General Assembly. Appointed a brigadier general to command all military forces of Rhode Island in October 4, 1775, he immediately began to strengthen Rhode Island’s defenses with the help of his deputy, William West. A few months later, December 22, 1775, Hopkins was appointed Commander in Chief of the Continental Navy authorized by the Continental Congress to protect American commerce.

In September 1764, during his time as a privateer and merchant, Hopkins took command of the slave ship Sally, owned by Nicholas Brown and Company. Hopkins had no prior experience in operating a slave trading vessel at the time, and the 15-month voyage would result in disaster with 109 out of 196 slaves dying after being acquired. In late 1765, Sally arrived at its first trading destination in the West Indies, but the surviving African captives were in such poor health that most sold for very little. Hopkins’ failed command of Sally contributed to the Brown brothers reconsidering their participation in the active slave trade of Rhode Island in the 18th century.

 Revolutionary War Service
On January 5, 1776, Congress gave Hopkins his set of orders: “You are instructed with the utmost diligence to proceed with the said fleet to sea and if the winds and weather will possibly admit of it to proceed directly for Chesapeake Bay in Virginia and when nearly arrived there you will send forward a small swift sailing vessel to gain intelligence....If...you find that they are not greatly superior to your own you are immediately to enter the said bay, search out and attack, take or destroy all the naval force of our enemies that you may find there. If you should be so fortunate as to execute this business successfully in Virginia you are then to proceed immediately to the southward and make yourself master of such forces as the enemy may have both in North and South Carolina...Notwithstanding these particular orders, which it is hoped you will be able to execute, if bad winds, or stormy weather, or any other unforeseen accident or disaster disenable you so to do, you are then to follow such courses as your best judgment shall suggest to you as most useful to the American cause and to distress the Enemy by all means in your power.”

Hopkins took command of eight small merchant ships that had been altered as men of war at Philadelphia. After much deliberation about taking on the overwhelming British forces listed in his orders, Hopkins utilized the last portion of his orders. Hopkins sailed south February 17, 1776 for the first U.S. fleet operation that took the fleet to Nassau in the Bahamas. He felt that it would be much more advantageous to seize a prize for the Continental Army than take a chance of destroying the Continental Navy in its infancy. He knew that the British port in Nassau would
be poorly guarded and had friends there who would help his cause.

The Battle of Nassau, an assault on the British colony there March 3, 1776 was also the first U.S. amphibious landing. Marines and sailors landed in “a bold stroke, worthy of an older and better trained service,” capturing munitions desperately needed in the War of Independence. The little fleet returned to New London on April 8, 1776, having also made prizes of two British merchantmen and a six-gun schooner, but failing to capture but injuring severely HMS Glasgow on April 6.

John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, wrote Hopkins: “I beg leave to congratulate you on the success of your Expedition. Your account of the spirit and bravery shown by the men affords them [Congress] the greatest satisfaction...” Not only did Hopkin’s expedition get needed war supplies for the Continental Army, but it showed the British Navy that they would have to divert their ships from the belligerent colonies to protect non-belligerent areas, thereby leaving fewer British ships to fight on the war front. John Paul Jones was a lieutenant at this time under Hopkins.

Hopkins’ decision to go to Nassau rather than pursue another part of his orders concerning Chesapeake Bay of Virginia and North and South Carolina, upset southern members of the Continental Congress, which added to the political, social, economic, religious, and philosophical differences already occurring between members of the Congress.

What happened next in the ensuing months was politically complex and controversial. The Continental Congress and individual state governors through their legislatures allowed privately owned ships to help in the battle against Britain by issuing letters of marque. There were virtually thousands of these ships, which overtook British ships, helping the war effort at sea. These privateer ships were allowed to claim any items found on the British ships they conquered as their own. They therefore were able to pay their seamen and officers nearly twice the amount that the Continental Navy could pay their crews, since the items captured by Continental ships went for the good of the colonies. Even after the Congress built and outfitted several more ships for Commodore Hopkins to use, he could not find adequate personnel to man the ships. John Adams, Sam Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Richard Henry Lee, Robert Treat Paine and John Paul Jones came to the defense of Hopkins.

Nevertheless, on August 12, 1776, Congress censured Hopkins. Humiliation and an injured reputation followed. Many sources say it would have been better if Hopkins was relieved of his command after the censure, rather than resume his command with a disgraced reputation and a loss of respect from his officers. Yet shortly after this John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, wrote a resolution to have a schooner remade into a war ship and named the Hopkins, although there are no records that indicate his resolution was fulfilled.

Hopkins’ little fleet was mostly blockaded in Narragansett Bay by the superior British sea power for the rest of Hopkins’ tenure as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Navy, partly due to the fact that he had inadequate manpower to confront the enemy. A disloyal group of Hopkins’ officers finally went directly to the Congress while at the same time leaving their ships without permission. Later it was proven that the allegations the officers took to Congress could not be substantiated — not in time, though, to squelch what was to happen. Pressure on the nature of Hopkins’ character and ability became increasingly significant. Even though John Hancock had congratulated Hopkins at the time, Hopkins’ decision to go to Nassau in the Bahamas and the escape of Glasgow was used by politically charged legislators against him.

