



Official Newsletter of the Michigan Company of Military Historians & Collectors  
**November 14, 2015**

*“Good men in poor ships are better than poor men in good ships.”* **Alfred Thayer Mahan**

*“Tell the men to fire faster! Don't give up the ship!”* **Captain James Lawrence**, uttered as he lay dying during the eventual surrender of the *Chesapeake* to the *HMS Shannon*, June 1, 1813

*“A good Navy is not a provocation to war. It is the surest guaranty of peace.”* **President Theodore Roosevelt**, December 2, 1902, second annual message to Congress

*“Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!”* **Lieutenant Howell Maurice Forgy, USN** December 7, 1941. As a chaplain aboard the *USS New Orleans* he was barred from actively participating in any form of combat. Seeing the ammunition party tiring as they brought shells to the antiaircraft gun he decided to add moral support through words of encouragement.

*“There is no way of dealing with the Frenchman but to knock him down - to be civil to them is to be laughed at. Why they are enemies!”* **Admiral Horatio Nelson**

Open Mess this evening, 0600-1000

**MEETINGS** take place the second Monday of every month at the **Riverfront Hotel Grand Rapids** 270 Ann St NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504 (616) 363-9001. Socializing begins at 6:00 (1800), dinner at 7:00 (1900), business meeting 7:15 (1915), and program at 8:00 (2000).

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# THE MARINE HYMN

The "Marines' Hymn" is the official hymn of the United States Marine Corps, introduced by the first Director of USMC Band, Francesco Maria Scala. John Phillip Sousa was a member of that early band. It is the oldest official song in the United States Armed Forces. The "Marines' Hymn" is typically sung at the position of attention as a gesture of respect. The music is from the Gendarmes' Duet (the "bold gendarmes") from the revision in 1867 of the Jacques Offenbach opera *Geneviève de Brabant*, which debuted in Paris in 1859. Major Richard Wallach, USMC, says that in 1878, when he was in Paris, France, the aria to which the Marines' Hymn is now sung was a very popular one.

The melody is not in the exact form of the Marine Hymn, but is undoubtedly the aria from which it was taken. Wallach was informed, however, by one of the members of the band, who had a Spanish wife, that the aria was one familiar to her childhood and it may, therefore, be a Spanish folk song.

The lyrics are said to date from the 19th century, no pre-20th century text is known. The author of the lyrics is likewise unknown. Legend has it that a Marine on duty in Mexico penned the hymn. The unknown author transposed the phrases in the motto on the Colors so that the first two lines of the Hymn would read: "From the Halls of Montezuma, to the Shores of Tripoli", favoring euphony over chronology. Some lyrics were popular phrases before the song was written. The line "To the shores of Tripoli" refers to the First Barbary War, and specifically the Battle of Derne in 1805. After Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon and his Marines hoisted the American flag over the Old World for the first time, the phrase was added to the flag of the United States Marine Corps. "The Halls of Montezuma" refers to the Battle of Chapultepec on September 12/13, 1847 during the Mexican-American War, where a force of Marines stormed Chapultepec Castle. The Marine Corps secured a copyright on the song on August 18, 1919. In 1929, the Commandant of the Marine Corps authorized the three verses of the Marines' Hymn as the official version.

What role the Marines played at the Battle of Chapultepec and at the shore of Tripoli was always a question this editor considered? When further information is lacking the answer is usually that legend trumps reality or there was "much ado about nothing." The role of marines in the US Navy was patterned after their responsibility in the British Navy. Their primary role was to maintain order aboard ship. Marines berthed between the officers and the seamen where they provided a barrier and a deterrent for any thought of mutiny. Life aboard a British man-o-war was harsh and violations were harshly dealt with for a large number of the crew were conscripted. The US Navy may have treated its sailors a little better because they were all volunteers and many of the reasons to mutiny just did not exist. The second role of the marines in both services was to serve as sharpshooters when close combat occurred. Their first targets were always exposed officers on deck of the enemy ship.

