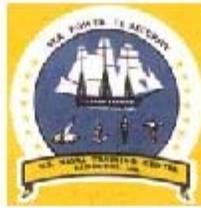


# USNTC Bainbridge



## Newsline

*News For USNTC Bainbridge Association*

Members and Supporters

Volume II. No. 2

March 2000

### BAINBRIDGE IS CIVILIAN LAND



Following is an extract of a  
Sunday, March 12, 2000,  
*New York Times* article.

#### DISPLACING GHOSTS OF STUDENTS AND SAILORS

By Maureen Milford

"Perched on steep cliffs above this curious little riverside town, which is just a mile long and 500 feet deep, is a ghostly granite-and-limestone group of buildings that have preoccupied residents for decades.

"Later, the [Tome] school became part of the Bainbridge Naval Training Center, etched in the memories of tens of thousands of men and women who served there, from 1942 until its closing in 1976.

"The Navy did little to alter the symmetry of the Tome School campus. The dozen buildings that lined the quadrangle in a century-old drawing — the gymnasium, dormitories, classroom buildings, dining hall and headmaster's house — are completely recognizable today. The row of two-story clapboard houses built for teachers, the heating plant, sidewalks, roads, drinking fountains and even street signs give the impression of a town deserted very suddenly.

"Only deterioration of the buildings and the untrimmed grounds, including a terraced garden and a nine-hole golf course, provide clues that the last class graduated from the Tome School in 1941 and that the Navy closed the base in 1976.

"A shadow of our history is up there," said Erika Quesenbery, a curator at the Paw Paw Museum, named for bushes that once graced the museum entrance.

"At the outbreak of World War II, the Navy came looking for recruit training sites, and the school was sold to the government for \$900,000. The entire campus was incorporated into the new naval base, and since 1942, the property has been off limits to most civilians, although drivers crossing the Susquehanna on Interstate 95 can glimpse the elegant headmaster's house and the clock tower of the main classroom building.

"Once the Navy closed the base, residents of Cecil County worked for years to reclaim the property. In 1991, the 125-acre Tome School section was annexed by Port Deposit. Then last year, the Navy agreed

to transfer the entire site to the State of Maryland.

"In a military ceremony last month, attended by Tome graduates, former sailors and local officials, the Navy formally transferred the parcel to the Bainbridge Development Corporation, an agency set up by the state.

"The development corporation, whose board is made of area residents, is charged with developing and marketing the property. Possible uses for the Tome campus include a conference center, retirement community or university campus, and the rest of the site could be devoted to recreation, home sites, office buildings or light industry. Development is expected to take place over the next 15 to 20 years.



"When it comes to restoring the buildings, the development corporation will have its work cut out for it. Vandals made off with much of the ornamentation on the Tome buildings inside and out. Even the weather vane on the clock tower of Memorial Hall was stolen.

"It was demolition by neglect," Mayor Tome said. "Vandals stripped out plumbing for the copper and chipped out the marble steps."

" In 1991, the Navy began tearing down all but 60 of 600 military buildings at Bainbridge, demolishing barracks, mess halls, a hospital, drill hall, indoor rifle range, bowling alley, theater and apartment complex. Among the buildings still standing are a mess hall, a recreation building, barracks, officers' houses, some quite large, and the water treatment plant.

"Men and women who served at Bainbridge hope that at least one of the remaining Navy buildings will be used as a museum to honor the 500,000 sailors trained at Bainbridge.

"Anybody who goes up there and just stands in the quiet can literally feel the presence of things past," said Albert F. Bagley Jr., 74, of nearby Havre de Grace, Md., who was one of the first recruits at Bainbridge during World War II. "You can almost believe you hear the men."

## A NOTABLE BAINBRIDGE OFFICER

*As related by his son, Rollin E. Westholm, Jr.*

"My fathers first duty station after coming back from the war in the Pacific was Bainbridge. I believe I was 4, maybe 5, at the time. Dad was probably a Lt. Commander."

