# JOURNALISM among the BLUE-JACKETS

Surprisingly Numerous and Clever Are the Magazines and Papers Published Regularly by the Men Behind the Guns on Uncle Sam's Fighting Ships

By Frank J. McGettigan

WIDELY divergent as are news and navy, powder and press or print, cannon and chronicle, jackie and journalism, Uncle Sam's navy is the seat of a unique class of publications. Considering that Dewey's report of the capture of Manila Bay comprised less than a thousand words, this may seem a fallacy, but its soundness is attested by fully a dozen papers published from warship editorial sanctums and maybe half as many more printed at the navy yards and the naval training stations of the United States. And San Francisco has the distinction of harboring the most pretentious of the navy list which, of course, does not include the Army and Navy Journal and the Army and Navy Register, established as distinctive civilian enterprises with heads intimate with, but beyond, the jurisdiction of the bureaucratic bosses. Briefly Our Navy, the largest of the navy newspapers, is published and edited by enlisted men attached to the naval training station is at Goat island, several thousand copies reaching bluejackets and their parents and friends monthly.

While the papers of the United States navy are essentially flagship institutions, they are not confined solely to vessels the quarterdecks of which are reserved for the tread of admirals. The tiniest craft frequently boast papers which enterprising bluejackets have printed ashore tentatively or at stated periods, when the itineraries of their vessels permit. Jackie journalists at times carry small printing presses with them, and it is seldom a printer can not be found among a ship's company to "stick" the type. Signally seagoing, navy newspapers, while they will resort to a shore news item to crack a joke, from first to last maintain their marine setting, which is frequently typified by their titles.

The Binnacle made a weekly appearance for many months on the tug Iroquois in Honolulu and throughout its existence was copied in toto by the Daily Commercial Advertiser of the Paradise of the Pacific. The Wigwag emanated spasmodically from a yeoman's office on the U. S. S. Mohican, and the Rainbow appears semimonthly on the flagship of the same name for the benefit of the enlisted men of the Philippine squadron. The Mare Island Light shone for 10 issues from the historic ship Independence off Vallejo, Cal., the expiration of the enlistment of its editor, a printer, closing its career. The Badger is the battleship Wisconsin's contribution to navy journalism, the Open Door gladdens the jackies of the U. S. S. Kentucky, the Mosquito is the New Jersey's organ and the Grand Canyon is published on the U. S. S. Pennsylvania. Then there is the Gopher of the U. S. S. Minnesota and the Volunteer is edited from the deck of the U. S. S. Tennessee. The Bulldog long recorded the news of the U. S. S. Oregon and the newspaper of Dewey's flagship, the Olympia, gained renown by recounting the fall of Manila in an issue to which paper captured from the Spanish ships was devoted.

Of the long list of navy papers Our Navy, published at the local naval training station on Goat island, and the Bluejacket, with headquarters at Newport, R. I., are the superior periodicals, the former in size and typographic dress easily excelling many a land magazine. Our Navy is published monthly by R. C. Shepherd, a yeoman or clerk attached to the station at Goat island, and the Bluejacket is launched semimonthly by Chief Yeoman Fred J. Buenzle at the Newport naval training station. Buenzle is the service editor who subjected himself to arrest to test the Rhode Island law that allows theaters and halls to discriminate against uniforms of the enlisted men of the army and navy. He lost, but still fights through the columns of his publication.

The foregoing has to do with the class of publications issued on our ships of war with the regularity of weekly inspection or the monthy general muster. There is another type of navy newspaper printed as the spirit moves in literati among the enlisted men of battleship, tug, cruiser, submarine or destroyer. To this class belongs "The Cruise of the United States Flagship New York Around the World," a 23 page account of the globe encircling trip made by the New York from March 3, 1901, to November 24 of the same year, the cruise affording visits to 59 ports in 12 countries by the warship. This publication was a feat essayed by a printer on the battleship, who set the type of the text of his story as he sailed and went to press as the New York entered the Golden gate, completing its cruise of 37,552 miles. "An Insight Into Navy Life" and "Three Months of Naval Training" are also typical of the short lived class of navy literature, both of these publications having been fathered by an enlisted man after the expiration of training cruises by the U. S. S. Mohican. Illustrative of the magnitude of the task implied by publications of this nature, it might be mentioned that the latter named pamphlets were profusely illustrated with halftones and required 40 octavo pages each for the navy author to recount his remarkable history.