In 1805 the United States was engaged in a war with what was termed the Barbary Pirates. The Barbary Corsairs, sometimes called Ottoman Corsairs or Berber Pirates, were pirates and privateers who operated from North Africa, based primarily in the ports of Tunis, Tripoli and Algiers. This area was known in Europe as the Barbary Coast, a term derived from the name of its Berber inhabitants. Their predation extended throughout the Mediterranean, south along West Africa's Atlantic seaboard and even South America, and into the North Atlantic as far north as Iceland, but they primarily operated in the western Mediterranean. In addition to seizing ships, they engaged in Razzias, raids on European coastal towns and villages, mainly in Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal, but also in England, Scotland, the Netherlands, Ireland, and as far away as Iceland. The main purpose of their attacks was to capture Christian-European slaves for the Muslim-Arab slave market in North Africa. The Barbary pirates had long attacked British and other European shipping along the North Coast of Africa. They

had been attacking British merchant and passenger ships since the 1600s. The many captives required regular fundraising by families and local church groups, who generally raised the ransoms for individuals. Many countries entered into an arrangement where tribute was given to guarantee freedom from seizure by the pirates. Initially the Americans went along with this arrangement. Tripoli was a quasi-independent entity nominally belonging to the Ottoman Empire, and (briefly) the independent Sultanate of Morocco. This war began during Thomas Jefferson's term when he refused to pay tribute, an amount that was greatly increased when he became president. A U.S. naval fleet was sent on May 13, 1801, at the beginning of the war under the command of Commodore Richard Dale. His orders were to safeguard American ships in the Mediterranean and blockade the harbor at Tripoli.

In 1804, William Eaton with the title of Naval Agent to the Barbary States had been granted permission from the United States government to back the claim of Hamet Karamanli. Hamet Karamanli was the rightful heir to the throne of Tripoli and had been deposed by his brother Yussif Karamanli who viewed the Americans as less than a second rate power and a lucrative source for extortion. Eaton sought out Hamet Karamanli who was in exile in Egypt. Upon locating him, Eaton made a proposal to reinstate him on the throne. The exile agreed to Eaton's plan. A small detachment of U.S. Marines was given to Eaton, one officer and eight enlisted men, commanded by First Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon. Eaton based his operation at Alexandria, Egypt. Commodore Samuel Barron, the new naval commander in the Mediterranean, provided Eaton with naval support from the *USS Nautilus*, the *USS Hornet* and the *USS Argus*. The three vessels were to provide offshore bombardment support. The *Nautilus* was commanded by Oliver Hazard Perry, the *Hornet* by Samuel Evans, and the *Argus* by Isaac Hull. With the help of Hamet Karamanli, they recruited about 400 Arab and Greek mercenaries. Eaton became general and commander-in-chief of the combined force.

On March 6, 1805 Eaton began to lead his forces on a 600 miles trek across the Libyan desert. Their objective was the port city of Derne, capital of the province of Cyrenaica. The mercenary forces were promised supplies and money when they reached the city. During the 50-day trek, Eaton became worried over the relationship between the Christian Greeks and the roughly 200 to 300 Muslim mercenaries. Mutiny threatened the success of the expedition on several occasions. By April 8, when he crossed the border into Libya, Eaton had quelled the Arab mutinies. In late April, his army finally reached the port city of Bomba, some miles up the coast from Derne, where the *Argus*, the *Nautilus* and the *Hornet* were waiting for him. Eaton received fresh supplies and the money to pay his mercenaries.

On the morning of April 26, Eaton sent a letter to Mustafa Bey, the governor of Derne, asking for safe passage through the city and additional supplies, though Eaton realized the governor probably would not agree. Mustafa reportedly wrote back, "My head or yours!" On the morning of April 27, Eaton observed a fort in Derne with eight guns. He believed the majority of the population would prefer to be ruled by Hamet. The *Argus* sent a cannon ashore to use in the attack. Hull's ships then opened fire and bombarded Derne's batteries for an hour. Meanwhile, Eaton divided his army into two separate attacking parties. Hamet was to lead the Arab mercenaries southwest to cut the road to Tripoli, then attack the city's left flank and storm weakly defended governor's palace. Eaton with the rest of the mercenaries and the squad of Marines would attack the harbor fortress. Hull and the ships would fire on the heavily defended port batteries. The attack began at 2:45 p.m., with Lt. O'Bannon and his Marines leading the advance. O'Bannon led his Marines and 50 Greek gunners with the field piece from the *Argus*, though the gun's effectiveness was lessened after the Marines carelessly left the ramrod in the tube and fired it down range. The harbor defenses had been reinforced, and the attackers were temporarily halted. But this had weakened the defenses elsewhere and allowed the Arab mercenaries to ride unopposed into the western section of the city.

