

# USNTC BAINBRIDGE



# NEWSLINE

USNTC BAINBRIDGE ASSOCIATION NEWS  
MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

Volume XVIII, No. 1

POST REUNION ISSUE

SPRING

2017

## From the President

Greetings Fellow Shipmates...

Sorry for the time it has taken to get this paper to you but a lot of things have taken place since our reunion including my cross-country trip of about three months.

Our 2016 Reunion was a very special one as we dedicated the USNTC Bainbridge Historical Marker set by the State of Maryland at the main gate on MD Route 222. Everyone there had memories flowing from their Bainbridge life as we stood and viewed the marker as it was undraped. Within this issue you will find the article regarding this historical event that was specially written by Jacob Owens of the Cecil Whig and published in the November issue to commemorate Veterans Day 2016.

Looking forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming Reunion.

In continuing service...*Arline Member #150*

### 2017 Memberships

**\$20.00**

**Mail to:** USNTC Bainbridge Association  
Membership  
C/O Arline Caliger  
PO Box 147  
Harrison, TN 37341-0147

\*\*Send all address changes to the above address as soon as possible. Non-delivered Newslines cost the Association 0.60 per issue as an address return as soon as possible.

Remember to send all **articles and news** to the

Newsline Editor  
USNTC Bainbridge Association  
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PO Box 147  
Harrison, TN 37341-0147

for the next issue by **COB** on **19 May 2017**

## 2016 Bainbridge Reunion Memories

### Veterans Secure New Marker for Bainbridge Legacy By Jacob Owens (Cecil Whig)

*Reprinted with permission*

PORT DEPOSIT - Each day, scores of vehicles make their way down the snaking path of Route 222 toward the Susquehanna River.

For many in Port Deposit, it's an area that will always hold memories of GIs in uniforms carousing around town and the constant hubbub of new generations of naval recruits being trained for duty. But for a growing number today, the site of U.S. Naval Training Center Bainbridge remains a place of mystery - a time capsule of sorts where decades-old buildings that once housed Cecil County's largest town are now slowly taken over by nature. Graduates of the once-prestigious training center were not content with letting the history of the facility slowly decay through, and through their efforts, a new marker will always recall the history of the place for perpetuity.

### **Bainbridge is born**

As President Franklin D. Roosevelt began mobilizing the American military might in response to the attack at Pearl Harbor in 1942, he was given a list of suggested locations for U.S. training centers. As Europe raged into the second World War and Japan flexed its power, Roosevelt knew that in order for America to enter the war it would have to train millions of men for wartime service.

On the president's list of sites was the stately Tome School for Boys, a 48-year-old prep school named in honor of Port Deposit lumber and railroad tycoon Jacob Tome with a list of distinguished graduates that included R.J. Reynolds Jr., son of the cigarette mogul, and members of the Mellon and Carnegie families. Roosevelt was well acquainted with the site - he was among those who spoke at the school's historic Memorial Hall as a guest lecturer while he served as undersecretary of the Navy prior to becoming president.

Perhaps FDR's fond memories of the bucolic charm of Port Deposit's rolling hills and granite cliffs played some part in his decision to build Bainbridge. Or maybe it was just the convenient location between Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York City - all major population centers and recruiting regions. Whatever it was, the land overlooking the Susquehanna was about to undergo a dramatic transformation.

The last class to graduate from the Tome School for Boys on the Bainbridge property was in 1941, as dwindling finances threatened the school's future, and the school moved back down to Port Deposit.

Meanwhile, the school's campus, along with the land from 70 surrounding farms, was appropriated by Congress for use as a U.S. Naval Training Center and Naval Academy Preparatory School (NAPS) on March 28, 1942. The campus was expanded by government purchase from 330 acres to 1,132 acres through the addition of neighboring farms.

Roosevelt chose the facility's name to honor Commodore William Bainbridge, who commanded the frigate Constitution when it defeated the British frigate HMS Java during the War of 1812.

