

The US Navy makes Shellbacks out of Pollywogs when “Crossing the Line”

By Jim Ward

The Navy can still have a little fun at sea—here are the pictures to prove it. They were taken in April of 1944 as the newly commissioned Bataan sailed on a southwesterly course toward what was to be our first taste of combat. *Shot below is at anchorage; a CVL is in the foreground at left.*



We had lifted anchor from a massive gathering at the atoll of **Majuro** and headed for Hollandia and Wadke to support an island hopping operation. MacArthur was closing in on the Philippines.

As we would be “Crossing the Line” (Earth’s Equator), the Task Force Commander gave us some “time off” so the old salts “shellbacks” could have some traditional fun initiating the “pollywogs” (newbies) aboard.

Shown below is Captain Shaeffer on the right, welcoming King Neptune and his court.



Next, the Royal Court sits to observe the rites of passage including the presentation of the “pollywogs”.....



Prior to his presentation to King Neptune’s Court, V-1 Division Officer Lt. Bosee (with his arm in a sling), gets special haircut from the Royal Barber.





A final shot of the flight deck as viewed from above the Bataan's island with the pollywogs "running the gauntlet" to become "shellbacks".



And the final result? Here is my (slightly yellowed) "Shellback" certificate framed, with the Captain's signature and ship's seal, complete with King Neptune's portrait and flanked by lovely Mermaids.

IMPERIUM NEPTUNI REGIS



GO ALL SATURS THEREFTER YE WISE BE:
 Mithras, Jorda, Gylfons, Edda, Mithra, Jackson, Krebs, Seltens and all other "Strong Things of the Sea"
 CREATING THEM IN THAT ON THE 17 day of April 1899 in Baltimore, Maryland, Templethor, General
 there appeared within Court Royal of London the U.S.S. Batavia found Sault for the Equator
 and for every water

BY THE SIGNATURE

That the said vessel and Lighter and crew thereof have been inspected and passed on by myself and our Royal High
 Lord the 15th Baron, by all the said Masters, Mithras, Jackson, Krebs, Seltens and others who may be honored by his presence that

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having been found worthy to be numbered as one of our Truly, Mithras, Jackson, Krebs, Seltens and all other "Strong Things of the Sea"

SOLEMN MYSTERIES OF THE ANCIENT ORDER OF THE DEEP

By the Royal High Lord the 15th Baron, by all the said Masters, Mithras, Jackson, Krebs, Seltens and others who may be honored by his presence that

all my subjects to show the honor and respect to them whenever they may be
 Disobey this order under penalty of Our Royal Displeasure

Given under our hand and seal this 17 day of April 1899

Neptunus Rex

Ruler of the Hanging Mithras

