

OLD NAVY

We are of the Old Navy. We call each other shipmate. Even if we haven't seen one another for years, we are always shipmates. When you have gone to sea on ships with other men and depended on one another through thick and thin, you have a connection which remains unbroken by time or distance, you know what it is to be a shipmate. Treasured memories of adventures in far away places are eagerly reminisced time and again. Recollections of difficult passages and lost friends are mutually shared. We sailed on ships of steam and teakwood decks with multi-barreled turrets of heavy caliber. The only female that we got underway with was the ship. We all loved her and would defend her against all threats whether that be an enemy at sea or some disrespectful louts in a bar ashore. We wore our dungarees and white hats with pride until the day we were judged worthy of donning wash khaki. When that day came, we happily presented ourselves to our new peers for the privilege of being INITIATED as a CREW. Not inducted but INITIATED. We endured the friendly indignities visited upon us with good cheer. When it was complete, we 'Put On The Hat'. When we crossed the Equator for the first time, we entered the realm of King Neptune and felt the sting of the shilleighle. After successfully passing the INITIATION, we became SHELLBACKS. We did these things because the sailors who came before us did the same and that was good enough reason for us. Heritage and Tradition were not just words in a book. We lived it. We held each other to a high standard and would not tolerate a slacker amongst us. A sailor's reputation rested on his skill at his rating. We were taught by hard men who had been in Harm's Way. They turned us into sailors and we never doubted them. We yearned for the sight of our next liberty port. Places like Subic Bay, Pattaya, Pusan, Keelung, Kaoshung, Sasebo and Yokosuka to name a few. After being at sea, we were more than ready to enjoy the delights of these places and headed to our favorite haunts. There we found that which we treasured the most, cold beer and accomodating young ladies eager to please us. We indulged ourselves with abandon only stopping when we ran out of money or the ship was getting underway. This was our life and we loved it.

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