### **Building a city**

After it became government property, contractors wasted no time in clearing the land and preparing it for development. On May 7, 1942, the first crews from Charles H. Thompkins Company, of Washington, D.C., descended upon Cecil County to begin work.

In the drive to recruit more workers, leaflets were dropped from airplanes in the southern United States informing men of the work to be found at Bainbridge.

Thousands of workers plied their trades on the naval training center during the summer of 1942, many inhabiting boarding homes formed out of older homes in the Port Deposit, Perryville, Rising Sun and Colora areas.

The first buildings erected on the base were the necessities - a union office and the outhouses, one of the workers recalled nearly three decades after the project. The crews built four camps - Rodgers, Perry, James and Barney - on the training center, each taking about six months, housing about 5,000 men and costing \$1 million. Each camp included a barracks, mess hall, drill hall, drill field, rifle range, classrooms, recreational facilities and more.

Between May 19 and Aug 14, 1942, an army of 15,000 workers built 506 temporary buildings on the land at an estimated cost of \$50 million. It was an undertaking that seems impossible by today's standards, but U.S. Naval Training Center Bainbridge accepted its first recruit - 19 -

year-old Damon Sutton of Pittsburgh, PA. - ON Oct. 1, 1942, less than five months after ground was broken.

### **World War boom**

The naval recruits came in busloads from railroad collection points at Havre de Grace and Perryville, and were given a battery of tests to determine their educational and skill levels.

As tens of thousands of cadets began to fill the training center, activity at Bainbridge was developing rapidly. Life on the base was a series of exams and lessons meant to ready recruits for duty in the navy.

Chief among the resources to accomplish that mission was the USS Commodore, aka the RTS Commodore or "USS Neversail," a landlocked dummy training ship at the training center. Built to resemble a small escort ship, the USS Commodore was equipped with operational guns and equipment, except for an engine, to allow for the training of sailors in shipboard operations in a reasonable safe environment during World War II and into the early Cold War era.

The ship was equipped with most of the facilities found on a real ship, including deck guns, a pilot house, davits with whaleboats, and mooring lines fastened to earth-bound bollards, so that recruits could even learn the proper casting off at hawsers and other lines connecting the ship to its dock.

The men also learned other valuable skills, including marksmanship, anti-aircraft gun training, marlinspike seamanship, swimming, first aid, gas and nuclear warfare protection and drill instruction.

Aside from training fresh recruits, Bainbridge also hosted 12 different schools under the Service School Command for advanced training of graduates in skills such as Hospital service, firefighting, filmmaking, recruiting, radio operation, physical instruction and more. The Navy's "A" school was the largest with 1,000 students, while the "B" school was a smaller, more advanced and technical 36-week course.

By the end of World War II, Bainbridge had trained 244,277 recruits, who transferred to various ships and stations throughout the world, and 24,484 graduates in Service School Command skills.

### **Cold War era**

Following the defeat of Japan, the residents of Port Deposit held a grand victory parade through town to celebrate the service of the men at Bainbridge.

But on June 30, 1947, the base grew nearly silent as it was inactivated as a Navy training center. The sole remaining activity on campus was the Naval Academy Prep School, which trained young men in preparation to enter Annapolis'

Naval Academy.

Its rest would be short-lived, however, as it was reactivated for the Korean War on Feb. 1, 1951, and on April 5 it accepted its first recruits, with 500 to 1,000 arriving each week thereafter.

By the 1950's, the base had four commands on base - Service School, Recruit Training, U.S. Naval Hospital and Administrative - to train and care for the roughly 25,000 recruits at Bainbridge. But its use would again be questioned following the Korean War as it was "mothballed," or placed into near-inactive status.

In the post-war years, perhaps one of the greatest additions to Bainbridge was the relocation of the WAVES Recruit Training Command to Bainbridge from Great Lakes, IL., in 1951. By October of that year, more than 100 WAVES, or Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, recruits had entered the base.