Save that "from the beginning it was not so" little is known of the origin of navy papers, for, strange to say, they seem never to have received official recognition from any secretary of the navy, and their existence is not written into the records of the bureau of navigation. They have found no place in the statistics of the civilian press, and the story of their birth may to the end remain unsung. It is certain, however, that the advent of the printing press into navy flagship equipment was responsible for the first man-of-war's man paper, as it has been for the survival of the enterprise which is forging ahead with a bound as the United States navy grows larger and stronger. Find the bureau order that first authorized admiral, commodore or commander to "rate" a printing press. This will lead to the United States navy's first printer and upon him it is safe to say will fall the honor of being the navy's pioneer editor. Mayhap the combat of the Constitution and Guerriere was vividly described in a ship paper and is lost to those coming after. History of United States navy journalism is a story in itself and perhaps this, the first known memorabilia of warship editors, may bring it forth. It is to be hoped either the patriarch of the navy's active list or a venerable member of the retired commission or enlisted corps will delve into reminiscence of yore and tell the tale, if not of the first, at least of the early warship publications.

Paramount among the features of warship newspapers and magazines is the fact that enlisted men culled from every path of life are the sole editors and publishers, upon whom devolves the really huge task. Not officially recognized, the papers must be prepared in the spare time of the ship journalists. This is a hardship, but the remuneration being great there is no cursing of printer's devil or invocation of anathemas by the yeoman or clerk editor and the sole printer, who usually form the complete editorial staff and management. No navy paper is sold at less than 10 cents the copy, many bringing as high as 50 cents or a dollar. The subscription is never less than 25 cents a month for a weekly or $1.50 a year for a monthly. Price, coupled with the natural generosity and enthusiasm of the sailorman, makes the way of the mariner journalist roseate despite his trouble. Few bluejackets are satisfied with one subscription, and on ships where papers are published man-of-war's men frequently subscribe for as many as a dozen copies as substitutes for letters to relatives and friends. Take a battleship with its thousand men. They will literally eat up an issue of ten thousand copies to the delectation of the "business office." And there is no deadhead list either, although the admiral or captain is usually supplied with a dozen copies, for which he graciously pays before his detachment to other decks, other seas or to shore duty. Officers are always bountiful subscribers, and secret orders for 100 copies of the ship paper are numerous when a "striper" or "warrant" is praised in editorial squib or "joshed" by innuendo easily explained by letter to proud mother, waiting sweetheart and anxious friends.

Then advertisements are a source of additional revenue. Every ship has one or two or more barbers, and tailors galore. These in a quarter, half or even a full page will exploit the perfection of their workmanship in the ship paper, and the commissary store or canteen under the jurisdiction of the paymaster frequently seeks the same avenue of publicity. To this advertising space, which lags little behind shore rates, add the advertisements contributed by merchants of ports visited by warships and you may gauge the revenue possible for warship journalists to glean by their enterprise. Here it is fitting to remark that navy editors as a rule are select in selling space to advertisers, and though evidently remote from a man-of-warsman's feelings, many of them actually refuse to advertise saloons or liquors. Careful scanning of Our Navy, San Francisco's navy paper, will not elicit a saloon or liquor boost, and The Bluejacket of Newport announces editorially that it will not accept advertisements that might urge "Jack" to pick a new brand of intoxicant or patronize another corner saloon.

Here are sample ads of a warship paper which sold space to its canteen and a ship's tailor:

"$ Notice $ Socks, suspenders, collar buttons and everything the heart desires can be purchased at Malone's Emporium, No. 2 Port Galley avenue. Eastern agency for Lowney's chocolates."

"Get a genuine flagship suit made by William Walker, custom tailor and clothier. Good fit and swell cut guaranteed. Patronized by the elite. No. 41144 Dungharee avenue."

Note the odd addresses of the ship merchants. By "No. 2 Port Galley avenue" Malone's Emporium explains to bluejackets that it holds forth on the port (left) side of the ship on the main deck abreast the galley, or the vessel's kitchen. William Walker, the tailor, in giving his location as "No. 41144 Dungharee avenue," intimates he labors on the berth deck near the engine room, where the "black gang" or the engineer's force, clad constantly in "dungharees" or overalls, holds forth.

While in many instances the printer allowed a flagship is the major domo of the ship's paper, he is not invariably the ship's editor. Frequently a yeoman or clerk will be in league with the typesetter, and between the two the paper is born, circulated and the pay a copy or subscriptions collected, honesty, and at times fear, keeping the bluejacket's from the publication's blacklist. Usually the monthly appearance of the paymaster liquidates all debts to the ship's paper.

