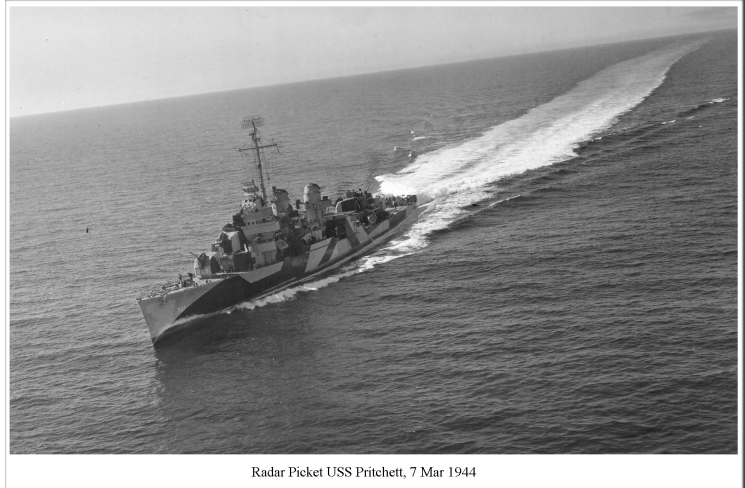


## Dad and the *Prichett* (DD-561)<sup>1</sup>

Dad didn't talk much about his war experience ever – Mom said, "for years your father hated moonlit nights because they were sitting ducks then." So here are a few little anecdotes that tell a bit about Dad's war.

A man named Harold Venturino, I think as a response to something I had posted on the *Prichett* association website, contacted Dad about 2005. He sent a letter which I saw indicating some problems he was having; apparently the Veteran's Association has not been sympathetic. Anyway, Dad mentioned a



Radar Picket USS Prichett, 7 Mar 1944

couple of events, which tell us what he actually did. He had great respect for Mr. Venturino who helped him in the CIC room ... apparently this was kind of a situation room where intelligence, information about nearby ships, radar information etc etc was collated, and Dad was the head collator. But he really relied on Venturino who was extraordinarily steady and

smart. One time as a result of an error on the group level, the *Prichett* was fired on by American artillery (ship-borne) which holed the ship with an explosive shell about 2 inches in diameter and about 10 inches long. It went through the hull, through some bulkheads, through the wardroom and the wardroom refrigerator, and into the CIC (Combat Information Center ) room. It struck Venturino



Bill Brewster, exec; Clarence Bowley skipper; WAL watch officer - early 1944 USS Prichett

in the back and fell to the deck, still glowing hot. Venturino looked around, saw it, touched his back and realized he wasn't hurt and went back to work.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://destroyerhistory.org/fletcherclass/>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS\\_Prichett\\_\(DD-561\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Prichett_(DD-561))

It wasn't all work – this was among Mom's papers.

SUBPOENA AND SUMMONS EXTRAORDINARY

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ooo  
o

The Royal High Court of the Raging Main

County of Prichett,  
Vale of Pacificus,  
Domain of Neptunus Rex

ss

To whom May Come These Presents:

GREETING AND BEWARE

WHEREAS, the aforesaid carries a large and slimy cargo of landlubbers, Swabs, hay-tossers, beach-combers, gargo-rats, sea-lawyers, lounge-lizzards, parlor-dunnigans, plow-deserters, park-bench warmers, chicken-chasers, chit-signers, dance-hall engineers, san-crabs, and all other living creatures of the land, falsely masquerading as seamen, or mariners, of which LOW SCUM you are a member, having never appeared before us; and

WHEREAS, THE ROYAL HIGH COURT OF THE RAGING MAIN has been convened by us on board the good ship PRICHETT on the day of May, 1944, at Latitude 00°00'00", Longitude , together with such surgeons, dentists, police and executioners as may be necessary to execute its judgements; and an inspection of our HIGH ROYAL ROSTER shows that it is high time the said and wandering nautical soul of that much abused body of yours appeared before the HIGH TRIBUNAL of NEPTUNE; and