Eaton's mercenary army was hesitant under the enemy's musket fire, and he realized a charge was the only way to regain the initiative. Leading the charge, he was seriously wounded in the wrist by a musketball. On the *Argus*, Hull saw the Americans and mercenaries were "gaining ground very fast though a heavy fire." The ships ceased fire to allow the charge to continue. Eaton would report that O'Bannon with his Marines and Greeks "pass'd through a shower of Musketry from the Walls of houses, took possession of the Battery". The defenders fled in haste, leaving left their cannons loaded and ready to fire. O'Bannon raised the American flag over the battery, and Eaton turned the captured guns on the city. Hamet's force had seized the governor's palace and secured the western part of the city. Many of the defenders of the harbor fortress fled through the town and ran into Hamet's force. By 4:00 p.m. the entire city had fallen, and for the first time, an American flag flew over fortifications on the opposite side of the Atlantic Ocean. From Derne, Eaton now planned to march across the desert and attack Tripoli from the land. During his march he was informed of the treaty signed between the United States and Yusuf Karamanli. In the middle of his trek Eaton was ordered to return to Egypt with Hamet.

The Battle of Derne was the first land battle of the United States on foreign soil after the American Revolutionary War. It was the decisive action of the First Barbary War, although Eaton was furious over what he called a 'sell-out' between the American Consul Lear and Yusuf. Hamet returned to Egypt and the mercenaries were never fully paid. William Eaton returned to the United States as a national hero. Legend holds that O'Bannon was presented a Mameluke sword by Hamet, the Ottoman Empire viceroy. No evidence supports this claim. The first mention of Hamet giving O'Bannon a bejeweled sword seems to be in a lengthy article, "Kentucky Officer First to Carry Stars and Stripes to Victory in Foreign Country," by John Presley Cain in the July 29, 1917 edition of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. One sword that was purported to be the sword in question turned out to be a late-Victorian era forgery. He was later awarded a sword of honor by his home state of Virginia. A further legend holds that O'Bannon's exploits in North Africa inspired the Marine Corps officers to adopt Mameluke swords, but this is also uncorroborated by any contemporaneous sources. Swords of this style were very popular in Europe and a more likely scenario is that the Marines were imitating the influential military leaders who were wearing them.

As for the Halls of Montezuma, an unknown number of Marines were involved in the attack on Chapultepec during the Mexican-American War (1846-47). Their commanding officer, Major Levi Twiggs was killed in the initial assault but further information has not been forthcoming.

The Marine Corps celebrated its 240th birthday on November 10, 2015. The Marine Corps traces its roots back to the Second Continental Congress in 1775, which established a resolution stating that "two Battalions of Marines be raised" as forces to land with the fleet. The Marines were on hand for the first amphibious raid into the Bahamas in 1776 under the command of Capt. Samuel Nichols. The Marine Corps marks the occasion with an annual Birthday Ball, the reading of a birthday message from the Commandant and the cutting of a birthday cake.

Latin for "Always Faithful," *Semper Fidelis* became the Marine Corps motto in 1883. According to the Marine Corps, *Semper Fidelis* is a permanent reminder that "a Marine will forever live by the ethics and values of the Corps." The Marines have three main symbols: the Eagle, the Globe and the Anchor. The Eagle represents the country they defend, with its eyes on the coastline and wings spread out to encompass the world. The Globe represents the Marine's worldwide presence. The anchor represents the ties the Marine Corps has with the Navy and its ability to access any coastline in the world.

Fewer than 100 people have been given the title "Honorary Marine." They include: Chuck Norris, Bob Hope, Jim Nabors, Gary Sinise and Bugs Bunny.

# OFF WE GO

This 1967 true story is of an experience by a young 12-year old lad in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. It is about the vivid memory of a privately rebuilt P-51 from WWII and its famous owner/pilot.

