



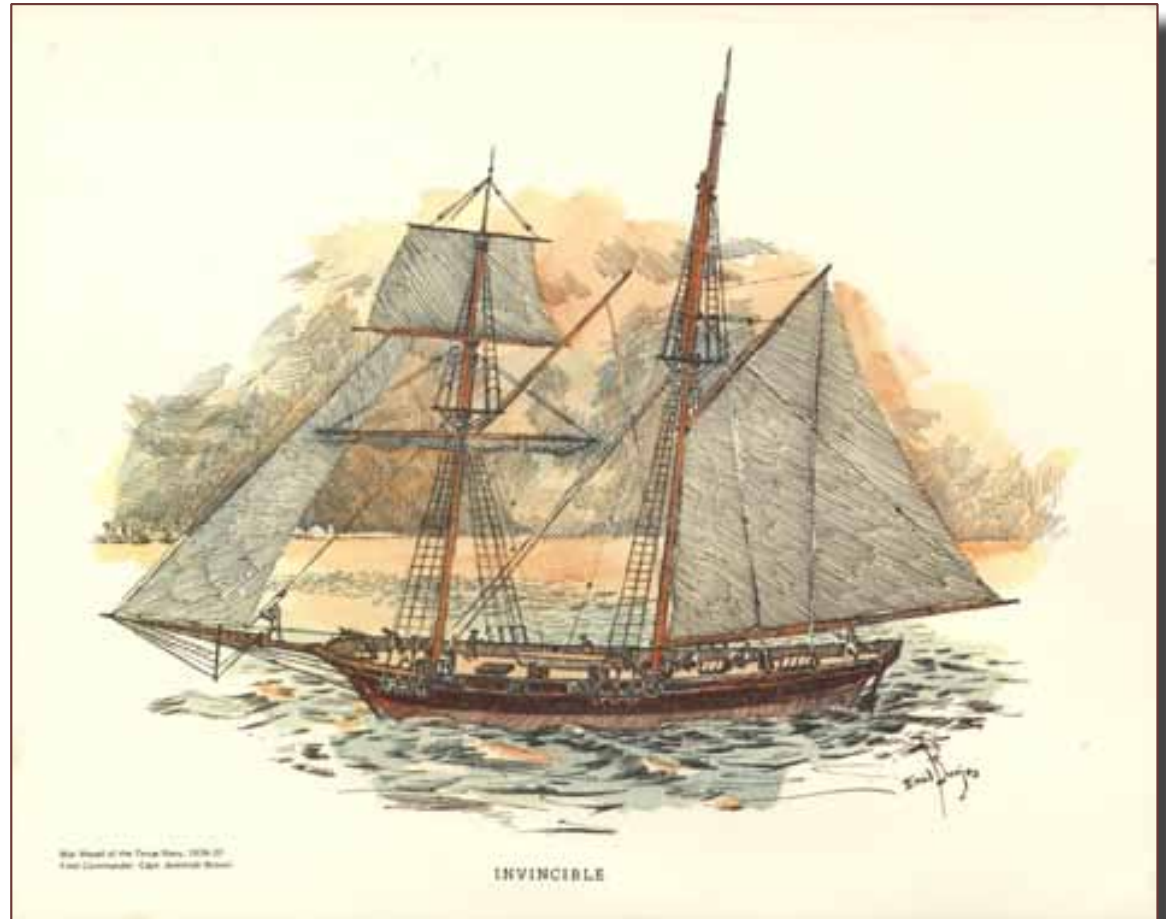
# The Invincible Newsletter

The TNA Newsletter was named back in 2002 when the members voted overwhelmingly to call it “The Invincible”. This wonderful print of the Invincible by Emil Bunjes gives us a look at what it must have been like sailing the open seas for the benefit of Texas.

