

Norman STUBBS

Born: 30 March 1921

Parents: Son of Samuel and Charlotte Margaret Stubbs of Southbourne Sussex

School Years: 1932 – 1936

House – Story

Prize - Form IV - Spring Term 1936

Oxford School Certificate – Pass - December 1936

Exemption from London University matriculation

Post School – 42nd place on list of R.N. Artificer Examination

Civilian Occupation: Jockey

Armed Forces Record

Service Rank: Engine Room Artificer 4th Class

Service Number: P/MX 54062

Service Record: HMS Grasshopper – Gunboat –Yangtze River–China Station

POW Camps: – Medan & Padang, Batavia

Date of Death - 26 June 1944



HMS Grasshopper (Google)

'Gunboat' – China Station - Yangtze



'Hell Ship' Harugiku Maru (Google)

(Formerly SS Van Waerwijck)

In the BBC TV's political comedy series 'Yes Minister', episode 'The Official Visit', at a meeting in Jim Hacker's office the Foreign Secretary in an effort to solve a problem blurts out "in the old days of the Empire this sort of thing could be resolved by sending a gunboat". To the astonishment of those present, and the amusement of Sir Humphrey Appleby, Hacker nearly fell for it! Hacker had forgotten that this phrase had long been used to wind up exasperating arguments from when it was decided that muscle was preferred over diplomacy.

Gunboat Diplomacy

This was the pursuit of foreign policy objectives with the aid of conspicuous displays of naval power. In other words, a continuous presence maintained particularly in China, by Britain, the US and France to protect their citizens and commercial interests.

It referred to British gunboats of the Yangtze Flotilla, China Station which had maintained river patrols for the best part of a century. In the 1930's China was at war with Japan, and communist elements were at war with the Chinese Government threatening incidents frequently involving British nationals. The United States also deployed river gunboats. The award-winning 1976 feature film 'The Sand Pebbles', starring Steve McQueen and Richard Attenborough, vividly portrayed the tribulations facing the crew of a U.S. gunboat on the River Yangtze

During the 2nd World War three of the British river gunboats *HMS Gnat*, *HM Grasshopper* and *HMS Dragonfly* were tasked with securing the Chinese rivers as part of the gunboat squadron operating from Shanghai. They were approximately 950-ton vessels with crews numbering from forty to seventy. *Old Boy* Engine Room Artificer 4th Class Norman Stubbs was among the ship's personnel of the *Grasshopper*.

Japanese Hostility

Japan did sign the 'Geneva Convention but failed to ratify it. They grossly violated it during the 2nd World War. Their cruelty was explained by the Japanese Military's firm belief that surrender was the ultimate shame and dishonour, POW's did not deserve humane treatment.

In 1942 the Empire of Japan invaded the Malay Peninsula its army pouring down towards Rangoon at an alarming speed. It took their army only 55 days to reach Singapore Island. The threat of surrender by the British forces became imminent. The gunboats were now ordered to Singapore delivering by a retreat passage off up to 3000 British troops, who had been cut off in the swamps south of Batu Pahat by the invading Japanese army, and delivered them to Singapore Naval Base

On arrival the Gunboats were the only large ships left in Singapore Harbour, all others had sailed many to be sunk by Japanese Navy and Aircraft. The Japanese launched a massive amphibious assault across the straits of Johore, Singapore was soon to fall. *Grasshopper* and

Dragonfly left Singapore for Batavia (present day Jakarta) at 21.00 on 13th February, having taken on other personnel to evacuate them. By the following morning, they could hear the attacks by Japanese aircraft on other vessels in the distance. Sailing south they were attacked by a wave of Japanese Bombers, During the initial pass, *Grasshopper* was hit by a single bomb and caught fire When the planes returned *Dragonfly* was hit three times and sunk with a heavy loss of crew. Commander of the *Grasshopper* gave the order to abandon ship as the fire was spreading to the magazine.