BE IT KNOWN, that we hereby summon and command you Lucking now a Lieut., U.S.N.R. to appear before this Royal High Court and Our August Presence on the aforesaid date at such time as may best suit our pleasure, and to accept most heartily and with a good grace the pains and penalties of the awful tortures that will be inflicted upon you; and to be examined as to fitness to become one of our TRUSTY SHELL-BACKS and be initiated in the MYSTERIES OF MY EMPIRE. If not, you shall be given as food for sharks, whales, frogs, and all living things of the sea, as warning to any landlubbers entering my Domain without warrant.

THEREFORE, appear and obey, and answer to the following charges:

CHARGE I. In that Lucking, now a Lieut., U.S. Navy Reserve has hereto willfully and maliciously failed to show reverence and allegiance to our Royal Person, and is therein and thereby a vile landlubber and POLLYWOG

CHARGE II Being a breakwater sailor, posing as a seasoned seagoing sailor with shoulders and physique to put POPEYE to shame.

CHARGE III Forever praising that rocky coastal region bordering our homeland to the westward, often referred to as the sunny state by natives of the hills.

CHARGE IV Bribery and Seeking clemency in order to preserve dignity deserving a ranking officer.

CHARGE V Posing as a mail clerk - inefficient delivery.

DISOBEY THIS SUMMONS UNDER PAIN OF OUR SHIFT AND TERRIBLE DISPLEASURE.  
OUR VIGILANCE IS EVER WAKEFUL-OUR VENGEANCE JUST AND SURE.

Given under our hand and seal.

*Davey Jones*

Attest for the King,  
DAVEY JONES, Scribe

*Neptunus Rex*  
NEPTUNUS, REX



One evening I showed Dad a copy of the naval history of the *Prichett*, and he said that it was accurate but that was one thing there that he thought nobody knew. He said that after the attack on Saipan in June of 1944 the *Prichett* was supporting the troops; they shot up some Japanese planes parked at an airfield. And then as they watched, thousands of people, clearly civilians, walked up to the cliffs on the north point of Saipan<sup>2</sup> and jumped into the sea and began swimming out to sea. So the *Prichett* took note of the situation, and radioed for instructions to SOPA (Senior Officer in the area - this was Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner.) And the orders came back from SOPA, “if convenient, pick up 3 or 4 for intelligence” but the rest should be extinguished. Dad said that he and the captain didn’t discuss the matter but there was an agreement that they would not extinguish anyone. And for days after they saw bodies floating in the sea; generally the men’s decomposing bodies would be face down in the water, but the women would be face up. Dad said he wrote this event up in the late 1940's and for many years his memoir lay in his desk. He would look at it from time to time to



Illustration 1: Purple Hearts being awarded

reassure himself that he still remembered it accurately. He thought he might be the only man still living who saw this. But he said that he thought that the “bosses in the sky” (words to that effect) would judge him for that day.

There are only two big actions that I recall Dad being involved

with – and one had no shooting! The first was the huge typhoon, Typhoon Cobra of December 17-18, 1944. The great fleet which was mounting the final attack on the Philippine Islands was low on fuel and Admiral Halsey had scheduled refueling at a rendezvous several hundreds of miles to the east.

<sup>2</sup> <http://todayshistorylesson.wordpress.com/2009/07/10/marpi-point-saipans-final-act/>



USS Prichett August 1945  
top right, "BoneDome"; l-r Thomas, ass't gunnery officer; WAL, ?, Pay Trent, ?  
Front, l-r Jim Webb, Keith Shay, ?, ?, Willy, communications officer

Dad made sure that I understood two concepts – one, that a ship that didn't have steerage way – that wasn't moving through the water – would wallow, be broached or pooped and sink in even a moderate wind; the other that the stacks were open from the sky to the boiler room, and that if much water entered the boiler room the fire would go out and the ship would lose steerage - and be sunk.

