FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU *FUBAR*

Situation Normal All F***ed Up

SNAFU

SAILOR, AIRMAN, AND SOLDIER SLANG OF WORLD WAR II

GORDON L. ROTTMAN

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author makes no apologies for the language used in this book – nothing is gained by sugar-coating the language of soldiers, sailors, and airmen. Profanities are fully spelled out, as are numerous words that are racially or sexually derogatory by today's standards. A dictionary such as this, striving to provide an accurate record of how soldiers, sailors, and airmen really talked and thought, is no place for hollow "political correctness." It would paint an unrealistic picture of the realities of the soldier's, sailor's, or airman's life.

Since slang is informal, exact pronunciation can vary, as can spelling. In written correspondence it was common for spelling to vary according to an individual's interpretation. There was no dictionary for the soldier, sailor, or airman to consult. An effort has been made not just simply to translate the term or phrase, but to provide some insight into where it came from and how it was used. No doubt some definitions may differ from expectations or perceptions. The author can only say that meanings and connotations vary and change, and reasonable efforts have been made to verify definitions and meanings. This book's predecessor, *FUBAR: Soldier's Slang of World War II*, covered only soldier slang, whereas while this book provides additional soldier slang it focuses on naval and air force slang.

INTRODUCTION

During World War II, slang was just as much part of the serviceman's vocabulary as the seemingly endless array of official formal terms for arms, equipment, maneuvering, fortifications, and so on. Slang and jargon were, of course, not as precise in definition as formal military and naval terms, but were as important to the troops, sailors, and airmen.

The armies, the ground combat forces, were the predominate forces in regards to manpower and their role in the war. No less important, however, were the navies and the comparatively new air forces. Regardless of much different roles, armament, and operating environments, soldiers, seamen, and airmen all bestowed words and phrases on many of the same things, be it their leaders, enemies, allies, weapons, equipment, food and drink, entertainment, illnesses, or just about anything else.

The difference between sailor slang and nautical terminology may seem blurry to landlubbers, but there is a distinct difference, no matter how alien or outlandish (no pun intended) a formal nautical term may sound. Simply put, terms describing ships' features, components, spaces, activities, actions, directions, etc., are not "slang," but recognized terminology with distinct definitions. Many date back to the 17th and 18th centuries when sail-driven wooden ships cut the waves, but are still applicable to ships of steel driven by diesel and steam turbines.

A conversation set in 1800 between Dr. Stephen Maturin, the freshly alighted ship's surgeon aboard HMS *Sophie*, and a midshipman giving him the tour of the ship, or more specifically the brig, demonstrates Dr. Maturin's unfamiliarity with things

nautical. However, he wisely suspected that his lack of knowledge would not do in the new world he was entering.

> Maturin: "You could not explain this maze of ropes and wood and canvas without using sea-terms, I suppose. No it would not be possible."
> Midshipman: "Using no sea-terms? I should be puzzled to do that, sir, but I will try, if you wish it."
> Maturin: "No, for it is by those names alone that they are known."*

The point is that there are no proper land terms for the parts of a ship. The bow, stern, deck, hatches, bulkheads, overheads, heads, and port and starboard may be called the front, rear, floor, doors, walls, ceilings, latrines, and left and right, but that would simply not be correct.

The air arms were new to the science of arms, having emerged in World War I and evolved into separate braches of service or at least semi-autonomous branches. They, therefore, borrowed from both military and naval slang – they too often used port and starboard. It was not uncommon for slang to crossover from one service to another. This was especially true between the armies and air forces, but also from navy to army, and so on. Naval air arms and the primary air force also used similar slang, but each also had their own unique jargon. A fair amount of slang derived from local words. Many of these terms were not recorded as they only remained in use while the relevant force was in the area of operations. However, some did remain in general use. It was not uncommon for terms to be used only in specific theaters, such as the Pacific and the Mediterranean.

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* *Patrick O'Brian,* Master and Commander, *Lippincott, 1969.*

Lastly, it must be mentioned that conflicts in spelling and pronunciation are common. The very nature of slang precludes any "correct" spelling, pronunciation or, in some cases, meaning and usage. It was not uncommon for even the meaning and context of some terms to change, either over time or in different regions or units.

If one wishes to understand the lives of solders, seamen, and airmen in World War II, a good start would be a study of their slang.

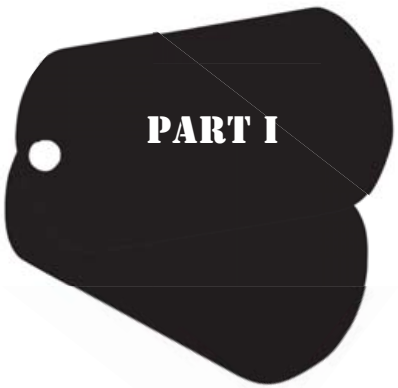
PHONETIC ALPHABETS

Phonetic alphabets substitute words for letters so that spelt-out letters are clearly understood over poor connections and static on radios and telephones. The selected words do not sound like any other, as some letters do – B, C, D, E, G, and P (and Z for the Americans), for example. In this book, the headings for each letter's section provide the country's phonetic alphabet.