"In the morning sun, I could not believe my eyes. There, in our little airport, sat a majestic P-51. They said it had flown in during the night from some U.S. Airport, on its way to an air show. The pilot had been tired, so he just happened to choose Kingston for his stop over. It was to take to the air very soon. I marveled at the size of the plane, dwarfing the Pipers and Canucks tied down by her. It was much larger than in the movies. She glistened in the sun like a bulwark of security from days gone by.

The pilot arrived by cab, paid the driver, and then stepped into the pilot's lounge. He was an older man; his wavy hair was gray and tossed. It looked like it might have been combed, say, around the turn of the century. His flight jacket was checked, creased and worn - it smelled old and genuine. Old Glory was prominently sewn to its shoulders. He projected a quiet air of proficiency and pride devoid of arrogance. He filed a quick flight plan to Montreal ("Expo-67 Air Show") then walked across the tarmac.

After taking several minutes to perform his walk-around check, the tall, lanky man returned to the flight lounge to ask if anyone would be available to stand by with fire extinguishers while he "flashed the old bird up, just to be safe." Though only 12 at the time I was allowed to stand by with an extinguisher after brief instruction on its use -- "If you see a fire, point, then pull this lever!", he said. (I later became a firefighter, but that's another story.) The air around the exhaust manifolds shimmered like a mirror from fuel fumes as the huge prop started to rotate. One manifold, then another, and yet another barked -- I stepped back with the others. In moments the Packard -built Merlin engine came to life with a thunderous roar. Blue flames knifed from her manifolds with an arrogant snarl. I looked at the others' faces; there was no concern. I lowered the bell of my extinguisher. One of the guys signaled to walk back to the lounge. We did.

Several minutes later we could hear the pilot doing his pre-flight run-up. He'd taxied to the end of runway 19, out of sight. All went quiet for several seconds. We ran to the second story deck to see if we could catch a glimpse of the P-51 as she started down the runway. We could not. There we stood, eyes fixed to a spot half way down 19. Then a roar ripped across the field, much louder than before. Like a furious hell spawn set loose -- something mighty this way was coming. "Listen to that thing!" said the controller.

In seconds the Mustang burst into our line of sight. It's tail was already off the runway and it was moving faster than anything I'd ever seen by that point on 19. Two-thirds the way down 19 the Mustang was airborne with her gear going up. The prop tips were supersonic. We clasped our ears as the Mustang climbed hellishly fast into the circuit to be eaten up by the dog-day haze. We stood for a few moments, in stunned silence, trying to digest what we'd just seen.

The radio controller rushed by me to the radio. "Kingston tower calling Mustang?" He looked back to us as he waited for an acknowledgment. The radio crackled, "Go ahead, Kingston." "Roger, Mustang. Kingston tower would like to advise the circuit is clear for a low level pass." I stood in shock because the controller had just, more or less, asked the pilot to return for an impromptu air show! The controller looked at us. "Well, What?" He asked. "I can't let that guy go without asking. I couldn't forgive myself!"

The radio crackled once again, "Kingston, do I have permission for a low level pass, east to west, across the field?" "Roger, Mustang, the circuit is clear for an east to west pass." "Roger, Kingston, I'm coming out of 3,000 feet, stand by."

We rushed back onto the second-story deck, eyes fixed toward the eastern haze. The sound was subtle at first, a high-pitched whine, a muffled screech, a distant scream. Moments later the P-51 burst through the haze. Her airframe straining against positive G's and gravity. Her wing tips spilling contrails of condensed air, prop-tips again supersonic. The burnished bird blasted across the eastern margin of the field shredding and tearing the air. At about 500 mph and 150 yards from where we stood she passed with the old American pilot saluting. Imagine. A salute! I felt like laughing; I felt like crying; she glistened; she screamed; the building shook; my heart pounded. Then the old pilot pulled her up and rolled, and rolled, and rolled out of sight into the broken clouds and indelible into my memory.

I've never wanted to be an American more than on that day! It was a time when many nations in the world looked to America as their big brother. A steady and even-handed beacon of security who navigated difficult political water with grace and style; not unlike the old American pilot who'd just flown into my memory. He was proud, not arrogant, humble, not a braggart, old and honest, projecting an aura of America at its best."

