

# Leger Lines

www.navymusicians.org

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## President's Message



Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, Happy Hanukkah, and my best wishes to all of my shipmates in the NAVY MUSICIANS ASSOCIATION. I hope you all have a healthy and prosperous New Year.

I have a good idea for a Christmas present for you all to consider. How about signing up a friend for membership in the NMA? You know, the kind of friend who says "I'll get around to joining one of these days" or "I may join but I keep forgetting", or "hmmm maybe". Once they become a member they are usually surprised by how much fun it is to be a member and to attend one of our reunions. I have given gift memberships in the past and will surely do so again this year. As you well know, there is not a better veterans organization than the NMA for all of us former MUs to join. You may want to remind them that we are open to all who have served as a Navy musician. Worn the lyre, served in Navy bands, and, in most cases, have made life-long friendships. We are not a "lifer" organization nor a "chiefs", nor a "special band" organization. We have members who served as MUs for 3, 4, 20, 30 years or more. All are welcome and equal in this "canoe club" vets group that is so unique in its membership.

Mark your calendars. June 26-30, 2013 Annual Reunion this year in Vir-

ginia Beach. We will once again be at the Holiday Inn, Virginia Beach where they treat us right. Bring your axe. Play in the concert band, dance band, or some of the smaller groups that get together. Jam in the lounge at our almost round the clock jam sessions. Don't play any more? It is still a fabulous hang. We also have, on occasion, reunions within the reunion. We have had and encourage others to get together with shipmates from unit bands that they have been in. This year I am trying to get as many Navy Show Band veteranos (my word) who have made UNITAS cruises to come to Virginia Beach and share our stories and music together once again. Response has been pretty good so far and I am excited to see my old pals.

This year, as we do every two years, we will hold elections for my job and for members of the Board of Directors. This is your chance to fire me! I am in my 6th year as your president and it is a labor of love for me. If you would accept me, I will throw my hat in the ring for a 4th term. Where does the time go?

I'll close as I began with my sincerest best wishes for all of you this holiday season. May you feel as blessed as I feel for the coming year 2013!

**TERRY CHESSON**

How do you like my photo? Sure doesn't look like that now but when I did look like that I was having a ball as a Navy musician!

# *I Gotta Be Frank - Frank Mullen*



The Annual Assessment of the Department of Sea Stories has been released. I am pleased to announce that the 2012 Navy Musicians Association reunion in Orlando was singled out for special mention:

"During afternoon rehearsals, evening jam sessions and even in the courtyard during tropical storms, the hyperbole, factual tap dancing and general shading of truth exhibited by members of the NMA reached levels rarely seen outside of campaign speeches and felony sentencing hearings."

Well done, shipmates. The numbers say it all: we scored an unprecedented 3.5 on the Standardized Sea Story Scale.

Yet we have room for growth. In hopes that our reunion in Virginia Beach next year will move us closer to the elusive 4.0, I submit the second chapter in our ongoing study of

## **The Art of the Sea Story**

In this installment, we will examine the nuances of Rule Two: Exaggerate for Effect, Not for Glory.

"What?" cries the befuddled beginner. "Are you saying that exaggeration is permitted when telling sea stories?"

You might as well ask, "Is strumming allowed when playing the banjo?" A sea story is, by definition, a sequence of magnified semi-truths and shaky assertions held together by a loose plot. To say to a sailor, "You're exaggerating" is as oblivious an observation as saying to Michelangelo, "You're painting the ceiling."

Let us not confuse exaggerating with lying. A lie is used to increase the storyteller's stature, whereas an exaggeration is employed to enhance a story's impact. One steals glory; the other shares it.

Lie: "I sneaked across the quarterdeck with a six-pack in my gig bag when the OOD wasn't looking."

Exaggeration: "There was so much liquor in the trap cases that we had to hoist them aboard with the ship's crane. Jimmy had the OOD so flustered that the guy never wondered how a Ludwig bass drum and two tom-toms could weigh as much as a Volkswagen."

See what I mean? A sea story is not courtroom testimony. It is a Life Lesson fortified by equal measures of distilled fact and fortified fiction.

Of course, care must be taken to avoid crossing the line from exaggeration into braggadocio. Nobody wants to hear your tales of personal valor. Yes, you saved the ship from running aground on the shoals at the mouth of Subic Bay in impenetrable fog by grabbing a trombone and warning the bridge with a blast of the Morse code signal for "Hard-a-Starboard." A grateful nation thanks you for your service. Now, shut up.