The British Commonwealth armed forces initially used their own system until 1943 when the US International Code Alphabet was adopted to standardize communications during combined operations. The old British system is used in Part II. When speaking an individual letter over wireless/telephone it would normally be said as "G for George," for example.

The American phonetic alphabet traces its origin to the International Code of Signals, which was adopted in 1897 as a means of communicating by flag, semaphore, and light. Problems during World War I led to refinements of the system at the 1927 International Radiotelegraph Conference in Washington DC. The new version was adopted in London in 1928. Originally, only certain letters were identified by words to differentiate them from similar sounding ones. It was not until 1938 that all letters were assigned a word. The Flag and International Code Alphabet was slightly modified in early 1941 by the replacement of certain words; the old words are shown in parentheses. In typed message transcription the phonetic words were usually upper case. This system was used until March 1, 1956 when the NATO Phonetic Alphabet was adopted.

The German phonetic alphabet used both male and female first names. The parenthesized words heading the letter sections in Part III are alternatives. Umlauts (ä, ö, ü) are long letters. When written in English they may be expressed as "ae," "oe," and "ue" respectively. They are sometimes shown in English with the "e" in parentheses, for example Cäsar may be shown as "Ca(e)sar" although this is an unnecessarily burdensome practice. The German character 'ß' (eszett – pronounced 'ess-zett') signifies a double "s" and is written in English as "ss." In 1996 it was officially declared acceptable to use "ss" in lieu of the eszett in most instances. The cases in which the eszett is still used are long vowels and diphthongs. Phonetically it was transmitted as Siegfried-Siegfried. The Germans designated some units with Roman numbers: battalions organic to regiments, brigades organic to divisions, corps, and some other commands. When transmitting Roman numbers by radio or telephone the numbers were spoken as Arabic numbers, but preceded by the word römisch (Roman), for example, römisch ein zwei Armeekorps (Roman One-Two Army Corps). Individual guns within artillery batteries were typically designated using the phonetic system Anton, Bertha, Cäsar, and Dora, as four guns were assigned to most types of batteries.



AMERICAN SLANG

BACKGROUND

US Navy slang terms were quite colorful and greatly influenced by words picked up in foreign ports of call, especially China where the Navy had been deployed long before World War II. Navy jargon retained many traditional terms and phrases through the war, but new phrases were also added as new types of vessels and weapons systems appeared. The US Coast Guard, which was placed under the control of the Navy during the war, used much of the same jargon.

A — Afirm (Able)

admiral's mate — An egotistical sailor with a high opinion of his own worth.

admiral's watch — 1) A good sleep.
2) To go aft or to the rear.

All hands — Everyone. "All hanje" was Pidgin Chinese and adopted by sailors.

Alligators — 1) The Navy Amphibious Force. Like an alligator it operated on land and at sea, and its members were tough and dangerous. Also "'gators."
2) The Landing Vehicle, Tracked (1) – LVT(1). It was also known as "Large Vulnerable Target." "Alligator" was also often used to describe later LVTs (2), (3), and (4).

anchorman — A sailor receiving the lowest grades in qualification courses. One who holds the others back.

Arctic boat — A refrigerated cargo ship. Also "reefer."

ash can — Depth charge. These were about the size and shape of a small garbage can.

Asiatic — A sailor who had served for a long time in China – an "Old China Hand." "Gone Asiatic," meant to

	have gone native. It was not uncommon for some sailors to retire there. The Philippines was another popular retirement "port" for sailors.
A to N	A qualification study book for enlisted men.

B Baker

baffle painting	Any camouflage scheme painted on a ship to reduce its visibility and/or mislead the enemy about its type, size, speed, etc. Not to be confused with the WWI "dazzle camouflage" of vivid geometric patterns.
BAM 30	Browning Aircraft Machine gun .30-caliber. The Browning .30-cal AN-M2 aircraft machine gun.
bandstand	The antiaircraft gun platforms on submarine conning towers, usually fore and aft mounting 20mm and 40mm guns. Also "cigarette deck." The latter derived from designated smoking decks aboard ocean liners.
bare navy	When only canned foods were available aboard ship as the fresh foods had been consumed.
barge	A large motor launch reserved for flag officers (admirals).
barnacle	A person you just can't lose, like a barnacle affixed to a ship's hull.
bazooka boat	Landing Craft, Infantry (Rocket) (LCI(R)) and Landing Ship, Medium (Rocket) (LSM(R)) fire support gunboats. Also "Whoofus."
Beach, the	Land, shore. "To be beached" or "to beach" meant to go ashore. "To be beached" also meant to be assigned shore duty. It also applied to a sailor awaiting assignment between ships or one on shore leave.

bear a hand Give us some help here.

beating gums Idle talk and rumors, often around the "jo pot" (coffee pot) or "scuttlebutt" (water fountain). The latter was the source for another term for rumors – "scuttlebutt."

beef boat A supply ship promising frozen beef and other meats.

bell tapper 1) A sailor slow in manning his action station. 2) The sailor ringing the bell every half hour to signal the time and watch changes.

bilge crawling Inspecting the bilge where oil collected with foul water. Also any dirty work.

bilge rats Engine room crew. Also known as the "black gang."

