

# USS SOMERS

## 2012 Reunion Another Big Hit

Another great, fun-filled reunion was experienced by all 56 attendees. Shipmates, family and friends gathered at the Goforth Ranch from April 27 to April 29 in Cameron, Oklahoma. Hosted by shipmate and spouse, Tom and Mary Anne Goforth (63-66), it started off with dinner at LaHuerta, Mexican restaurant with the introduction of our Guest of Honor, Don Conat, YN, DD381, (44-45) and his sons Terry and Rick. We celebrated Don's 88th birthday with gifts crafted by Plank Owner Harry Tooker, MR, DD947, (58-61) and of course a birthday cake with not as many candles, from a donation by Lamar & Cathy Jarrard, LT, DDG34, (71-72), a magnum of California Merlot with the Somers (DD381) label by the Association and, of course, a Somers Cap from Tom & Mary Anne.

Door prizes were abundant, including a free annual membership from the Tin Can Sailors Association, and fun gifts donated by our host and hostess, Tom & Mary Anne. A DDG34 Zippo Somers lighter donated by Gary Coakley, MM, DDG34, (69-72), and an assortment of pens, bumper stickers and fun items.

Accommodations were provided to the Conat's by the Association at the reunion hotel, the Best Western Traders Inn located near the restaurant in Poteau, OK.

Dinner was also provided by Tom & Mary Anne and we thank them so very much for their continued support and generosity in hosting the last 3 reunions (2010, 2011 & 2012).

From the restaurant we continued the festivities at the Goforth Ranch, with drink, more cake and sea stories and great conversation. Certainly, a great start to the 2012 Somers reunion.

## Introduction of Don Conat

by Bob Plante at the 2012 Reunion.

It is my pleasure to introduce to you our "Guest of Honor" for the 2012 USS Somers Crewmembers Association reunion, Mr. Don Conat.

Don enlisted in the Navy when he was 18 in Bemidji, MN and served honorably from 1942-1946, participating in operations in North Africa while stationed at the US Naval Base in Oran, Algeria before reporting aboard the USS Somers (DD381) in 1943.

As a crew member aboard Somers, he participated in the invasion of Normandy and the invasion of Southern France, where the Somers fired upon and sank 2 German destroyers the night before the invasion.

At the time, Somers also participated in convoy duty to England, the Mediterranean Sea and France. He especially was fond of sailing the winter seas in the North Atlantic!! I think it was the gentle rocking of the seas that he really enjoyed!

Following his discharge in 1946, he joined his father and brother and started a lumber business in Big Sky country, Whitefish, Montana. With a saw mill, a planer mill and dry kilns, they produced about a train car load of lumber daily, shipping throughout the States.

In 1961, he decided to become a baseball umpire and attended the Al Somers Baseball Umpire School in Daytona Beach, Florida, graduating 2nd in a class of 81. He was assigned to the Carolina League in North Carolina that same year and later advanced to the Triple AAA Pacific Coast League in Pioneer, California. He went to spring training with the Chicago Cubs for 5 years in Mesa, Arizona and with the San Francisco Giants for a year in Casa Grande, Arizona. (Con'd p2)

### Continued... Introduction of Don Conat,,,,,

Don had the pleasure of meeting such baseball greats as Willie Mays, Bob Lemon, Bobby Cox, Rick Wise, Ernie Banks, Ron Santo, Lou Brock, Billy Martin, Lou Pinella and many more.

In the off season he resided in San Jose, California and worked for the Dunn Paint Company where he was offered a managerial position for 2 of their retail stores in Oakland. Leaving baseball, he worked for Dunn for the next 20 years when he retired and relocated to Salem, Oregon.

He purchased his retirement home on a golf course, where he resides today. He and his wife, Blanche, spent the next 20 years volunteering for the "Make A Wish" foundation where they granted 97 individual wishes and raised more than \$350,000.00 running 9 large annual golf tournaments.

For the past 21 years Don has put together and edited a 20 -30 page monthly newsletter for his local community.

Blanche couldn't be with him today because she suffered a major stroke last year and for the past 16 months has been receiving skilled nursing care in a retirement home.

His sons Rick and Terry have accompanied their father here this weekend and we welcome them as part of the Somers family.

Don, we understand you recently celebrated your 88th birthday. We would like to congratulate you in reaching this milestone. All former Somers crew members and their families and especially those present this evening, would like to wish you a belated Happy Birthday and help celebrate this special occasion with you.



