

Galleys, Pantries and Skullery

By Ron Ucovich, Docent USS Hornet

Where are the Food Service facilities on the Hornet?

The Hornet has two galleys on the ship; both of them located on the Third Deck. These two facilities prepare all the food for the 16,000 meals served every day. In addition to these two galleys, there are several pantries which can prepare light meals, breakfasts, or special-need snacks between meals. The **Main Galley** has chow line on the starboard side for a full meal, and also an express line on the port side for a quick breakfast or a hamburger or hot dog for lunch. The **CPO Pantry** is on Second Deck. The food for the main meals was prepared in the Third Deck Galley, and then served on Second Deck, but breakfasts and light meals could also be prepared in the Second-Deck Pantry.

The officers' galley is on the Third Deck, near Special Weapons. Here, they prepare food and send it to pantries in the Ward Room, Flight Suit Mess, First-Class Mess, and Special Weapons. The **Ward Room** is where senior officers would dine, provided that they are formally attired. Pilots returning from a mission and were not formally attired, would eat in the **Flight Suit Mess**. There was another pantry for officers called **First Class Mess**. This room was reserved for officers who worked in Weapons and Special Weapons Division, and had achieved the rank of First-Class Petty Officer. There is another pantry in **Sick Bay** where light meals were prepared, and where they prepared food for patients on restricted diets. There is another pantry in **Captain's In-Port Quarters**. This facility would be used when the Hornet was docked, or when the captain or admiral held a special meeting, called together a committee, entertained political dignitaries, or held a social event.

*Does the word **pantry** mean **small kitchen**?*

If you are not in the Navy, a **pantry** is a food storage room, but historically, it referred to a room where bread was stored. The Latin word for bread is *panis*. From this we get *empanada* (wrapped in bread), *pannier* (bread basket), *panatela* (small bread), *companion* (someone you share bread with), and **pantry** (a room where bread is stored). On the Hornet, however, it refers to a room where quick meals were prepared.

What is an SOS breakfast?

In the Navy, as well as other branches of the military, an SOS breakfast was very common. SOS is an acronym, which may stand for "save our souls," or "same old slop," or (more colloquially) "shit on a shingle." It was invented during WWI, and was served routinely during the lifetime of the Hornet. It was made of beef that was salted and dried, similar to bacon. It was then shaved into thin slices to tenderize it, then covered with gravy, and served on a slice of toast. When served with fried eggs, it gave you a high-protein, high-carbohydrate, tasty and substantial breakfast.

Isn't SOS a distress code word developed by the Navy?

It was developed by the Navy, but not ours. It was the German Navy that created it in 1905, and the code was adopted internationally in 1906. Popular lore says that it was an acronym for **Save Our Ship**, but actually, it is not an acronym for anything. In Morse code, "**S**" is signed with 3 dots, and "**O**" is signed with 3 dashes. When it is signed several times with no spaces between the letters, the signal becomes: dot dot dot dash dash dash dot dot dot dash dash dash dot dot dot dash dash dash dot dot dot dash dash dash.

This distress call is immediately identified over all background noise and static, and when it is heard, even if it is very faint, everyone will clear the air and listen for the message. Whoever hears the message clearly will identify himself, give his position, and state that he is coming to help. Whoever hears the return call will do the same, and this will happen again and again until all the ships in the area are alerted to the disaster.

Why in the world is the dining room called a mess hall?

In many languages, the word for "eating room" is the same as the word for "table," in fact, *table* is French for our word "table." *Board* is the German word for table. When you rent "room and board" it means you get a place to sleep and eat. *La mesa* is the Spanish word for table. "Mess hall" comes from *la mesa* (with an American accent). It has nothing to do with table manners.

Why did enlisted sailors eat on metal food trays instead of dishes?

In civilian cafeterias, diners will pick up a flat tray and pass down the chow line collecting small dishes and finger foods along the way. To make the liner move faster and with less chance of dropping and breaking, the Navy created stainless steel trays with embossed compartments to replace those loose dishes. This more-efficient style of serving comestibles was not introduced to civilian life until the 1950s when America invented the TV dinner.

Why is there a large tank obstructing the work area in the galley?

