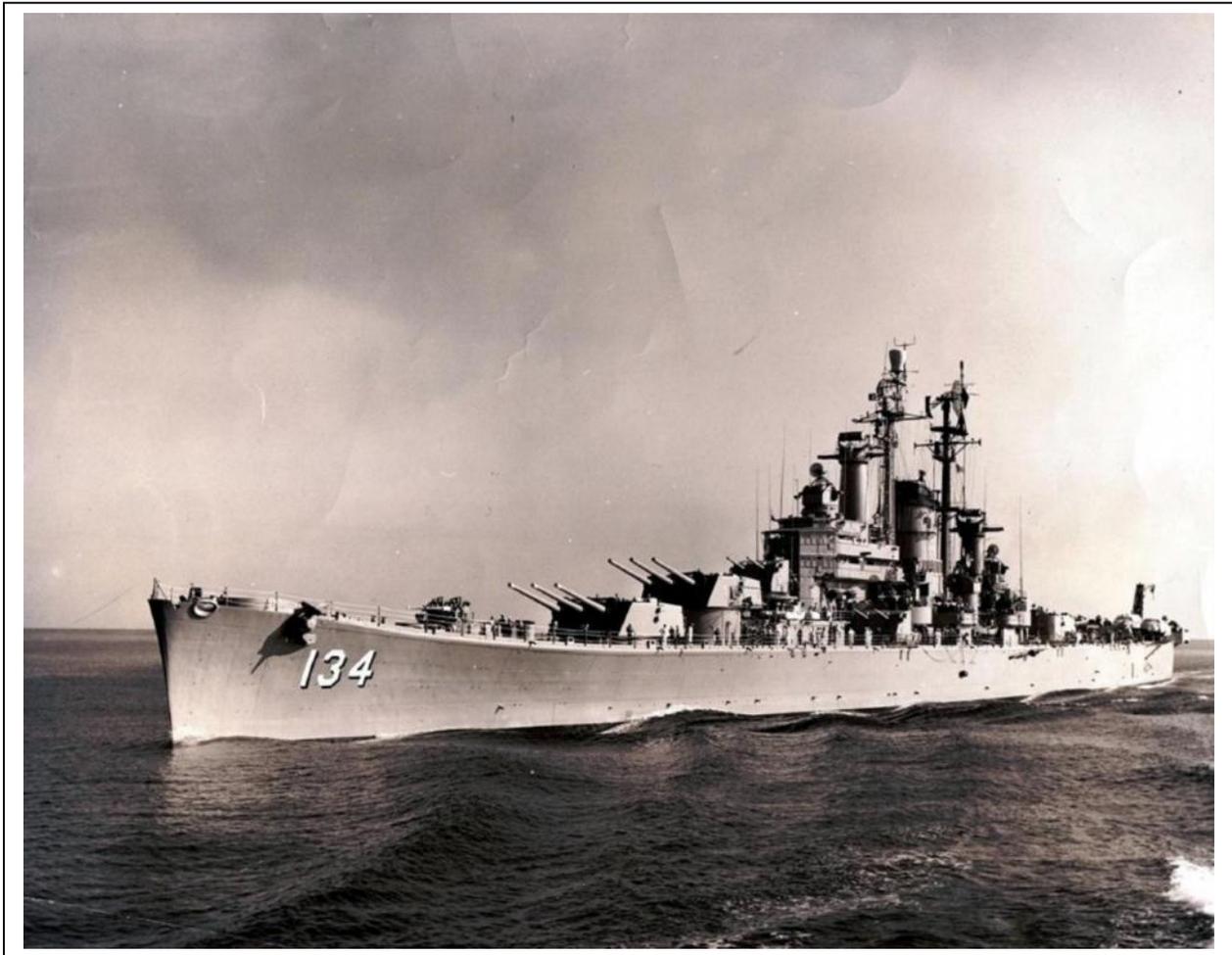


## USS DES MOINES (CA-134) VISITS HAMBURG, GERMANY

July 3-10, 1956



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To: The Des Moines Register  
400 Locust Street  
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Des Moines, Iowa 50309