Bilgewater! Nonsense. Akin to saying "Bullshit!"

binnacle list The daily sick roster. The binnacle housed a compass beside the ship's wheel. A corpsman placed the sick list on the binnacle each morning for the captain to review.

black gang The engine room crew, originally because of coal dust, then because of oil.

blow A storm. "We're in for a good [meaning bad] blow."

blue room Brig cells. The walls were painted pale blue to give a calming effect.

Blue Water Navy The Fleet, the big ships – battleships, aircraft carriers, and cruisers. Also "the Big Navy."

bluejacket Enlisted sailors below the rank of chief petty officer, because of their blue jackets.

Blues The "blue" winter uniform worn by officers and chief warrant officers. Enlisted men had blues too consisting of a jumper and bell-bottom trousers. The color navy blue is actually black. The reason

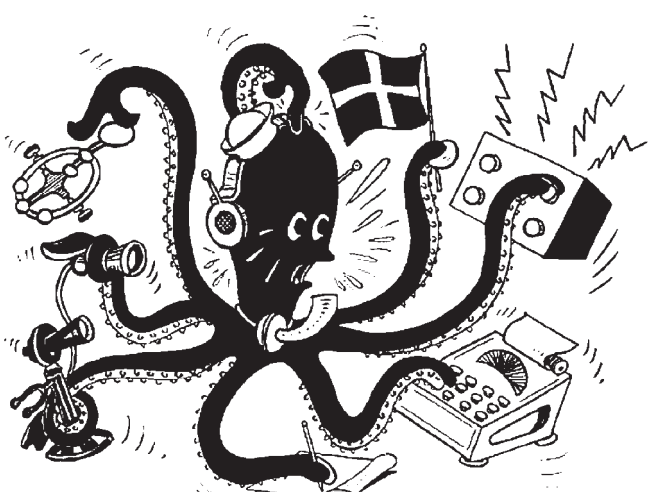
for this is that long ago blue uniform dyes faded so the "blues" were made darker to combat fading and ended up being black, as was first practiced by the Royal Navy.

boarders Enemy aircraft approaching a ship formation.

Boats The bos'n's mate. The boatswain is pronounced "bos'n."

bone in her teeth The white bow wave of a ship travelling at speed.

bosun The boatswain. Bosuns were originally seamen responsible for a sailing ship's three boats, the boat (the captain's gig), cock boat (ship's tender), and the smallest, the skiff. They were known respectively as the boatswain, cockswain, and skiffswain with the first being retained into the modern era. "Swain" meant "keeper."



The "bridge gang," especially the signalmen, were kept busy on all watches. (Author's Collection)

brass work Any brass fittings, which needed constant polishing. Also "bright work."

breakout To take out something be it change in a pocket, a wallet, shaving gear from a sea bag, weapons from the arms locker, etc.

bridge gang Sailor assigned to the bridge, including the watch officer, helmsman, signalmen, radar operators, and others.

brig bait The conversion of an underaged virgin.

brig-timer A sailor doing time in the brig.

broken stripper A warrant officer because of the gold strip "broken" by light blue segments on their cuffs and shoulder straps. On the blue uniform the stripes appeared "broken."

Brown Water Navy The pre-war patrols on Chinese rivers, the Yangtze Patrol.

Brushmaster Landing Vehicle Tracked (3) – LVT(3). Also "Beach Master." This became the standard LVT after the war replacing the LVT(1), (2), and (4).

Bugs The bugler. It was pronounced "byoogs."

bumboat Boats operated by entrepreneurial locals in ports who sold items to sailors aboard ships. A floating ships' store.

C Charlie

called before the mast Ordered to report to the captain for "captain's mast," a dialogue about indiscretions, errors in judgment, and mistakes, most likely the sailor's and not the captain's.

canteen The ship's store selling toiletries, cigarettes, shoe polish, snacks and candy ("poggy bait"), and other

	personal goods. It was also found on naval bases. Also "gedunk" or "geedunk bar."
captain of the head	The sailor assigned to clean up the wardroom.
captain of the hold	The sailor assigned to clean up the hold once it was emptied of cargo.
captain's writer	The yeoman assigned as the captain's secretary.
CBDR	A warning to a sailor that he was about to run into trouble. Constant Bearing and Decreasing Range (CBDR) was used to indicate that a contact (another ship) was on a collision course with your ship.
Chicago piano	The 1.1in (28mm) Mk I and Mk II quad antiaircraft guns used from 1936 until they were replaced by twin and quad 40mm guns, beginning in 1942. The complex guns were highly prone to malfunction.
Chips	Nickname for the carpenter's mate. Also "Nails."
cigar box fleet	Amphibious landing craft as they looked like small, open-topped boxes adrift.
chop-chop	Hurry up, make it fast. The term was brought back from China.
clackers	Coins, change.
clay pigeons	Catapult spotter aircraft launched from battleships and cruisers. They were launched like clay pigeons from a trap and then shot at by the enemy.
clothes stops	Lengths of 12in cord used to tie clothes to clothes lines. Clothes pins would not hold clothing on a line in high winds.
coal heaver	Stoker.
cockswain	A boatswain's mate 3rd class. It was an old term remaining in unofficial use.

collision mats Pancakes and waffles. The term referred to the heavy rope mats slung over the sides to prevent damage to the ship when docking.

combat loaded Assault transports and assault troop transports loaded with the equipment and material needed to support amphibious assaults. The essential equipment was loaded above less critical items allowing it to be unloaded first and sent ashore.

