

## ***Naval Ships Named for Richmonders***

### **USS Samuel L. Gravely DDG-107**

Samuel Lee Gravely, Jr. (June 4, 1922 - October 22, 2004) was an African-American pioneer in the United States Navy: the first African American in the U.S. Navy to serve aboard a fighting ship as an officer, the first to command a Navy ship, the first fleet commander, and the first to become a flag officer, retiring as a vice admiral.

Gravely was born on June 4, 1922 in Richmond, Virginia, the oldest of five children of Mary George Gravely and postal worker Samuel L. Gravely, Sr. He attended Virginia Union University but left before graduating to join the Naval Reserve in 1942. He had attempted to enlist in the U.S. Army in 1940 but was turned away due to a supposed heart murmur.

After receiving basic training at Great Lakes, Illinois, Gravely entered the V-12 Navy College Training Program at University of California, Los Angeles. Upon graduating from UCLA, he completed Midshipmen's School at Columbia University and was commissioned an ensign on November 14, 1944. His commission came only eight months after the "Golden Thirteen" became the first African-American officers in the U.S. Navy.

The USS Gravely is an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer in the United States Navy. She is named after Vice Admiral Samuel L. Gravely, Jr.

Gravely is the 57th destroyer in her class. She was authorized on 13 September 2002 and her keel was laid down on 26 November 2007 at Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding's Ingalls Shipbuilding shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi. Gravely was launched on 30 March 2009. She successfully completed sea trial in June 2010.

Alma B.C. Gravely, Adm. Gravely's widow, christened Gravely, Northrop Grumman's 27th Aegis guided missile destroyer, on 16 May 2009. Retired Navy Adm. Gravely was commissioned at Wilmington, North Carolina on 20 November 2010 under the command of Commander Douglas Kunzman.

### **USS Ellyson DD-454**

Theodore Gordon Ellyson, born 27 February 1885 in Richmond, Va., was the first naval officer designated an aviator. He served in experimental development of aviation, and established the Naval Aviation Camp at San Diego in 1911. Commander Ellyson was awarded the Navy Cross for distinguished service in World War I, for his development of successful tactics for the submarine chasers based at Plymouth, England. He was killed in a plane crash 27 February 1928.

### Naval Ships Named for Richmonders

Laid down 2 December 1940 and launched 7-25-1941 in Kearney, New Jersey by Federal Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company. Reclassified and converted to Highspeed Minesweeper, DMS-19, 15 November 1944. Reclassified back to a Destroyer, DD-454, 4 May 1954. Decommissioned, 19 October 1954

Struck from the Naval Register and transferred to Japan 20 October 1954 as Asakaze (DD 181). Decommissioned in October 1969. Returned to U.S. custody in December 1969.

Transferred to Taiwan in October 1970. Did not enter active service with Taiwan's navy, but was retained for spares and repair needs. Used as a prop in a 1976 Taiwanese naval action film and sunk as part of a 'sea battle'

### USS Major DE-796

Charles Nance Major, born 24 February 1915 in Richmond, Va., enlisted in the Naval Reserve 1 August 1940. Following training in *Arkansas* and in Midshipman's School at Chicago, he was commissioned ensign 14 March 1941. He served in *Leary* from April until December when he reported to Norfolk for duty in the 5th Naval District. On 9 February 1942 he reported to the Armed Guard Center at New York City for duty in SS *R. P. Resor*, a tanker owned by Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey. The tanker loaded a cargo of bulk crude oil at Houston, Tex.; and, while steaming for Fall River, Mass., she was torpedoed off Manasquan, N.J., by *U-578* late 26 February. The German torpedo exploded against the tanker's portside. Explosions and raging fires engulfed *R. P. Resor* from her bridge aft, and she burned out of control before sinking 2 days later. All but two of the merchant crew and armed guard, including Ensign Major, died in the attack.

*Major* (DE-796) was laid down by Consolidated Steel Corp., Orange, Texas, 16 August 1943; launched 23 October 1943; sponsored by Ens. Margaret Roper Major, Ensign Major's widow; and was commissioned at Orange, Texas, 12 February 1944.

