



# PLAYERS – PART 4

by Dick Odom

Skillet & Glass, May 25, 2020 *Memorial Day* (finished June 6)

**Chief...** Given that so many fancy food terms come from French—think of *sous vide*, *chiffonade*, *crudités*, and even *à la carte* and the term *haute cuisine* itself—another surprise is that *chef* by itself has no specific connection to food or cooking at all: it’s the French spelling of the word that gave us *chief*, meaning “boss” or “leader.” The “skilled cook” meaning of *chef* is an abbreviated form of *chef de cuisine*, meaning “kitchen head” or “kitchen chief.” --History from Merriam-Webster.

First let me apologize for the delay in getting this feature out. You may notice that this writing is dated on Memorial Day and that it was Memorial Day weekend that the above passage from Merriam-Webster shifted my thoughts to my Dad. From his days in the Navy as Chief Radioman and Chief Petty Officer on a minelayer that operated primarily in the Pacific Theatre during World War II, Dad was proud to be called “Chief” by his friends, co-workers, and staffs for many years after the war. I even began calling him Chief for many years before he passed at 88 years. No, he was never seriously injured in the war, but there is a story here. And being somewhat attention deficient (not ADD) and a little obsessive compulsive (not OCD) too, I couldn’t get my mind back on **PLAYERS** until I filled in some of the gaps in Dad’s story.

The first vessel specifically designed as a minelayer, the 450 foot, 6,000-ton **USS TERROR** CM-5 was constructed at the Philadelphia Navy Yard and launched there on June 6, 1941. Commander H.W. Fitch assumed command of the Terror as she was placed in commission on July 5, 1942 and proceeded to put his new command and the 400-odd men who were to man her through their nautical paces. In April 1944, Commander Horace W. Blakeslee, USN, relieved Commander Fitch as Commanding Officer of the Terror. At Pearl Harbor on January 22, 1945, USS TERROR received on board the staff of the newly organized Commander Minecraft U.S. Pacific Fleet in the person of Rear Admiral Alexander Sharp. Richard F. Odom, CRM, Chief Radioman for Terror is now Chief Radioman for the Flagship of the

Pacific minelayers fleet, with he and his staff having communications responsibilities for both the ship and the fleet.

This story takes place minutes before 04:00 on May 1, 1945, as *Terror* lay at anchor in Kerama Retto (about 15 miles west of Okinawa and 400 miles southwest of the home islands of Japan), a kamikaze dove toward the ship. Darting through a hole in the smoke screen and coming in on *Terror's* port beam, the attacker banked sharply around the stern, then came in from the starboard quarter so rapidly that only one of the minelayer's stern guns opened fire. As the plane crashed into the ship's communication platform, one of its bombs exploded. The other penetrated the main deck before it, too, exploded. The aircraft's engine tore through the ship's bulkheads to land in the wardroom. Fire flared immediately in the superstructure but was soon controlled and, within two hours, was extinguished. Flooding of the magazines prevented possible explosions, and no engineering damage occurred, but the kamikaze had exacted its toll. The attack cost *Terror* 171 casualties: 41 dead, 7 missing, and 123 wounded. – Wikipedia

Dad had told me of the kamikaze attack on the *Terror* and also told me the kamikaze pilots were trained to take out the command and communications of a ship. This one planted his plane and bombs between the bridge and the radio room. He also told me that only 20 minutes before the attack, one of his men had relieved him in the radio room. But for that, Dick Odom, Jr. would not have made it into this world. I'm sure he told me the name of the radioman that relieved him, but I didn't remember. Hence, the delay in finishing my writing. I finally found a list of fatalities from that fateful morning. On that list, Robert K. Buehner, RM 2-c.

This from the *Austin Daily Herald* – Austin, Minnesota  
Monday, May 21, 1945

R.K. Buehner, Radioman - Killed in Action Robert Kenneth Buehner, 22, Radioman 2nd class, was killed in action in the Pacific theatre, his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Buehner, 1009 Gleason, were notified Friday night. No details were given. Born in Austin Oct. 03, 1922. Robert was graduated from Austin high school in 1942 and enlisted in the Navy that fall. He received training at Great Lakes, Indianapolis, and Marc Island. He left the U.S. March 19, 1945 and went into combat service a month after receiving final training in the Hawaiian Islands. Surviving besides his parents are a brother, Wallace, Seaman 2nd class, stationed in Rhode Island, and two sisters. Mrs. Raymond Christofferson and Mrs. Leonard Cotter, both of Austin.

Henceforward I will remember Radioman 2<sup>nd</sup> class Robert Kenneth Buehner on Memorial Day and all other days that we celebrate those who made the ultimate sacrifice in defending our country.

**A**nd now, introducing one of only two, thus far, non-cooks to our cast of players...**Ken Carter**. Good reason. Our judges must be “well-wined-and-dined” and, having dined over most half of the world, this player fills that tall order. After years as a National Accounts and Regional Manager of a well-known construction materials company, a generous entertainment budget allowed for dining at many of the finest restaurants around the country. Thusly, there were many opportunities to compare the nuances of dishes prepared by many of the finest chefs and their staffs from around the US. And he learned that it was beneficial to try a glass of a new wine, bourbon, scotch, or tequila before investing in a bottle, or case.