Combustible, Vulnerable, and Expendable The description of escort aircraft carriers (CVE). Also "baby flattops." These were originally designated as aircraft escort vessels (AVG) until August 1942 when they were redesignated as auxiliary aircraft carriers (ACV) then aircraft carrier, escort (CVE) in July 1943. See "jeep carrier."

conn The conning station from where the ship was steered and otherwise controlled. Most ships had an auxiliary conn in the event of battle damage to the conn. This was typically below decks and near the stern. When it was used an above deck observer was required to telephone or speaker tube directions.

cow grease Butter or, more commonly, margarine. Canned issue margarine was white and contained a packet of yellow powder to be mixed into it so it would appear more like butter. Few cooks bothered with this.

crab, to To complain. The term was probably derived from "crabby."

CRES shit-kicker A movie featuring knights in shining armor and their horses. CRES referred to corrosion resistant steel.* Shit-kicker was a Western movie.

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* *CRES was widely used to fabricate lockers, galley counters and cabinets, sinks, toilets, etc.*

cross my bow To meet an acquaintance. "You'll never guess who crossed my bow."

cumshaw A gift of Navy property, that is, stolen from ship's stores. It also referred to a bribe in the form of a tip. The term was derived from the Chinese for grateful appreciation.

D Dog

day cabin A small cabin near the bridge or conn occupied by the off-duty captain (they were never truly "off duty") while at sea rather than using his larger regular cabin.

day the eagle screams, the Payday.

deck apes Deck crew. Also "topside sailors," "deck force," "deckhands," or "right arm rate."

deep six To discard something overboard. The "six" referred to six fathoms (36ft), because in shallower water it would be easy to retrieve discarded objects. "Deep six" is derived from the leadsman call of "By the deep six," when casting the sounding lead. Of things thrown overboard, jetsam were jettisoned objects that sank and flotsam were items that remained afloat.

destroyer escort While widely known by this designation, DEs were officially designated as "escort vessels." DE was said to mean "destroyer, expendable" as they were lower costing than "real" destroyers.

destroyer transports Old destroyers (see "flush-decker") and destroyer escorts converted to light transports, more commonly known as "destroyer transports" or "high-speed transports." They usually carried

	raiders, beach reconnaissance units, and underwater demolition teams.
district craft	Small auxiliary and service craft assigned to navy yards, which were under the command of the various naval districts.
ditty box	A small wooden box in which a sailor kept his possessions.
Dixie cup cap	The traditional white sailor's cap worn since 1886. It was often shaped to give a personal touch. Also "cracker jack cap."
Dobell's gargle	Standard prescribed medication for sore throats, which was also used to treat influenza.
doghouse	A covered hatch on a weather deck with a protective housing. It looked similar to a modern "porta-potty."
dogs	Locking levers on watertight doors and hatches.
Dolphins	The Submariners Warfare Insignia. It was a qualification badge depicting a bow-on submarine flanked by dolphins that was either a gold-colored metal worn on the left breast (officers) or embroidered in white or blue on the lower right sleeve (enlisted). Also "Fish." It required an extensive qualification course ("Quals"). Qualifications were recorded in a "Quals Card" and approved by a "Quals Board." An unqualified individual was "Non-Quals" or a "nub," a non-useful body."
Donald Duck cap	The navy blue flat cap worn with the winter uniform since 1852. Prior to the war these caps bore ribbons displaying the ship, organization, or installation name. In 1941 they were replaced by "U.S. Navy," "U.S. Naval Reserve," or "U.S. Coast

	Guard" ribbons due to the frequent reassignment of personal and for security reasons.
dough-puncher	The baker. Also "dough-head."
He draws a lot of water	A sailor with a big ego, self-important.
dream sack	A sailor's hammock or bunk.
Dungeon, the	The cramped basement room in the Navy Yard, Pearl Harbor, Ohau, office for "Station Hypo," the code-breaking operation – Fleet Radio Unit, Pacific (FRUPAC). Hypo was formerly the phonetic letter for "H" representing Hawaii.

E Easy

Eagle boat	200ft antisubmarine patrol craft built during 1918–19. A few were used during WWII, mainly as training vessels. "Eagle boat" was coined in a newspaper article calling for "… an eagle to scour the seas and pounce upon and destroy every German submarine."
Elsie Item	As it sounds, Landing Craft, Infantry (LCI). Also known as a "floating bedpan" because of its boxy shape and perhaps because of the close troop quarters and limited toilet facilities.
Ernie	Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King (1878–1956), Commander-in Chief, US Fleet. Also "Rey."
Eureka boat	A Landing Craft, Personnel (Large) (LCP(L)). An early troop assault boat that lacked a bow ramp. "Eureka" was the Higgins model name. Also "U-boat" (derived from "Eureka") and the British called it an "R-boat" for raiding boat.