Don Conat receiving hand carved moose from shipmate and artisan Harry Tooker.



Terry Conat, Don, Everett Perry & Rick Conat.



Since the reunion Don has relocated in Keizer, Oregon to be closer to Blanche, whom he visits daily.

It was our sincere pleasure to have met Don, Rick and Terry and we're certainly pleased to have Don on the roster of former Somersmen and to have him as a member of the Association. We couldn't have chosen a better Guest of Honor for the 2012 USS Somers Crewmembers Association reunion,

Thanks Don for sharing the life and times of Don Conat! Pass along our best wishes to Rick and Terry.

**DD214's** by Jim Lechner, BT, DD947 (59-62)  
Plank Owner: Since May 5, 2012, you can view your DD214 online on the following link:

**[tp://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/](http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/)**

USS Somers Crewmembers Association

Saturday, April 28th

The following day was a full schedule with everyone arriving at the Goforth Ranch. The large tent delivered and assembled on Friday afternoon, tables and chairs were set up under the tent, a registration table and seating were set up in the garage. The reunion sign was set up and here it is:



A catered lunch was on it's way at 1:00 p.m.. Bruce Terry Catering was bringing BBQ ribs, chicken breasts, pulled pork sandwiches, baked beans, cole slaw, potato casserole and for dessert, assorted cobbler and ice cream. Sweet tea and iced tea for beverages.

Country and blue grass was played by the talented including our own Tommy Goforth on the Dobro with Everett Perry, ST, DD947, (60-62) on the guitar. Small groups were scattered (where the sea stories were shared) and you always found the ladies in the kitchen, brewing coffee, and keeping things going. Mary Anne always on the go, mostly to the store for soft drinks, beer and snacks.

Around 4:00 p.m. it was time for the raffles. Always popular and the lines formed for tickets! The items: 24 bottles of Sonoma Valley California Merlot with specially made labels of DD947 and DDG34. 2 magnum bottles in their respective crates, a gift basket for the ladies attending - assembled and decorated and donated by the Goforths. Two large baskets of top shelf booze.

Everyone participated, although it was clear the DDG34 crew were taking everything in sight! As it seemed they did at the 2011 reunion!!

So, for the winners of the baskets, and the magnums of wine:

Dave Manson, CS, DDG34, (70-71) Basket of Booze



Dennis Hurt, BT, DDG34, Basket of Booze

Jim McLeod, HT, (68-72) Magnum of Wine



Willie Pina, BM, DDG34, (67-69) and Stella. Stella takes home the Ladies Basket.



BUT, to avoid a clean sweep of the larger prizes, our own Sherline Hartley, wife of Russ Hartley, MM, DD947, (63-66) takes home the last remaining magnum!



## Sunday, April 29th:

With the reunion winding down our final day arrived. Breakfast was available in the kitchen and if I remember correctly, eggs, bacon, ham, toast, coffee, doughnuts, fruit, juices were abundant. Seems like Mary Anne never stopped! Thank goodness for the assist from the other ladies!

The Association meeting for members was scheduled and began at 10:00 a.m. Following the meeting, an afternoon social was sponsored by the Association that included assorted pizza, salads and beverages.

Later at about noon, a photo session was held and group photos were taken.

Saturday evening also included a bon fire, where story telling took on a new meaning, cocktails were plentiful as was some very fine Kentucky shine! Thanks to our good friend and shipmate John (BUCK) Buckman, BT, DD947, (63-65). Buck also brought with him the tastiest ham straight from Kentucky.

All in all, a great weekend, good to see old friends, make new friends, and enjoy the beautiful weather of eastern Oklahoma.

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## Memorial Day Parade—A True Story by Tom Legge, FTG, DD947, (64-66)

I went to my local Memorial Day parade this morning and as a previously shunned Vietnam vet (we all know that feeling, don't we), I experienced something new— and very humbling! I went in regular clothes, jeans and a tee shirt, and the only thing that would identify me as a veteran was my USS Somers ballcap that I was wearing—so imagine my surprise when the following happened:

As the parade was passing by I noticed some people that were participating in the parade (other veterans, public officials, etc.), were saluting me from a distance, and some even fell out of formation from their group and walked up to me and shook my hand

and said, “thank you for your service”. Then a bunch of young children, ages about 5 to 10 years old approached me and also thanked me (those kids have surely been raised right)! All told, throughout the course of the parade, about 30—40 perfect strangers stopped by to display their appreciation towards me, to which I smiled and said a grateful “thank you” and “it was my pleasure”, etc., etc.