The creative raconteur, however, knows that the odor of self-glorification can be masked by assigning the hero's role to a different player: (Continued next page)

# *I Gotta Be Frank*

"The admiral grabs Jonesy after the first set and says, 'The band's too loud, the music's too fast and I can't dance to it.' So Jonesy says, 'Well, sir, I've been watching you from the bandstand, and I'll agree with you on one thing.'

"'What's that?' the admiral says.

"Jonesy says, 'The part where you can't dance.'"

Remember, we don't tell sea stories to increase our stature. We tell sea stories to elicit laughter, to point out the foibles of human nature and to subtly prompt the listener to buy us beer.

Just as bluster and boasting are dangerous, we must also be wary of reverse-exaggeration. Understatement may have its place in the IRS examiner's office and confessional booth, but is of little worth in the company of sailors.

Consider this variation on the common topic of Gigs That Ended Early:

"The combo was playing at the 'O' Club the night of the playoffs. By 2030, everyone had moved to the bar to watch the game, so the XO told us we could leave early."

This is a lackluster assessment of a situation that is ripe for embellishment. Never bunt when you can swing for the stands:

"The XO storms over from the bar shouting that he and his buddies can't hear the game. Lester tells him that fifty bucks and a direct order would buy him an evening of peace and quiet. The XO pays up, we split, stow the gear, jump in our civvies and are buying rounds for the house at the Shipwreck Lounge by halftime."

Are there absolute limits to exaggeration? Theoretically, no. Truth, like time and space has no finite boundaries. Yet navigating the straits between truth and fiction can be hazardous. The skillful teller of sea stories may stretch the truth, bend it, even melt it down and recycle it anew, but he will never intentionally utter a falsehood.

That would be lying, and we all know lying is wrong.

- FRANK MULLEN

## Wanted: Your Memories

Do you have a sea story that needs telling? A reminiscence that screams to be shared? A photo that depicts a memorable day in your life as a Navy musician? Leger Lines, the official publication of the NMA, is looking for submissions that reflect the past and present lives of Navy musicians. Your contributions help make Leger Lines a valued benefit of membership in the Navy Musicians Association. Please send your submissions to [legerlines@navymusicians.org](mailto:legerlines@navymusicians.org).

In 1956 the Navy sent me from Ohio, as a civilian, to audition at the Naval School of Music in Washington, D.C. I don't remember who auditioned me but I passed and was then asked if I wanted to join the Navy. Of course, I said yes. The chief told me to always sign my name with the title MUSR in boot camp. He was very emphatic about that. I was sent downtown Washington to sign some papers and get sworn into the Navy that afternoon. That evening I went on to boot camp at Bainbridge, MD.

Once in boot camp I was given a battery of tests. I did well and was sent back to take a second battery of more tests. Midway through boot camp I was called into classification by a PN3. He told me I had a high GCT, perfect score on the electronics test, high score on this test, high score on that test, etc. He congratulated me and told me I could get into any school the Navy had. Which one do you want, he asked me? I said music school. He said NO, which one do you really want? Again, I told him music school. He said NO! The PN3 said you didn't understand me. The PN3 repeated himself again saying that I could have ANY school the Navy had to offer. Which one did I want? Again, I told the PN3 that I wanted music school. The PN3 just shook his head and said alright, but you'll have to give me a second and third choice on schools, which I did.

That PN3 just couldn't understand that I wanted to go to music school.

Anyway, I always remembered to sign my name followed by MUSR and at the end of boot camp I was given a set of orders to music school. I never heard anything about the other schools I had to list as my second and third choices.

David E. Zehner  
MUCM USN (Ret)



SOM Class, December, 1957. Photo courtesy of Richard Eddings (GTMO 57-59) CINCLANT FLT (59-60), USNA Band (62-67).

## **TAPS**

**James Avery  
Donald Borenstein  
Bill Bowden  
Norman N. Smith**

(Editor's note: In recognition of the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, this issue of Leger Lines will include some related stories and photos.)

