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*Ann's Choice Residents and Guests are invited to attend Veterans Group Programs and Events-
(Meetings are open to ALL residents)*

NEXT MEETING:

**October 16, 2018
at 7:30 pm, Ann's Choice PAC**

The October meeting will be on Tuesday, October 16 at 7:30 in the PAC. Ann's Choice resident Richard Hartman



will present a program on "Forgotten Heroes of the American Revolution". Learn the history of forgotten heroes who made possible victory in the long and uncertain war of the American

Revolution, and why they are not in US History textbooks.



As always, this program is open to all residents of Ann's Choice. There is no charge for the program.

Veterans Group Members are encouraged to wear their Veterans Group shirts.

Volunteer and Service Opportunities

There is a continuing need for help with the program to drive veterans to the Horsham VA Center. Volunteers do not have to be veterans themselves in order to assist veterans getting to their appointments. Call Judy Wright at 215-674-2328 for information about the program or to schedule a ride.

Volunteers are also needed to help with the Deployable Flags Program. For more information or to volunteer call Jerry Wright at 215-674-2328.

New Members

A big welcome to Jean Ann McCloskey (US Navy, 1960 - 1965) who recently joined the Ann's Choice Veteran's Group.

Save the Date -

**November Veterans Day Service
in the PAC**

(Note: Start time will be 10:30 am)

On Friday November 9, 2018 starting at 10:30 am the Veterans Group invites residents for a remembrance of the 100th anniversary of the "Eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month" when hostilities ceased in World War I.



Please note, there will be muffled battlefield background noise until 11:00.

Patriotic Bouquet Raffle



Also at the October 16 meeting, you can win this beautiful patriotic bouquet in a Skill Raffle Drawing. The drawing is open to all Ann's Choice residents and staff.

Tickets are \$2 each or \$5 for three tickets.

You do not need to be present to win. The winner will need to answer a simple "skill" question about our country.

Tickets will be available at 7:00 before the meeting.

USS Nicholas

USS Nicholas (DD/DDE-449) was a *Fletcher*-class destroyer of the United States Navy, which served through most of World War II, and for 27 years and two more wars.

It's been 70 years since John Basilone, who grew up in Raritan, NJ was killed in World War II action on Iwo Jima. Basilone had returned to battle after being the first enlisted Marine in World War II to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for bravery earlier on Guadalcanal.

Raritan has kept alive the memory of its hometown hero through the decades. The biggest commemoration of Basilone is the annual fall Basilone Memorial Parade. The grand marshal of the September 2015 parade was Tony Lettieri, who was born in Raritan in 1926 and served on the destroyer *USS Nicholas* during World War II. Tony is a retired science teacher from Middletown; he and his wife

Peggy are now residents of Ann's Choice.

For the first half of WW II, Lettieri was too young to join the military. But he remembers the John Basilone Welcome Home Parade in September 1943 which celebrated Basilone being awarded the

Congressional Medal of Honor. A few days after the parade, Lettieri joined the Navy and served for two years on the *USS Nicholas* in the Pacific. The ship covered troop landings, shelled Japanese positions and sank a Japanese submarine.



Tony Lettieri (right) and fellow gunner Snuffy Bryne from West Virginia on the *USS Nicholas*

1941 - 1942

The *Nicholas* was laid on March 3, 1941 at Bath Iron Works, Bath, Maine and commissioned on June 4, 1942. It displaced 2,050 tons, length was 376.5 feet, beam was 39.67 feet and draft was 17.75 feet. The crew complement was 336, range was 6,500 nautical miles. It was armed with five 5"/38 caliber dual purpose (surface and anti-aircraft) guns, ten 40 mm AA guns, seven 20 mm guns, ten 21 inch torpedo tubes, and six depth charge projectors. The *Nicholas* left New York City in August 1942 and the next month was in the Solomon Islands escorting Guadalcanal-bound troop and supply convoys.

1943

Beginning with its arrival in 1943 through the end of hostilities, *Nicholas* served in many engagements

in the South Pacific.

In early January 1943, *Nicholas* was one of the Tulagi-based "Cactus Striking Force" (Task Force 67) destroyers which resisted the Japanese last counterattack for Guadalcanal by pounding the newly built enemy air facilities at Munda, New Georgia. The strike force also shelled the enemy fortifications at Kokumbona-Cape



Esperance (northern-most point on Guadalcanal.) In 1943, Cape Esperance was the site of the final Japanese withdrawal of troops from the island after six months of fierce resistance against occupying US Marines.

On February 1, as the Japanese began the evacuation of Guadalcanal, *Nicholas* covered the 2nd Battalion, 132nd Infantry, landing at Verahue and supported them during their trek inland to seal off the Cape Esperance area to Japanese reinforcements. While returning to Tulagi *Nicholas*, *De Haven* and 3 LCTs, (Landing Craft, Tank amphibious assault craft) were attacked by a formation of 14 Aichi D3A "Val" carrier-based dive bombers. Three bombs hit *De Haven* and a fourth, a near miss, put a hole the hull. As *De Haven* settled in the waters of Iron Bottom Sound (southern end of "The Slot", so named because of the dozens of ships and planes sunk there during the Battle of Guadalcanal), *Nicholas* fought off eight planes, receiving only near misses which killed two of her crew and damaged the steering gear.