F Fox

feather merchant 1) A service person who rarely exhibited effort and/or responsibility and let others do all the work; a loafer, slacker, malingerer.
2) A service member assigned to a comfortable job when compared to others in his unit.
3) Civilian bureaucrats employed by the armed forces.
4) An unkind term for a Navy Reservist. Also "a Reverse."
Used by the Navy and Marines and other services as well.

feeder To say a ship was a "feeder" meant it had a good mess and good cooks.

"I felt like a dog on its hind legs" A sailor feeling out of place, like a whore in a church.

field day A day scheduled for cleaning and polishing. An odd-sounding term for a naval event.

Fire and fall back State your cases or complaint and be brief about it. It referred to a landing force tactic used when outnumbered.

First Luff The ship's 1st lieutenant (not a rank, but an appointment), the officer in command of the deck department.

fish A torpedo. Also "torp." Most torpedoes were 21in, but late in the war 22.5in torpedoes were introduced for deck launchers. 18in torpedoes were largely obsolete.

five for sixer, a A sailor loan shark. He'd loan five bucks and receive six back on payday.

flag people Staff officers.

Flags The signal quartermaster responsible for the flag locker and the hoisting of signal flags as well as other bridge signal means such as the blinker light. Signalmen wore crossed signal flags with their chevrons.

flattop An aircraft carrier: fleet aircraft carrier (CV), large aircraft carrier (CVB), escort aircraft carrier (CVE), and light aircraft carrier (CVL). Also "covered wagon" or "bird boat."

fleet boats The large, long-range, 1,500-plus-ton Gato-, Balao-, and Tench-class submarines first built in 1941 and then throughout the war.

fleet nickname A ship's nickname, which was often a word play on its name or some attribute or failing.

fleet sailors Sailors assigned to the Fleet, those serving aboard combatants.

floating coffin A ship or boat in poor condition.

flush-decker Destroyers built before 1922 with low flush decks. As well as transferring a number to the RN and other navies, the USN converted many to destroyer transports (APD), fast seaplane tenders (AVD), and fast minelayers (DM). See "four-stacker."

flycatchers These were patrol craft and other vessels deployed around fleet anchorages at night off islands under assault. They protected against suicide boats, mini-submarines, and combat swimmers. Flycatcher patrols employed patrol craft, submarine chasers, and landing craft, infantry (LCI), including rocket-firing support craft.

Flying Zippo The Japanese Navy's Mitsubishi G4M ("Betty" – Allied codename) twin-engine bomber due to its propensity to catch fire because of a lack of

self-sealing fuel tanks. Also "one-shot lighter" and "flying cigar" due to its shape – both ends of the fuselage were blunt. The Japanese used similar nicknames: "Type One Lighter," "Flying Lighter," or "*Hamaki*" (Cigar).

four-stacker Caldwell-, Wicks-, and Clemson-class destroyers built between 1917 and 1920 because of their four smokes stacks. Fifty were transferred to the RN, RCN, and other navies in 1940 as Town-class destroyers. Also "four-piper."

four-striper A captain with four gold rank stripes on his cuffs.

freezer box Refrigerated lockers or compartments for meat and fresh vegetables and fruit.

frogmen Combat swimmers in 100-man underwater demolition teams (UDT). They conducted beach and approach reconnaissance and destroyed underwater obstacles with demolitions. They did not use scuba-type gear.

G George

gig Smaller than a longboat, this was a ship captain's "limousine."

goat locker The chief petty officers' berthing compartment, where the "old goats" rested.

going dogging In search of wine, women, and song, not necessarily in that order.

gold braid Officers. "The skipper wore gold braid on his panamas" meant he was overly rank conscious. See "scrambled eggs."

grass Lettuce, asparagus, and any other green vegetables.

grease pot A demeaning term for a cook.

GO FIND A...

Recruits or gullible men newly assigned to a ship were frequently told to go find some nonsensical or nonexistent item or piece of equipment. They were usually told to ask a specific individual, undoubtedly a crusty old petty officer with little sense of humor who would usually go along with the gag. The Army, Marines, and Air Force had their own versions:

Hammock ladder – essential for climbing into a swaying hammock.
Hundred feet of shore line – or any other quantity for that matter.
Bulkhead remover – with no clear description of what it looked like.
Crow's nest – it might be occupied by a lookout.
BT punch – the sailor would be sent to a boiler tech (BT) who would punch him on the arm. Along the same lines be may be sent to the bosun's locker for a bosun's punch. (It would hurt too.)
Bucket of steam from the boiler room – used for cleaning greasy parts.
Smoke preventer – when asking officers and petty officers where one could be found, the searching sailor would eventually realize that there may not be any such item.
Can of holdback grease from supply – no one had any idea what it held back.
Report to the bridge to grease the relative bearing – take a rag to clean your hands and speak properly to the officer on watch.
Mail buoy – seamen on their first cruise were told to spend the night writing letters so they could be posted to the mail buoy the ship would pass the next day, even if they were mid-Atlantic. They also could be set on mail buoy watch with instructions to call the bridge and report to the skipper when it was spotted.
Channel fever shots – a new sailor might be sent to the sickbay for these.