In the month of June 2010, I went to Dayton, Ohio to attend the funeral service for my beloved brother Jack C. Davis, CPL, USMC, WWII veteran who saw action on Saipan after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Prior to the ceremony, guests, friends, and family members gathered in the funeral parlor, and I made rounds greeting people etc. My cousins asked me if I knew who the person was standing to my left on the other side of the room. I thought about it, and the bell rang. It was my uncle, Harold (Dick) Davis. Out of a family of 9, my dad was the oldest, and Dick was the youngest. I knew he was a sailor in WWII, but knew no specific details. I approached him and we immediately started a conversation. It soon became fascinating. He was 90 and sharp as a tack. The last time I talked to him was in the 70's when the USNA band went to the Rose Bowl for the Army - Navy game. He lived in Ventura, California, and we spoke over the phone, not time for any visits, etc. He knew I was a Navy MU. What I didn't know was that he was a total jazz buff, big bands in particular and the bulk of our conversation was him telling me all the side men he knew from Artie Shaw's outfit overseas, and many name bands stateside. The story became truly noteworthy as we kept in touch and he told me he was a crew-member aboard the U.S.S. Nevada during the attack at Pearl Harbor. He was an electrician's mate eventually becoming a Chief Electrician's mate, serving on battle ships. He will tell his story including the famous strafing sequence with O.L. McMillen conducting the national anthem as the guns were blazing. He will tell his story.

To my shipmates from Unit Band #147 aboard the fighting I U.S.S. Intrepid, CVA 11, my favorite band of them all, you're in my heart forever. All hands who I served with in Band 94, first Naval District, Boston, Mass. Chief Leonard "Casey" Casebolt, Warrant Officer Bob Frye, and of course yours truly should have emblazoned in our memories that eleven month Vietnam adventure in Unit Band #163 aboard U.S.S. Constellation CVA 64, after six years in the fleet, and the Crème de la Crème, 22 years with the versatile U.S. Naval Academy Band, Annapolis MD. To Nick Annase, my very awesome clarinet instructor, I remember you telling me, "Davis, you better get to work on that embouchure and those scales or you are looking at a career as a deck hand on a tin can." Well Chief, after 22 years at the naval Academy, ten years at Georgetown University playing top orchestral repertoire, another ten at Gardner-Webb University with the band and the Gardner-Webb University/ Cleveland County Orchestra, I've been able to maintain my clarinet chops. Thanks for motivating me. Not to be confused as being a great jazz musician or anything. I'd call myself a competent all around player. Thanks to Joe Viola, Herb Pomeroy, Dick Wright, and John LaPorta, I learned all about the C word and I word, Changes and Improvisation. Thanks to those guys at the Berklee School of Music.

Over the years, I played acceptable solos in a lot of venues and I know a lot of tunes. Some Navy pianists I'd like to mention as being cats I really enjoyed working with: Vinnie Genova, Leonard "Casey" Casebolt, Phil Fama, Mike Campbell, Phil Streit, Bob Marver, Jack Marcheskie, Warren Kellerhouse, Gene Ronsonette, Johnny Myles, Mike Thompson, Ralph Martino, Dick Glass, Guitarist Gary Malveso, Bruce Barsamion, Phil Cook, and Manfredo Magliano. And one non-navy pianist from Charlotte, NC, Bill Hanna. Those guys could get her done. On the civilian side, Roy Battle and the Altones, for ten years steady work around the Baltimore/DC corridor, and his wonderful friendship, and four exciting years with the 42nd Street jazz Band in the Asheville/Hendersonville, NC area. And everyone else I have worked with.

The impetus behind this whole thing was my Uncle's story. Since that idea sprouted I have had a medical condition arise that made me want to say a few things I feel important. Thank God for Navy medical benefits-they got me through ten years of serious medical problems. I've played music with some of the best people around, my Navy buddies. After a lifetime struggle with the clarinet, I think I finally got it together.

That's it. One musician's journey. Maybe there's a Unit Band in Heaven, and we can all get the gig! Hey, Poncho Vilapondo, remember our dream of creating the position of COM. NAV. MU.PRO. Commander Navy Music Program, with the rank of Rear Admiral. Would that not be cool?

Sincerely, Dennis Benjamin Davis, MUC, USN, ret.

(Harold Davis' story continues on next page - Ed.)

## MY EXPERIENCE AT PEARL HARBOR DECEMBER 7, 1941 by HAROLD DAVIS

My four year enlistment had expired Nov. 7, 1941. I was looking forward to a discharge and civilian life. But this was not to be.

Aboard the USS Nevada, stationed at Pearl Harbor, I was on duty that weekend of Dec. 7, 1941. I had been assigned the job of repairing the port side boat crane. That morning at daybreak I went up on the crane to open all the control boxes and disconnect the power. This would allow the morning sun to dry out the moisture that had accumulated while at sea. This was normal procedure. Afterward, I hit the shower, had breakfast, and still had about a half hour before the 8 AM workday started. I was lying on my bunk when I became aware of faint concussions and explosions. A few seconds later, the explosions were on top of us, very loud. My first thought was that I had somehow goofed up on the crane, and that was where I was headed. I ran up the ladder to topside and discovered the Japanese air force busy at work. Our band was playing the National Anthem. They were magnificent!