As stated earlier—this was a surprise—a very pleasant surprise! Why? Because, as most Vietnam vets know, we never experienced being applauded while walking through an airport in our uniforms such as they show being done on TV or You Tube now-a-days; plus they never had welcome home parades for us; quite the contrary as unfortunately some of us were even spit upon, which to this day I will never, ever understand as we were just trying to defend out (sp) country— the very same way todays servicemen and women are doing so wonderfully. Am I bitter? I was.—a little—that is until today! My experience today wiped away all the exasperation and negativity that would occasionally pop into my head. Thank God!!

My advice to all of you on any Memorial Day and Veterans Day is to proudly wear your Somers ball cap!!! You'll be glad you did!! :)




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**“ I can imagine no more rewarding a career. And any man who may be asked in this century what he did to make his life worthwhile, I think can respond with a good deal of pride and satisfaction: ‘I served in the United States Navy.’”**

**President John F. Kennedy, 1 August 1963**

Reunion 2012 Photos:



**From An Old Somersman:** Jim Grebe, GMM, DDG34, (70-74)

Old sailors sit and chew the fat  
About things that used to be,  
Of the things they've seen'  
The places they've been,  
When they ventured out to sea.

They remembered friends from long ago,  
The times they had back then,  
The money they spent,  
The beer they drank,  
In their days as sailing men.

Their lives are lived in the days gone by  
With the thoughts that forever last.  
Of the bell bottom blues,  
Winged white hats,  
And good times in their past.

They recall long nights with the moon so bright  
Far out into the lonely sea.  
The thoughts they had  
As youthful lads,  
When their lives were wild and free.

They know so well how their hearts would swell  
When old glory fluttered proud and free.  
The underway pennant  
Such a beautiful sight  
As they plowed through an angry sea.

They talked of the chow ol' cookie would make  
And the shrill of the bos'n pipe.  
How salt spray would fall  
Like sparks from hell  
When a storm struck in the night.

They remember old shipmates already gone  
Who forever hold a spot in their heart,  
When sailors were bold,  
And friendships would hold,  
Until death ripped them apart.

They speak of nights spent in bawdy houses  
On many foreign shore,  
Of the beer they'd down  
As gathering around,  
Telling jokes with a busty whore.

Their sailing days are gone away,  
Never again will they cross the brow.

They have no regrets,  
They know they are blessed,  
For honoring the sacred vow.

Their numbers grow less with each passing day  
As the final muster begins,  
There's nothing to lose,  
All have paid their dues,  
And they'll sail with shipmates again.

I've heard them say before getting underway  
That there's still some sailing to do,  
They'll say with a grin  
That their ship has come in  
And the Lord is commanding the crew.

Anonymous



**Humbled** by Bob Plante, MM, DD947, (64-66)

**“Presented to Bob Plante—In recognition of his outstanding work & dedication as Secretary / Treasurer for the USS Somers Crewmembers Association—Thanks Bob.”**



Thanks to all of you! It is prominently displayed in my office & radio shack.

**USS Somers Reunion**  
**2012 Attendees List**

**DD947**

Everett Perry  
Cliff Atkinson  
Gary Rose  
Roy Lindberg  
Bob Plante  
Harry Tooker & Teresea  
Ray Wasilewski  
Russell Hartley & Sherline  
Tom Goforth & Mary Anne & Ruth  
Jim Schmid  
Ron Richmond & Kay  
Jerry Smith & Kathryn  
Carl Trimble & Joyce  
John Buckman  
Rod Given +1  
Bill Tankersley & Brenda  
Jerry Jeffrey  
Jim Culverhouse  
Steve Lewis  
Ron Hulme  
Jim Lechner & Tess  
Harry Gall & Jan

33

**DDG34**

Mike Tull  
Jim McLeod  
Ken Delk & Teresa  
Gary Coakley  
Damon Carlton  
Willie Pina & Stella  
Lynn Hill  
Ray Fish & WenShu  
Al Munoz  
Dave Manson & Jackie  
Dennis Hurt  
Monte Breeden & Dianna  
Ron Botts  
Jim Williams & Carol

