

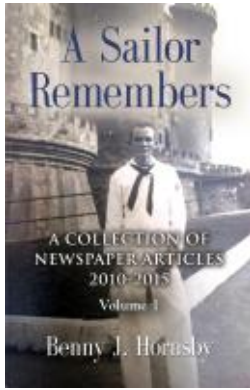


# A Sailor Remembers

A COLLECTION OF  
NEWSPAPER ARTICLES  
2010-2015

Volume 1

Benny J. Hornsby



*"A Sailor Remembers" is a collection of newspaper articles that appeared monthly in the Hattiesburg American (MS) newspaper during 2010-2015. They were written by Benny J. Hornsby, a retired naval officer and college professor who served 20 years at sea and who has traveled to over 100 foreign countries. The author appeals to a wide range of individuals who are interested in travel, history, and military affairs.*

# **A Sailor Remembers**

**Order the complete book from**

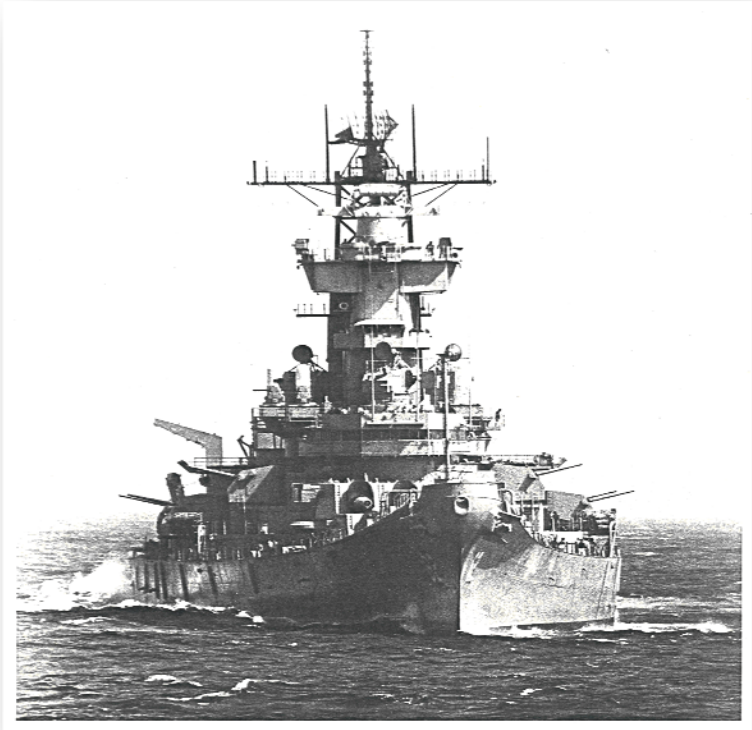
**[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)**

**<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/8695.html?s=pdf>**

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**

**Enjoy your free excerpt below!**

# A Sailor Remembers



**Benny J. Hornsby**

Copyright © 2016 Benny J. Hornsby

ISBN: 978-1-63491-512-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016910783

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Bradenton, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

BookLocker.com, Inc.  
2016

First Edition

Scripture taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

## Naval Words and Terms Are Common

It was a dark, rainy night, and I was killing time in the wardroom, waiting on midrats, absent-mindedly watching the evening movie, before I took the JOOD midwatch on the bridge. I dreaded it, because the OOD was a screamer, and we were off the mouth of the Tagus River, the Rio Tejo, where the Portuguese fishing boats, probably with their sea anchors out and crews asleep, painted almost solid on the surface search radar.

To the uninitiated, the preceding sentence might seem, at best, unclear. A naval cognoscenti, however, would know that I was nervously waiting around for the abbreviated midnight meal to be served before I took the 12 to 4 A.M. Junior Officer of the Deck watch in the ship's pilothouse. They would also know that the Officer of the Deck often lost his temper under duress, and that it was going to be a long night; underway from Lisbon, but now creeping through the foggy darkness, trying not to hit any of the tiny, ubiquitous fishing boats that had the right of way under maritime law.

They would also know that there would be no English on any of the bridge radio circuits, and that JOOD is one of those thankless jobs where you have 100 ways to go down in flames with all the responsibility and no power. We had gotten underway from Lisbon that afternoon, slipping downriver, past the outstretched arms of the statue of Cristo Rei, similar to

Christ of the Andes in Rio de Janeiro, except Christ the Redeemer stands atop a building, and then passing the new Padrao Dos Descobrimientos, or Monument to the Discoveries, commemorating the exploits of Vasco de Gama, Ferdinand Magellan, and Prince Henry the Navigator back in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Vasco de Gama was the first early modern European to reach India by sea (1498). Magellan, who was Portuguese, actually left from Spain on his voyage to the Spice Islands which turned out to be the first circumnavigation of the globe, some 37,560 miles. He had five ships and 237 men; sadly, only one ship and 18 crew members made it back three years later, not including Magellan. He had the misfortune to be killed in 1521 on the Island of Cebu, in the Philippines, by King Lapulu, an indigenous chieftain, over a minor misunderstanding. He did live to name the Pacific Ocean (Peaceful Sea). Revered today in the PI (Philippine Islands) as a national hero, Lapulu is also the name of a large fish of the grouper family that is served as a delicacy in Filipino restaurants.

My wife and mother in law once visited me in Subic Bay and we rode the “Philippine Rabbit,” a local bus line, up to Manila for dinner. I was a little worried during that trip because there had been a resurgence of HUK (Hukbalahap) communist guerrilla activity around Subic, and a U.S. naval officer had been murdered out in the ville. We went to a nice restaurant on Roxas Avenue, along the seashore, not far from the American Embassy. When the waiter took our order, trying to impress my mother in law, who never liked me, I ordered three lapulu. The waiter looked at me quizzically, shrugged, and soon showed up with three gigantic fish, each one covering a very large

platter. One would have been sufficient for three people. Needless to say, my mother in law was not impressed. Obviously, your choice of words is very important.