GroPac Pronounced "grow pack." Acronym for Group Pacific, a Navy advance base organization designed to operate seaports on remote islands.

gull A girl who had lost her amateur status, a hooker.

Gun Club Officers who were advocates of the battleship and thought that opposing fleets should slug it out at gun range. They generally discountedthe impact of aviation on naval warfare.

Guns A gunner's mate.

H How

handy billy A portable, gas powered, water pump.

Here comes the brass *or* rank Officer inbound. Act busy.

Higgins boat 1) One of several types of 36ft landing craft: Landing Craft, Personnel (Ramp) (LCP(R)),Vehicle (LCV), andVehicle or Personnel (LCVP). The LCVP was also known as "Papa boat." Higgins Industries built larger landing craft, but it was the smaller ramped craft that were known as "Higgins." Collectively, they were often referred to as "assault boats."
2) Higgins-built patrol torpedo boats (PT).

Home Island Waters The seas around the Japanese Home Islands of Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu. Also "Imperial Waters."

honey barge Barges for carrying human waste, which was collected for fertilizer in Asiatic ports.

Hooligan navy The US Coast Guard (USCG).* An unflattering

* *The US Coast Guard was assigned to the Treasury Department in peacetime, but was made subordinate to the Navy Department from November 1, 1941 to January 1, 1946.*

name bestowed by the "Big Navy" on what they considered to be a minor and undisciplined naval service. Also "corsair fleet" and "US Revenue Cutter Service," its title from 1790 to 1915 when it was combined with the US Life-Saving Service. It was informally known as the "First Fleet" as there was no US Navy from 1790 to 1798.

hot run A deck launcher on a destroyer or PT boat with a torpedo stuck in the tube at launch was known as a "hot run." The turbine ran at high speed and as it was unimpeded by water it created tremendous heat. If not stopped, the super-heated "torp" would disintegrate. If it ran long enough the spinning props would arm it. A torpedoman had to physically shut off the compressed air line, a job that required direct contact with the red-glowing potential bomb.

hot-sheeting There was often a shortage of bunks on wartime-manned ships and smaller craft with limited space. Two sailors would share the same bunk with one on watch and one off. The term alludes to the warm sheets of the previous bunkmate. Also "hot bunking."

J Johnny

jeep carrier Escort aircraft carriers carrying spare aircraft. These followed far behind the fleet carrier groups and when the large carriers lost aircraft replacements would be immediately dispatched from jeep carriers. The term has been used to describe any escort carrier.

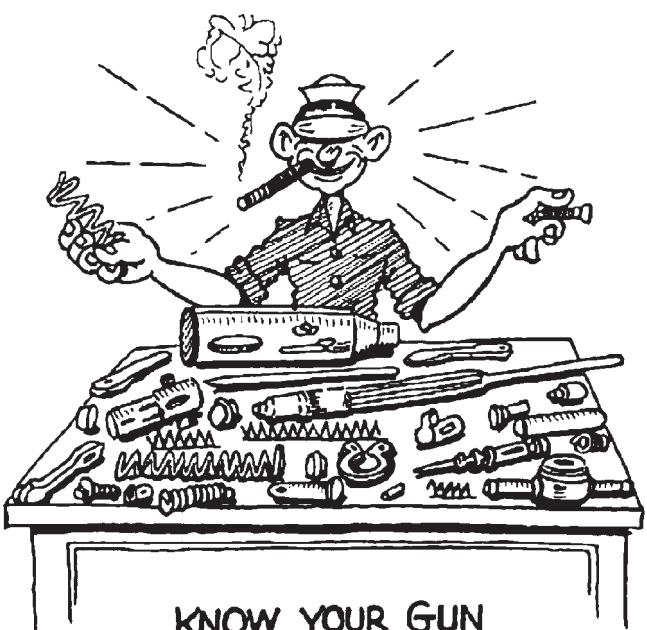
jewelry steep Armor plate, because it was valuable and difficult and expensive to produce. A 12x32ft plate of 17in Class A (face-hardened) armor used on Iowa-Class battleships weighed 133 short tons. (Class B armor was homogenous.)

Jimmy Legs The ship's master-at-arms, a chief petty officer, the ship's "sheriff," so to speak. He was also responsible for landing force small arms training.

jo pot A coffee urn.

Jonah A sailor whose presence brought bad luck and endangered the ship. A jinx. The term can be traced back the Biblical Jonah and his run of bad luck when he was accused of being responsible for a storm and was cast overboard by sailors.

jury rig A makeshift device or substitute piece of equipment.



"Jimmy legs," the ship's master-at-arms, was responsible for weapons training and maintenance. (Author's Collection)

K King

Keys The storekeeper. He kept the property he was responsible for well secured. Storekeepers wore crossed keys with their chevrons.

knee-knockers The shin-high threshold of watertight hatches that guaranteed bruised shins to the unwary.