“Emil Bunjes was born in Schulenburg, Texas. He started working as a book binder for Clark and Courts in Galveston in 1923. Over a forty year period he made hundreds of drawings of the architectural heritage of old Galveston along with watercolors of Galveston history. Primarily self taught his residence moved from Galveston to Houston and back again. He was exhibiting in the 1930’s in local competitions in Houston. **He was named official artist for the Texas Navy** and his work has appeared in numerous Texas historical publications”

(at [http://bosquecrossinggalleries.com/emil\\_bunjes\\_bio.htm](http://bosquecrossinggalleries.com/emil_bunjes_bio.htm))

The newsletter will be created twice a year and will be comprised of articles written by members and friends of the Texas Navy Association. If you have a “spotlight” story, comments or photos you would like to submit, please send an e-mail by clicking this link - [Admiral Judy Fisher](#)



Invincible by Emil H. Bunjes 1928-1974



## SAVED BY THE “WOODEN WALLS”

Independence Won on the High Seas

by Jonathan W. Jordan

### *Winning Independence*

The shortest distance between two points is a straight line. That simple truth would be the hidden key to the defense of Texas in 1836. It would also become the key to maintaining that independence seven years later, when Mexico was on the verge of a second invasion of her former province.

The Gulf of Mexico is shaped like a giant letter “C,” and this geographical fact gave Mexico two options to invade the Lone Star Republic. Its army could march, in clockwise fashion, from Mexico City to Galveston, the hub of Texas resistance, or it could take the more direct path across the Gulf, from the ports of Veracruz or Tampico to Velasco or Galveston Bay.

In 1836, Santa Anna chose the first path, one that took the “Napoleon of the West” into bleaker, poorer, and more inaccessible stretches than the Napoleon of the East marched during his campaigns in Europe. Santa Anna’s men slogged through mud, they

marched over rivers, and they even tramped through snow. They consumed food, wore out supplies, and lost men to disease, accident, and injury. By the time he arrived at the marshy, soon-to-be hallowed ground of San Jacinto, Santa Anna’s advance guard was small portion of the once-mighty host he led through Tamaulipas, Coahuila and the Texas scrublands.

The Mexican government knew provisions would be scarce, and in early 1836 it commissioned a relief expedition to sail with supplies and officers to the Texas coast. The schooner-of-war *Bravo* and the two-gun *Segundo Correo de Mexico* were dispatched to the mouth of the Rio Grande River to escort the New Orleans-based merchant vessels *Pocket*, *John M. Bandel* and *New Castle* to Copano Bay. Carrying food, ammunition, maps and other critical supplies, these vessels would breathe new life into Mexico’s *Ejercito de Operaciones*, which would drive the rebels out of Texas at the point of a bayonet.

But on the morning of April 3, Captain Jeremiah Brown of the Texas warship *Invincible* had other ideas. Sailing within hailing distance of the Mexican ships under a United States flag, Captain Brown found the *Bravo* helpless—the victim of a rudder unshipped on a sandbar off Brazos de Santiago. Captain Brown’s ruse was soon smelt out, and before long the Texas and Mexican vessels were pounding away at each other with their great guns. The nine-gun Texian won the day, and the hapless *Bravo* was driven aground. Captain Brown captured the *Pocket* as it sailed towards the Rio mouth (the two other vessels would not arrive until later), and sailed to Galveston with his prize.

The Mexican government, worried about the Texian pirates swarming the Gulf, scrubbed any further supply missions. But what if Mexico’s convoy had arrived safely? After Houston’s victory at San Jacinto, the Mexican Army, under General Vicente Filisola, still boasted nearly three times as many men as the Texians fielded, and held a marked supe-



riority in cannon and cavalry. Sam Houston had only beaten Santa Anna's advance guard, and General Filisola—never as overconfident as Santa Anna—would not have been lulled into a surprise attack. A second Battle of San Jacinto might well have produced a very different result from the first.