20

**DD381**

Don Conat  
Rick Conat  
Terry Conat

3 = 56



The most recent changes to the cover page of the roster

**USS SOMERS  
SHIPMATE ROSTER  
AND  
USS SOMERS CREWMEMBERS ASSOCIATION**

*Established: April 2010*

---A Non-Profit U. S. Navy Veterans Organization---

**★ Reunion Statistics - Last Page★**  
**★★ Roster Contains 228 Photos★★**  
*USS Somers (DD381) WWII*



**★★ THE ROSTER★★**

Roster Entries.....207  
 Email Addresses Only.....81  
**Total.....288**

**★★ Association Membership★★**

**2013-2014.....60**  
 2012-2013.....72  
 2011-2012.....75  
 2010-2011.....33  
 DD381.....1  
 DD947.....35  
 DDG34 .....24



**★★ ROSTER DESIGNATIONS★★**

- ☐ = Charter Members.....20
- ▶▶ = Former U.S. Naval Officers
- ◆◆◆ = Plank Owners
- (F) = Finance Committee Member
- (R) = Reunion Committee Member
- (M) = Membership Committee Member

**★ = 1 Star For Each Reunion Attended**  
**(MEMBER)** = Crewmembers Assoc. Member

**★★ COMMITTEE MEMBERS★★**

**Finance Committee:**

- Ray Wasilewski, Chairman (DD947)
- Everett Perry (DD947)
- Dennis Hurt (DDG34)

**Reunion Committee:**

- Gary Coakley, Chairman (DDG34)
- Tom Goforth (DD947)
- Roy Lindberg (DD947)

**Membership Committee:**

- Willie Pina, Chairman (DDG34)
- Russell Hartley (DD947)
- Gary Rose (DD947)

**Secretary/Treasurer: (S/T)**

- Bob Plante (DD947)

**Web Administrator: (WA)**

- Dale Drewer (DDG34) usssomers.com

Most recent changes to page 1 of the roster

1

**USS SOMERS  
SHIPMATE ROSTER  
AND  
USS SOMERS CREWMEMBERS ASSOCIATION**  
*Established: April 2010*  
**---A Non-Profit U. S. Navy Veterans Organization---**

**★★ROSTER COMPLEMENT★★**

Boatswain's Mates (BM) (1893- )	7
Boiler Tender (BT) (1948-1976)	23
-Boiler Technician (BT) (1976- )	5
Commissaryman (CS) (1948-1974) to (MS)	3
-Mess Mgmt Specialist (MS) (1974-2004)	3
Damage Controlman (DC) (1948-1972) to HT	1
-Hull Technician (HT) (1972)	2
Disbursing Clerk (DK) (1948-2005) to (PS)	2
Electrician Mate (EM) (1921- )	9
Electronics Technician (ET) (1948- )	3
Electronics Warfare Tech (EW) (1971-2003)	3
Engineman (EN) (1948- )	1
Fire Control Technician (FT) (1955-1985)	16
<i>Fireman (FN)</i>	2
Gunner's Mate (GM) (1885- )	12
Hospital Corpsman (HM) (1948- )	1
Interior Communication Electrician (IC)(1948	3
Machinist's Mate (MM) (1893- )	27
Machinery Repairman (MR) (1948- )	1
Personnelman (PN) (???? -2005 to (PS)	4
Quartermaster (QM) (????- )	5
Radarman (RD) (1943-1972) to (OS)	7
- Operations Specialist (OS) (1972-)	2
Radioman (RM) (1921-1999) to (IT)	11
<i>Seaman (SN)</i>	5
Shipfitter (SFP) (1958- )	2
Ships Serviceman (SH) (1943- )	3
Signalman (SM) (1956-2003) to (QM)	4
Sonar Technician (ST) (1964- )	10
-Sonarman (SO) (1943-1964)	1
Storekeeper (SK) (1916-2009) to (LS)	4
Torpedoman's Mate (TM) (1942-2007) to GM	1
▶▶ U.S. Naval Officers	16
Yeoman (YN) (????-????)	8

★★31 Ratings ★ 207

◆◆◆ PLANK OWNERS ◆◆◆

DD 947.....	27
DDG 34.....	18
	45

★★SHIPMATES★★

DD 381.....	6
DD 947.....	98
DDG34.....	103

★207

**★★SHIPMATES BY STATE★★**

Alabama	2
Arizona	5
Arkansas	5
California	32
Colorado	2
Connecticut	1
Florida	15
Georgia	2
Hawaii	3
Idaho	3
Illinois	6
Indiana	4
Iowa	6
Kansas	2
Kentucky	3
Louisiana	1
Maryland	2
Massachusetts	1
Michigan	10
Minnesota	3
Missouri	7
Montana	2
New Hampshire	1
New Jersey	3
New York	6
Nevada	5
North Carolina	1
Ohio	5
Oklahoma	4
Oregon	7
Pennsylvania	4
Rhode Island	1
South Carolina	3
Tennessee	1
Texas	20
Utah	0
Vermont	1
Virginia	7
Washington	5
West Virginia	1
Wisconsin	8
Wyoming	2
★★41 States	202
Australia	1
Canada	1
Guam US Territory	1
Japan	1
Thailand	1