"I remember that our quarters [Quarters R] were on a corner. One of the base swimming pools [structure #782 on NTC maps] was across the street and to the left as I looked out the front door. I was occasionally used as a training aid for recruits who were afraid of the water or could not swim as I was a good swimmer at that age. "See - that little kid can swim, "WHY CAN'T YOU" .

"I remember Bainbridge as a green and pleasant place during the summer - we had a big tree in the front yard - orioles nested in the top of it.

"Last year - I drove in through the gate and looked around. I must say that obviously nothing conformed to my 50 plus year old memories of the place. Post-apocalyptic is the best description I can come up with.

"My father's full name was Rollin Everton Westholm (nicknamed "Westy"). At the time we were in Bainbridge (1946 -47) he was a Commander. He retired a Captain.

"He was in the first PT boat squadrons organized - once held the Norfolk to New York speed record in an early PT - Supported the Guadalcanal campaign while stationed at Tulagi. He was JFK's CO and friend for a time - gave PT 109 to JFK because it was an old boat and he was a junior officer.

"He was CO of the destroyer USS Bush from 5/30/44 to 4/06/45, when it was sunk by kamikazes while on radar picket station # 1 during the invasion of Okinawa.

"I work for the State of Maryland in the Department of General Services in the Office of Real Estate which is, coincidentally, the office involved with the transfer of the Bainbridge property to developers. I am not personally involved in that but various coworkers are."

---

## I LOVED A NURSE AT BAINBRIDGE

*by Gene Gomolka*

I was a lowly 18-year-old S2C, and the love of my life was LTJG Stevenson, a nurse whose first name I've since forgotten. Of course, Miss Stevenson didn't know she was the love of my life. She seldom spoke to me except to ask me how I was feeling or to give me an order to straighten my bed, or tell me it was time to change my pajamas.

Miss Stevenson was, without a doubt, the boss of Ward 812. She ruled with a firm but fair hand. Corpsmen and patients alike jumped at her commands. The result was we had the shiniest floors and cleanest windows, and beds so neat they were the envy of Good Housekeeping magazine. It goes without saying that we, the patients, also received the best medical care the Navy had to offer. Miss Stevenson made that her priority.

I was so smitten by Miss Stevenson, who could not hide her good looks or great shape behind the bars she wore on her shoulder, that I started to compose poems about her. These were not necessarily long romantic poems, just little verses to occupy my time. Of course I knew the non-fraternization rules that applied to enlisted men and officers of the opposite sex. And, Miss Stevenson was always an officer, always proper. So I kept the poems to myself

After one particularly tense day, when nothing seemed to go right in our ward, Miss Stevenson chewed us all out. There was too much card playing, the radios were too loud, the bed sheets were wrinkled, the juice glasses still remained on the night stands, etc. She touched every base and found fault in every step. That evening, when the lights were turned down low, I wrote still another poem about Miss Stevenson.

I recall that the subject matter had to do with Miss Stevenson's unfortunate and untimely demise from causes unknown. I have since forgotten the initial verses. But the ending went something like this:

*"We bow our heads and bend our knees,  
"We pray that you are blest.  
"But heavens knows, as well as we,  
"It's Ward 812 that rests."*

While no one was looking, I slipped that poem partially under the desk pad at the nurse's station in the hallway and nervously waited through the night to see what might happen.

The following day, as Miss Stevenson made her rounds, she stopped by my bed to make entries on my chart. I waited for the reprimand I thought for sure was coming. Instead, she leaned down toward me, and with a very small smile escaping her beautiful lips, she said: "Sailor, you misspelled 'blessed.' And, for God's sake, change those pajamas."

After I left Bainbridge during that winter of 1944, I never saw, or heard of, Miss Stevenson again. I would like to write her a 'thank you' note for all the memories and the great care I received in Ward 812. And, if I've mustered enough nerve to speak up after 56 years, I just might add: "Excuse me, please Mam. But 'blest' is optional for 'blessed.'"