Even with the impassioned defense of John Adams, the Continental Congress voted on 2 January 1778 to relieve Hopkins of his command permanently. Nevertheless, the first act Hopkins did at the beginning of the war in Nassau, which proved later to be an effective method for the Con-
tinental Navy to use against an overwhelming British Navy, was politically used against him. Sub-
stantiating this, John Paul Jones, who had been a lieutenant directly under Hopkins, gained great re-
spect while continuing this same type of naval warfare against the much larger Royal Navy. “Further-
more, and perhaps most impor-
tantly, the Raid on Nassau brought the war to the English in an area where they felt more strategi-
threatened than the American Colonies. The West Indies was a location of importance to the British both due to trade concerns and due to its pivotal role in naval conflicts with the English nemesis France. Paranoia over losing the West Indies would frequently deflect English interests and military assets away from the war in America. English preoccupation with this area would nearly cause her to abandon the war in 1778 and may well have cost her the war in the long run. If true, it might well be said that this raid was the first tweaking of this English concern and a tweaking which may have set the tone for those later English decisions. As such, the Raid of Nassau was not just a minor tactical victory but a great strategic victory as well.”

Hopkins was terminated by the Congress on 30 July 1778 for his part in the arrest of Richard Marven and Samuel Shaw, a pair of early whistleblowers. Hopkins is singlehandedly responsible for the resolution of Congress “That it is the duty of all persons in the service of the United States, all well as all other inhabitants thereof to give the earliest information to Congress or any other proper authority of any misconduct, frauds or other misdemean-
ors committed by any persons in the service of these states, which may come to their knowledge.”

**Family**

Hopkins was the brother of Rhode Island governor Stephen Hopkins, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and first Brown chancellor in conjunction with the tenure of president James Manning.

Hopkins married Desire Burroughs (1724–1794) in November 1741. The marriage produced 9 children, including John Burroughs Hopkins (1742–1796), a participant in the Gaspee Affair, who later became a captain in the Continental Navy; and Susannah Hopkins (1756–1850), who married Jonathan Maxcy, a Baptist minister and second president of the formerly Baptist affiliated Brown University, which was then known as the College of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

John Paul Jones

John Adams

Stephen Hopkins

John Hopkins House

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Early Iowa Photos

The following photos are from Iowa’s early career in the 1940s.

Title: USS IOWA (BB-61)
Caption: Workmen installing 16”/50 guns in her forward turrets, at the New York Navy Yard, circa fall 1942. Other men are engaged in laying deck planks.

Title: USS IOWA (BB-61)
Caption: Commissioning ceremony on the ship’s fantail, New York Navy Yard, 22 February 1943. Destroyer astern appears to be USS WAINWRIGHT (DD-419).
Title: USS IOWA (BB-61)  

Title: USS IOWA (BB-61)  
Caption: View looking forward from the masthead, showing 16”/50 guns and top of Mk8 fire control radar antenna (bottom). Taken at New York Navy Yard, 22 February 1943, at the time of her commissioning ceremonies. Note visitors boarding at left.

Title: USS IOWA (BB-61) commisioning  
Caption: Guests at the commissioning ceremonies salute the colors as the national ensign is hoisted at the main for the first time, 22 February 1943, New York Navy Yard, Brooklyn, New York. From left to right: Captain Lyman S. Perry, USN; Captain F.E. Beatty, USN, Aide to the Secretary of the Navy; Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy; Rear Admiral E. J. Marquart, USN, Commandant, Third Naval District and the New York Navy Yard; and Governor Burton B. Hickenlooper of Iowa.
Title: USS IOWA (BB-61) commissioning
Caption: Officers of the ship’s company and guests on deck after the ceremonies, 22 February 1943, New York Navy Yard, Brooklyn, New York. Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, is in the center (eyes closed). To his left is Rear Admiral E. J. Marquart, USN, Commandant, Third Naval District and the New York Navy Yard. Second man from Rear Admiral Marquart’s left is Governor Burton B. Hickenlooper of Iowa. To Knox’s right is Captain F. E. Beatty, USN, Aide to the Secretary. Second man to Captain Beatty’s right is Captain Lyman S. Perry, USN.

Title: USS IOWA (BB-61)
Caption: A group of Iowans study a photo of the ship’s launch, just before her commissioning ceremony, 21 February 1943. Present are L to R: State Senator Ben C. Whitehill, Brigadier General Charles H.G.
Title: N.G. Cucinello, Machinist, USN
Caption: Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, pins the Silver Star medal on Machinist N.G. Cucinello, USN, during the commissioning ceremonies of USS IOWA (BB-61), 22 February 1943, New York Navy Yard, Brooklyn, New York. Machinist Cucinello, a member of the IOWA crew, was awarded the Silver Star for his heroism in scuttling USS QUAIL (AM-377) at the time of the Japanese invasion of the Philippines.

