

From the "All Hands November Edition 1956"

*WHAT'S IN A NAME*

Early in 1947 a doughty old gunboat, manned only by memories, was used by a San Francisco barge company to remove a sunken tug from the waters off Hunter's Point. After raising the hulk the gunboat carried it out to sea, where both tug and gunboat were to be sunk together.

The tug settled to the bottom quickly, but at the last minute the gunboat broke away and shot her bow 75 feet into the air in a last gesture of farewell. Then the waters closed in over one of the oldest, most colorful ships to see service in World War II.

She was USS Dover (IX 30), whose career had spanned half a century, three wars, and service under 30 skippers, more than half of whom had gone on to flag rank. Three times she had been a proud flagship for admirals and her bow had sliced the world's waters from the Yangtze to the Amazon and the Indian Ocean to the Great Lakes. For most of her lifetime she had been USS Wilmington (PG-8), but in 1941, when that name was passed on to a new cruiser, she was renamed Dover.

Launched 19 Oct 1895, Dover was commissioned two years later. In the Spanish-American War she captured two enemy schooners and two fishing vessels, helped destroy several Spanish gunboats and fought valiantly against enemy shore batteries at Cardenas and Manzanillo, Cuba. After the war she made an extended good will tour of South America, which included an independent cruise up the then little known Orinoco and Amazon Rivers.

In 1900 she was ordered to the Far East, where the Boxer Rebellion and Philippine Insurrection were making things hot for Uncle Sam. She arrived in Manila 21 Jan 1901 after three-month voyage via Gibraltar, the Suez, Red Sea and Indian Ocean, and for the next 21 years remained in Asiatic waters, either in the Philippines or China. Her World War I service consisted of Philippine patrols out of Olongapo, Cavite and Mariveles Harbor and in the post-war years she was back in China where she was flagship of the Asiatic Fleet and later, of the Yangtze River Patrol.

Dover came home from the Far East in September 1922, after a difficult, stormy voyage that had forced her to accept a tow by USS Sapelo (AO 11) from the Azores to Portsmouth, RI. Then followed 20 years as a training ship for Naval Reserve units on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. During that period she was selected for another good-will voyage, returning to the Canadian government a Parliamentary Mace which had been captured by American troops in the War of 1812.

World War II saw Dover's return to salt water and about the toughest trip she ever made. In November 1942 she was picked to serve as a training ship for armed-guard crews at San Francisco. On the way there she survived a fight with ice fields off Quebec, a 90 mile gale, a collision with an ice-breaker, another tangle with some barges in the East River and a suspense packed voyage through 3800 miles of submarine haunted waters. But, she reached her destination and carried out her wartime duties with flying colors.

When the war ended Dover's days were numbered. By the time she was finally sold on 30 Dec 1946 she was the oldest ship in full commission in the entire United States Navy.

Shortly afterward, the distinguished veteran was buried at sea.