That America will return one day! I know it will! Until that time, I'll just send off this story. Call it a loving reciprocal salute to a Country, and especially to that old American pilot: The late-JIMMY STEWART (1908-1997), actor, real WWII Hero (Commander of a US Army Air Force Bomber Wing stationed in England), and a USAF Reserves Brigadier General, who wove a wonderfully fantastic memory for a young Canadian boy that's lasted a lifetime. *This article was contributed by James McCloughan, combat medic, US Army, Vietnam and retired teacher and coach.*

James Stewart enlisted and was inducted in the Army on March 22, 1941 at age 33 as a private. He became the first major American movie star to wear a military uniform in World War II. As a college graduate and a licensed commercial pilot he applied for an Air Corps commission and pilot rating. Stewart received his commission as a second lieutenant on January 19, 1942, shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, while a corporal at Moffett Field, California. He was then trained to fly B-17s and was promoted to captain on July 9, 1943, and appointed a squadron commander. In August 1943, Stewart was assigned to the 445th Bomb Group as operations officer of the 703d Bombardment Squadron, but after three weeks became its commander. His group flew its first combat mission on December 13, 1943 bombing the U-boat facilities at Kiel, Germany. After his 12th combat mission on March 30, 1944, he was sent to RAF Old Buckenham to become group operations officer of the 453rd Bombardment Group, a new B-24 unit that had just lost both its commander and operations officer on missions. As a means to inspire the unit, Stewart flew as command pilot in the lead B-24 on several missions deep into Nazi-occupied Europe. As a staff officer, Stewart was assigned to the 453rd "for the duration" and thus not subject to a quota of missions of a combat tour. He nevertheless assigned himself as a combat crewman on the group's missions until his promotion to lieutenant colonel on June 3 and reassignment on July 1, 1944, to the 2nd Bomb Wing, assigned as executive officer to Brigadier General Edward J. Timberlake. He continued to play a role in the Army Air Forces Reserve following World War II and the new United States Air Force Reserve. In 1953, then Colonel Stewart served as Air Force Reserve commander of Dobbins Air Force Base, Georgia. He was also one of the 12 founders and a charter member of the Air Force Association in October, 1945. After 27 years of service, Stewart retired from the Air Force on May 31, 1968 as a Brigadier General.

# Impressment

The forcible conscription of seamen into the Royal Navy is the definition of impressment. In the 1790's and early 1800's Britain was at war with France and Spain and her warships were undermanned. The system of impressment rested upon the English doctrine of "indefensible allegiance and the recognized prerogative of the crown to require the services of all seamen for the defense of the realm." In Britain it was carried out by "press gangs" who patrolled the waterfront neighborhoods and practiced a brutal mode of on-the-spot conscription; often resulting in the detention of any able-bodied adult male unlucky to find himself in their path. British and foreign merchant ships were also subjected to boarding parties at sea to fill any warship vacancies. Men who had been born in the United States before or after the Revolution were in theory exempted. But as a practical matter it was impossible to distinguish between British and American seamen, either by speech or appearance. As a result, large numbers of native-born American seamen were forced to serve in the Royal Navy between 1792 and 1812. Between 1796 and 1812 American agents in London processed 9,991 requests for repatriation by American seamen wrongfully detained who were lucky enough to return to England. Countless others were afforded no opportunity to protest their illegal impressment.

Britain found impressment necessary for three reasons. The first was the unprecedented wartime expansion of the Royal Navy necessitated by the French Revolutionary Wars (1792-1802). Before the outbreak of war British fleets had about 10,000 men; by 1812 the number had grown to 140,000. The second was the unprecedented growth of the American merchant service during this same period. Employment in American merchant vessels rose from fewer than 10,000 seamen before 1792 to about 70,000 before 1812. By 1800 the United States was the largest neutral maritime power in the world. The final reason was a pandemic of desertions from the Royal Navy. Horatio Nelson estimated that 40,000 men had deserted his navy between 1793 and 1801. C.S. Forester judged that at least one half of the hands enlisted aboard the typical British warship between 1803 and 1812 would desert at the first opportunity. Every man who deserted had to be replaced. More often than not he was replaced by a pressed man, but it was the pressed man who was most likely to desert. It was a vicious cycle, and the longer it continued the more vicious it became.