On June 20, 1951, the first two WAVES to report at Bainbridge's Naval Hospital Command were Hospital Corpsman 3c Marion Walsh, of New York, and Hospitalman Fran Griffith, of Portsmouth, Ohio. By 1962, the Recruit Training Command Women was made its own command on the base, staffed by seven WAVE officers and 55 enlisted women, and graduating 22,400 recruits each year.

Also added or relocated to Bainbridge were the School of Recruit Procurement in 1953, Enlisted Personnel Distribution Office in 1958, the Personnel Accounting Machine Installation in 1959 and Naval Security Group Detachment in 1959.

The Cold War also ushered in a new focus for the Bainbridge story, as the Nuclear Power School was commissioned on July 1, 1962, to handle the growing need for those to man nuclear-powered submarines. Every three months, a group of 300 carefully selected enlistees and 50 officer students were admitted to the NPS.

#### **The end is near**

While humming along in the late '50s and early '60s and lasting through 1972, schools on the base were gradually closed and relocated.

For many officers and residents, the impending end of Bainbridge wasn't difficult to see. The buildings began to deteriorate and the grounds went unkempt longer. According to a 1973 base newspaper, "Beautiful downtown Bainbridge" became a tongue-in-cheek reference to the decline of the facility when conducting tours.

In May 1972, the last WAVE class graduated from Bainbridge.

Four years later on March 31, 1976, with all of the base's schools and camps closed, Bainbridge itself was officially shuttered by the U.S. Navy-relegating what was once Cecil

Country's largest town to a collection of empty buildings. About 500,000 recruits came through Bainbridge in its 34-year history.

#### **The decline**

Following the exodus of the Navy, the Susquehanna Job Corps Center operated inside some of the old Tome School buildings, but the abandoned base became a target for the ill-intentioned. At least six arsons and 12 fires were reported at the property in 1988 alone.

By 1990, the job corps moved out too, leaving all of the structures on the property ripe for theft and vandalism. Copper was the first element to be stripped from the buildings - presumably for scrap metal sale - and then just about anything else, from door knobs to roof shingles. When there wasn't anything left worth stealing, vandals would smash things or throw radiators down the stairs.

Most of the government-built buildings were demolished during a lengthy cleanup in the late 1990's. Later on, it was discovered that the demolition left contamination of the soil in many areas, and debates over the liability of that work are still continuing.

#### **Cecil to help**

In the mid-1990s, a group of volunteers led by historian Erika Quesenbery-Sturgill, Delegate David Rudolph (D-Cecil) and then Cecil County District Court Judge Walter Buck Jr., who was a 1940 Tome School graduate, began to tackle the cleanup of the site.

Every Saturday from May to October 1997, the Tome School Clean-Up Volunteers worked to clear brush, clean the buildings and make small repairs of the former stately property that once housed the Tome School for Boys and the Naval Academy Preparatory School.

In 1999, special legislation passed by the Maryland General Assembly created the Bainbridge Development Corporation (BDC), composed of local volunteers, and tasked it with the redevelopment of the site. On Feb. 14, 2000, the federal government turned over ownership of the property to the State of Maryland and the BDC.

Despite persistent efforts by the BDC to redevelop the land over the past 16 years, nothing has occurred yet. But the tide may be turning, as the county prepares to build a new wastewater treatment plant on the site that could spur its marketability for a future employer site.

#### **Grads keep memory alive**

While volunteers and politicians worked to try to save the physical remnants of the Bainbridge facility, the training center's former graduates and officers began trying to save its memory.

The USNTC Bainbridge Association was founded at a March

13, 1999, meeting of 16 Bainbridge veterans in Newark, Del.

The first volunteer officers of the association were president Porter E. May, who was a career Navy officer and served as the comptroller for the NTC from 1960-1962; vice president Michael Miklas Jr., who served at Bainbridge for 27 months, beginning in 1951, as a ship's company storekeeper third class; treasurer Paul L. Fleming, who served tow tours at Bainbridge, first as a Naval Reserve boot in 1955 and then as a regular Navy student in the personnelman school in 1958; and secretary and committee chairwoman Annabelle F. "Sue" Fischer, who completed a Navy career, including two tours at Bainbridge, first as a recruit company commander from 1956-59 and then as the chief petty officer in charge of the briefing board from 1963-66.