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I wonder how many lowans remember they had two United States Navy ships named after their Capital. The first USS Des Moines C-15 (then re-designated C17) served our country from 1904 to 1930. The second was the Heavy Cruiser USS Des Moines CA-134 which was launched on September 27, 1946 and was sponsored by Mrs. Anna K. Meredith, the daughter-in-law of Edwin T. Meredith the founder of the Meredith Publishing Company. It was then commissioned in 1948 and decommissioned in 1961; and finally scrapped in 2005.

I, Jerry Manriquez, am the President and Web Master for the USS Des Moines Reunion Association. I was born in Sioux City and grew up in Boone. I joined the Navy and served about two years on the USS Des Moines which was then the Flag Ship of the Sixth Fleet; home ported in Villefranche, France.

As Web Master I collect all related items associated with the USS Des Moines and one item was a Ports of Call Brochure for the ship's visit to Hamburg, Germany in 1956. See the website at [www.ussdesmoines.com](http://www.ussdesmoines.com)

A shipmate, Phil Roberts from Hayward, California saw the Brochure and contacted me with a story about that visit to Hamburg.

During the summer of 1956, the USS Des Moines embarked on a training cruise for Midshipmen from the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and from other universities with Naval ROTC programs. On this cruise were first and third year students. In addition to at sea training, two ports of call were scheduled, Stockholm and Hamburg. There are many adventure stories sailors aboard this ship could tell about the cruise, and this is one of them.

Phil Roberts, Journalist 3<sup>rd</sup> Class at the time, was editor of the ship's newspaper the "Daisy Mae" and helped the Public Information Officer with promotional activities. During the cruise, Phil and his team were responsible for writing hometown newspaper articles about the Midshipmen. The ship's program for the Hamburg visit allowed Phil to be onshore for an extended time. A model railroad hobbyist, Phil visited a local hobby store and struck up a friendship with the sales girl. As part of the promotion, the ship was scheduled to appear in a television special. So, Kirsten invited Phil home to meet her parents and watch the program.

Fast forward 41 years to 1997. Now the Chief Executive Officer of an international aviation consulting firm Roberts, Roach & Associates, Inc., Phil had consulting assignments with Hamburg Airport and that year attended an ICBI Aviation Conference at the Ritz Hotel in Madrid. Benno Hoffman, then EVP at Hamburg Airport LLC, delivered a speech on airport privatization. After the presentation, Phil invited Benno to have dinner with him.

In trading stories of their past, Phil and Benno found that they had nearly met all those many years ago. Benno's grandpa had taken Benno down to the harbor to see the Des Moines on the day Phil was ashore. Benno and Phil believed they were likely just two blocks apart. Now, working together, their friendship blossomed.

At the time, Phil was a member of the Industrial Advisory Board (IAB) of Embry Riddle Aeronautical University's business school. Having an executive from a European airport on this Board would offer new perspective, so Phil recommended Benno for membership. The University agreed with the reasoning and approved Benno's membership.

As years past, Benno earned a PhD in Business to go along with his German law degree acquired years ago. Benno continues to serve on the IAB, and is also an Adjunct Assistant Professor for the University. His next assignment: he will teach two courses for the University in Singapore (January-March 2019). And it all began with the USS Des Moines' visit to Hamburg.

**The following pages reproduce Hamburg newspaper accounts of the 1956 visit.**



### Die Amerikaner sind da



This is the camera view from the air of the heavy American cruiser "Des Moines" the ship, which displaces approximately 17,000 ton of water, passed by the St. Pauly bridge this morning. At 10 AM the cruiser "Macon" also docked on the Uebersee (overseas) bridge. On Beachhaven anchored the destroyers K.D. Bailey, Goodrich, N.K. Perry and Turner. Almost 4000 American sailors will stay for a visit until the 10th of July. From tomorrow on between 13:30 and 16:00 the ships can be visited.