Knife and Fork School The Officer Indoctrination School for former ratings and civilians receiving officer direct commissions, such as doctors, dentists, veterinarians, chaplains, and other professional specialists, as well as enlisted men granted direct commissions.

L Love

large slow target A Landing Ship, Tank (LST). The term described its characteristics well. Also "Green Dragon" and "Green Snapper" due to their green camouflage in the Pacific.

leap-frog convoy An early war coastal convoy system in which ships sailed only short distances, then sought a safe harbor at night to avoid U-boats.

liberty Leave ashore – a sailor's most important privilege, especially in a new foreign port. The all-important "liberty card" granted him 48 or 72 hours ashore.

Long Lance The deadly Japanese Type 93 24in torpedo, which had a range of 25 miles at 38 knots with a 1,100lb warhead. It was considered the most advanced torpedo in the world. The nickname was American-coined.

loot bag A small bag taken ashore during liberty.

lucky bag A ship's lost and found where lost clothing and personal items were turned in. It was maintained by the chief of boat.

Luff Lieutenant junior grade.

M Mike

Mariana Turkey Shoot The June 19–20, 1944 battle of the Philippine Sea, the last of the five carrier-versus-carrier battles. The Japanese lost over 600 aircraft, three carriers, and two oilers while the US lost just over 100 aircraft and no ships.

meal pennant A red triangular pennant flown on the port side when meals were being served. Also "bean rag" or "red rag."

meatball As well as referring to the red roundel on Japanese aircraft, it also referred to the battle efficacy flag, an equilateral triangular red pennant with a black disc in the center. It was flown by ships winning the annual battle efficiency competitions, a cycle of inspections and exercises. Winning the award allowed the ship to fly the pennant at the fore truck when not underway and to paint a large white "E" on the ship. The pennant and painted "E" were retained until the end of the next cycle.

mid rats Midnight rations, light meals, usually sandwiches or leftovers, served during the Mid Watch (2300–0400 or 2300–0600 hours depending on the ship's schedule).

middy *or* middies Midshipman, a cadet at the US Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD.

Mighty Midget The Landing Craft, Support (Large) (LCS(L)) rocket-firing gunboat.

Mike boat Landing Craft, Mechanized (LCM). Also "M-boat."

mined in When ships were bottled up in port by sea mines, usually delivered by air. Not only could the ships not sortie and perform their mission, but they were more vulnerable to air attack.

missed the boat A missed opportunity. The well-used terms had naval origins and referred to a sailor returning to his ship from shore leave who had missed the last boat returning leave men.

mokers The blues, depression, down in the dumps.

monkey drill "Organized" calisthenics on the weather deck.

monkey island The uppermost accessible platform above the bridge. Also "upper bridge." Solar and stellar observations were taken from there.

mosquito boats Patrol torpedo boats (PT) or "Peter Tare." Also "nighthawks" (they mostly operated at night), "barge-busters" (one of their main missions), and "plywood boats" or "plywood battleships" (they were largely built of plywood). The Japanese called them "devil boats" (*Akuma no Gyoraitei*) and "green dragons" (*Midori no Rye*). The Germans called them "fast torpedo boats" (*Schnelltorpedoboot*) or *S-Booten*.

mothball A recruit wearing his brand-new first issue uniform.

Mousetrap The Mk 20 and Mk 22, which were smaller versions of the Hedgehog antisubmarine projector for small ships. They launched four or eight 7.2in projectiles. The "Minnie Mouse" was a sub-caliber training launcher.

movie marathon All-day and all-night movies shown aboard ship while in port to accommodate all watches.

mystery balls Meatballs made from undetermined ground meats from leftovers.

N Nan (Negat)

Naval Academy impatient A newly commissioned ensign with unrealistic expectations that everything should replicate the precision and timeliness of the Naval Academy.

navy cocktail A dose of castor oil, good for whatever ails you. It was mainly used as a laxative although it was also used to treat a wide range of other minor ailments.

navy shower A water conservation method during which a sailor would soak himself, turn off the water, soap down, then rinse off. A "Hollywood shower" – considered luxurious and the privilege of pampered landlubbers – was wasteful and unnecessary.

nesting When ships were moored side-by-side due to a lack of mooring space at piers. It was necessary for crew debarking or embarking the outermost ships to ask permission to board and debark each and every vessel they crossed, as well as run a gauntlet of officers on duty (OD) and their inspections.

ninety-day wonders Newly commissioned ensigns as officer candidate school (OCS) was three months long. In the South Pacific they were known as "Shirley Temples" because of their youthfulness, naivety, and lack of experience.

O Option (Oboe)

OBB An unofficial designation for the 14in gun-armed updated battleships built between 1911 and 1921, which were used for shore bombardment. Also "Old battleships."

officer country Areas and spaces reserved for and under the preview of officers: the bridge, wardroom, the portion of the ship containing officer cabins, and the quarterdeck (q'deck) where officers and their guests congregated.

Old Faithful 4.5in beach barrage rockets (BR) fired from Landing Craft, Infantry (Rocket) (LCI(R)) and landing Ship, Medium (Rocket) (LCM(R)).