Once pressed into the Royal Navy an American seaman was confronted with a Hobson's choice (realistically only one choice). He could "enter the books"—that is, enlist formally—in which case he would be eligible to receive wages. However, in doing so he would have to renounce any right to appeal for release through official channels. If he refused to enter the books he would still be forced to serve as any other member of the crew, while receiving no pay. If he refused to obey orders he could be flogged half to death. If injured or disabled in the line of duty he would simply be landed on the nearest shore, ineligible to receive a pension or medical care at a naval hospital. Even when a protest was lodged through diplomatic channels it could be rejected by the Admiralty on any number of flimsy pretexts. If the appeal led to a discharge order, the commanding officer might shelve it indefinitely on grounds of necessity. In either case, the appeals process could be expected to drag out for years.

By the system's perverse logic, a pressed American seaman was transformed into a subject of the British crown. He could be compelled to fight and die in England's wars. After the outbreak of war between America and Britain in 1812, he could be compelled to fight and kill his own countrymen. If he managed to escape, he would be forever labeled a deserter, and hunted for the

rest of his life on land and sea. If he subsequently served in the U.S. Navy during the War of 1812 and was taken prisoner, he could be condemned as a traitor and executed.

It was no secret to British seamen that Americans payed better, had better working conditions, plus they guaranteed their seamen would be released from service at the end of the voyage. It was no secret to President Jefferson that the number of British seamen on American ships exceeded the number of Americans impressed into British warships. Between 1803 and 1807, of the annual number of seamen needed (4,200) to man American merchant ships, one half were British. Moreover, the British seamen tended to be highly trained and experienced “able seamen.” To feed its voracious appetite for men the Royal Navy was determined to reclaim as many of these British-born seamen as possible. Admiralty orders directed commanders to stop and search American merchant vessels and to seize all British sailors they could identify. Identification was left to the on-scene commander. Americans carried official citizenship certificates known as “protections,” but they could easily be obtained fraudulently and the British regarded all certificates as bogus.

A majority of impressments occurred just off the coast of North America, often within the three-mile limit of U.S. territorial waters in the major sea lanes off the Virginia Capes, the Delaware Capes, New York, Rhode Island, and Boston. In some cases, American ships were stripped of so many men that they were left precariously short-handed and forced to make their way as best as possible to the nearest safe harbor. America was a neutral trading partner where all the belligerents and ships from all nations came to her ports for trade. In Europe the English blockaded French and Spanish ports while French and Spanish privateers preyed on English shipping all along the English Channel. This mutual restraint of trade allowed American merchants to profit quite handsomely as they supplied both sides. In order to intercept French and Spanish ships off the American coast a large number of English warships cruised just off-shore, battleships (74 guns), frigates (32-37 guns) and sloops (10-20-guns). They would periodically replenish supplies in Norfolk, New York, and Boston and their purchases were greatly appreciated by the mercantile class. However, this close proximity to the American shore presented problems for the Royal Navy. Only officers and trusted seamen were allowed on shore during periods of restocking. British officers and seamen were a common sight in American ports and were initially treated quite warmly by the populace. As the weather warmed desertions increased as men could swim to shore and immediately find employment. In colder weather British seamen would commandeer boats and row to shore.

A British squadron, comprised of the 74-gun battleships *Triumph*, *Bellisle*, and *Bellona*, the 32 gun frigate *Melampus*, the storeship *Chichester*, and several 16-gun sloops was stationed in the Atlantic, just off-shore of the Virginia Capes. During inclement weather they would seek shelter in Lynnhaven Bay, just west of Newport. During the night of March 7, 1807 five crew members of the sloop *Halifax* overpowered a midshipman, stole a small boat, and rode the incoming tide to the present day site of Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia. They quickly melted into the local community. With every reason to fear the lash and the noose if apprehended, a British deserter’s safest form of maritime employment was to enlist in a foreign navy. By custom, law, and standing orders, the Royal Navy had no authority to stop and search naval vessels of a nation at peace with England. To do so could be interpreted as an act of war. So it was to no surprise that a number of British deserters went to the U.S. Navy recruiting station in Norfolk and enlisted. The U.S. Navy frigate *Chesapeake* (38-gun) was in port outfitting for transit to the Barbary coast to relieve a ship on blockade duty off Tripoli. Several of the British deserters were entered into the *Chesapeake*’s muster roll under false names and became part of the crew.