That is not a tank, but rather an air vent. The 3rd Deck Galley is directly on top of Fire Room 4, and this huge ventilation duct is the air vent for the boiler room. The exhaust vent for the boiler smoke is on the starboard side of the serving line behind the door marked UPTAKE. The smoke that comes out of the Fire Room has to pass through 18 floors of work areas before it exhausts out of the smokestack about 200 feet above you.

Why are there so many pizza ovens in this galley? Did they make that much pizza?

There are 9 ovens in this galley: 3 of them are for tall pans, like for roasting a turkey, and the other 6 ovens are narrow, like for baking pizza pies, but pizza was not a common fare 60 years ago. It was not until 1958 that Pizza Hut opened the first pizza franchise in America. Those narrow ovens were designed for chafing dishes. Most of the hot food on the ship was cooked in casserole pans and chafing dishes before placing them in the steam trays for serving.

Wasn't pizza ever served on the Hornet?

Pizza was only served once on the Hornet. It was in 1969, when Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin returned from the Moon. The Hornet carried aboard hundreds of reporters, photographers, journalists, and news crews who had to be fed before their departure. Their lunch was pizza and salad.

The pizza was cooked in the chafing ovens in the enlisted men's galley. The Hornet did not have a salad bar at that time, so a state-of-the-art salad bar was installed just for this historic occasion. That salad bar still exists today at the forward end of the enlisted men's mess hall.

Why didn't they have a salad bar earlier?

Using salad bars carries with it a variety of health and safety concerns. The food must be kept at 41°F or lower to avoid bacterial contamination; food can only be exposed to air for a short time; animal products must be kept separate from vegetable products or dairy products; older foods must be discarded and never placed on top of newer foods when refilling food trays. Also, on aircraft carriers, meals are always served by food servers, and it is never self-service. They are required to get each man through the chow line within 10 seconds. Even at 10 seconds per man, only 6 men are served per minute, and they had hundreds of men to feed at each meal.

When President Nixon was on board to greet the Astronauts, did he use the silver set in the Wardroom?

President Nixon did not eat pizza and salad, nor did he have lunch on the ship, nor did he even see the silver service set in the Wardroom. After his televised interview with the Astronauts, Mr. Nixon used the escalator to return to the flight deck. There, he took a few minutes to thank Rear Admiral Seiberlich, Captain of the Hornet, for a "job well-done." Then, the President boarded his helicopter, Marine One, and was flown off the ship.

Weren't the Captain's In-Port Quarters spruced up for the President to use?

The Captain's Quarters were made available to Mr. Nixon should the need arise, but there was no necessity. Our Restoration Crew had dressed up the room to replicate the way it looked in 1969. There were elegant vases holding artificial flowers, and a fruit bowl with wax fruit in it to make the table look inviting. Mrs. Nixon herself selected colorful wallpaper with a tropical island theme to adorn the walls of the conference room. The room did not look very military, but it sure looked homey. About eight years ago, we had a severe winter and these temporary artifacts were lost to rain damage. Now, the rooms up there are back to their original military décor.

Why does the Hornet have a fancy silver service set if no one ever uses it?

The silver set in the Wardroom is there for two reasons: tradition and superstition. In the late 1800s, all Navy vessels were made out of iron, and they were powered by steam. They were given powerful names, like *Old Ironsides*, to engender respect and dignity. In the early 1900s, battleships started to be named after States, like *The Iowa* or *The Missouri*. Politicians from that state liked the idea of having a battleship named after them, and decided to solicit donations from their citizenry to purchase a silver service to showcase in their Officers' Quarters. The set would proudly show the State's name, and it would be engraved with local imagery, monuments, and landmarks, and would inspire in them a sense of pride and honor. When the old battleships were replaced with aircraft carriers, this tradition continued, and today all newly commissioned carriers are outfitted with a set of silver service.

I can understand that the silver set became a tradition, but how did it become a superstition?

Launching a new ship is a monumental event, and like all monumental events, it is celebrated with the same fanfare and pageantry as a wedding, baptism, or bar mitzvah. Why do we throw rice at a wedding? ... why do we sprinkle water on a baby's forehead at a baptism? ... why do we hoist a boy off the ground and dance around him at a bar mitzvah? Yes, these

are traditions, but at the same time, they are superstitions. We believe that it would bring us bad luck if we did not observe these customs.

