

## Gerald Teaster

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**From:** "Robert Hall" <ivanhoe61347@charter.net>  
**To:** "Robert Hall" <ivanhoe61347@charter.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 18, 2013 11:33 PM  
**Attach:** image001.jpg; image003.jpg; image005.jpg; image007.jpg; image009.jpg; image011.jpg; image013.png; image015.jpg; image017.jpg; image019.png; image021.jpg; image023.jpg; image027.png; image029.jpg; image035.png; image052.jpg  
**Subject:** FW: Memories of Wartime Charleston Navy Yard/ USS TIDEWATER AD31 HISTORY  
 Greetings All,

This is a special Tidewater History posting. For those of you that are Tidewater Association members you would have received your "High Tide" publication by now. And to those who are not members, you should be! The article below was the feature. John and I have emailed several times and with his input we have added to his original writing to fill in some areas that would help the readers understand more completely the importance of the Charleston Yard, the Jules James family, the workers like Elma England, Fred Teaster, Pearl Hill and Robert Hinners, dedication to the war effort and most importantly the USS Tidewater. Thanks to John and the James family for their contributions. We hope you enjoy.

Best Regards

Bob Hall

Note: Fred Teaster was a ship fitter and worked on the Tide. He also rode the ship down the launching ways. Pearl Hill helped build the Tide and was a guest along with Ms. England at our first reunion in Charleston. Ms. Hill resides in North Charleston. Also, John's mother volunteered with the Navy Auxiliary at the yard and worked with Mrs. Jules James in that effort.

### Memories of Wartime Charleston Navy Yard By: John Hinners

**I was a little kid just starting first grade when we went to Charleston in 1942.**



*Photo inset is the Ben Tillman Elementary School, North Charleston. John attended this school.*

**My most vivid memory is that for me and many others, winning the *war* was not a sure thing. Reminders were all around us. Damaged ships steamed into the yard dry-docks waiting for my dad, Captain Robert Hinners, Naval Academy class of '27, armed with a master's in naval architecture and marine engineering from MIT, to figure out how to restore them to the fleet. Damaged men also streamed into the sprawling yard hospital to be treated for unspeakable burns and wounds.**



*Building NH. Shipyard hospital as it appeared in 2012*

*Photo from the Bob Hall Collection*

**We hosted many of their wives in our home at Quarters "I".**



*Inset photo is Quarters H-I circa 1941*

*Official Navy Photograph provided by Bob Hall*



*John Hinnners family in Quarter I.*

*Official Navy Photo from the Hinnners family collection*



*Mrs. Jules James (right) aboard a hospital ship at the Charleston Navy Yard.*

*Official Navy Photo From the James Family Collection*

**Their spirits buoyed by our brilliant azaleas and magnolias. Our headlights were half blacked out so they could not be seen by enemy planes. Rationing stamps figured in every store purchase. In dour tones, H. V. Kaltenborn and Ed Murrow gave grim reports of allied advances and setbacks. Then, we would hear Hitler and Tojo on the radio vowing to kill us all. Across the street on the ship-building ways, men and women were frenetically constructing Churchill's brainchild, LSTs, 24 hours a day. The rivet guns became our lullaby at night and the welding arcs and floods our night light. As I watched the ships grow from my side-yard swing, scurrying builders and enormous elevated cranes entertained me.**

**My mother christened one of these workhorses (LST 358) that were so important to our winning the war. LST 358, commanded by George Sweet -with whom I recently made contact -- served in the Mediterranean at Salerno and other landings.**



*LST 358 in Salerno.*

*Official Navy Photo provided by Bob Hall*

**In our back courtyard, I built my own battleships out of discarded wooden crates and fashioned rickety cranes to construct them. I was fascinated by the cranes traveling above the ways, noticing the hand signals men on the ground used to raise and lower the payload. During one lunch break, I crossed the street and tried it myself. The friendly operator lowered the hook, larger than me, so I could reach up and touch it- a kid's dream.**

