

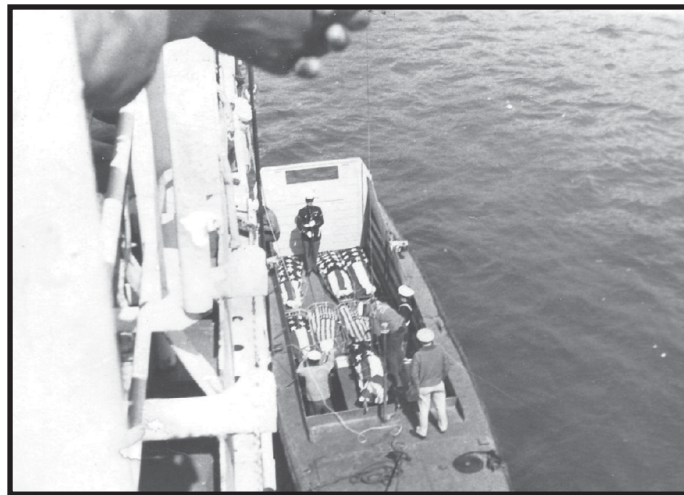
New photos of the Next Day surface...

It's Been 65 Years: A Time to Remember

30 Men We Should Not Forget Are Homeward Bound



"This is the second boat with one body at the top of the cable." Gillitzer



Second boat with one body being hoisted aboard HAVEN

The Deck Log and a Bare Bones Narrative on that Fateful Day

Following is the deck log from 4 p.m. (1600 hours) to midnight on the day of the explosion in Turret One. Officers of the Watch note the significant events of the ship's day. This record demonstrates that in the midst of tragedy, the ship's routine must continue:

Monday, 21 April 1952

1600-1800 Steaming as before. 1605 c/c (change course) to 135° T PCC, 144° PSC, to head the ship downwind. 1606 received report that crew had turned on sprinkler system in Turret #1. 1608 c/c to 105° T PCC, 114° PSC. 1622 received report that fire in turret #1 was extinguished. Preliminary report – flashback in upper portion of turret; exact location unknown. Personnel being removed from turret by medical and repair parties. 1627 c/s to 10 knots, 095 RPM. 1628 c/s to 15 knots, 141 RPM. 1630 lower handling room and magazine crew of turret #1 accounted for. 1631 completed firing in Kojo area having expended the following ammunition: 19 rounds 8" H.C. full, 63 rounds 8" reduced. 1633 c/c to 125° T PCC, 134° PSC. En route to bomb line 1646 secured sprinkler system in turret #1.

1722 mustered crew on stations. Following are absentees, all deceased of fire (Ed Note: the word explosion in original typing had been crossed out to be replaced by "fire") in turret#1:

(THE NAMES, RATES, SERIAL NUMBERS, ALL FOLLOWED BY USN, WERE LISTED)

1730 all personnel clear of turret #1. 1740 secured from fire quarters.

/s/ J O Lyon
LT, USN

1800-2000 Steaming as before. (numerous speed and course changes) 1903 unloaded center gun of turret#1 through muzzle. 1905 (another course change) 1909 darkened ship. 1910 (course and speed change).

/s/ A F Bridger
LT USNR

2000-2400 Steaming as before. 2000 commenced firing secondary battery on night harassing and interdiction targets assigned by 1st ROK Corps. 2008 to 2100 (Engaged in deballasting, pumping 48,700 gallons of salt water over the side) 2130 a court of inquiry convened by ComCruDivONE, president, Captain G.P. Enright, USN, Chief of Staff of ComCruDivONE met to inquire into a fire in Turret#1 of the USS SAINT PAUL (CA-73). 2131 ceased night harassing and interdiction fire having expended 19 rounds of 5" AAC projectiles and flashless powder. 2139 In accordance with (orders) departed from bomblines for Pusan, Korea. 2232 commenced ballasting. 2300 completed ballasting, having taken aboard 50,300 gallons salt water.

A “Lurch” or a “Thump”?

HOWEVER IT WAS FELT, IT WAS A TRAGEDY

65 Years Ago, 30 Shipmates Perished in Turret One

“Suddenly the cruiser lurched like a hooked marlin, rattling from stem to stern.”