Other than the silver set, was there any other superstition observed when the ship was launched?

There was one other ritual that was observed when the ship was launched: The ship had to be christened and assigned an honorable name. Originally, this ceremony was performed by a Catholic priest who would pray that the ship be guided and protected from all adversity. Over the years, the Catholic priest was replaced by a politician, and the salt water was replaced with sacramental wine. During Prohibition, the wine was replaced with sparkling cider which made a much more spectacular explosion. After Prohibition was repealed, they were able to use wine again, but wine just didn't have the panache that the sparkling cider had, so they switched to champagne. And, to give the event even more panache, they used warm champagne and they shook the bottle vigorously to build up explosive pressure. They also suspended the bottle from a rope tied to the bow of the ship, and kept spectators at a distance so no one would be injured by airborne glass shards. And that's how the Hornet was launched. Was it tradition or superstition? I say it was a little of both.

Where are all the food supplies stored?

Food was stored mostly on Fourth Deck. Under the main mess hall was storage for cans, bottles, boxes and sacks of food. On 4th Deck under the bakery there were shelves full of baking goods and supplies. Also, there is a large walk-in refrigerator for dairy products. And again on 4th Deck, under the butcher shop there is a large defrosting freezer that kept meat very cold, but not frozen. Under the Torpedo Shop, there are three walk-in freezers containing frozen foods. And under the aft Auxiliary Generator, there are three more walk-in freezers for frozen meats and sides of beef. In the passageway that runs between the Main Galley and the Bakery, you will find the elevator that brought food supplies up from 4th Deck. That same elevator opens onto the Hangar Deck just aft of the Apollo Quarantine Trailer. Food supplies were uploaded from supply ships via Elevator 3.

Where are all the food trays, dishes, glasses, pots and pans washed?

The place where all these things were washed is called the **scullery**. You can find the mess deck scullery aft of the Enlisted Mess Hall. On the portside bulkhead of the scullery you will see two windows through which the men would pass their dirty mess trays. All food scraps and paper napkins were scraped into garbage pails to be dumped. During the 1940s, the garbage pails were taken to the back of the ship and dumped directly into the ocean. Although it was never used after WWII, the old garbage chute can still be found on the fantail aft bulwark. During the 1950s, a garbage disposal was installed on Second Deck to grind up galley refuse and flush it out with water so the ship would not leave a trail of floating debris in the water.

Is there anything special about the dishwashers in the scullery?

The dishwashers are made to wash the dishes at 280°F. That is hot enough to thoroughly sterilize the dishes, and also to dissolve all grease residues. Even a small film of grease is enough to breed a colony of harmful microorganisms, so it was important for dishes to come out squeaky clean. Also, when the dishes come out of the washer very hot, they air-dry for a minute and they are ready to be used again.

Were sailors allowed to smoke in the mess deck?

During WWII, the dining room was outfitted with a device called a **smoking lamp**. When the lamp was on, smoking was permitted, but during mealtime, the light would be off and smoking was prohibited. This was not a safety precaution, but rather a courtesy to the people who were eating. An unlit smoking lamp in the mess hall also indicated "covers off," which required you to remove your hat (another courtesy to the diners). There were smoking lamps in other locations on the ship where ammunition was being moved or fuel was being pumped. Today, smoking on naval vessels is only permitted on designated weather decks.

Were sailors allowed to drink alcohol in the mess deck?

Alcohol was strictly prohibited in all parts of the ship. There were harsh penalties for any sailor who was found in possession of alcohol. There was only one exception to this restriction. A sailor on shore leave was allowed to purchase one bottle of alcohol as a gift or a souvenir within these parameters: the bottle must be registered upon bringing it aboard the ship; the bottle must remain unopened until final disembarkation; and the bottle must be stored under the auspices of a Marine guard. To find this high-security place, go down to the brig, and upon passing through the barred gate, go left down a short passage that ends at a door marked SASS Store Room. Your bottle of alcohol could be stored in this room without any worry of impropriety.