Title: Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy
Caption: At the conclusion of commissioning ceremonies for USS IOWA (BB-61), at the New York Navy Yard, Brooklyn, 22 February 1943, Secretary Knox congratulates the New Skipper, Captain John L. McCrea, USN, former Naval Aide to the President. Left to right: Rear Admiral E. J. Marquart, USN, Commandant of the Third Naval District and Commandant of the New York Navy Yard, where the ship was built; Secretary Knox; Captain McCrea; and Governor B. B. Hickenlooper of Iowa, who headed a delegation from IOWA. Official Navy Photo.
Title: USS IOWA (BB-61)
Caption: View of the side of 16” gun turret two, showing point of impact of a Japanese 4.7” projectile on turret armor, and resulting damage to the light metal water seal. Damage was received during the bombardment of Mili Atoll, 18 March 1944.

Title: USS IOWA (BB-61)
Caption: Photographed in 1943. This photograph has been retouched to censor radars.
Title: USS IOWA (BB-61)
Caption: Damage from a 4.7” projectile that hit the ship during the bombardment of Mili Atoll, 18 March 1944. View shows hole in side, looking outboard to port from compartment B-228-V at frame 134. Damaged degaussing cables are shown at top.

Title: USS IOWA (BB-61)
Caption: Photographed in 1943.
Title: USS IOWA (BB-61). Making smoke from No. 2 Stack, circa May 1943
Caption: USS IOWA (BB-61). Making smoke from No. 2 Stack, during her shakedown period, circa May 1943. Note 16”/50 and 5”/38 guns. Also hatches and ventilators.

Title: USS IOWA (BB-61) Crewmen at divine services aft of No. 3 16”/50 turret, 1945
Caption: USS IOWA (BB-61) Crewmen at divine services aft of No. 3 16”/50 turret, 1945. Ship is refueling from USS CAHABA (AO-82), whose stack is in the right foreground. Note refueling line-handling party at left, and 20mm gun positions.
Title: USS IOWA (BB-61) refuels from USS CAHABA (AO-82), in the Pacific, 1945

Caption: USS IOWA (BB-61) refuels from USS CAHABA (AO-82), in the Pacific, 1945.

Description: USS Iowa (BB-61) Crew members attend mass on the battleship's starboard after deck, at the time of the Marianas Campaign, circa June 1944. Note the 16/50 triple gun turret at left, with a 40mm quad machine gun mount on top; 5/38 twin gun mounts in the right background, 20mm gun mount at left, and the Navy Blue (5-N) and Light Gray (5-L) paint of her Measure 32 camouflage scheme. Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives.
Title: USS IOWA (BB-61) Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet, Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll (center) on board for an inspection, during IOWA’s shakedown, circa Spring 1943. With him are Captain John L. McCrea (Ship’s C/O on the left) Rear Admiral Olaf Hustvedt (Admiral’s Chief of Staff).

Caption: USS IOWA (BB-61) Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet, Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll (center) on board for an inspection, during IOWA’s shakedown, circa Spring 1943. With him are Captain John L. McCrea (Ship’s C/O on the left) Rear Admiral Olaf Hustvedt (Admiral’s Chief of Staff).
Title: USS IOWA (BB-61) Captain John L. McCrea shows officers around ship, circa February - May 1943
Caption: USS IOWA (BB-61) Captain John L. McCrea (center), ship's Commanding Officer, shows other senior officers around the ship, during her shakedown, circa February - May 1943. Note catapult, crane and OS2U Aircraft on its cart.

Title: Captain John. L. McCrea, Commanding Officer, USS IOWA (BB-61) circa 1943
Caption: Captain John. L. McCrea, Commanding Officer, USS IOWA (BB-61) on the bridge of his ship, during her shakedown period, circa February-May 1943.
Title: USS IOWA (BB-61)
Caption: Fires a salvo from number 2 16” turret during the bombardment of Tinian, 14-15 June 1944.
Title: USS ESSEX (CV-9)
Caption: Crewmembers enjoy a swim in the lagoon of Majuro Atoll, April 1944. USS IOWA (BB-61) at anchor in the background.

Title: USS IOWA (BB-61)
Caption: Boxing match on the quarterdeck, while the ship was in port awaiting the start of the Marianas campaign, 5 June 1944.
Title: USS IOWA (BB-61) View looking aft from the forward fire control tower, 1943
Caption: USS IOWA (BB-61) View looking aft from the forward fire control tower, during the ship's shakedown period, 1943. Carrier in distance may be USS LEXINGTON (CV-16). Photographed off Norfolk, VA. Taken 18 May 1943.

Title: USS IOWA (BB-61)
Caption: Passes the burned-out hulk of USS INDEPENDENCE (CVL-22) in San Francisco Bay, July 1947. INDEPENDENCE had been a target ship in the Bikini atom bomb tests the year before.
Title: Curtiss SC-1 Seahawk
Caption: Spotting plane, catapulted from USS IOWA (BB-61), off San Francisco, July 1947.