But Filisola saw his army was in no condition to fight. The men had exhausted their food. Supplies were scarce, and their morale was low. Reinforcements and fresh supplies from Mexico had not materialized, and Filisola decided to march back to San Antonio. The high tide of Mexico's army had receded. All because an obscure Texas Navy captain charged into battle off the coast of the Rio Grande.

### ***Preserving Independence***

Seven years later, in April 1843, Mexico was nearly ready to invade Texas again. It was fighting rebels on the west coast of the Yucatan peninsula, but it looked as if that problem would be solved soon. The Mexican Army had laid siege to the rebel-held port of Campeche, and the Mexican Navy clamped a tight blockade on the Yucatan coast.

Once Yucatan was pacified, Mexico would turn her guns on Texas. At the beginning of

1843, President Houston had predicted there would be a formidable invasion of Texas by Mexico, and diplomats in the United States and Great Britain calculated that Mexican success in Yucatan would be followed by an invasion of Texas. Undoubtedly, Mexico would not repeat the mistakes of 1836.

Yucatan rebels—states' rights proponents who resisted central rule from Mexico City—had allied with Texas off and on since September 1841, when then-President Mirabeau Lamar rented the Texas Navy to Yucatan for \$8,000 per month in silver. But after Sam Houston's return to the presidency the following December, the Texas Navy's fortunes hit a reef and appeared to be sinking. The Texas Congress could not afford to appropriate funds for further operations, and the sailors went without pay or replacement clothing for months at a time. The Navy lived off the personal credit of her commander, Commodore Edwin Ward Moore, and it was not until April 1843 that Moore was able to provision two ships—the twenty-gun sloop-of-war *Austin* and the sixteen-gun brig *Wharton*—for a voyage to assist Yucatan.

Mexico hadn't been idle during the years following San Jacinto. Her warships comprised the most technologically advanced fleet in the world, and she fielded the largest squad-

ron in the Gulf. Leading the fleet were the iron-plated steam frigates *Moctezuma* and *Guadalupe*, vessels built in England for the Royal Navy but sold to Mexico. They carried long guns that lobbed sixty-eight pound explosive shells—nearly three times the size of the Texas Navy's largest guns, and they were propelled by two large side-wheel paddles. In addition, Mexico's navy fielded two brigs, the seventeen-gun *Mexicano* and the nine-gun *Iman*, plus the seven-gun schooner *Aguila* and the three-gun *Campecheano*, which the squadron's daring captain, Tomas Marín, had captured from the federalist forces.

At 7:05 on the morning of April 30, Commodore Moore hoisted the Texas ensign from his mizzen, the broad blue pennant of a commodore at the main, and the British and American colors at the forepeak. Charging into the Mexican line, the two Texas sailing ships, assisted by two Yucatan schooners and five tiny gunboats, fought the enemy for nearly two hours. But the Mexicans had the weather gage, and Commodore Moore could not beat against the wind far enough to bring his foe to close combat. As the Mexican guns had a longer range, Moore had no choice but to back off, and the two sides settled in for a two-week standoff.

But at ten in the morning of May 16, Com-



modore Moore again saw his chance when a landward breeze off Campeche blew his vessels into gun range of the *Moctezuma*, *Guadalupe* and *Aguila*. The two sides traded shots. The Texians drove off the *Aguila*, but the two steamers poured their fire on the *Austin*. This time, the wind carried the *Austin* between the two steamers, and the Texas flagship blazed away on both sides, damaging flagship *Moctezuma*. After two hours, the Mexican fleet withdrew. The blockade of Campeche was lifted, and the Mexican reconquest of Yucatan was doomed.

With the temporary loss of Yucatan and the Texians roaming the Gulf, once again Mexico could not risk putting an armed convoy to sea. The predicted invasion of Texas in 1843 was defeated before it could be hatched, and Texas remained free to join the United States two years later.



**Jonathan W. Jordan** has written about historical topics for such publications as *Military History Magazine* and *Military History Quarterly*. A graduate of Vanderbilt University Law School, he is a practicing attorney. He lives in the Atlanta area. He is the author of the wonderful book, "*Lone Star Navy*"- Texas, the fight for the Gulf of Mexico, and the shaping of the American West.