Commissioned or warrant officers do not figure in the publication of warship papers either as censors or contributors, but as subscribers only. Here is proof of the navy's discipline, for it is not written that a bluejacket journalist was ever silenced for disrespectful comment or unwise criticism. This record, however, is not indicative of absolute extermination of criticism and comment concerning officers by the enlisted men editors. One navy paper is said to have originated the term "tea going admiral," referring to Admiral Sampson, and the wag of another warship sheet is given the credit of writing that Dewey said at the capture of Manila bay: "You may fire when you're ready, Gridley—I'm going below." That both scribes went unpunished shows the radius within which the jackie journalists may scribble safely. There is no set rule, however, and the brig and bread and water forever hanging over the warship editor as the sword of Damocles probably more than indulgence are responsible for the cleanliness of the navy's bluejacket press.

Wit dots the columns of warship newspapers with the frequency of portholes on a battleships. Seldom is there a column devoted exclusively to sally; the bluejacket's humor is written as it is felt, not even a death notice being too sober to precede or follow a bon mot. The following excerpts from Our Navy and The Bluejacket are symbolical of the mirth of bluejacket editors in their publications:

"I am very sorry to hear, captain, that your wife left you so unceremoniously."

"My mistake. I took her for a mate, and she proved to be a skipper."

"Driven to it by stern necessity, the old sailor had taken the job of running an elevator.

"'Vast there, my hearty!' he said to the fat man who was moving toward the side of the car. 'I'll have to ask ye to stand amidships. This craft has a heavy list to port.'—Our Navy.

"Some unexpected articles are sometimes found in the possession of bluejackets at bag inspection, but the landsman for yeoman at Newport, who recently showed up with his appendix in alcohol, deserves more than casual mention."—The Bluejacket.

"If you kiss me I'll call mother!"
Said the maiden, fair to see.
"That is all the good 'twill do her,
"I'm no Hobson," answered he.
—Our Navy.

"If the sailors use the boxing gloves
When they try to raise a rumpus,
Why don't the captain use the gloves
In 'boxing' of the compass?"
—The Bluejacket.

"In the Volunteer the sleepy first divisionite says, 'I think I must be moving.' 'Perhaps,' returned the boatswain's mate, 'but it has not been for 20 minutes at least.'

"In Des Moines, Ia., at the navy recruiting station opened there, a man was recently rejected because he had six toes on one foot. He was not a moral man."—The Bluejacket.

Bluejacket editors are partial to verse and seldom does unworthy rhyme find place in the periodicals under their guidance. Typical samples of the muse as wooed by warship poets are shown in the following:

**THE FARTHEST PORT AWAY**
**By E. S. B., an Enlisted Man**

We weighed our anchor long ago,
Our sails were bright and clean,
A fair breeze blew—we set our prow
For lands we ne'er had seen.
Ahead the mists hid all from view,
Astern—the silent bay,
We entered on our voyage to
The Farthest Port away.

We still are tossing on the waves,
The spray oft sweeps our deck,
And now we pray our good ship may
Reach land without a wreck.
"Aye, look to your ropes, my heartiest!
Spin sea yarns while you may,
We know not when our watch will sight
The Farthest Port away."

Farther than Cuba's sunny skies,
Than Egypt's fertile plain,
Beyond the rolling Jordan lies
The harbor we would gain.
Keep ever watchful eyes upon
Our main to'gallant stay—
If we would drop our anchor in
The Farthest Port away.

**THE DARK BROWN TASTE**
**(By One Who Has Had It)**

When you wake at one or two bells in
the morning with a head,
And your throat is like a furnace,
shooting blazes, fiery red;
How you call for icy water, like a
demon long disgraced,
To remove the awful presense of that
DARK
BROWN
TASTE.

If you keep the ten commandments it
may be you'll never know
How it is to wake in anguish, with
your system all aglow;
But the ordinary sinner, while his being goes to waste,
Learns in sadness all the sorrows of
that
DARK
BROWN
TASTE.

In terming the bluejacket newspapers unique they are not to be considered freakish. Far be it from such. Comparison of them with prison papers is ignominious and many a college journal would fall in their sight. Pure English marks the dress of the warship journals, their rhyme is meritorious, their comedy of the chuckling variety. They are a class by themselves to be matched with none other, and, to the observant of the bluejacket world, they are potential in cementing man-of-war's men to the hardship of navy life and in inducing others to seek the jackie field—the wanderer's Utopia.

"In 10 years," said a retired chief boatswain's mate in his Fruitvale retreat recently, "they'll be shipping editors."