Title: Curtiss SC-1 Seahawk

Title: Curtiss SC-1 Seahawk
Caption: Spotting plane, taxiing up to a sea-sled towed by USS IOWA (BB-61), off San Francisco, July 1947.
Title: USS IOWA (BB-61) out of a Pacific Anchorage, during 1944
Caption: USS IOWA (BB-61) View from the forward superstructure, as the ship follows other battleships out of a Pacific Anchorage, during 1944. Two camouflaged BBs in distance are (left) NORTH CAROLINA, and (right) INDIANA. Note watchstanders by Mk. 51 Director in foreground, and armored conning tower at left.

Title: USS IOWA (BB-61)
Caption: Sailors lined up on the fantail, waiting to go below after commissioning ceremonies, at the New York Navy Yard, 22 February 1943.
Title: USS IOWA (BB-61), circa May 1943
Caption: USS IOWA (BB-61). View aft along the port side, seen from the tower bridge, during her shakedown period, circa May 1943. Note 40mm & 5”/38 guns. Also highspeed wake.

Title: Lieutenant Commander Charles Fenno Jacobs, USNR
Caption: Poses with his F-56 camera, on board USS IOWA (BB-61), in December 1944. He was a member of Edward Steichen’s wartime photographic unit.

Below; Description: Drawing prepared by the Bureau of Ships for a camouflage scheme intended for battleships of the BB-61 (Iowa) class. USS Missouri (BB-63) wore this pattern. This plan is dated 18 May 1944. Official U.S. Navy Photographs
Some of the best jokes are played by sailors. They range from the simple and innocent to the complicated. Everyone’s heard about some of them. The first is the proverbial sea bat. The sea bat is a small aquatic creature that is occasionally caught and placed in a box. Usually an announcement is made over the 1MC (the general announcing system) that one has been caught and if you want to see, come to the designated place. This is usually a place where others can watch. It never fails; someone will come up and want to see. The guys then tell him to bend down really low so he can see it from the bottom without letting it out of the box. As the poor schmo is peeking under the bottom, another sailor steps up with a shillelagh (usually a 3 foot piece of fire hose with a one foot section taped to form a handle) and gives him a good smack on the rear. It’s a good natured learning experience. You can even judge a man by the way he reacts. Most times there is embarrassment and joking (including some cussing) and then a good laugh. But there was this one guy who just didn’t get the idea. He bent down and looked. The smack was a good one, and this guy turned around and said to stop it. That he was trying to see. When he went down for the third time, the Chief came up and grabbed the shillelagh. The crash of the shillelagh could be felt all the way to the stern and most of the guys around me hurt just watching it. Laughing so hard I thought they would pass a lung. Only then did this guy realize that he had been had and calm down - but not before he kicked the box over the side. He held that grudge for a long time. The bos’ns just went to the galley and got another box.

Another good one was done by some engineers on the LST. During a long, boring watch, one engineer sent his new boot messenger out to the other engine rooms to get a length of fallopian tube. When I heard him say it, I almost passed out, but this kid said “yes sir,” and headed out. You should have seen it. These guys kept this kid going for over two hours from the engine rooms to the repair locker to supply and then back to the engine rooms looking for this length of fallopian tube.

Once he came back with a question from one Chief asking if he needed loose or tight fallopian tube. Tight was the reply since he needed to work it on the exhaust of #1 main diesel. Then he returned with about 5 feet of garden hose. He was then sent back saying that it needed to be a full length or it wouldn’t fit. By now the kid was exhausted running back and forth, and the other rooms were getting tired of seeing him drag back and forth so the first class called the engine room on the speakers and said that he agreed that it wasn’t as long as usual, but to fix it, the Chief should tie it off at the muffler tit. I’ll bet that poor kid never knew he was being had. The rest of us were in tears trying to keep a straight face when he came in.

There are a number of variations. One new bos’n’s mate was sent around one day to get a length of water line. Unfortunately that backfired when he tore the bos’n’s locker completely apart looking for this fictitious stuff. It took a team of four three hours to put everything back in its place.

The engineering favorite on steam driven ships is to send someone out for a bucket of steam. You know, common sense would usually dictate that these wouldn’t work,
but amazingly enough, they do. I have seen dozens of new guys out with a common bucket, going from boiler room to boiler room trying to get the boiler techs to give them a bucket full. I have even seen some open a valve and put auxiliary exhaust steam into the bucket in front of them and cover it with a rag. By the time they got back to their space, the steam is gone and the person that sent them busily asks what they did with it. The best response from one guy was to go up (this was on a carrier) where they refilled CO2 fire extinguishers and get some dry ice. They then put a little water in the bottom, added the dry ice and covered it with a cloth. By the time they got back, the bucket was full of mist from the CO2 and the kid then screamed at the first class for letting all his steam out.