Not so, but that was *Time* magazine's version of what happened the afternoon of April 21, 1952; 65 years ago next month.

The explosion in 8" Turret One snuffed out the lives of 30 sailors of the USS SAINT PAUL's 3rd Division. They had moments before been wreaking havoc, bombarding enemy targets off Kojo, North Korea.

Actually, the tragic event was not more than a thump to John Hannabach (51-54, Fox, FT3), who was five decks down in a plotting room near the armored barbette in which the explosion occurred, or to LT Clifford Roosa (52-53), the ship's doctor, who was about to be tossed into one of the defining events of his professional life.

Dr. Roosa, in the wardroom, felt a shudder and thought the ship may have been hit by gunfire.

Most of the rest of the crew first learned of the disaster when they were called to Fire Quarters (“This is no drill.”). As damage control teams were ordered to Turret One, acrid, yellow smoke began to roll through below deck spaces.

That was the beginning of a series of events that saw the remains of 30 shipmates brought from inside the turret to be laid on tables in the Captain's cabin, the Admiral's cabin, the wardroom, and the crew mess decks.

There the entire medical department and damage control teams turned to in attempts to revive the victims until, sadly, no hope remained for any of the 30.

Newsweek magazine summed it up: “Thus, the Navy suffered its worst casualties in the 22 months of the Korean War.”

So, even as life, and mission, must go on, the ship began the tasks of returning Turret One and the ship, to action. After all, the SAINT PAUL was still a fighting ship.

At the same time, preparing the remains of our shipmates for return to their loved ones, was a necessary task.

George Johnson (51-56, 1st, BM1) who had just been relieved off watch from Turret One, found himself



BM1 George Johnson, who cleared turret one of casualties, later sewed them into canvas shrouds

back inside the turret, engaged in cleanup, damage repair and making the turret ready for fire missions.

Later, after the ship had returned to Yokosuka, he led in the task of removing the stuck projectile in the gun that misfired.

Johnson was a central figure on the ship in the aftermath of the disaster. He spent the entire night of April 21-22, sewing the remains of the casualties into canvas shrouds to prepare them for transfer.

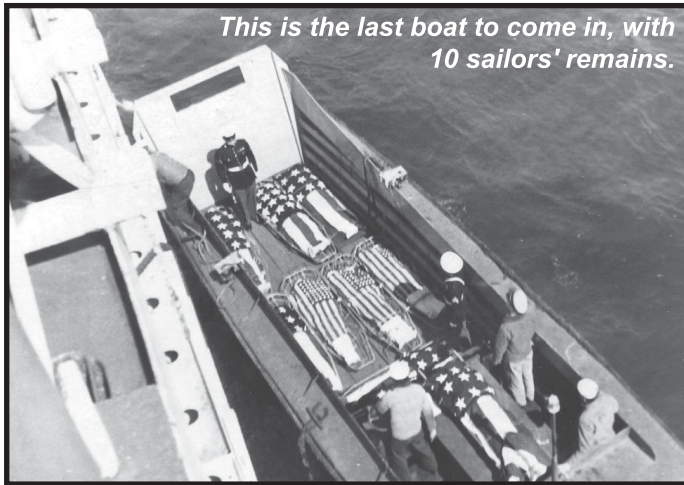
Nobody could stomach the task with him, he remembers, so he sewed pretty much alone through the night, with stewards keeping him primed with coffee.

Though burial at sea was discussed it was decided to transfer the remains to a hospital ship, the USS HAVEN, then in Pusan, South Korea, as the next step in returning them home.

Thus, as Johnson stitched, the ship steamed through the night to Pusan, where a shipboard memorial service was conducted before the 30 shrouds and personal possessions were loaded on small boats for a short journey across Pusan Harbor to the HAVEN.

And that is where memories of this sad tale would have ended for most former SAINT PAUL sailors if not for the recent discovery of a batch of photos in an attic in Wisconsin.

Those photos show small boats departing the SAINT PAUL and coming alongside the USS HAVEN and shrouded remains being lifted aboard the hospital ship.



Dan Gillitzer sent the photos his U.S. Marine father, Tom, had taken. Tom was a patient on the HAVEN, recovering from an abdominal wound.

The SAINT PAUL, having offloaded its precious cargo in Pusan, returned to the bomb line and pounded enemy positions for a few more days before heading to Yokosuka, and home.