Following repairs, in March *Nicholas* performed escort assignments and participated in two bombardments of the Munda-Kolombangara area of New Georgia. In April, she joined Task Force 18 for "Slot" patrol in the middle of the Solomon Islands. On the 19th she turned her bow toward Australia for maintenance at Sydney.

By May 11 she was once again with Task Force 18 in route to Kolombangara. On the 13th, while firing on enemy positions, her #3 gun jammed and exploded, with no casualties. After repairs at Nouméa, New Caledonia (in the southwest Pacific) she took up antisubmarine patrol duties and later resumed escort duties in the Solomons-New Hebrides area.

(continued on page 3)

(USS *Nicholas*, continued from page 2)

On July 5 she participated in another bombardment of Kolombangara. In the early morning hours



of the 6th she made contact with enemy surface vessels in Kula Gulf

(waterway in the western Solomon Islands). In the battle, *Helena* was lost. *Nicholas*, while rescuing 291 survivors, took on the Japanese ships under torpedo and gun fire. *Nicholas* and *Radford* were later awarded Presidential Unit Citations for their persevering performance during the Battle of Kula Gulf – a token, Admiral Chester Nimitz told the crew, of "the respect and esteem which this ship, her officers and men have well-earned throughout the Navy."

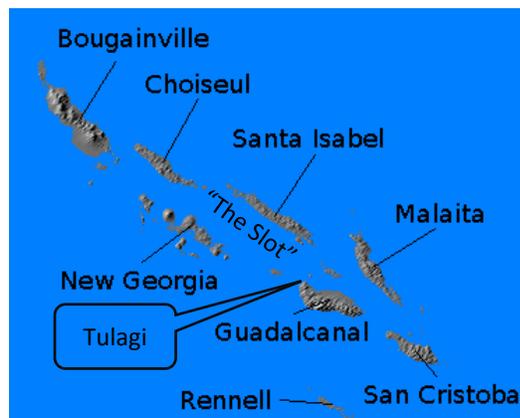
In mid-July *Nicholas* participated in the Battle of Kolombangara, covering the rescue of remaining *Helena* survivors from Vella LaVella (an island west of New Georgia). On the 16th she returned to Tulagi to resume escort duties.

In early August, she joined Task Unit 31.5.1 and screened the advance transport group during landings at Barakoma, Vella LaVella. Back at Tulagi on the 17th, *Nicholas*, *O'Bannon*, *Chevalier* and *Taylor* were sent to intercept four Rabaul-based Japanese destroyers as they headed for Vella LaVella to cover the establishment of a barge staging area. (Rabaul is at the northern tip of New Britain, and is northwest of Bougainville.)

Racing up the "Slot" on August 18, the American destroyers picked up the Japanese ships on surface radar at 00:29, 11 miles away. To the west the radar showed a barge group. At 00:50, the American ships feinted toward the barges. Then at 00:56, they swung back toward the enemy destroyers, five miles to the northwest. In the brief engagement the Japanese "crossed the T" of the American forces but failed to press their advantage; the attack was broken off by the Japanese at 01:03. (Note: "Crossing the T" is a classic warfare tactic in which a line of warships crosses in front of a line of enemy ships, allowing the crossing line to bring all their guns to bear while receiving fire from only the forward guns of the enemy) The American force pursued, scored on the *Isokaze*. However engineering problems in *Chevalier* limited them to 30 knots and they had to drop behind. They then turned their attention to the scattering barge group, destroying two sub chasers, two motor torpedo

boats, and a barge.

Nicholas returned to Vella LaVella in late August for barge hunts and to cover mining operations. At the end of the month she steamed to Nouméa and then to New Guinea and Australia. Back in the Solomons



by October, she conducted another search for barge traffic. On October 6 she covered amphibious operations at Barakoma. Then, on October 22, she

steamed to Efate (an island in Shefa Province in Vanuatu) to resume escort duties.

On November 11 *Nicholas* departed Nadi, Fiji Islands, with Task Group 50.1 for raids on Kwajalein (in the Marshall Islands) and Wotje (coral atoll in the Marshall Islands), after which she headed east, arriving at San Francisco on December 15 for overhaul.

1944

Tony Lettieri joined the crew of the *Nicholas* in San Francisco. Tony and his gun partner, John O'Neil from Massachusetts, manned a 40 mm gun next to the starboard side of the bridge.

Just like 1943, during 1944 *Nicholas* was assigned to various operations as their part of the war effort.