The all time favorite is the mail buoy. New recruits are told that the way a ship gets its mail is to put a lookout on the ship and watch for the mail buoy. The idea is that the Navy places mail along the way and we can pick it up. It never dawns on these boots that with an ocean so vast it would be nearly impossible to ever find one if we tried it. But, here they would go, up to the bow of the ship, dressed in dungarees, a life jacket, whistle, flashlight, boat hook (a long pole with a metal hook at the end used for pulling boats in), and other paraphernalia designed to further confuse and later humiliate. Often, we put a helmet on his head with a rotating red light. This joker was to stand up there and wait till he saw the mail buoy. Details of what they would see were sketchy at best, but everyone said that if you see it, you’ll know it. These poor guys would be out in the elements for hours watching for this buoy with the stern warning that if he didn’t find the buoy, the crew would be pissed off.

One group of midshipmen (college students studying to be officers) was onboard the Midway, a carrier out of Japan. This one lieutenant commander thought it would be great fun to have these guys stand a mail buoy watch. None of the midshipmen fell for it, but the guy said they would stand it anyway. They were to get dressed up and set the watch. The watch would then remain until morning. It started at midnight. You have to understand that nothing upsets a sailor more than have his sleep disrupted. In this case, there were about 16 of them. Planning for revenge began immediately.

First, they forced the lieutenant commander (Andy) to give a detailed description of what this mail buoy would look like. He told them it was in the shape of a 35 gallon drum. He also said it would have a bell, a green light and would be painted red, white and blue. Before it was over, the whole ship knew of the plan and worked with the midshipmen to “get even.” A 35 gallon drum was obtained and painted the requisite colors. The ship’s post office then gave them a couple of Postal Service decals to go on the sides. The hull technicians welded a bracket on the lid and mounted a bell on the inside so it would ring. Green chemical lights were obtained and kept ready. The post office even gave a mail bag which was then filled with letters addressed “To Andy with Love.” The bag was then sealed with an official seal and placed inside the buoy. All was ready.

At the appropriate hour the midshipmen reported for duty and were sent to both sides of the bow, the bridge, the after lookout, the boat deck and the combat information center. They were told that whoever saw the buoy should sing out and flash the bridge with their lights. Once in place, the plan went into effect. At about 0015 (12:15 a.m.), the guys at the bow started blinking at the bridge. They also called out over the sound powered phones to say that they saw the buoy and alert the boat deck. Andy actually had the watch on the bridge at the time and promptly ignored the flashing. On the boat deck the midshipman and one crew member got ready. First, the midshipman was doused with seawater. They kept wetting him till he was completely soaked. Then he and the sailor carried the 35 gallon drum up to the bridge. This was no small feat since the bridge was about 7 stories above the boat deck. Once there, the bell was unhooked so that it would ring freely and the lid was placed on the buoy. The chemical lights were activated and then cut and poured all over the top. One more bucket of water from a third sailor, and the midshipman entered the bridge.

Once inside, the midshipman walked (or squished) up to Lieutenant Commander Andy and requested the mail buoy watch be secured. Andy then told the guy that he had to bring the mail buoy to the bridge. The midshipman said that it was kind of heavy and asked for some help. Andy told the Bo’sn’s Mate of the Watch to help the midshipman bring the buoy onto the bridge. That Bo’sn almost had a heart attack when he went outside. Here was this red, white and blue drum sitting there with green light on top and a Post Office symbol on the side. His face broke into a nice grin and he said, “I can’t wait to see this sh-t.”

The sound of a bell echoed through the island structure...
of the carrier as these two manhandled the buoy around the corners and onto the bridge. It was set right up front and the midshipman saluted again and asked for the watch to be secured. Andy was just calling into question the midshipman’s parentage when the CO came onto the bridge. He had been sleeping in his at sea cabin (next to the bridge) and was awakened up by the scuffling and the bell. He was just about to ask “What the f–k is going on,” when he saw the group up front. Picture this, a midshipman, soaking wet, with a trail of water from the door to where he was standing. Next to him is this red, white and blue monstrosity glowing for all it is worth, and Andy with his mouth open and nothing to say. It seems that Andy had been bragging that he was going to have these guys do this stuff.

The captain chuckles, catches himself and then says, “I see you found the mail buoy!” The midshipman said yes sir and asked again to secure. The captain said he thought it was a good idea. Then Andy told the mid to get that thing off the bridge. The captain said no, that it was government property and ordered it open. That bell sounded louder still and when they opened the bag and all the mail was addressed to ‘Andy,’ the Captain told him to move it himself since it was all his big idea to start with. Then he had him open and answer all his mail immediately after his watch ended at 4 a.m. The mail buoy watch was secured by 0030. The mids got their sleep and Andy never played a trick on them again. I think they still had the mail buoy when the ship decommissioned.