## Announcements

The TNA *Christmas Party* is December 11 at the Artillery Club in Galveston. If you haven't sent in your reservations, do so quickly. Seating is limited. Our Board decided to give our business to the *famous club* again to help them recover from Hurricane IKE. Next year we will take bids from leading hotels that have large unlimited seating banquet rooms. If you have questions about your reservation please e-mail [Admiral Judy Fisher](mailto:AdmiralJudyFisher) or call 713-963-0643.

By sending out our newsletter through e-mail we save a lot of money due to the continued increase in postage. Encourage fellow TNA Members who are not yet using e-mail to start so they can receive more information about the Texas Navy Association happenings. However, for those valued Members who do not have computer access, we will continue to send out a printed newsletter.

The Texas Navy web site is a wonderful resource for Texas Navy History and valuable information about our association. Check it out regularly at [www.texasnavy.com](http://www.texasnavy.com)

The Texas Navy Association is a non-prof-

it organization with varying membership dues. A Life Membership is \$350, however as of January 1, 2011 they will be \$500. Regular membership dues are \$40/year for Admirals and Commanders and \$25/year for a Lieutenant.

### ***Search for the Invincible***

Texas Navy Admiral Tom Oertling, a Professor at Texas A&M Marine Branch, Galveston found an 1850 US Navy survey map of the entrance to Galveston harbor. Tom arranged a search of the Navy library in Bethesda, MD where the original survey log book with bearings tied to the 1850 *survey map was found*. One grouping of bearings referred to the "Schooner" that recently went down which might be the *Invincible* that had sunk earlier in 1837. Discussions have been held between the Texas Navy Association, The National Underwater Marine Agency (NUMA- a highly effective search group sponsored by writer Clive Cussler together with *Admiral Wayne Gronquist*, a TNA Board member) and the University on how to proceed with a detailed search for the *Invincible*. Texas A&M would lead the search on behalf of the Texas Historical Commission. The TNA will keep everyone informed as to this exciting progress in the search for the *Invincible*.



## Annual Meeting

On December 11, 2010 at 2 PM at the Artillery Club in Galveston there will be a general meeting of the membership of the TNA. This will be an informational meeting only.

There will be committee reports from the Finance Committee, the Membership Outreach Committee, the Internet/Web Site Committee, the By-Laws Committee, Ship's Store Committee and the Search for the Invincible Committee.

You will have an opportunity to volunteer for services in the future to the TNA. The Board of Directors wants to encourage the members to help us fulfill our mission statement and goals.

## Business Meeting

In January 2011 the TNA will have a meeting at a convenient regional location that will be announced at the annual meeting and through e-mail. This business meeting will be in advance of a regular Board Meeting that same day. The purpose of the Business Meeting will be to allow any member to directly address the Board of Directors. You can ask questions, make statements, offer constructive suggestions that you feel will improve our organization. Each member speaker will have the same amount of limited time to speak to the Board. All current paid members that want to speak will be allowed this opportunity to address the Board.

## TNA License Plates



You can help support the TNA by buying a personalized license plate proudly displaying the Texas Navy Logo. [www.myplates.com](http://www.myplates.com)

*Click on:* Create a plate

*Choose a category:* Luxury, Custom or Design Series

*Select:* Texas Navy plate in the "Officially Sponsored"

Check out our **Ship's Store!**  
Christmas is just around the corner!



[www.texasnavy.com](http://www.texasnavy.com)

## Remembering our TNA Board Members

*Admiral Tynes Sparks* of Houston and La Porte, Texas, passed away on the 21st of June 2010. He owned Tynes Sparks Building Corporation that built some of the finest homes in River Oaks in Houston. Admiral Sparks had been a longtime member of the TNA and was a TNA Board of Directors member. He was a Past Commodore of Houston Yacht Club.