Fleming, the curator and historian for the association, was disheartened to learn of the precious few details and photos archived by the U.S. Navy while conducting research for a book on Bainbridge in the late 1990s. Attempting to find more information about life at Bainbridge, Fleming began writing to other Navy reunion groups searching former Bainbridge shipmates. After several responded and discourse grew, they decided that more needed to be done collectively to preserve the history of Bainbridge.

After the association was formally stated, the group began collecting and preserving personal and official artifacts from the training center's heyday, recording written and oral histories from graduates, organizing a newsletter to continue communication and ultimately creating the USNTC Bainbridge Museum that exists today in downtown Port Deposit.

"Bainbridge with our the memories of the people who knew the base becomes just a plot of land and some buildings. People made Bainbridge something worth remembering," Fleming wrote in his early appeal to Bainbridge grads. "There are those, I am sure, who will readily say 'Forget it! Let it go! I am not one of them. The period of time in which Bainbridge existed was unique. Values were different. As a training base, Bainbridge outlasted her sister bases; Farragut in Idaho and Sampson in New York. Bainbridge has a greater legacy; a bigger story to tell... Perhaps if the time capsule of the time capsule of Bainbridge can be preserved, future generations may be able to conceptualize a time, a spirit, a birthing process to manhood and womanhood that seems to have faded from the American fabric."

To date, more than 1,400 people have signed onto the rolls of the association to help keep the base's memory alive, but only a little more than 200 remain.

### **Sight for sore eyes**

Even today - more than 17 years after the association began and an untold number of Bainbridge graduates have passed - the keepers of the memory gather to ensure it lives on. On Sept. 30, about two dozen Bainbridge veterans gathered in downtown Port Deposit to see the Bainbridge Association Museum located at the former town bank on Main Street and hold a memorial service on the banks of the Susquehanna River.

For Arline Caliger, the association president for the past 16 years, the annual reunions are an important way to make sure the memory preservers. Reunions alternate with one at Bainbridge and one at another place of military historical importance.

"The bulk of our membership are World War II and Korean veterans, and we're losing them every day," said Caliger, a 1957 recruit training graduate, noting that 500 veterans attended the first reunion in 1999. "For a lot of these guys and gals, they'll tell you that Bainbridge changed their life."

Before tossing handfuls of flowers in the river, the veterans held a memorial roll call for each association member who has passed, ringing a bell with each name.

"This ground that we are on is considered sacred to the memory of those men of World War II and also to us, who remember their sacrifice," Caliger said, "Our memorial stone not only recognizes the past, but also all the men and women who are a part of the Bainbridge story for over three decades. Some of them are no longer with us or unable to be here, however, they are present in this living legacy."

"Even though Bainbridge is not what she once was, she still remains a part of our being and will always hold a special place in our hearts and mind," she said.

Bob Steel, 76, said he owes a lot of this life to Bainbridge, as that was where he made his career and met his wife.

"I was a young kid when I came there for radio school right out of recruit training, and I made the Navy my entire life, over 40 some years," he said. "I was just a kid from a tobacco farm in Virginia who knew nothing, and I traveled the world and saw about 20 different countries. I learned Morse code and advanced electronics, even working with satellites, and ended up the director of naval facility for six years before I retired." Steele said it took some time to lobby the right bureaucrats and politicians to get a historical marker erected, but seeing it in person was "outstanding."

The Maryland Historical Trust's historical marker program, run in partnership with the State Highway Administration, started in 1933 when cars became more ubiquitous, and today there are more than 800 markers alongside roads

statewide. Getting a new sign is somewhat rare, however, and requires an applicant to go through a comprehensive evaluation of a site's worthiness.