★207

## Reunion 2014

I'll be contacting the Reunion Committee this week to have a discussion as to the location of the 2014 reunion. The current committee is comprised of the following shipmates:

Tom Goforth, BT, DD947, (63-66), Roy Lindberg, CS, DD947, (62-66) and Gary Coakley, MM, DDG34, (69-72).

As in the past, the main considerations are cost and location - keeping the location as centrally located as possible to be fair to anyone wishing to attend. We have accommodated those flying by picking them up at the airport and ensuring they are shuttled to the reunion site, if not at the hotel. We can thank Tom Goforth for providing the shuttle service with help from some of the guys to avoid airport parking fees.

Consideration should also be directed toward family attractions and/or theme parks, that would be of interest to the majority. In these cases, the reunion and a family vacation would justify increased cost.

Although our previous reunions have been in April, reconsideration would be warranted based on the location selected, more appropriately in June or July.

As we decide, keep in mind we're 12 months away at best and reservations must be on our minds. We'll need a good count of those planning to attend. Discounts are predicated on number of room reservations and number of attendees.

Reunions involve quite a bit of planning. In a best case scenario, we should have at least 2 or possibly 3 choices to present. The final decision based on overall cost to all concerned.

If any of you have any suggestions or recommendations that would be in the best interest of all concerned, please send me an email and I'll forward it to the Reunion Committee.

I look forward to seeing many of you in 2014, and assure you I will do everything I can for a cost effective, safe, fun-filled reunion that you'll be happy to share with family and friends.

## Tips to Consider When Traveling:

1. Distance and fuel cost. Check-in at most hotels is around 3:00 p.m. Plan your departure to arrive before nightfall. Fuel costs vary. Check the internet for mileage and fuel costs.
2. Meals. Pack a lunch or 2. Stop frequently to rest and stretch. Fatigue is your worst enemy.
3. Vehicles: Take the time to conduct a thorough check of brake fluid, power steering fluid, engine oil and antifreeze. Check tire pressure for optimum gas mileage and make sure your spare tire is also good. Longer trips without regular stops cause engines to run hotter - be mindful of your temperature and oil gauges,
4. Road Service & Discount Cards. Have your AAA card and emergency number, AARP card for senior discounts and rental car discounts or Good Sam card for the travel trailers & motorhomes.
5. Fuel mileage. Use cruise control if you have it. Maintain a reasonable speed within the limit to attain the best gas mileage.
6. New Law in many States require motorists to change lanes for any police, fire or emergency vehicles pulled over in the breakdown lanes. Use safe lane change procedures. Avoid a costly speeding or traffic ticket.
7. Weather is unpredictable. Summer rains cause oil on the surface of roads to make them more slippery. Down pouring rain may cause your vehicle to "plane" or ride on the water surface, causing you to lose control of your vehicle. Slow down or pull over and wait for it to pass.
8. GPS units are not always perfect. Road closures and detours require your attention. If in doubt, pull over and get your bearings.
9. If you will be delayed, when time permits, call the hotel to inform them to avoid losing your reservation.
10. Drive safe. Don't be in a hurry. We'll wait for you. Better late than NEVER!

**Where Did They Travel From:**

If you're wondering where the attendees from the 2012 reunion came from, here's the breakdown:

Arkansas	4
California	3
Colorado	2
Idaho	1
Iowa	4
Kentucky	1
Michigan	2
Minnesota	2
Missouri	1
New York	2
Ohio	2
Oklahoma	2
Oregon	2
Pennsylvania	1
Texas	6
Virginia	1
<u>Wisconsin</u>	<u>2</u>
17 States	37 Shipmates

19 Family & Friends

**Total: 56**

**Used Airlines - 2**

**Drove - 35**



**Perfect:** from Jim Schmid, BT, DD947, (60-64)

An elderly man was stopped by police around 2:00 a.m. and was asked where he was going at this time of night.



The man replied, "I'm on my way to a lecture about alcohol abuse and the effects it has on the human body, as well as smoking and staying out late."

