

## **OUR NAVY**

By Richard Sorokin

During the war for independence the colonies had no navy. It was the French fleet that blockaded Cornwallis at Yorktown and won our country its independence. In fact there were more French troops in the battle than colonials. We had no navy and there were no plans to create one until around 1786. Barbary pirates from Algeria, Tripoli, Tunis and Morocco were capturing our ships. Citizens were being held for ransom. In 1794 Congress authorized six frigates to protect our commerce. Thus, the beginning of the United States Navy.

The undeclared naval war with France and the Tripoli War of 1801-05 tested these vessels and produced officers whose names ring through the years: Hull, Decatur, Perry, Bainbridge, Preble, Porter. When America, infuriated by impressments of sailors and seizure of cargoes, declared war on Great Britain in 1812, these men had already forged a tradition of daring seamanship and sharp gunnery. The British navy was caught by surprise.

Peace was signed on Christmas Eve, 1814, and America turned to trade. Now it had a navy to guard merchantmen that carried the Stars and Stripes to ports the world over.