**A few celebrities came to energize the fleet. Harpo Marx played the harp.**

*Sept 13, 1942. Byline from the Charleston Post and Courier, "Sailors yell with approval as Harpo fixes girls skirt"*

*Harpo and his assistant Muriel Goodspeed entertained the audience. Harpo played two songs on his harp, Stardust and Blue Moon. The show was the "Hollywood Follies" with Paul Geraitis as Master of Ceremonies.*

**Blackstone, the magician, made a canary and cage vanish while I and some other Navy Brats touched it.**

*March 14, 1943. Byline from the Charleston Post and Courier, "Magician Coming Here". The U.S.O. Corps Shows will present Blackstone, world famous magician. Supported by a company of assistants for two performances at 7:00pm and 9:00pm Tuesday night in the auditorium of the New Recreation Building at the Charleston Navy Yard.*

**Helen Keller came to the base hospital to raise the spirits of the wounded. Thanks to my mother's quick thinking, my sister and I got to meet her and speak with her as she touched our lips.**



*Photo inset is Helen Keller and her assistant in Quarters "A" the yard Commandant's house. The young ladies are Eleanor James Jr. and her school mates.*

*Official Navy Photograph, From the James Family Collection. Photo contributed by Bob Hall*

**My circle of playmates included the youngest daughter Mable James of the base commandant, Admiral Jules James, at whose palatial home we met screen heart-throb, Tyrone Power.**



*Left: Eleanor James Jr.*

*Right: Anne James*

*Front: Mable James*

*Photo from the James Family Collection. Photo provided by Bob Hall*

Quarters "A", the Commandants house as young John Hinners would have played there. Circa 1943 (Official Navy Photograph)



*Note the landscaping*

**The Admiral's property included other delights: a restored rail club car, a milk cow that chased us screaming out of her pasture, and afternoon concerts by the base band. I would dress in my sailor suit and play along with them on my bass drum.**

**Gradually, inklings of victory eased our fears, and the pace of life on the base slowed. German POWs, relieved to be out of the fighting, mowed our lawns and trimmed our bushes. They became our exotic friends, throwing a ball so we could hit it and relating their war experiences by drawing on the sidewalk with chalk.**

**My friends and I got into trouble twice: Once by playing inside a steel compartment stored near the launching ways, and the second time, by "flying" a carrier plane which was parked in a storage field. That time, MPs kicked us out and the plane was removed. What were they thinking that we wouldn't be tempted?**

**As calm began to settle into our lives, the Naval Officer's tradition of calling on colleagues on Sunday afternoon was restored. There was a tray for calling cards by the front door.**



*The tray was presented by the Tidewater Officer's Wives Club to Mrs. John Derr. John was the Tidewater's Executive Officer (1968-70) Provided by Bob Hall*



**Three shocking events intervened: a polio scare that had all the kids quarantined; the sudden death of FDR, which simply could not comprehend.**



*Admiral Jules James and service representatives at Warm Springs Georgia, placing FDR's Casket onto his train.*

*Official Navy Photo from the James Family Collection. Photo provided by Bob Hall*

**Dropping the atom bomb, which I could not reconcile with victory.**

**Then, shortly before we left Charleston for suburban DC, I began watching a ship like no other grow on "my" launching ways. The USS Tidewater seemed too big to build where manageable LSTs had ruled for so long in my short life. I did not know what they were building. I wanted to go over there and tell them that they had gotten it wrong. They had the plans wrong *and* that nothing that big could be launched. On this last point I**



**was partly right.**

**As a special treat, all the yard kids were invited to ride down the ways on this enormous Queen of the Cooper. It was the highlight of my stay in Charleston.**

*Photo inset is the Tidewater sliding down the launching ways. Official Navy photo.*

*A contest was held among the yard workers to sell the most war bonds. The winners would ride the ship down the ways. There were about 300 onboard for the launching.*



*Photo inset is Ms. Elma England, a former shipyard welder. Elma helped build the Tidewater and was one of the contest winners. She rode the ship with John down the launching ways. Elma is a member of the Tidewater Association and resides in Charleston. She recently participated in the Citadel's WWII oral history program that included her time at the yard. We are still adding histories. Photo provided by Bob Hall*