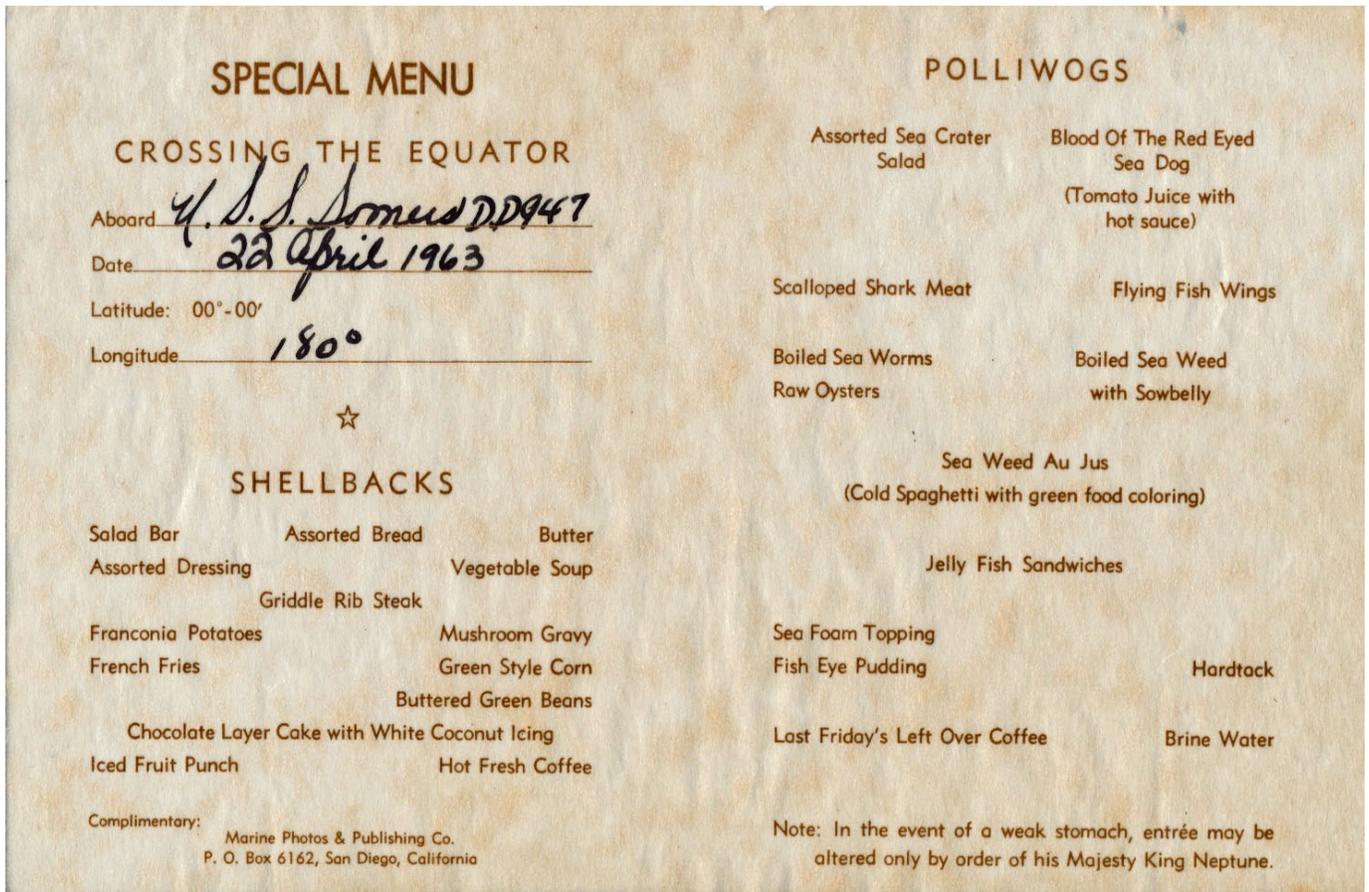
The officer then asked, "Really, who's giving that lecture at this time of night?"

The man replied, " That would be my wife."

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 Bob Plante, Mary Anne Goforth & Tom Goforth



**Special Menu Crossing the Equator 1963: The menu isn't any better today**



**USS Somers Crewmembers Association  
Navy Blue Polo Shirts & Tee Shirts:**

**Small to Extra Large: \$28.68**

**Email me to place your order**

**Small to Extra Large: \$19.21**



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(Ran out of things to say)

**Midway Island - 1965**