Roxas Avenue, formerly Dewey Avenue, as in Admiral George Dewey of Spanish-American War fame, is a beautiful, wide esplanade that reminds you of the Malecon in Havana. It was built to connect Manila with the old U.S. Navy Yard at Cavite, which was closed down after World War II and replaced by Naval Station, Subic Bay, at Olongapo. Sailors and Marines of a certain vintage remember Subic as the jumping off place for the Heart of Darkness that was Vietnam. Manuel Roxas, the first president of the PI after the Second World War was a Japanese collaborator, but General Douglas McArthur saw him as the lesser of several evils.

Every profession has its “insider” language or jargon that one has to quickly learn to survive, and the Navy is worse than most. In fact due to its ancient traditions, it possibly has more idioms or code words than most professions. Such constructions are evident in a ship’s administrative organization chart. The CO or Commanding Officer is known as the “Old Man,” but never to his face. In these days of mixed gender crews, I doubt anyone would refer to a female commanding officer as the “Old Woman.” Well, maybe once. The Executive Officer, who is the factotum of the CO, is known simply as the XO. The Operations Officer, who brings a sense of strategic “nous” to the wardroom, is known as OPS. The Weapons Officer is known as WEPS, or if he is a “Mustang,” or someone who has come up through the ranks, he might be known respectfully as the “Gunner.” The Chief Engineer is known as the CHENG, which is pronounced

CHANG. The Supply Officer is known as the CHOP, perhaps because he supplies the pork chops. A “chop,” of Chinese origin, is also the name of a signature a supplicant must obtain on a “chit” (Hindu origin) or paper request for something as it makes its way up the chain of command. Both chop and chit are words that date back to the old U.S. Asiatic Squadron of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. If the ship is large enough to have a medical officer embarked, he is, of course, known as BONES.

When I was in enlisted boot camp in San Diego, a new friend of mine bolted out of marching formation and punched out a mouthy sailor who had the temerity to call us a bunch of “boots.” I was new to the game and thought that boots were what we wore on our feet, not realizing it was a term of derision. Later when I was in Officer Candidate School at Newport, Rhode Island, every Saturday morning we would anxiously gather around the squad bay bulletin board when they posted the weekly “QUM,” or everyone’s weekly cumulative academic average, which determined whether you got liberty in town or study hall for the weekend.

Civilian life is also replete with codified language, and you don’t have to belong to the Masonic Order, Skull and Bones, or the Illuminati to experience it. That night in the wardroom, as I watched the credits roll at the end of the evening movie, I was wondering just exactly what was a “gaffer,” a “key grip,” and a “best boy.” When I got out of the Navy, I taught history and drove a school bus at Sumrall High School for five years. One day, a fellow bus driver advised me that I had failed to turn on my bus “CLEPS,” or the rotating light atop the bus. A friend of mine went to the doctor and got “scoped” last week; my granddaughter, a freshman at



Mississippi State, speaks fondly of her “big” who is her sorority mentor; a lawyer friend probably takes on too many “pro bono” or free cases for his own good; If I got into legal trouble, I might go “pro se,” or represent myself in court, which would be a bad idea. I’d probably plead “no lo contender,” or no contest to the charge, but not admitting guilt; those living unofficially in the United States call themselves “sin papeles,” or without papers. You would think that “in camera” means “out in the open;” in fact, it means “in private.” Sometimes it’s a matter of attitude. My pastor tells the story of a young man who was sent to a far country to sell shoes. Failing miserably, he reported back to his superior that it was hopeless: “No one here WEARS shoes.” Another young man was sent out, and he reported back excitedly: “Send all the shoes you have; everyone here NEEDS shoes!” It’s a wonder we can communicate at all.

One of the most interesting aspects of the unique talk of sailors is the large number of nautical idioms that have been borrowed by landsmen with a metaphorical significance now understood by all. While only a sailor would use “Big Chicken Dinner” to refer to a bad conduct discharge; or “scuttlebutt” to describe a water cooler; or “lucky bag” for a repository of lost articles; or “shipping over” to describe a reenlistment; or “sally ship” to describe the recent phenomenon of immigrants in the Mediterranean rushing to one side of their fragile boat and capsizing it, almost everyone understands “feeling blue” (sailing ships flew a blue flag returning from a cruise on which someone died); “lend a hand” (giving assistance in rowing a boat); “to be above board” (to be visibly honest – pirates hid

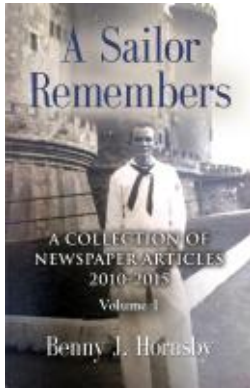
behind the bulwarks or ship's walls); and "by and large" (sailing close-hauled and running free and large in the wind).

Not knowing the meaning of words got Magellan killed and can still get you into trouble. Mark Twain said that "The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter. 'Tis the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning." But, as she said to me when I left Marseilles: "Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose." The more things change, the more they stay the same.

*A Sailor Remembers*



*Child Watches Father's Ship Leave Port*



*"A Sailor Remembers" is a collection of newspaper articles that appeared monthly in the Hattiesburg American (MS) newspaper during 2010-2015. They were written by Benny J. Hornsby, a retired naval officer and college professor who served 20 years at sea and who has traveled to over 100 foreign countries. The author appeals to a wide range of individuals who are interested in travel, history, and military affairs.*

# **A Sailor Remembers**

**Order the complete book from**

**[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)**

**<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/8695.html?s=pdf>**

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**