Old Man The captain of the ship, the "skipper." While titled as a "captain," the rank of the commanding officer (CO) varied depending on the ship type:
Battleships, carriers, and cruisers – captains
Destroyers – commanders
Destroyer escorts and submarines – lieutenant commanders
Destroyers, escorts, and submarines could also be commanded by a grade lower, especially early in the war.

One-and-a-half-striper A lieutenant (junior grade) because of the wide and narrow cuff stripes.

one-striper An ensign with one wide strip.

Oscar A rescue training dummy thrown overboard for man overboard rescue drills. It was named after the "O" (Oscar) flag (diagonally divided red and yellow) hoisted aboard ships to signal a man overboard.

P Prep (Peter)

paluka A big bruiser, a troublemaker or bully. Also a "gumbo."

pecker-checker A pharmacist's mate, so-called because of VD checks ("short-arm inspections").

picket boats/ships Any type of smaller combatant, usually destroyers, destroyer escorts, patrol gunboats, submarine chasers, and other patrol craft. They commonly had radar and were positioned in an outer perimeter around a fleet to detect and warn of incoming air attacks. These craft often bore the brunt of attacks as they were the first ships detected by the inbound attackers.

pig A sailor's girlfriend. It does not necessarily mean she was ugly, but he'd never use the term around her or he might have to "unshack" her.

pig boat Submarines due to the lifestyle of the crew in such cramped conditions for prolonged patrols. Also "bedpan." Subs never smelled very pleasant.

pig iron This originally referred to an old iron hulled ship, but came to be a demeaning name for any ship with a steel hull. Also "rust bucket."

pink lady A medicine cocktail for digestion problems.

pip A return signal on a radar, in other words, a ship, aircraft, or other object.

plank owners The original commissioning crew of a newly commissioned ship. The term referred to the deck planks "owned" by those working on them. It has since become a term for donors providing money to help restore and maintain memorialized ships.

Prong you Fuck you. The term was brought back from China.

punk and piss Bread and water. A sailor confined in the brig could be penalized with a bread and water diet. He would be provided all the bread and water he desired. If a prisoner was confined for five days or less he could be fed only bread and water. If the punishment was for six to 30 days, the prisoner had to be fed a full-ration, that is, three regular square meals, once every three days.

Q Queen

q'deck Quarterdeck. The designated portion of deck reserved for the captain and other officers. This may also have been where the gangway was located.

quarterly marks The quarterly Enlisted Performance Evaluation Report completed by a sailor's division chief.

quills A yeoman or scribe. He was so named because of the crossed quill pens on his sleeve rating insignia. Also "pingpong."

R Roger

radioing Temperature and pressure readings were entered hourly in steam engine logs. When an entry was missed and filled in later it was called "radioing" and considered a sin by the engineering staff.

Rags A signalman responsible for hoisting signal flags. Also "Ragman."

red lead Cheap red wine. Also "catsup." Both were named after red lead primer paint. Another cheap wine was "Diego Red."

rice bowl One's job. This was picked up in China where a man's job was his source of food. To break someone's rice bowl was to infringe or take over his job.

ring rail The circular shroud or vane on the tail of a 22in Mk 13 aerial torpedo that prevented hooking and broaching, and reduced rolls when dropped into the sea.

Ripple An enlisted Wave.

river rat Name given to the "brown water" sailors of the Yangtze Patrol by Fleet sailors.

Rocks and Shoals Articles of the Government of the Navy, the regulations for Navy and Marine Corps judicial processes.

Roosey Roosevelt Roads Naval Station, Puerto Rico, pronounced "Rosy."

run cold/hot A torpedo "running cold" was defective in some manner, but still running. A torpedo "running hot" was said to "run hot, straight, and normal" – that is, the motor was operating properly, it was true on course, and at the normal depth.

S Sugar (Sail)

scrambled eggs The gold-colored adornments on officer pecked service cap visors. See "gold braid."

sea dust Salt.

sea lawyer Self-styled expect in rules and regulations. His advice was best taken with a grain of sea salt.

Sea Mule A small barge-like powered tug or push-boat – a district harbor tug (YT). Also "yard tug" and "marine tractor."

sea pie Stew with a crust, a pot pie.

seagull aboard Chicken for dinner.

seaweed Spinach, that green stuff favored by a one-eyed sailor man.

shack A small office or work space aboard ship: radio shack, supply shack, Sonar shack, etc.

shaft alley coffee Coffee brewed in the engine room, which was said to taste like no other. Perhaps it was due to the water from condensed steam and the oil.

She's a home The best compliment that could be paid to a ship with a good skipper, officers, and crew. The worst thing that could be said of a ship was, "She's a madhouse."

ship folklore Rumors, scuttlebutt, and sea stories about a particular ship. The ship's oral history passed from sailor to sailor, especially the juicy stuff.

shove-off To tell an individual to "shove-off" was to say "get outta here" or "get lost." The term derived from "shoving off" a launch from a pier or the beach.

show the flag To visit foreign ports and demonstrate naval power and presence. The ship had to be spick and span and the crew well turned out.