If any of my comrades know where I can reach Miss Stevenson, please contact me at 116 Payne Court, Naples, FL 34112, or by e-mail EGomolka@aol.com

---

#### VOLUNTEER !

Reunion 2000 needs volunteers to work before and during the reunion to help set up disassemble displays, help at the registration desk, in the ship's store storeroom and sales desk, and stand host and security watches in the hospitality room, If you can be at the hotel a day or two early, you will be able to learn your jobs and be ready to go when everyone else arrives. If you can help, send a note with your registration form.

---

## MEMORIES

*by Rich Miano*

In October '51, Co. 254 was on the drill field when it started to rain. Our group leader yelled "Ponchos" and our Chief yelled, "Ponchos hell, lets get back to the barracks." He was called back after serving 25 years.

---

## CURATOR'S CORNER

*By Paul Fleming*

Ordinarily this column would present some aspect of information gleaned from materials in the growing collection. This one is both an apology and an update.

First, an apology!

Your archivist/curator had been functioning as Membership Chairman, Treasurer and contributor to the Newline in addition to serving on the Board of Directors and the steering committee for the 2000 reunion/convention.

The position of Membership Chairman was passed on but the responsibilities for small stores has taken the place of Membership Chairman.

A side responsibility predates the USNTC Bainbridge Association and that is being a board member on the Port Deposit Heritage Corporation based on involvement with Bainbridge.

The result has been a complete halt in acknowledgment of memorabilia received and the issuance of Certificates of Gift. Technically items cannot become part of the collection until a copy of the Certificate of Gift form is signed and returned from the donor.

For that I sincerely apologize and ask that those of you who have not heard from me to be patient. To be sure that your material has been received please obtain either a Delivery Confirmation, Certification of Delivery or obtain a Return Receipt.

We have had donated one video of the reunion and we have received the video produced by Cecil Country Community College of the reunion. A third video was made of the ceremonial property transfer on February 14th and, once edited, will be shown at the next reunion along with the other two.

At the January Board meeting it was proposed and approved that a separate Archive fund be established. That has been done. The account is now in excess of \$1,900.00 and grows with each donation and \$2.00 from each membership fee.

Additionally, the Board approved my attending the Small Museum Association conference in Ocean City Maryland at the end of February. At that conference it was recommended we use a computerized cataloging program called PastPerfect for our collection. We will purchase that program and begin re-cataloging the over 1,000 items in the collection. This program generates all related forms.

The Collection Policy and Procedure protocol was submitted to the Board on March 20th and was approved. This allows the USNTC Bainbridge Historic Preservation Board as established in the Association by-laws to function. A committee was also formed to report on the feasibility of establishing a USNTC Bainbridge Foundation for the establishment and maintenance of a museum.

Porter and I have been working on a composite resource file for writing and submitting grant proposals. Using this material we have generated a request to the Bainbridge Development Corporation for consideration of a building for a museum on the former Bainbridge property.

See you at the reunion!

---

## NOMINATION'S

*by Porter May, President*

Before you know it, we will be at the Reunion 2000 business meeting and electing Association officers.

Most of the incumbents will have served in multiple capacities for two years. Ideally, officers would serve two-year terms with half of them elected each year. The Association needs new leadership or it will perish.

Candidates must be nominated by a Nominations Committee composed of a representative from each of the Association's regions.

Current officers and directors may not serve on the nominating committee and no member of the nominating committee may be nominated for office.

The Nominating Committee's job is challenging and frustrating. It cannot just choose among a number of willing and capable candidates — it must recruit them then assure themselves that each candidate has the leadership, administrative skills and integrity to keep the Association steady on course during their terms, if elected.

Volunteer to serve on the nomination committee or stand for office to:

Porter E. May  
7 Brookmont Drive  
Malvern, PA 19355-3115  
e-mail;portermay@msn.com

---

**\*\*\* DUES 2000 DUES \*\*\***

Send your \$10 year 2000 dues to:  
Arline Caliger, P. O. Box 611, Mt.  
Airy, MD 21771-0611. Make check  
payable to USNTC Bainbridge  
Association Write "2000 dues" on  
your check.