Later, on a street near the Norfolk wharves, Captain James Townsend of the *Halifax* came face-to-face with two of the men who had stolen his boat. Realizing he had no power to coerce them while on American soil, he attempted to coax them into returning to the *Halifax* voluntarily. One, a British-



born seaman named Jenkin Ratford, according to Townsend, hurled epithets at his former commander and declared that “he would be damned if he should return to the ship, that he was in the Land of Liberty; and that he would do as he liked, and that I had no business with him.” The infuriating exchange was reported to the C-in-C of the British North American station, headquartered in Halifax. Known deserters from the *Halifax*, wrote Captain Townsend, “were seen by me & several of the Officers...patrolling the Streets of Norfolk in triumph.” He estimated that no fewer than thirty-five British seamen had enlisted aboard the *Chesapeake*. The report was forwarded to London asking for instructions. By June 1, 1807 no reply had yet been received. The C-in-C of Halifax station then wrote out an order to be distributed to every commander throughout the station:

*Whereas many Seamen, subjects of His Britannic Majesty, and serving in His Ships and Vessels...while at anchor in the Chesapeake, deserted and entered On Board the United States frigate called the Chesapeake, and openly paraded the Streets at Norfolk, in sight of their Officers under the American flag, protected by the Magistrates of the Town and the Recruiting Officer belonging to the above mentioned American Frigate....*

*The Captain & Commander of his Majesty’s Ships and Vessels under my Command are therefore hereby required and directed in case of meeting with the American Frigate Chesapeake at sea...to show to the Captain of her this Order; and to require to search his Ship for the deserters from before mentioned Ships, and to proceed and search for the same; and if a similar demand should be made by the American, he is permitted to search for any Deserters from their Service, according to the Customs and usage of civilized nations on terms of peace and Amity with each other.*

These orders were carried from Halifax to the Virginia Capes by the 52-gun frigate *Leopard*. After a passage of twelve days, in which she pressed seamen from several merchant vessels along the American coast, *Leopard* anchored in Lynnhaven Bay.

On Monday, June 22, at 7:00 AM the *Chesapeake* headed out to sea. Her crew of 381 included 329 officers and seamen and 52 marines. In addition, there were several civilian passengers, including Dr. John Bullus, the newly appointed Mediterranean Navy Agent, with his wife, three children, and two servants; the wife of Marine Captain John Hall and 10 Italian musicians who were returning home after performing as the Marine Band for a number of years. The logistical challenges of maintaining an active squadron far from American shores, combined with Jeffersonian parsimony, required the *Chesapeake* to ship a large quantity of provisions, stores, baggage and spare ammunition on her passage. The frigate was duty double duty as her own storeship, and in the rush to get to sea various articles had been hastily stored wherever a vacant corner could be found. Consequently, access to the guns and storerooms were completely obstructed. No one denied that the clutter was unseamanlike, but the officers assumed there would be time to properly stow the gear before she reached the open sea. Besides, the United States was at peace with the entire world and there was no reason to expect a hostile encounter between the Capes and the Straits of Gibraltar.