The crew, among them Norman Stubbs, were ferried across to the nearby island of Posic by the ship's boats while the Japanese aircraft strafed them. They were joined by survivors from the *Dragonfly*. However the *Grasshopper* did not sink initially and after the planes had departed, several crewmen were sent back on board to scavenge supplies. Among the survivors were six captured Japanese airmen and two pregnant women who had their babies delivered by the ship's coxswain. Both boys were named after him by their mothers. Whilst on board, Petty Officer George White found Judy, the ship's dog mascot trapped below. It was she who would later locate a source of fresh water on the island. On 19th February, the remaining crew managed to commandeer a Chinese Tongan vessel, using that and the ship's boat they reached Singkep Island in the Dutch East Indies. After two days, the crew departed for Sumatra on a Chinese junk, leaving their injured in the care of the Dutch Empire. They eventually reached Sumatra and sailed through the Strait of Malacca and up the Indragiri River. When the river narrowed, the survivors commenced a 170-mile five-week trek through the hot and humid jungle. Entering a Japanese-held area they were captured four miles outside their destination Pangdan. Devastated they had missed the last ship to Columbo by 24 hours. They were put to hard work with little food or medical attention. This regime was similar in POW camps throughout the far-east. In the hands of the Japanese thousands of prisoners entered into a continuous spiral of physical and mental degradation.

'Hell Ships'

The term became used to describe ships having unpleasant living conditions with the POW's suffering crew cruelty. Most were ageing ex Dutch steam merchant ships used by the Imperial Japanese Navy to transport allied POW's out of the Dutch East Indies for forced labour in other lands including Japan. The POW's were crammed into the ships holds having bamboo bed structures for those sick and dying with little fresh air, food, water or any sanitation provision.

On 26th June 1944 'Hell Ship' *Harugiku Maru* sailing from Balewan to Pakanbaroe carrying 730 mostly British POW's being transported to build a railway when it was torpedoed by the British submarine 'HMS *Truculent*'. 177 men went down with the ship among them of the survivors of the *Dragonfly* and the *Grasshopper* including Norman STUBBS from Southbourne. He was 23.

Commemorated

Chichester High School for Boys

Chichester War Museum

Panel 85, Column1. Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Hampshire

The heroic and tragic story of the POW's became entwined with that of a pedigree Pointer bitch and is worth the telling.

THE JUDY STORY – The Dog with Six Lives'

Nearly killed by Japanese soldiers as a puppy -

Nearly drowned after falling overboard into the Yangtse from HMS *Ghat* –

Injured by an alligator in Sumatra -

Caught and trapped below deck when HMS *Grasshopper* was sunk -

Nearly killed when the 'Hell Ship' *Harigiku Maru (Van Waerwijck)* was torpedoed and sunk -

Grazed by Japanese rifle in Sumatra -

Judy was also on board the 'Hell Ship' *The Harigiku Maru* when it was torpedoed. Below decks, POW Leading Aircraftman Frank Williams R.A.F, who eventually would become the dog's life-long career, hoisted up and pushed Judy through a porthole into the sea and then waded through the sinking ship to escape overboard. Both spent hours in the water, Judy was observed by many survivors to be assisting others in the water.

For three years Judy suffered and shared the horrors and privations of war with the POWs. Like them, she became reduced to a bag of bones. She was a brave animal and her fierce determination to survive gave her fellow prisoners the encouragement to live.

An unknown prisoner wrote at the POW Medan Camp, Sumatra:

They stagger to their workplaces

Though they ought to die,

And would mutter through their beards

If that bitch can, so can I!

"That bitch" was Judy of the Royal Navy, documented and officially tagged "81A Medan" POW by an inebriated Japanese Camp Commandant, and, post-war awarded of the Dickens Medal – the animal VC.

After the War Judy became the centre of attention wherever she went. Frank Williams became restless and obtained a position in East Africa with the Overseas Food Corporation to work on the 'Groundnut Scheme'. He left his home at Portsmouth and took Judy with him. She died on 17th February 1950. He buried her in a nearby clearing to his hut at Nachingwea, Tanganyika and erected a monument. July had three litters during her turbulent life.

A truly inspirational story.

Extracts from the 'The Judy Story'- the Dog With Six Lives - by Edwin Varley 1973