**I recall the USS Tidewater slid quite slowly, glided into the water, and with a slight bump, stuck on a sand bar in the middle of the Cooper River. The tugs could not budge it. We had to wait for several hours for the tide to lift us off the bar before we could be towed to dry-dock for fitting out.**



*Photo provided by Bob Hall*

*The photo above is the Tidewater at Pier "C" for the fitting out process. Official Navy Photo, 4 Jan. 1944*  
**For a child like me, life in the Navy Yard was an adventure. I did not know how easy I had it compared to the adults around me who worked so hard to win the war. I look back on their tireless work, remembering my dad on the phone at all hours dealing with setbacks in repairing damaged ships. King George awarded him an MBE (*Honorary Member of the British Empire*) for his work on three British cruisers. He surely earned it, as did thousands of others who had to be satisfied with our heart-felt thanks**



*Quarters A circa 1943, from the James Family personal photo collection. Photo provide by Bob Hall*



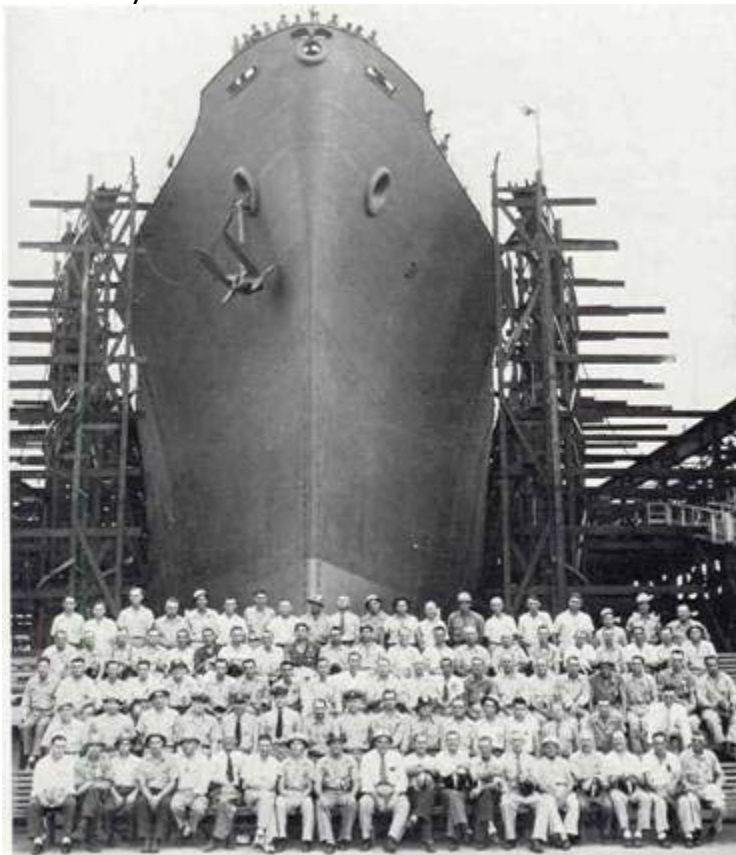
*Above: Quarters Q, formerly Quarters H-I. After WWII the building was designated Quarters Q and used for B.O.Q housing. It is now been refurbished and is used as the "Admin Building" in the television show Army Wives. This photo was taken February, 2012. The awnings had been removed for cleaning and additional landscaping completed before the season's filming begins. Additionally several homes along "Officers Row" are used in the television show, shown below.*







"Officers Wives" is filmed entirely in and around Charleston and the Navy Yard.  
Photos by Bob Hall



This is the official Navy photo taken before launching. The photo was initially used in the shipyard newspaper "Produce to Win". Also released to the "Charleston Post and Courier". Photo courtesy of the National Archives.





The photo above shows German prisoners of war enjoying southern fried chicken at the Charleston Navy Yard. They were rescued when the Coast Guard Cutter Icarus sank their U Boat U-352 off the coast of Beaufort, N.C. Photo courtesy National Archives