“Doc” Holiday (ever known a Holiday that wasn’t called “Doc?”) was a trip. He was the Weapons Officer on our ship and his favorite joke was going down to sonar and having the guys listen for hard hat divers. According to Doc, there was a diving team in Subic Bay and they took pride in their old hard hat diving gear. This pride extended to their off duty hour where they had formed the Grandy Island Hard Hat Divers Marching Band and Chorus. According to Doc, when a ship went by Grandy Island in the middle of Subic Bay, you could occasionally hold the door practicing and marching along the bottom. Now, most people would see through this, but there are a few sonar operators who still listen for that band. Doc didn’t explain how they could play their instruments in a hard hat or how slow the tempo would have to be. Nor did he explain how many work boats would have to be on the surface pumping air to all these clowns. But every so often Doc would go down to sonar and grab a headset and start telling the guys about what they should listen for. This lasted for a short while until some guys from another ship played a joke on him. Grabbing a hydrophone, they took it out in a boat and waited till we were coming in. Then they played Sousa marches on the thing as we passed by. Sonar really lit up. Doc was summoned and thought they were getting ready to put one over on him till he put on that headset and hear “Stars and Stripes Forever” in the distance coming through the water. The look on his face was priceless. We recorded it so he could forever listen to the final concert of the Grandy Island Hard Hat Divers Marching Band and Chorus.

Sometimes the best jokes have to do with bodily functions. One evening after a long day on watch participating in squadron exercises, I had finished my dinner in the wardroom and sat back to listen to the latest news on the ship’s television. In those days our television station was manned by a journalist, a TV repair person and any other volunteers who wanted to be involved. The system did not have a live camera capability, so the journalist would read the copy and have slides from the Associated Press in the system so he could show a slide of the subject while reading the news.

On this evening, most of the wardroom was sitting there listening while the journalist droned on. Half way through a story about how President Carter was concerned about the economy the journalist stopped and said, “One moment please.” We didn’t think about it at first. After a couple of minutes he came back on and continued reading. In the very next story, he stopped again. Now I was beginning to worry and headed back to the television station. This meant I had to go outside at night, with no lights, to enter by a door near the missile launcher. Feeling my way around, I overheard some sailors wondering what was going on in the television station. They were off the air again. Now I was in a panic. Feeling my way aft, I finally found the door and started to open the dogs holding the door closed. I pulled the door open just in time to hear a huge laugh from inside and smell the most god-awful odor I had ever encountered. One look at me and all three of the guys in there broke into fits of laughter.

It seems that in the middle of the news, with the journalist concentrating on his reading and slide control, the TV technician eased up behind the journalist, turned around and placed his rear right beside the journalist’s ear and broke wind. This was loud enough for the journalist to hear, but not loud enough to be picked up by the microphone. The journalist had just enough control to get off the air before he began cussing and passing a little wind of his own. After the first wave finished, and the journalist began reading again, the volunteer (who read the sports) who had been sitting quietly throughout the
ordeal eased up on one leg and let out a peal of thunder that shook the bulkheads. Again everything stopped. By now they were each taking turns passing gas at opportune moments. The journalist couldn't read for the tears in his eyes and then I came through the door, took a whiff and let out a cry of my own. It took at least 10 more minutes to finally get through the news.

Just as the news finished, the technician pulled his shirt away from his chest and belched into the neck opening. Here we go again.

One of the best practical jokes I saw was done by a Chief Warrant Officer (CWO) aboard USS Cochrane (DDG-21). The ship had a nice tradition of greeting each new officer and family at the airport with flowered leis (we were stationed in Hawaii) and other gifts. In preparation for this we tried to get as much information about the man as possible. Bob, the CWO, had a very dry sense of humor and usually was very quiet. He had recently come back from a school in San Diego and told the wardroom that he had met the next officer coming aboard. He was to be one of the ship’s engineers and Bob had taken a special interest in meeting the man. Bob proudly announced to us that he was a very pleasant young man with a nice family. There was a wife, and three kids with the eldest at 6 and the youngest in diapers. The wardroom went all out making candy leis for the kids, a special gift for the baby and nice flowers for the wife and officer. Bob even told us that he had kept up a phone dialog with the family and that the kids were really anxious to get here and meet other children. The wardroom wives went all out. Children were prepped to come to the airport. Sitters and special family functions were arranged to make them comfortable. A larger apartment was set up so that all they had to do was drive from the airport to their temporary residence and start getting used to our garden paradise. Nothing was left out.

The day of arrival was one of great activity. Children were cleaned up and brushed down, some guys went over to make sure the apartment was ready. Leis were brought out of the refrigerator and everyone converged on the airport. Luckily, airport security was not as tough as it is today or the guards would think there was some sort of demonstration planned. We had about 30 people at the gate waiting when the plane pulled in. All of us were watching for this guy and his family to come off the plane. The people kept coming and coming, but no family. The captain even said they would probably be one of the last off since they had a small child, but still no family. The last group left the plane, no family. Everyone started to look at each other and ask if they might have missed the plane when a young man came up and asked if we were from USS Cochrane. The captain said yes and he introduced himself as the new officer. Everyone was happy. Handshakes went all round and he then introduced his wife and the wives poured leis on both of them. Then the captain asked where the children were. The officer then replied, “What children?”

All together we turned to Bob, who was standing in the back leaning on a pillar. Bob returned the gaze and slowly broke into a big grin. I laughed till I hurt. The wives started throwing the candy leis at Bob and the CO started cussing. The young officer and his wife didn’t get it. We never underestimated Bob again.