At the unveiling of Bainbridge's marker, C. Ewing McDowell, state deputy secretary of planning, welcomed the veterans who traveled to see the event. McDowell has a personal connection to Bainbridge, as his mother, Grace McDowell, taught third grade at Bainbridge Elementary School for many years.

"When I grew up here and because my mom taught at the school, she was very friendly with many of the people who were stationed here," he said, recounting several staff members who spent time at the training center.

For the handful of Bainbridge veterans who saw the unveiling of the stark white marker off Route 222 at the base's former entrance, it was a sight for sore eyes.

Retired hospital corpsman third class Al White, 85, of Mechanicsburg, Pa., came to Bainbridge in 1951 for the Service School Command's corpsman program and stayed on after to work at Bainbridge's hospital.

"It was difficult, but as I look back I really appreciated my military experience," he said. "When I discovered they were putting it out of commission, it kind of tugged at you."

White, who was attending his 10<sup>th</sup> reunion, said seeing the decline of the base was "distressing."

"There was nothing left," he said. "They just dug everything up and knocked everything over, and they buried a lot of things. All of the buildings were gone. But you have to counter that with the memories and it kind of evens out."

To now see the historical marker standing on Route 222 near what was once the main gate to the base brought pride to White.

"I think they did a beautiful job, and I'm just glad we were able to see it while the good Lord allowed us," he said.

*Editor's Note: The term WAVE was not used following the end of WWII. Women became regular navy personnel- a tribute to their dedicated and historic service through two World Wars. Today's navy women makes up approximately 21% of the total fleet. As a historical note women have served in the navy for 109 years.*

**SHIPMATES WHO HAVE TRANSFERRED  
TO HEAVENS FLEET**

YNC Annabelle 'Sue' Fischer member# 42 Nov 2016  
 Capt Arthur F. Rawson member# 605 Nov 2015

**USNTC Bainbridge Association has lost  
one of their own...**

YNC Annabelle "Sue" Fischer- USN (Ret)  
 1926 - 2016

Chief Fischer was a 'plank owner' in our association being one of the original founding members. She was on the USNTC Bainbridge Assn. Board and served as the Maryland Corporate Officer. Sue had a long and distinguished navy career and continued her military interests and experience in several veterans organizations following her active duty retirement.

In the beginning being too young to enlist in the US Navy, Sue worked as an Airplane Spotter for National Defense during WWII.

Sue served on active duty in the US Navy from 1951 to 1971, achieving the rank of Chief Yeoman. In 1971 Sue transferred to Fleet Reserve until her retirement in 1981, serving a total of 30 years. She served as a Company Commander at RTC Bainbridge. With the US Embassy working in legal in London she remembered this as her favorite all-round Navy assignment. She was also active in the Navy Women's National Convention Association, founding the Chesapeake Unit 7, WNC, and serving as the Organization's State Director for Maryland. Besides being a leading member of USNTC Bainbridge Assn. Sue also was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion.

Upon retirement from the Navy, Sue returned to the College of Notre Dame, obtaining a Bachelors of Arts degree in Liberal Arts in 1978. After graduation, she became a literary consultant, author, editor and research. *In that capacity, Sue wrote several books covering Navy Women and her own family history on "Old Ironsides" in "Experienced and Conquered" now part of the USS Constitution's permanent records and other publications on a variety of subjects.*

Sue had lived on a farm in Carroll County, Maryland where she created a Retreat where people could "contemplate..., where they can be alone and talk to the Lord" due to her Catholicism and secular Franciscan Order.