My battle station was the No. 1 damage control party. We had the responsibility for repairing everything topside that was damaged., Especially the anti-aircraft guns. We had plenty to keep busy that morning. Our first orders were to get the ship underway and out to sea. Normally it would take several hours to get enough steam to drive the turbines, but we made it in minutes. Underway, I was amazed to see the mighty *Arizona* exploding, the *Oklahoma* rolling over on its side, the *Cassini* and the *Downs* literally going up in smoke.

As we reached the entrance to the harbor, the Japanese concentrated all their aircraft on us in an attempt to sink us there and block the channel. They did sink our ship, but we were able to use tugboats to shove us against the bank and stay clear of the entrance. We sank in shallow water. Hundreds of our crew were killed that day, and many others were severely injured. Of our damage control party of 12 or 15 men, I am aware of only 2 survivors: my friend Ted Kuykendahl and myself. I didn't even get a scratch.

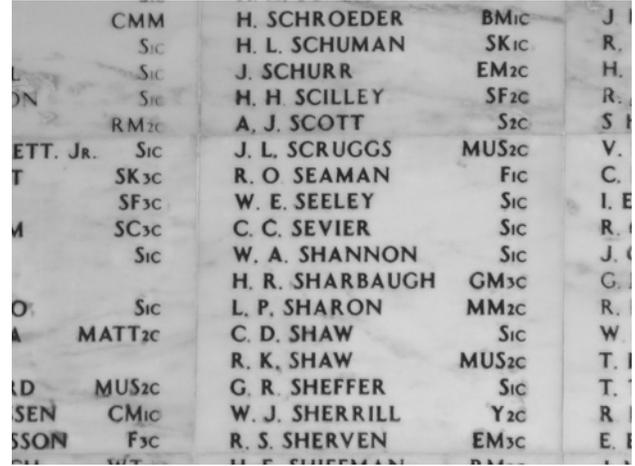
Within a couple of days I was able to send my mother a wire and tell her I was OK. She answered and told me that she had been praying for my safety and knew I would be safe from harm. For added protection, she sent me a medal-covered testament to wear in my shirt pocket. The medal would deflect a bullet, and the Word of God would hide me from harm. We made an agreement to meet every day in prayer at 12:00 noon, no matter where we were, to pray for my safety. I don't suppose the Lord heard my prayers, but I'm sure glad he listened to Mother.

Now, I would like to discuss my heroes during our dance with the Japanese. These men stand out in my memory, I'll never forget them. First, was our Chief Quartermaster Sidbury. In the absence of any officer above the rank of ensign, he assumed command, and within seconds he sounded general quarters'. All of our AA guns were blazing away very soon. What a sight! He also took the helm and steered us down the channel. Then, down in the engine room, the Chief MM managed to keep steam up and give us maximum power. This under the worst of conditions. My boss, (Only when in GQ), standing in the middle of the main deck aft, directing his damage-control party, of no thought for His own safety. These three men were recognized for their bravery and awarded the Medal of Honor. They earned their fame. But there was another incident I observed. And these men were sadly overlooked. At 8:00 AM the colors went up as the ship's band began to play The Star-Spangled Banner. While being strafed, bullets flying everywhere, these men stayed in formation and completed the number. The band-leader was steady, bravely ignoring the enemy. These brave men inspired many of the crew to face the enemy, and stand fast at their guns. If only I could personally praise these, the USS Nevada Band.

Signed Harold D. Davis



Entrance to Arizona Memorial from Navy shuttle



Detail of Memorial Wall; note names of band members



This model in the Arizona museum shows the position of the Memorial relative to the sunken vessel. (Editor: Sorry about reflections)



The end of the story: plaque on bulkhead of USS Missouri, located adjacent to Arizona Memorial.

Editor's note: I visited the Arizona Memorial in October and thought members who hadn't had the opportunity to visit might appreciate these photos. If you would like to see more online, send an email to [legerlines@navymusicians.org](mailto:legerlines@navymusicians.org) and I will email the link to you. - David Blakeley



The Arizona band, taken November 1941.

Fill out the entire form (or write the requested information on paper) and mail to:

Cecil Strange, Treasurer of NMA

PO Box 2294

Plant City, FL 33564-2294

*(Dues are for 1 January - 31 December 2012 and are \$30.00)*

*(Make checks payable to NMA. **NO CASH PLEASE**)*

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Thank You