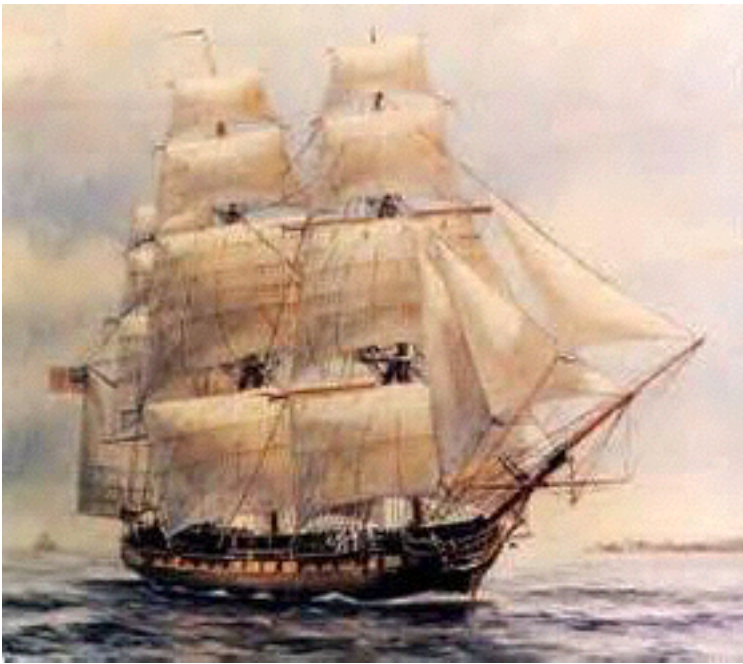
At 9:00 AM she passed the British squadron at Lynnhaven Bay noticing a fury of signaling between the men-of-war at anchor. The *Leopard* had put to sea just ahead of the *Chesapeake* after replenishing in Norfolk. By 3:00 PM the *Leopard* was three to four miles south of the *Chesapeake* when she suddenly headed north toward the *Chesapeake*. As she closed the distance the Americans noticed her lower deck gunports were open and the tompions had been taken out of her cannons. The Americans did not feel there was any cause for concern for it was possible that the British ship merely intended to ask the Americans to carry dispatches to Europe, a courtesy frequently extended between vessels at sea. As the *Leopard* came within hailing distance she requested permission to send an officer aboard with dispatches. Once aboard, the Americans were presented with the Admiralty orders and asked to muster all hands on deck. The Americans replied that they did not know of any men described in the British order.

The *Leopard* knew that the *Chesapeake* was completely unprepared to contest the order and had no intention to give her time to prepare. The *Leopard* fired a warning shot across the bow of the *Chesapeake* which the Americans ignored. At 4:30 the *Leopard* pulled within pistol-shot range and fired an unknown number of cannons. Most of the hits were amidship sending splinters into the interior and onto the gun deck. Among the initial wounded was Commodore Barron who received a splinter wound in his leg. Barron hailed the *Leopard* shouting that he would send his boat over to discuss the issue. The British Captain Humphreys assumed his adversary was attempting to stall for more time and unleashed another broadside. More shot crashed into the *Chesapeake*, and splinters exploded in the faces of men standing at the guns they could not fire. At 4:45, while the American colors were on their way down from the mizzen peak, the British fired third broadside. Total score: 3 KIA, 18 WIA, 1 would die later of his wounds.

The *Leopard* sent over a boarding party and ordered the sailing master to produce the muster books and muster the crew. The English officers recognized three deserters and a fourth, Jenkin Ratford was found hiding in the bilge. The four were sent back to the *Leopard* which then returned to Lynnhaven Bay. Barron decided that his ship must return to Norfolk. The hands were set to work repairing damage, splicing severed rigging, and pumping three feet of water out of the hold. As darkness fell the ship got underway and dropped anchor at 12:30 PM, June 23, in Hampton Roads.

The wave of public outrage raised by the *Chesapeake-Leopard* encounter was unlike any the American people had felt since the Revolution.

When 11 injured men were transported to the hospital in Norfolk their sight transformed the crowd into a mob. They turned their collective fury against two hundred casks of fresh water of recently purchased by the British squadron, smashing them to pieces. The British demanded reparations for the casks and were at a loss to understand the hostility of the Americans. They maintained that they had every right to seize seamen to man her warships in protection of the British realm. The Federal government was slow to agree to an appropriate response and President Jefferson eventually decided to impose a trade embargo on all goods to and from the Britain Empire. The embargo continued under President Monroe who took office in 1808 but the effects were very



detrimental to the American economy. Formal hostilities between the two countries began in 1812 over the unresolved issue of trade restrictions brought about by the British war with France, the continued impressment of US merchant sailors into the Royal Navy, and the continual British support for Native American tribes against American expansion.

As for the four seamen seized by the *Leopard*, they were taken to Halifax and tried for desertion. All were found guilty. The British-born Jenkin Ratford was hanged. The three American-born seamen were each sentenced to 500 lashes; a more slowly applied death sentence. After much negotiation the three Americans were eventually released before punishment was rendered and returned to Norfolk.