- 16 August 1943: Keel laid by the Consolidated Steel Corp., Ltd., Orange, Tex.
- 23 October 1943: Launched and christened, sponsored by Ens. Margaret Roper Major, Ensign Major's widow
- 12 February 1944: Commissioned at Orange, Tex., LCD. O. W. Goepner in command
- 13 March 1948: Decommissioned at Long Beach, Cal. after 4 years and 1 month of service;
- berthed with the Pacific Reserve Fleet at Stockton, Cal.
- 01 December 1972: Struck from the NVR
- 27 November 1973: Sold for scrapping

## Naval Ships Named for Richmonders

### USS Price DE-332

Edward Max Price, born in Richmond, Va. on 20 June 1916, grew up in Charleston, W.V. After attending Lincoln Grade School in Charleston; Hargrave Military Academy (Class of 1932) in Chatham, Virginia; and Concord State College, Athens, West Virginia; he was appointed Midshipman at the United States Naval Academy on 16 July 1935. Graduating as number 26 in his class of 550, he was commissioned Ensign on 01 June 1939, and assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Lexington (CV 2).

Promoted to Lieutenant (junior grade) on 01 November 1941, Lieutenant Price was officer in charge of weapons in the after-control station of Lexington. He was responsible for the training and action of the automatic gun crews, and when in battle he directed the aim for his gunners. On the second day of the Coral Sea Battle, 08 May 1942, the Japanese were coming at Lexington from all directions. The dive bombers zoomed close. Their deadly missiles fell all about the marked ship. The men were too busy to think of dodging them. Their minds were centered on their jobs. Their young officer's attention was focused on the job he had to do - fight off the Japanese planes. A bomb whistled close - then exploded. A fragment struck Lieutenant Price. He died giving the command "Keep firing!" And his gun crew did. Although Lexington sank later that day, those surviving shipmates remembered the young lieutenant and his orders.

*USS Price* (DE-332) was laid down by the Consolidated Steel Corp., Orange, Tex., 24 August 1943; launched 30 October 1943; sponsored by Mrs. Ray P. Reynolds; and commissioned 12 January 1944, Lt. Comdr. J. W. Higgins, Jr., USNR, in command.

- 24 August 1943: Keel laid at the Consolidated Steel Corp., Orange, Tex.
- 30 October 1943: Launched and christened, sponsored by Mrs. Ray P. Reynolds
- 12 January 1944: Commissioned, LCDR J. W. Higgins, Jr., USNR, in command
- 16 May 1947: Decommissioned at Green Cove Springs, Fla. after 3 years and 4 months of service
- 21 October 1955: Reclassified and converted DER 332 at the New York Naval Shipyard, Brooklyn, N.Y.
- 01 August 1956: Recommissioned at New York City, N.Y., assigned to CortRon 18 at Newport, R.I.
- 30 June 1960: Decommissioned at Orange, Tex. after 3 years and 11 months of service
- 01 August 1974: Struck from the NVR with a total of 8 years and 3 months of service
- 12 March 1975: Sold for scrapping

### USS Wingfield DE-194

John David Wingfield, born in Richmond, Va., on 4 November 1916, enlisted in the United States Naval Reserve at Washington, D.C., on 15 November 1940 and was appointed an aviation cadet on 5 February 1941. Following flight training at Jacksonville and Miami, Fla., he was

### Naval Ships Named for Richmonders

appointed a naval aviator on 20 August 1941 and was commissioned an ensign in the United States Naval Reserve on 5 September 1941. After further training in the Advanced Carrier Training Group, Pacific Fleet, he reported for duty to Scouting Squadron Two on 28 December 1941.

He was awarded the American Defense Service Medal and the Navy Cross: "For extraordinary heroism and valiant disregard for his own personal safety as pilot of a scouting plane in action against enemy Japanese forces in the Coral Sea on 8 May 1942. With keen determination in pursuing his objective, Ensign Wingfield, when his bomb failed to release during his initial dive on an enemy Japanese carrier, gallantly returned to the scene of attack without protection or support to complete his assigned mission." He failed to return from this mission.