The dozen photos, some yellowing with age, and all somewhat dog eared from handling, were found in the attic of the family home after Tom passed away in 1982, and his widow passed several years later. Family members found the photos in the attic as they were sorting through their parents' possessions.

Barely Detectable Hull Number Gave Clue

Tom's son, Dan, tracked down the data that allowed him to send the photos to Bob Board last Summer. Barely detectable hull numbers on two photos of the ship and the modern miracle of Googling yielded ship's name and dates that brought Tom to the HAVEN and the SAINT PAUL to Pusan at the same time.

A few of the photos are running in this issue of *The Roving Saint* and all 12 will reside permanently in the Association's archives under Chan Zucker's loving care.

Remembrances of the incident have been published in *The Roving Saint* over the years, in the September, 2010 and March, 2006 issues, for example.

But a lasting memorial, and a tribute to one shipmate's devotion to his fellows was created in 1987 when the late Allen Starr (51-53, 2nd, SN),

though unemployed, worked odd jobs in the Marines' Camp Lejeune mess hall to earn \$1,080 to buy a plaque with all the victim's names to be installed at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD.

As the plaque was being dedicated in September, 1987, he recalled to reporters his memory of helping his shipmates remove the bodies from the turret and "piling them like loaves of bread" in the admiral's cabin as they were carried from their armored tomb.



This plaque, with names of all the dead, is displayed in the Navy-Marine-Corps Memorial Stadium since 1987 commemorating the death of 30 USS SAINT PAUL sailors. Allen Starr (51-52,2nd,SN), who did odd jobs to raise money for the plaque, is second from left

Starr, who worked for a mobile home builder at \$3.75 an hour, made an avocation of creating memorials in remembrance of sailors and Marines, donating blood at age 50, mortgaging his home, and putting his life savings into such memorials.

The memorial plaque for the Turret One casualties was presented to the Academy at a pre-game luncheon and formally presented at halftime to an

See Turret One on page 14



Where were you. . .

WHEN THE TURRET EXPLODED

By: John Hannabach (51-54, Fox, FT2)

I served on the ship from 1951-54, and was on board when the disastrous explosion occurred in Turret One on that April day in 1952. My Fox Division General Quarters position was in Sky Plot, but I also otherwise spent a significant part of my day in that plotting room and that was where I was when this horrible event occurred.

The Main-Battery Plotting Room and Sky Plot (5" battery) were side-by-side, located forward in the ship and five decks down. We were a level below the armor belt of the ship and near fuel tanks and powder rooms.

Both the main battery and the 5" battery had firing missions that day. When one of the 8" guns fired, you might feel a very slight shudder that far below decks, but nothing significant. We likely would know when the main battery fired because it was done from the plotting room next door, and it was not unusual for the connecting hatch to be open between the plotting rooms except for GQ, and Fox Division personnel would flow freely between the two compartments.

We had no idea of a problem until GQ sounded. Nor did we know how close we were to the entire ship exploding had the fire reached the powder room, very close to us. At GQ, the hatch to Main Plot was secured so there was no information from there. Slowly, the word began to spread about a problem in Turret One, but no specifics. We remained in Sky Plot until GQ was secured. Apparently, the bodies

were removed from the turret during GQ as we observed none of that activity.

A pall hung over the entire ship. Everyone spoke in hushed voices as the ship pulled off the bomb-line. Some of us in Fox Division went up to the forward fire-control director level, above the bridge, but nothing was visible even from that height.

The ship returned to a normal routine condition, such as was possible, but rumors were rampant, many turning out to be accurate. We proceeded south to Pusan to rendezvous with a hospital ship, USS HAVEN, to transfer the bodies. The ship then returned to North Korea and the bomb-line and a firing mission.

I personally knew several of the 30 crew who were killed as our berthing compartment was one deck below the Third Division, and we shared the same "head" with them.

This was a tragedy that resulted in the largest naval casualties of the Korean War. Had the sprinkler system and/or fire and rescue crew not extinguished the fire before it reached the black powder, we likely would have lost the entire ship and many hundreds of lives – certainly all of us in fire-control plot. It would have occurred prior to GQ being sounded and hatches secured.

Eternal Father, strong to save ...