I did hear of one more. One of the DDGs was going to have a missile shoot. These are big events since it is one of the few times a crew actually gets to see one of the white birds (training birds are blue) and actually see it fly. This shoot was to be very special. The Navy was going to get rid of a number of very old missiles and they decided to let the ship shoot them all. That meant a special trip to the weapons station to load them up. While there, a technician from the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) was to open the missiles, and install a fuse interrupt plug. This would prevent the fuse in the warhead from detonating the main charge. The NAVSEA rep also installed a telemetry package on each missile so that they could determine how it flew and if it hit the target. (Modern missiles don’t actually strike the target in most cases, the warhead goes off near the target and does more damage.)

It was a half day affair and by lunchtime the last missile
was being fitted. They decided to break for lunch and finish the job afterwards. The missile guys took the NAVSEA tech to eat. During that time, they got him slobbering drunk. At the same time, one of the missile guys went back into the last missile and removed the fuse interrupt plug. When the tech got back, he finished installing the telemetry package and didn't even notice that the fuse plug was missing. The missile went down into the magazine.

Imagine a few days later when the ship is having her exercises. They had already shot four of the missiles at the drone and the people at Barking Sands (the missile range) told them they had enough fuel for one more run. The missile officer selected the last cell for loading and that missile came up on the rail. It was a beautiful late afternoon with the sun low on the opposite horizon. The drone started in and the tracking radars locked on. At a range of 15 miles, the captain gave the order to shoot. That bird took off from that launcher like it really had a mission. It just knew it was gonna kill something. Straight as an arrow it shot into the sky. Every one of the missile guys came up on deck and started watching. The testosterone was really flowing because they knew what was about to happen. In just a few seconds their efforts were rewarded. Less than a second from target, the fuse ignited and set off the main charge and a continuous rod warhead exploded out of the front of the missile, sheared the drone half in two and set off a fuel explosion that was seen for miles. Everyone on the bridge had the same expression... "WOW!" The NAVSEA rep was not so happy. The drone cost money. But everyone swore that the plugs had been installed. They later figured that this was one of the times when the missile had actually flew into the target. I wish I could have seen it.

The Author:

Hunter Goforth has written four books about USS Iowa. The first is called Tempered Steel - about a future war with North Korea. The second is called Sending Messages - where Iowa is called upon to help when a Venezuelan dictator kidnaps several American mayors. The third is Arctic Wind - when the world becomes embroiled in a war started by Russia, and the fourth is called Desert Blooms about a terrorist attack on the US.

These books are available on Amazon Kindle for $3.99 each.
2017 Reunion of the Iowa Veterans Association

Here is the latest information on the dates and place of the reunion:

**Location:** NASHVILLE AIRPORT HOTEL, 2200 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37214

**Dates:** Saturday 12 August 2017 - Wednesday, 16 August 2017

**Room Rate:** $125

**Tour Days:** Sunday, Monday and Tuesday

**Crews Meeting:** Wednesday

**Banquet:** Wednesday

**Checkout:** Thursday

$125 room rate will be available on nights of 11 August and 17 August depending on room availability.

**Website:** hinashville.com

Set in Historic Mud Tavern and just down the road from Opryland, the hotel is minutes from popular local restaurants, famous concert venues, shopping malls, golf courses, lush city parks and family-friendly attractions.

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**Tours for Nashville**

**Sunday, August 13 11:00am -- 3:00pm**

General Jackson Showboat Luncheon Cruise

100 Tickets Available

$85 per person

11:00am Begin boarding your coach and depart your hotel with your guide

11:30am Arrive at the dockside for boarding. While cruising the Cumberland River, on the 300 foot long paddle wheeler Gen. Jackson Showboat, enjoy lunch and a musical stage show.

2:30pm Cruise over

3:00pm Return to your hotel

(Tour includes deluxe motorcoach transportation, an experienced, fun tour guide, tickets to the Gen. Jackson Showboat, all taxes and gratuities excluding tour guide and driver)

**Monday, August 14 9:00am – 1:00pm**

Highlights of Music City Tour

Approx. 100 people 2 buses

$57 per person Includes a tour of the Country Music Hall of Fame Museum

9:00am Begin boarding your coach and depart your hotel with your tour guide. This 3 hour experience features some of the best highlights of Music City including a driving tour of the historic downtown area, Ryman Auditorium, State Capitol, Korean Memorial and Viet Nam Memorial,
Bicentennial Park with the WWII Memorial, the Parthenon and more. You will drive down the world famous Music Row, the heartbeat of the music industry where hearts are broken and dreams come true.