**New Members for 2016**

Albright, Clyde J.	E6
Bamberger, Richard E.	BMCS(DR)
Breuer, William F.	RM2
Brown, Bernard F.	
Clinton, Robert H.	
Hoffmaster, Bradley H.	DK1
Hollenback, David L.	
Ireton, James P.	RM1
Jackson, Joseph A.	S1/c
Keeler, Ronald G.	YNSN
Metcalfe Jr. Charles E.	Lt(JG)
Miller, Robert G.	PN2
Nava, Robert V.	IS1
Parry, Thomas R.	
Pettingill, Richard H.	DK2
Phibbs, Richard M.	SN
Rich, Billie Jo	Daughter
Rippy, Richard A.	
Robinson, Corrine M.	HM3
Roth, John L.	
Sherman, Julaine Kay	SA
Tracey, Edward	
Tucci, Joseph	FTG2
Varney, Kathy	Spouse
Weber, Albert A.	
Weber, Benjamin	
Wilson Jr., Ralph E.	CAPT
Yerger, William E.	DP3

**2017 Reunion**  
**Mark your Calendars**

**28 Sept to 1 Oct**  
 Watch for the  
 Call to Reunion issue

## Reunion History

### **How many did you make?**

1999...Aberdeen, MD - USNTC Bainbridge visit  
2000...Wilmington, DE- USNTC Bainbridge visit  
2001...Milwaukee, WI - Maritime Museum of WI  
2002...Aberdeen, MD - *USS New Jersey* visit  
2003...Columbia, MD - Navy Memorial & Navy Yard  
2004...Aberdeen, MD - Farewell tour of USNTC Bainbridge  
2005...Charleston, SC - *USS Yorktown & CSS Hunley*  
2006...Metro DC (MD or VA) - World War II Memorial  
2007...Springfield, MA - Joint Venture w/CO125-1957  
2008 - Aberdeen, MD - Bainbridge Legacy-10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
2009 - Norfolk, VA - *USS Bainbridge DDG-96*  
2010 - Aberdeen, MD - Naval Academy Annapolis  
2011 - Kings Bay, GA - TTF facility & *USS Rhode Island*  
2012 - Aberdeen, MD - Dedication of Memorial Stone  
2013 - Chattanooga, TN - Civil War Remembrance  
2014 - Gaithersburg, MD - Fort McHenry & War of 1812  
2015- Erlanger, KY - Daniel Boone Country  
2016- Aberdeen, MD - Dedication of MD Historical Marker

### **Volunteer to Serve your Shipmates**

The Association is looking for some members to stand up and volunteer for a need of the organization. Any member interested in the below announcements please contact the President.

#### **Needed:**

**Reunion Photographer.** This position photographically records the events of the reunion for the Association Post Reunion *Newsline* and the Association annual scrapbook.

### **USNTC Bainbridge Association Web Site:**

[www.usntcbainbridge.org](http://www.usntcbainbridge.org)

Check it out for the past and the most recent scuttlebutt...

Web site: We are open to placing your photos of Bainbridge Memories on the Web Site. Just forward your photo in a jpeg file and we will send it to the web master.

\*\*\* USS Yellowstone AD 27 Asso. Reunion \*\*\*  
23 Aug to 27 Aug 2017  
Hilton Gardens, Columbus, GA  
Contact: Paul W. Bowen, Ocala, FL 34481  
Cell 1-352-208-5400 or email: bowp@centurylink.net

## **Association Business 2016**

Due to space use for this newsletter Minutes of the 2016 Business Meeting will be by-passed due to sharing with members some of the events that have transpired since then.

During the absence of the President for about four months for a cross-country trip several events occurred which had to be resolved upon returning. Of course, one being the death of our MD Corp Officer. Our Association is required to annually report Personal Property Tax which must be filed by 15 April. I am glad to report that we have been able to provide a member to take over those duties.

The second matter involved Small Stores clothing items. Upon return from trip I was notified that our vendor was no longer able to continue providing us with the items due to health reasons and had to give up his business. Since the order I had placed prior to my trip would not be filed so a new vendor had to be found that would allow clothing orders at our numbers (normally vendors consider a gross of each item) and since we do not keep that type of inventory on-hand, we only order to fill what is requested unless there is an item available in stock. I am happy to report that a vendor was located and clothing items will continue to be available however the cost will be a little more.

### **ASSOCIATION OFFICERS**

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