So he told me that ships were assembling for fueling but they all knew that a big storm was bearing down on them, and many ships, especially destroyers, were very low on fuel. Some ships, in preparation for fueling, had pumped out the sea water used for ballast, so they were top-heavy. When the typhoon struck (gusts of 140 mph) other ships had partially refueled, so they had fuel in holds on one side, and not the other.

Dad said that the captain (?) had just returned from a training session on just this topic, and so the *Prichett* entered the storm in ballast, with not enough fuel but balanced. I forget some of what Dad said, but one thing he noted was that at one point the ship was heeled over to 90 degrees from vertical – briefly, I guess, as the ship survived – but three destroyers sank with virtually all hands, and many others suffered heavy damage.<sup>3</sup>

The second action was off Okinawa July 29, 1945; three destroyers<sup>4</sup> – radar pickets - the *Prichett* (DD-561), the *Callaghan* (DD-792), and the *Cassin Young* (DD-793) - were positioned with several LCS 's (small ships used close to shore.) A Kamikaze raid did serious damage to the hull and superstructure of the *Prichett*, and ultimately sank the *Callaghan*. Dad was in a 26' motor whale boat; he spent the night, he said, rescuing the seriously wounded. Some went to the *Prichett*, the critically wounded went to two nearby LCS's. The Japanese

<sup>3</sup><http://www.patriotwatch.com/typhoon.htm>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typhoon\\_Cobra\\_\(1944\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typhoon_Cobra_(1944))

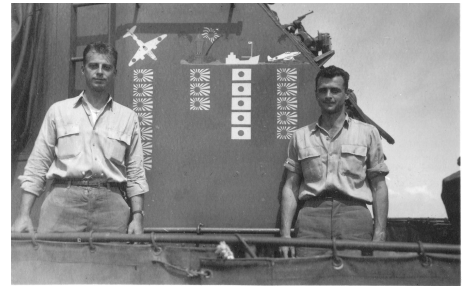
<sup>4</sup><http://wgordon.web.wesleyan.edu/kamikaze/books/ships/cassinyoung/index.htm>

<http://www.destroyersonline.com/usndd/dd792/letter.htm>

were still strafing. He said they went around and in the water there were men saying, “Sir, can you get me? If not, how about so-and-so over here ...” And Dad said, “But if we took in anyone, that meant someone else would have to be put out into...” and he paused, “that.”

I have a little piece of metal that Dad picked up from the deck after this action and which he kept with him as a kind of talisman.

He was twice recommended for the Silver Star including for that night, and got the Bronze Star.



Oct 18 1945 - “One of my Bronze Stars.”  
WAL Jr & Lt.Cdr John Frederick Miller, USN - Captain of Pritchett -  
in 1997 living in Maryland

PERIOD OF ACTIVE DUTY		RIGHT INDEX FINGERPRINT
FROM	5 June 1941	
TO	22 January 1946	
TYPE OF SEPARATION		
Released to inactive duty.		
CERTIFICATE NUMBER		
9579		
SIGNATURE		
Wm. A. Lucking, Jr.		
IF FOUND/LOST IN MAIL BOX POSTMASTER: POSTAGE GUARANTEED.		
RETURN TO: CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL, WASHINGTON 25, D.C.		

Certificate of Satisfactory Service	
UNITED STATES NAVY	
THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT	
William A. Lucking, Jr.	
Lieut. Comdr. (D) USNR (101172)	
Has served and satisfactorily completed a period of training and service on active duty in the	
United States Navy, World War II	
SIGNATURE OF CERTIFYING OFFICER	RANK
W. A. Lucking, Jr.	Lt. USNR
(GENUINE ONLY IF WATER-MARKED - U. S. NAVY)	

Illustration 2: Discharge

*Cassin Young* is now now a museum ship run by the National Park Service at Charlestown Navy Yard in Boston.

*THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY WASHINGTON The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending the UNITED STATES SHIP PRICHETT for service as follows: "For outstanding heroism as a Fighter Direction Ship on Radar Picket duty during the Okinawa Campaign, from March 24 to April 7, 1945; and May 8 to August 13, 1945. A natural and frequent target for heavy Japanese aerial attack while occupying advanced and isolated stations, the USS PRICHETT defeated all efforts of enemy Kamikaze and dive-bombing planes to destroy her. Constantly vigilant and ready for battle, she sent out early air warnings, provided fighter direction, and, with her own gun-fire, downed six hostile planes, shared in the destruction of several others and routed many more. During the furious night action of July 30, she rendered invaluable assistance in protecting the damaged CALLAGHAN from further enemy suicide attacks and, although herself hit by a Kamikaze while rendering aid, stood by the CALLAGHAN for three additional hours to furnish protection and assist in recovering survivors. A seaworthy, fighting ship, the PRICHETT, her officers and men withstood the stress and perils of vital radar picket duty to aid in preventing air attacks in strength against the Naval forces off the Okinawa beachhead, thus achieving a gallant combat record which reflects the highest credit upon the United States Naval Service."*

*For the President*

*/s/ James Forrestal*

Secretary of the Navy

Captains –

Clarence Bowley graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Class of 1928. He retired as a Rear Admiral in the U.S. Navy.

#### **Navy Cross**

*Awarded for actions during the [World War II](#)*

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Navy Cross to Captain Clarence Matheson Bowley (NSN: 0-62015), United States Navy, for extraordinary heroism and distinguished service in the line of this profession as Commanding Officer of the Destroyer U.S.S. PRICHETT (DD-561), and as commander of Destroyer Division FORTY-EIGHT (DesDiv 48), during operations against enemy forces in the vicinity of Okinawa, from 1 April 1945 to 23 June 1945. On 3 April Captain Bowley's ship was under heavy attack by many enemy airplanes for over three hours, but by his courage, skill and combat, and determination, Captain Bowley caused his ship to drive off the attacks, destroy three enemy planes and damage others. Although his ship was severely damaged in the action he continued to fight so effectively that further damage was prevented. He caused effective damage control measures to be taken that permitted the ship to remain on its vital mission until relieved. His conduct throughout was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Navy of the United States.

**General Orders:** Commander Destroyers Pacific Fleet: Serial 04160 (November 25, 1945)

**Action Date:** April 1 - June 23, 1945

**Service:** [Navy](#)

**Rank:** Captain

**Company:** Commanding Officer

**Division:** U.S.S. Pritchett (DD-561)

John Frederick Miller - John Miller graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Class of 1939. He retired as a U.S. Navy Captain.

#### **Legion of Merit**

*Awarded for actions during the [World War II](#)*

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Legion of Merit to Lieutenant Commander John Frederick Miller, Jr. (NSN: 0-82571), United States Navy, for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding

services to the Government of the United States as Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. PRICHETT (DD-561) on Radar Picket duty during the Capture of Okinawa Gunto from 20 May 1945 to 21 June 1945. During the entire period of action he led his ship with such courage, skill in combat and determination, that she was able to perform the vital and hazardous duty of Fighter-Director ship on Radar Picket station for a total of nineteen days during which period three enemy planes were destroyed by her combat air patrol and two destroyed and others damaged by her gunfire without casualty to herself or crew. His devotion to duty was an inspiration to his officers and men enabling them to continue their superb performance of duty throughout the long action. His ship in giving timely warning of incoming enemy air attacks and in destroying by combat air patrol or gunfire many of the enemy planes, contributed greatly to the successful outcome of the conquest of Okinawa Gunto.

**Action Date:** May 20 - June 21, 1945

**Service:** [Navy](#)

**Rank:** Lieutenant Commander

**Company:** Commanding Officer

**Division:** U.S.S. Prichett (DD-561)