1:00pm Return to your hotel

(Tour includes deluxe motorcoach transportation, an experienced, fun tour guide, all taxes and gratuities excluding tour guide and driver)

**Tuesday, August 15  6pm – 10pm**

Grand Ole Opry
100 Tickets Available
$70 per person

6:00pm Board your coach and depart hotel with your guide.
6:30pm Arrive at the Grand Ole Opry House. The live radio show that made country music famous features a dynamic line-up of new stars, superstars, and legends of country music in each performance. Unlike a typical concert, the Opry presents eight or more artists on each show, giving the audience a sample of each artist's musical style.
9:30pm Show over
10:00pm Return to your hotel

**Wednesday, August 16  9am – 2pm**

IOWA FAMILY & FRIENDS SHOPPING TRIP
$20 per person

9:00am Board your coach
9:30am Arrive in Franklin, TN, located fourteen miles and 100 years from Nashville. This small town is an oasis of Southern hospitality housed in a 16-block National Register district of antique shops, gift and book stores, art galleries, boutiques, lovingly restored homes and more. It boasts an award-winning Main Street, brick sidewalks, a stunning collection of Victorian buildings.
1:30pm Shopping done, board your coach
2:00pm Return to your hotel.

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**Reunion Dinner Menu**

**Wednesday, August 16th**

**SALAD**
Mixed Field Green Salad
Tossed Garden Greens with Cucumbers, Cherry Tomatoes, Shredded Cheese and Herbed Croutons - Served with Ranch Dressing and House Vinaigrette

**ENTREES**
Lemon-Rosemary Chicken Breast
Served with a White Wine Veloute
$34 per person

Citrus Scented Salmon
With a Lemon-Ginger Veloute or Sweet Chili Glaze
$38 per person

Grilled Sirloin
With Bourbon Demi Sauce
$40 per person

All Dinners are Accompanied With:
Your Choice of Salad
Chef's Choice of Starch and Seasonal Vegetable
Freshly Baked Rolls with Butter
Chef's Choice of Dessert
Freshly Brewed Coffee
Iced Tea
**USS IOWA REUNION 2017 NASHVILLE, TN REGISTRATION FORM:**

This order form covers reunion registration, membership dues, planned meals and tours. Please complete this form and mail it along with your check/money order payable to: VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF THE USS IOWA, 24307 Magic Mountain Pkwy #342, Valencia, CA 91355. Registration form must be postmarked no later than 20 July 2017. If registering later than this, registration will be at the reunion. Questions call 661-755-7676.

**NAME:** _______________________________  
**DATES SERVED ON IOWA:** ______ TO ______ (IE: 43-45)

**ADDRESS:** ______________________________________  
**DIVISION:** _______

**CITY/ST/ZIP:** ______________________________________  
**RANK/RATE:** ____________

**PHONE:** ________________________________________  
**NEED NAME TAG:** YES/NO

**EMAIL:** ________________________________

**OTHER ATTENDEES:** ______________________________

ONE FREE T-SHIRT WITH EACH REG FORM IF REGISTERED BEFORE OR ON 1 JUNE 2017.

**SIZE:** S/M/L/XL/2XL/3X./4XL (CIRCLE SIZE).

**REGISTRATION FEE:** (NON-REFUNDABLE)

**NUMBER OF ATTENDEES:**

**PAYING 2017-2018 DUES ($20.00):**

**SUNDAY, 13 AUGUST 2017 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM**

**GEN JACKSON SHOWBOAT LUNCHEON CRUISE**

100 TICKETS AVAILABLE

**MONDAY, 14 AUGUST 2017 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM**

**HIGHLIGHTS OF MUSIC CITY TOUR**

**TUESDAY, 15 AUGUST 2017 6:00 PM – 10:00 PM**

**GRAND OLE OPRY TOUR**

100 TICKETS AVAILABLE

**WEDNESDAY, 16 AUGUST 2017 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM**

**IOWA FAMILY & FRIENDS SHOPPING & ANTIQUES**

(For those not attending The Crew’s Meeting):

**BANQUET:**

**DINNER CHOICES (INDICATE NUMBER OF EACH):**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>LEMON-ROSEMARY CHICKEN BREAST</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>GRILLED SIRLOIN</td>
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</table>

**TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED:** $ __________

NO REFUNDS AFTER 1 AUGUST 2017. UNLESS FOR MEDICAL EMERGENCY. PLEASE SEND LETTER REQUESTING REFUND TO: VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF THE USS IOWA, 24307 MAGIC MOUNTAIN PKWY #342, VALENCIA, CA 91355. REGISTRATION FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

**EMERGENCY CONTACT:** __________________________ PH: __________________________

Nashville Airport Hotel, 2200 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37214 Phone: 615-316-1060

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**The Iowan History Letter Second Quarter 2017**

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I hope you all are enjoying the stories from this issue. I am now doing both this newsletter and the Iowa Veterans Association newsletter. I may occasionally share some of the stories of interest.

Included this issue is the information for the Iowa Veterans Reunion in Nashville, TN. The information will also be in the next IVA newsletter, but you are getting an advanced copy. Hope to see you there.

If you have anything you would like to share with our shipmates and friends, please send it in. It may take some time to get it in the newsletter, but we’ll get it in for all to see. Send your works to:

Brad Goforth, 1200 Somersby Lane,
Matthews, NC  28105
or email it to: bgoforth@thesamaritanhouse.org

Brad Goforth

Title: USS IOWA (BB-61)
Caption: Photographed in December 1943.

Disclaimer:

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