Hometown Heroes

By Frank Parker
Community Contributor

I may be totally wrong when it comes to movies and theater criti-
cism. I'm not quite sure. But I watch them like a hawk, because they have the power to steer my viewing habits. I've found that small towns are far more negatively influenced than the major metropoli-

tan centers, and even when they slip back every once in a while.

I've lived in small towns in North Carolina, Massachusetts, Connec-
ticut and Florida, and actually did some part-time reviewing in Mas-

sachusetts. I was told to look for flaws and, if I didn't find any evi-
dence, then to give a good review. If these are universal small town

marchers on errors, then, in no time, the reviewers will all fall into

the same pattern. We are the positive elements of a profession before citing their res-

cuits. Does "Crimes of the Century" schedule a beginner's core class

called "A Crime Isn't Fool Proof? It's 99%? A little bias? Maybe! The

opening definition of "criticism" in my Apple computer the-

hesive notes is, "To offer written or verbal opinions or judgments or, what is wrong or bad about somebody or something."

May I cherry-pick this defini-
tion, but, as far as I'm concerned, it answers my question. With the

mind, it's easy to understand why journalism grad students have had their brains washed clean with this false-

hood. This philosophy would also interpret the real world wearings a name tag bearing the title of "critic" and proceed to do what we were trained to do.

That must we can expect!

For example, I recently went to the movie "Eat Pray Love" with Julia Roberts. I liked it, but, as a sophomoric romantic, you really can't expect me to think of any objective-ness. I thought it dragged a little in the middle, but there was more than enough there to satisfy me. Most

small town reviewers, however, were moved to negatively critical of the film.

While I was waiting for the mov-

i to begin, I noticed a group of 10 women in a cubicle of some-

ies, I suppose. Later, I saw that same group in a private room at a

local restaurant. I left my party and boldly invited their little con-

clave to dinner. I was told, "No, we are at "Eat Pray Love."

And I want you to answer a question for me, honestly and quic-

\kly. With a show of hands, one of the women said, "You mean you like the movie?"

At once, a split-second would be more accurate. 30 hands shot into the

air. That made us 30, out of 30.

I think that the movie is a com-

edy. I've asked others, and the same response tends to come back from


"They were cruisers sucking up like this," he said, holding his hand up almost verticle.

B illy Boyer saw enough of war, and the ocean, to last him a life-

time. The triumphant from Philadel-

phia enlists in the U.S. Navy in 1942 and spent the rest of the war on a "Jin

can." That's what the warships formally


NAPLES SAILOR WITNESSES PACIFIC WAR

from Harford Harbor to Hoi An Bay

By Lance Shaver
Daily News Correspondent

The sailor used the same phrase, a greyhound, for ships, to describe Pearl Harbor, the U.S. naval base in Kunming, where he saw the first time, as the Blue headed to the Pacific. Theaterno of Operations to help roll back the Japanese military power.

Sitting in the kitchen of his daughter and son-in-law's home in Pelican Bay, Billy Boyer spoke of all the campaigns he witnessed both on land and sea. His memory sometimes plays tricks with him, but almost 80 years old, but he remembers events from the war years vividly.

"He told me the same story three times, but things from 60 years ago made a big

impression," said daughter Susan Wells. "And he plays duplicate bridge, which is all about memory. He's a bridge champion at Bentley Village where you now live.

The Blue was part of a fast carrier task force, composed of some of the most pow-

erful ships in the U.S. Navy. The ship par-

cipated in the "island hopping" attacks of the Pacific war, supporting invasions of islands including Eniwetok, Peleliu, Okinawa and Okinawa. They battled submarines and enemy aircraft, including the notorious kamikaze bombers.

"You'd hear the 3-inch guns going off, and then the 40 missiles as they got closer," said Boyer. "When you had the 20-mil-

limeter cannons, you knew the planes were coming.

Fleet duty for destroyers mounted sailling on the fleet's perimeter, hunting for enemy aircraft.

"We were anchored 100 yards from the coast, where they said the enemy would come. We were on deck for hours, and we were ready to turn around, but we didn't have to," Boyer said.

"When we sailed into Tokyo Bay, it looked like a graveyard for Japanese navy vessels. There were cruisers sucking up like this," he said, holding his hand up almost verticle.

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By Frank Parker
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By posted by rill at 12:34 p.m. on Wednesday

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NAPLES SAILOR BILL BOYER WITNESSED PACIFIC WAR FROM PEARL HARBOR TO TOKYO BAY

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“In this 1943 photo, Bill Boyer, center of the back row, surrounded by several of his fellow USS Blue shipmates. In 2005, Bill Boyer, right, got together with former USS Blue shipmates to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the ship returning to San Francisco following the Allies’ defeat of Japan in World War II.”

When we fired depth charges, they didn’t sound general quarters,” said Boyer. “If you were off duty, asleep in your bunk, the explosion would come out of nowhere, and you’d think it was blowing your brains out.”

Even deadlier than the enemy, said Boyer, was the sea. Caught in a typhoon that sank three of its fellow destroyers, the Blue crew was ordered to stand by to abandon ship.

“I looked at those 40-foot waves, and I thought I was a dead man. We saw the sailors from the ships that went down, but there was no way we could stop or help them,” said Boyer. All hands were lost on the warships that sank in the storm.

As a radioman, Bill Boyer was in constant contact with the ship’s officers and often was the first to learn of war news or action assignments.

“The messages came in five-letter groups, and the officers didn’t want to be bothered with decoding,” he said.

“Then they were one-finger typists, and I could touch type.”

“Bill can still copy Morse code to this day, as well as semaphore,” said John Howell, Boyer’s son-in-law, who has accompanied Boyer to several reunions of the Blue’s ship’s company.

The crew also listened regularly to Tokyo Rose, the Japanese broadcaster who interspersed propaganda with popular American songs.

“She had such good music — Artie Shaw and Glenn Miller,” said Boyer. “And then she’d say, ‘You know what your wives are doing tonight, fellas? Nobody at home gives a damn about you.’”

The sailors believed they had been forgotten — much of the war effort was focused on the struggle against Nazi Germany — so they were overwhelmed when they returned to the U.S. mainland after the war was over.

“When we came into San Francisco, it was written on the hill in flowers, ‘Welcome Home, Third Fleet.’ People lined the Golden Gate Bridge, and the girls were throwing down stuff like women’s underwear,” remembered Boyer. “We realized Tokyo Rose was wrong.”

While he says he didn’t suffer any ill effects after the war, Boyer has not forgiven the Japanese after 65 years. “I would never buy a Japanese car. I don’t buy anything Japanese,” he said.

And his time at sea was enough. “If I never take a cruise, it’ll be too soon,” said Boyer, although he has enjoyed deep-sea fishing. He went back to Philadelphia, and worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad, retiring as a yardmaster. He and his wife, who died two years ago, had three children and four grandchildren.

Boyer left the Navy as quickly as he could get out, but the Blue remained in the service for decades, on active duty through the Vietnam War.