*Admiral Wayne Gronquist* of Austin, Texas passed away on November 9, 2010. Admiral Gronquist had been a longtime member of the TNA and a TNA Board of Director member. He also had been the leader of many searches for the Republic of Texas warship "The Invincible". He had been working for many years with Clive Cussler and the National Underwater Marine Agency on the search for the Invincible and other historic shipwrecks.

Both of these fine men are and will be missed by all.

**T**exian Navy Day in Matagorda, Texas honoring **Samuel Rhoads Fisher, Secretary of the Texas Navy.**

This event was hosted by the Sons of the Republic of Texas with Daughters of the Republic of Texas and The Texas Navy participating.



**TNA Admirals** in attendance are: (L) Admiral David Hanover, Admiral Will Fisher IV (Fisher Descendant), Admiral Michael Thompson, Admiral David Whitaker, Admiral Carolyn Casterline, Admiral Michael "Mickey" Casterline, Admiral Dwight Sharpe, Admiral Beth Fisher (Fisher Descendant), Sitting - Admiral Ann Fisher (Spouse of Descendant) Not in photo, but in attendance were: Admiral Ron Brown, Admiral Tom Green, Admiral Michael Bailey

Photos by: Admiral Dwight Sharpe  
SRT Texas Navy Day Committee



At the Stanley-Fisher house reception happy **Admiral David Whitaker** receiving his Admiral Certificate, which replaces the original that was lost in Hurricane IKE, from **Admiral Will Fisher.**



**Lieutenant Will Fisher V** (Fisher Descendant) at the Fisher house reception.



(L)**Admiral Michael Bailey** and (at the end) **Admiral Ron Brown** participating in the color guard with the very talented bagpipers.



(L) Rik Stanley, Peggy Stanley, **Admiral Dwight Sharpe** and **Admiral David Hanover.**



## Texas Navy Goals

2010 - 2011

Investigate how the Texas Navy Association can more actively communicate with other Historical Associations, Texas Historians, Nautical Historians, and political officials to promote and preserve the history of the Texas Navies:

- Through text books
- Videos
- Sale of ships store items
- Presentations and displays across Texas

Actively recruit new members to the Texas Navy Association who will help us with our mission, i.e. create a Houston/Galveston squadron. We must follow through in helping new potential TNA members with the necessary paperwork to become Texas Navy Admirals.

Continue to monitor and support the search for the Invincible, one of the first Texas Navy flagships. The Invincible sank off Galveston in 1837. Ultimate goal is to create a replica Invincible that would sail from and be on display in Galveston.

Inventory all known Texas Navy artifacts, documents, and digitally photograph as many items as possible.

Investigate various possibilities for the location of a permanent Texas Navy Museum where all possible physical artifacts and records could be on display or available for further research and/or educational purposes.

## Grow the Texas Navy Association!

We need your help to grow the Texas Navy Association. To open our membership we now have Lieutenants and Commanders.

**Texas Navy Lieutenant:** This is an entry-level rank for young men and women of good character, from the age of 18-24, who desire to assist the Texas Navy in its goals of Preserving and Promoting the history of the Texas Navies.

**Texas Navy Commander:** This rank is for Texas citizens of good character who desire to serve in the Texas Navy, assisting with its goals of Preserving and Promoting the history and accomplishments of the Texas Navies.

*Lieutenants and Commanders* are members of the Texas Navy Association, and as such are eligible to serve on Texas Navy committees, chair sub/ad-hoc committees and participate in all Texas Navy functions.

Each current Admiral is encouraged to get someone who you think is qualified to join the Texas Navy Association.

A *Houston/Galveston* area TNA Squadron is being formed with the help from the Houston Yacht Club, the Lakewood Yacht Club and the Texas Corinthian Yacht Club. Dates for formation meetings will be announced shortly.

Consider volunteering to help with any of the Goals listed on the left.