The first time he and I teed it up, we found several commonalities: we played to the same handicap; we shot the same score that day; we entered the 19<sup>th</sup> hole only for the bartender to bring both of us our usual, a double Makers on a few rocks (his and my house bourbon at the time); and found that we were both married on the same day of the same year (mine being the second time around). The only dissimilarities were: he hits it farther than I; he’s young enough to be my son; and he doesn’t cook.

Ken doesn’t have to cook and found no need because apparently his mother is a good cook and I know his wife is an excellent cook. But he appreciates fine dining and has an “excellent” palate. I know he has an “excellent” palate because he and I enjoy and appreciate the same bourbons, scotches and tequilas...has to be his excellent palate. Moreover though, he is willing to try new dishes. As an example, with somewhat an aversion to raw beef, he was willing to try carpaccio one evening at an Italian restaurant while we two couples were celebrating our mutual anniversaries. It was quite a sizable platter for an antipasto, and Ken did try a second serving.

One of the things of which he is very proud is his bourbon collection, that BTW is very extensive. What you will find with Ken’s collecting (that you might not find with many collectors these days) is he has tasted, more than just a few times, everything in his collection and can point to even subtle distinctions in the characteristic aromas, flavors, finishes, etc. of each. Plus, even better, he shares the good stuff with a generous pour thereby showing his Commonwealth of Virginia roots, exemplifying gentlemanly hospitality.

His early in life interests were, let's see how to characterize this, "fast and furious"? He raced go karts and dirt bikes growing up and because his dad was in the automobile business, he liked fast cars. Thankfully, he stayed out of jail for speeding because his family went to the same church as the local magistrate and his dad was well connected to local policemen. Reminds me a little of Hunter Smith's life motto.

When I asked Ken "What keeps you interested in pursuing your interest in spirits?" His answer, "**Fellowship and camaraderie with close friends and the opportunity to experience fine spirits and wine**". This embodies about half of the envisioned purpose of our Fellows of the Skillet & Glass. The other half is what I have observed in Ken, he is **eager to learn and quick to share his knowledge in food, wine and spirits**.

**Oo! Oo!** (ha, remember *Car 54 Where are You?*) Before I move on to yet another player, Ken shares this little humor on his questionnaire that is one of his achievements... "After many evenings of heavy pours, successfully navigating Joslin Pointe without falling in a fountain or lake, specifically the fountain between my house and Dick Odom's".

We can look forward to sharing much with **Ken Carter** and will be happy that he is aboard.

**O**pen the hatch to **Captain Tom Eaton**. And I have to introduce him as Captain Tom as his career was dedicated first to restoring and then to captaining sailing yachts in the US, France and Italy. He made his first of 17 Atlantic crossings for an owner who eventually purchased a 102' (138' LOA), two-masted schooner that was first launched in 1915, hence her name "*Mariette of 1915*". Of his proudest achievements Tom cites "restoring and racing a big, old sailing yacht with someone else's money". That he did, and raced out of ports in Monaco, Cannes and Saint Tropez. And while living 10 years in the south of France he developed a penchant for French wines and he only drinks French wines (stating simply it's a better quality for the price), despite having lived and sailed out of Italy for 18 years. And in Italy he sailed a 153', ketch rigged, motorsailer, the Piropo IV out of Monte Argentario, Italy where he and his family lived.

Now he has returned to the US to retire (brought back 187 bottles of French wine in the move), and lives near Mocksville, NC on a former family farm that he bought, about 30 minutes from guess what NC winery? None other than Raffaldini Vineyards. And he passed along a funny to me that he doesn't like North Carolina wines...well, Jay credit me this, I promised to share with Tom—and he accepted the

invitation—a bottle of Grande Reserva 2017 (you all remember the double-gold medal) from the Odom stash next time the Odoms and Eatons get together.

Guess what my competitive juices are beginning to anticipate, a **Smash Down** with **French vs Italian wines** center stage...**Capt. Tom vs the Jellyfish**, fit for a Disney movie. Move over *Pirates of the Caribbean*!

So, the second highest paid member of the crew on an expensive sailing vessel as the Piropo IV is the chef. Now it is the captain's responsibility to assure that all provisions are onboard before setting sail, so coordination between captain and chef are essential, and though Captain Eaton had no cooking responsibilities, he had many years to observe the best chef in Monte Argentario who was the Piropo IV chef.

Having observed and experienced many and varied countries, cultures and cuisines in the world, Tom still identifies with French and Italian cuisine. Of the dishes he likes to cook are grilled sea bass and spaghetti vongole. When asked what his favorite dish to prepare however, he loves Janssen's Temptation, a **Swedish** dish with gruyere, anchovies, or anchovies paste, and heavy cream. Sensing that I was flinching a little at the anchovies, he quickly shared that the pungent taste of the fish melds into the dish with only a hint of the anchovies. Methinks we may see a demonstration of this going forward. Welcome, **Captain Tom Eaton** to the Skillet & Glass.

**MORE TO COME!** Again, I hope to eventually introduce you to all of our members in the same manner as above. In the meantime **FELLOWS**, keep on cookin'.

Oh, and thanks for indulging the story of my dad, the USS Terror and Radioman 2<sup>nd</sup> class, Ken Buehner.

***"Creativity is inventing, experimenting, growing, taking risks, breaking rules, making mistakes, and having fun."*** Mary Lou Cook