*USS Wingfield* (DE-194) was laid down on 7 October 1943 at Newark, N.J., by the Federal Shipbuilding and Drydock Corporation; launched on 30 December 1943; sponsored by Mrs. E. E. Wingfield; and commissioned on 28 January 1944, Lt. Comdr. H. E. Purdy in command.

- 07 October 1943: Keel laid at the Federal Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Co., Port Newark, N.J.
- 30 December 1943: Launched and christened, sponsored by Mrs. E. E. Wingfield
- 28 January 1944: Commissioned, LCD H. E. Purdy in command
- 26 August 1947: Decommissioned at Green Cove Springs, Fla. after 3 years and 7 months of service
- 15 September 1950: Transferred to France under terms of the Military Defense Assistance Program, renamed *Sakalave* (F-720) (Sold, scrapped 1960)
- 20 October 1950: Stuck from the NVR

### USS Upshur T-AP-198

William Peterkin Upshur, born on 28 October 1881 in Richmond, Va., graduated from the Virginia Military Institute and received a commission as second lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps on 1 February 1904. Over the ensuing three and one-half decades, Upshur rose in rank and eventually became a major general on 1 October 1939.

After tours of sea duty in the Marine detachments of *Maine* (Battleship No. 10) and *Kearsarge* (Battleship No. 5), Upshur successively served ashore at Panama; the Marine Barracks at Norfolk, Va.; Port Royal, S.C.; and Mare Island, Calif., before being ordered to the transport *Buffalo*. Assignments with Marine detachments in the Philippine Islands and in China preceded his return home for duty at the Marine Barracks in Philadelphia, Pa.

During his next tour of duty, in Haiti, Upshur won the Medal of Honor. While his detachment of mounted Marines forded a river in a deep ravine, they came under the fire of some 400 Haitian Caco bandits from an ambush. Leading his men forward through the heavy fusillade, Upshur succeeded in establishing a defensive position which protected his command for the night. At daybreak on the following day, 24 October 1915, Upshur led a fierce counterattack which caught the Cacos unawares and routed them. This action materially aided the Marines in their eventual capture of the Haitian stronghold, Fort Dipitie.

### Naval Ships Named for Richmonders

Following his return to the continental United States, Upshur performed shore duty at Philadelphia; Annapolis, Md.; and Quantico, Va., before sailing for France in World War I. Following the war, he served in shore billets in repeat tours at Philadelphia, Quantico, and Haiti, before attending the Army Staff School at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1924 and 1925.

Serving in *California* (BB-44) on the staff of the Commander, Battle Force, United States Fleet, in 1929. Upshur attended the Naval War College in 1931; and served briefly at Headquarters, Marine Corps, in Washington, D.C., before attending the Army War College. In the late 1930's Upshur again served ashore at Headquarters, Marine Corps; and later commanded the Marine Corps Base at San Diego.

Upshur's last post was that of Commander, Headquarters of the Department of the Pacific, at San Diego, a billet which he filled on 9 December 1941. Major General Upshur subsequently died as a result of injuries suffered in a plane ash near Sitka, Alaska, on 21 July 1943.

The USNS *Upshur* (T-AP-198), was a Barrett Class<sup>[1]</sup> transport named in honor of Major General William P. Upshur, United States Marine Corps

- Laid down as SS *President Hayes*, a Maritime Commission type (P2-S1-DN3) hull, under Maritime Commission contract (MC hull 2916), 1 September 1949, for American President Lines at New York Shipbuilding Corp., Camden, N.J.
- Launched, 1 January 1951
- Reassigned to the US Navy and renamed Upshur, while under conversion
- Acquired by the Navy, 1 December 1952; and placed in service by the *Military Sea Transportation Service* (MSTS) as USNS Upshur (T-AP-198), the same day
- Placed out of service, 2 April 1973, title passed to MARAD
- Transferred to the *Maritime Administration* (MARAD), 2 April 1973, and loaned to Maine Maritime Academy, Castine, ME. the same day
- Renamed TS *State of Maine*
- Returned to MARAD in 1990 for lay up in the National Defense Reserve Fleet, Mobile, AL.
- Assigned to the US Coast Guard as a testing platform for the US Coast Guard Fire & Safety Test Detachment, Mobile, AL.