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Shipmates of the Charles Berry,

I want to share some of my thoughts with you. I want to give you observations from a young girl's perspective. I did not live in the days before cable TV existed and barely before cell phones. I have visited the ocean on a couple occasions, mostly looking out at the vast blue from the safety of a sand beach. I took a cruise once with my parents and slept in a small cabin where maids turned down the sheets and placed chocolates on my pillow each night. I know nothing of what it would be like to exist on a ship, surrounded by the ocean, during a time when advanced technology was up and coming. At the reunion, I asked myself a question, "What is it about a ship that ties these men together?" Is the ship a common home? Is it like sharing a house? What creates this strong bond between people? I learned, through talking with some of the shipmates that it is more than a home. It is being at the mercy of the ocean. It is due to trusting one another to fulfill responsibilities so that each person can persevere. Many of you lived on the Charles Berry during different years, never acquainted with one another until now. One man witnessed the christening of the ship while another witnessed the release of the Charles Berry to the Indonesian Navy. Each person possesses a piece of the puzzle to the history of the Charles Berry. The ship continues to live through its shipmates. The history, forgotten or told dully and uneventful in history books, flourishes in your stories.

I was told that the Navy is different from the Army, from the military, and from any other type of service. The Navy requires camaraderie. I gained an entirely fresh perspective of men in the service of the Navy, constantly at the whims of the ocean. I assume that those serving in the future will not feel the connection that each of you do now. I believe technology will and have created gaps in the complete reliance on one another.

I love music and I love to hear it live. I greatly appreciated the guitarist and bassist at the reunion. I imagine life aboard a ship: a long day's work, followed by a group of sailors gathering on deck to create music. I imagine the many men that sat around to hear those familiar tunes. I wonder to myself... if many of you miss those days. Maybe today's luxury is incomparable to the simple pleasures found aboard ship. In your stories, I hear joy along with the adventure. I want to thank you all for sharing with me a part of your lives. I know that I have only received a miniscule sliver of the experience, but I enjoyed it nonetheless.

Thanks again.

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