According to Tony – "As far as a typical day: the ship was our home (without liberty) for two years. Our only recreation was a nightly gathering at the fantail - someone would play a guitar and I my harmonica. When we anchored, we may see a movie. At one time we saw Bob Hope and his group at Subic Bay in the Philippines."

In February *Nicholas* resumed Central and South Pacific escort duties. On April 5 as part of Destroyer Squadron 21, she proceeded to southeastern Papua New Guinea for temporary duty with the Seventh Fleet. On the 22nd, she covered the Aitape (small town on the north coast of Papua New Guinea) landings. Until May 8 she escorted resupply groups there and to Humboldt Bay (small bay on the north coast of New Guinea). Afterwards, she returned to the Solomons and joined the 3rd Fleet for shelling Medina Plantation, New Ireland (island north of New Britain), on the 29th.

Nicholas joined the 7th Fleet on June 14th, serving (continued on page 4)

(USS *Nicholas*, continued from page 3)

with Task Group 70.8 in the northern Solomons on antisubmarine patrol. On 15 August she sailed to Manus Island (northern Papua New Guinea) to join Task Force 74 and until the 27th operated along the New Guinea coast. She then returned to Seadler Harbor (on Manus Island) to support the Morotai operation in September (Morotai is a rugged island in the Moluccas, in northernmost Indonesia.)

In mid-October, *Nicholas*, now in Task Group 78.7 escorted reinforcements to Leyte. She patrolled northeast of Mindanao in the Philippines, and on the 27th set out again for Manus. In November she patrolled in the Caroline Islands, where a floating repair base was located. On the 12th *Nicholas*, *Taylor* and *St. Louis* was closed by a Japanese submarine. Leaving the formation, *Nicholas* pressed home two depth charge attacks, sinking the sub.

Nicholas joined Task Group 77.1 on patrol of the southern end of Leyte Gulf. There until December 6 she survived four kamikaze attacks in late November and early December. During one, according to Tony "It is now the belief that at the moment he was about to slam into us, he saw a cruiser nearby. He thought a cruiser was a better target than a destroyer, so - he changed direction at the last moment in an attempt to hit the cruiser. Fortunately, he was shot down before he succeeded. He was so close, I actually saw the pilot's face." On December 6 she assisted in a sweep of the Camotes Sea (small sea within the Philippine archipelago), bombarded Japanese Naval facilities on Ormoc Bay on Leyte and then covered Allied landings there. On the 10th she sailed for Manus, returning to Leyte on the 28th for further escort work.

1945

On January 1, 1945, *Nicholas* joined Task Group 77.3, the Close Support Group for the Lingayen Gulf assault. In route to Luzon, the group was harassed by enemy midget submarines and almost constant air raids. After a two-day bombardment, Army troops landed at Lingayen Gulf on January 9. *Nicholas* provided fire support until the 18th, and then patrolled west of Luzon with the covering escort carrier group. On the 24th, she captured a motor boat being used by three Japanese escaping from the island. On the 29th she provided close cover for the landings in Zambales Province.

During early February *Nicholas* escorted vessels between Leyte and Mindoro. Then she proceeded to Manila Bay to shell Corregidor, other islands in Manila Bay, and shore installations. Resuming escort work on the 17th, she guarded minesweepers

as they cleared Basilan Strait (off the tip of Zamboanga) in mid-March and then supported the occupation of the Zamboanga area. In April she returned to Luzon to support the Sixth Army as it fought to reoccupy the island and then on the 24th resumed operations in the Netherlands East Indies.

From then until May 5 she supported the Tarakan operation after which she steamed north again to Luzon, and then to Leyte to join Task Unit 30.12.2; on June 15th the unit departed for Okinawa. Following strikes on Saki-shima, she joined Task Group 30.8 at Ulithi and screened that group as it refueled and resupplied the fast aircraft carriers at sea. On August 11 she reported to CTG 38.4, a fast carrier task group. On the 13th she screened the carriers during strikes against the Tokyo area.

On the 15th hostilities ceased.

Approaching Japan in August 1945, Admiral William Halsey, commander of the U.S. Third Fleet ordered that *Nicholas*, *O'Bannon* and *Taylor* be present in Tokyo Bay for Japan's surrender. Tony relates "We were given the honor to lead the entire task force into Tokyo Bay and then transport representatives to the USS *Missouri* for the peace ceremony. I will always remember standing next to Doolittle and Wainwright".

Nicholas then joined in the repatriation of Allied POWs. Departing the Far East on October 5, she arrived at Seattle on the 19th and continued on to San Pedro, arriving on November 1 to begin inactivation.

1946

Decommissioned on June 12, 1946, *Nicholas* remained in the Pacific Reserve Fleet until hostilities in Korea necessitated her recall.

Article based on dinner conversation and email with Tony and Peggy, article on the parade at MyCentralJersey.com, various links on Wikipedia and The Pacific War Online Encyclopedia © 2007-2008, 2010 by Kent G. Budge