Continued from Turret One on page 13

Army-Navy game before finding a permanent placed in the Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium.

Wording on the plaque briefly describes the April 21 incident and lists the names of all 30 casualties. It is the only permanent remembrance of the incident and the 30 men who died in the turret.

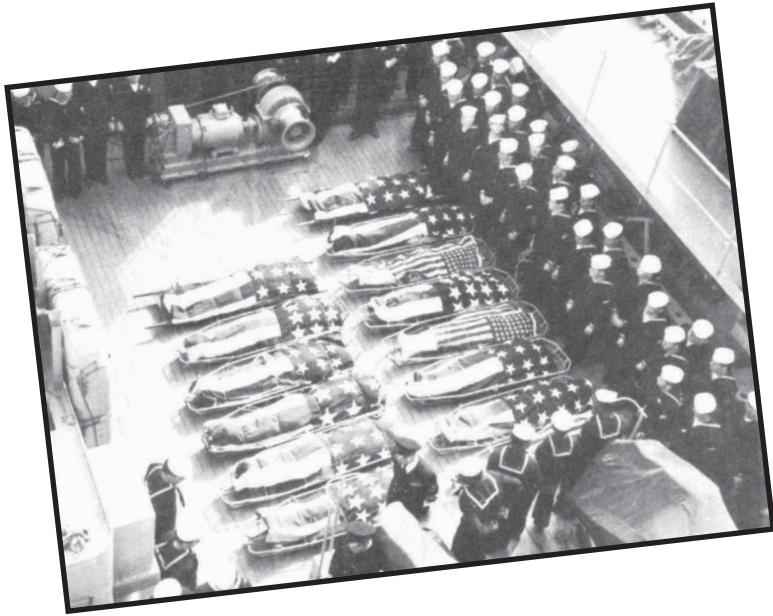
This year, as the 65th anniversary of the explosion approaches, it is fitting that new photos have been discovered that shows us another facet of the sad event. We are grateful to the Gillitzer family for sending the photos to help in this observance.

Had our shipmates lived, they would be in their mid-80s by now and would have enjoyed the past 65

years passing through the normal rations of heartbreak, love, joy, passion and family life that the years have dealt to the survivors.

They would have enriched their communities with their activities and efforts, and they would have contributed children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and even great-great-grandchildren to the wealth, growth and prosperity of this great nation.

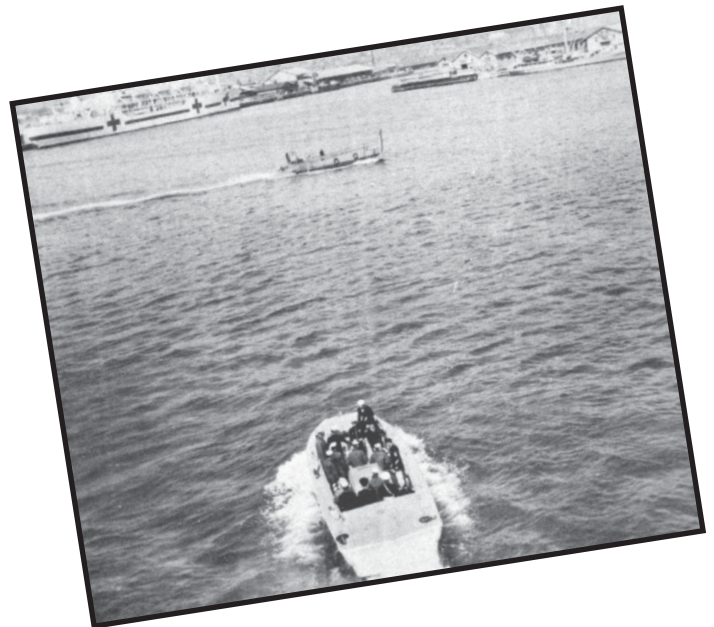
Perhaps, then, on April 21 we might do well to ponder the loss of the unborn, even as we recall our devastation at the loss of nearly three dozen valued shipmates.



The warship had anchored, they were taken ashore,
Never again would they fight anymore,
God up in heaven had called them away,
The lives of my buddies were taken that day.

Now they're in heaven, around God's great throne,
They left this world for a much better home.
There'll be no wars there, I'm told,
Where the gates are of pearl, and the streets are of gold.

— D. E. GABLE



This Korean Cruise II book (1952) page shows the remains of the 30 dead sailors arranged on the quarterdeck of the USS SAINT PAUL (upper left), the first bodies being borne down the gangway (upper right) and into a small boat (bottom left). The first boat is shown departing for the distant hospital ship USS HAVEN (lower right). The poem in the center was composed by a shipmate to lament the tragic deaths.

NIGHTMARES OF TURRET ONE DISASTER...

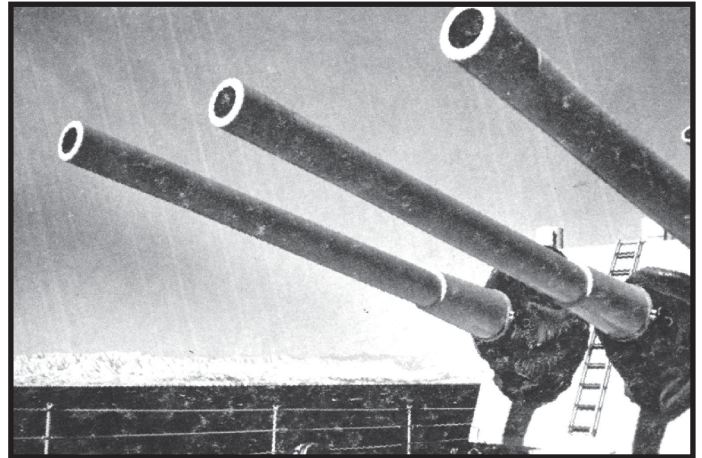
By: George Johnson (51-56, 1st, BM1)

21 April 1952 We made a gun strike on KOJO area of the east coast of Korea. We did good shooting until this afternoon when we were relieved in Turret One by the third division about 1545. At about 1600 General Quarters and Fire Quarters sounded. An explosion happened in Turret One which I had just left when relieved on the shell deck. The explosion killed thirty men. All three gun crews, all men in upper powder's and all on the shell deck. The sight setter was the only one to get out of the turret. He dropped out of hatch from the booth and took about six steps and said "I am ok" then dropped dead on deck.

All the men removed from turret had yellow cordite from powder coming from their ears and eyes, and mouths. It was a real mess, the gun crew from left gun, and man from upper powders that had a bag of powder in his arms. The man that relieved me on shell deck got full blast of fire from voice tube by projectile hoist. George Costa GM-1st broke zebra to left gun and got hit with fire that burned his silhouette on back of booth.

We are now on our way to Japan with our dead. Change of plans will take our dead to hospital ship HAVEN in Pusan.

Bodies were all over in Captain's cabin, wardroom and passageways. It fell to me to sew up all the men in canvas as we did not have body bags back then. Since First Division had the sail locker I had Leon Petersen sew me three lengths of canvas together and then sewed each man into a canvas shroud. I still remember like it was yesterday. I sewed from 1700 to about 0600. The only thing that kept me going was the Stewards in Captain's cabin and wardroom keeping the coffee hot. My hands hurt for a week from all the sewing but because of the angel on my shoulder I missed the explosion by five minutes.



Removal of projectile in left gun after explosion May 5, 1952.

We were sent from Yokosuka to explosive anchorage in outer harbor. The rigging loft shop X-72 made a eye beam with a cap that would fit over the point detonation fuse so it would not set off when we tried to back it out of the barrel. The other end of eye beam had a plate welded on it so we could use a hydraulic jack which fit on a frame bolted to the barrel.

The ship was cleared of all personnel except three of us forward of turret number two. We jacked on it as much as we could until it finally let go with a whoosh and landed on the tray in left gun room. Rather than shoot it out BU-Ord wanted the projectile. Once again my angel was on my shoulder.

The Board of Inquiry found the explosion was caused by a double load. The gun was loaded when we relieved on station. The word came in to load so the gun captain tripped the salvo latch, opened the breech. The rammer man then rammed a new projectile into the back of the two powder bags in the gun setting them off and the two ready for next load. That set them off driving the powder cars down to upper powder setting off two more bags for a total of six bags going off. The loaded projectile was sent into the barrel the other projectile ended up on the tray. This is all I can tell as some I do not want to talk about.