### American in Fahrt (Americans arriving)

Approximately 4,000 American sailors, excluding the men that had to guard the ship, explored Hamburg yesterday. The Americans were as curious of Hamburg as the citizens are of Summer. (Probably referring to the weather in the northern part where summer may be more rain than sunshine).

*(The next paragraph refers to how much money would be spent in the economy of Hamburg. The exchange rate was 4.2 Deutsch Marks to one American dollar, so 400,000 Deutsch Marks would amount to \$95,238. The sailors could draw on their account from the Disbursing Officer, so this amount would most likely be available for all the ships in port. Which would mean an average of \$24 per sailor, which seems very low. (Exchange chart by Professor of German History at UC Santa Barbara.*

<http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/projects/currency.htm>)

Before sailors will be going on shore leave, they had to stash away money. The equation is

simple. When 4,000 men would only need 100 German Marks or \$25 spending money, that would make 400,000 DM. (check with Mathematician Adam Riese)

The American sailors were kind of mad at the weather. Prior to coming to Hamburg, the ships were in Stockholm and had received a copy of the Hamburg newspaper the "Hamburg Abendblatt" and the newspaper had predicted good weather.

Because the NCOs had to pay for the uniforms they protected their gold decorated caps with a black cover. With the black caps and the dark blue overcoat the NCOs could be part of an advertisement for a funeral home.

The sailors who wore their traditional blouses were not pleased when the rain poured into their collars. With anger (showing in their faces) and a lot of money in their pockets someone should not drive a car or go into town. This can result in conflicts, fights, broken windows and drink glass and other problems with the ship's police and their German counterparts. Both had been patrolling yesterday until in the early morning hours. The police was optimistic. Besides of only six incidents where the Americans were brought back to their ship, mainly for excessive drinking and fighting, it was overall quiet.

For tomorrow, the following is planned. The senate invites the commander and some of the officers of the association (I think this is a German association).

At 17:00, 200 NCOs will be welcomed in the ball room of the city hall. The NCOs will march with their Ships Marching Band to city hall and there they will receive a commemorate plaque.

## The Americans at City Hall

Since the end of war, this is the first time that the ball room has seen such a colorful picture. This happened at 17:00. A half thousand cadets and NCOs, who came from the American war ships and visited the city of Hamburg, stood at military attention in the big room.

With the ships orchestra the sailors marched from the Oversea bridge to city hall plaza, which was crowded with people. At the plaza the ships orchestra and the soloists of the cruiser "Des Moines" competed with the police orchestra. Mayor Doctor Sieveking ended his welcome speech at the reception in the ball room with "and now let us have a drink" - 500 men answered to the order to "fall out". With a lot of applause and hollering the sailors and the orchestra marched back to the ship. The public viewers were most impressed by the musician with the huge instrument which the musician had wounded around his shoulders. The experts stated that the instrument is a base tuba.

Today on Friday, the ship cannot be visited, but on Saturday and Sunday, as usual between 13:30 and 16:00.





The hippodrome was the number 1 attraction for the American sailors. Everyone wanted to win the bottle of Champaign which the bar owner sponsored. To win the bottle of Champaign, the rider had to stay on the donkey "Nauke" two rounds before being thrown. On the photo above, the donkey is still willing to let someone sit on it. On the next two photos it shows that the bar owner and the donkey are the winner of this bet.

Die Amerikaner machen seeklar

The Americans are getting ready to go back to sea.

The American war ships on the oversea bridge are preparing to go back to sea and therefore the ships cannot be visited. The port officials counted over 10,000 visitors and almost as many admirers who had passed the Oversea Bridge. Tomorrow morning at 7:45 the war ships will leave port.



This morning at 9:15 AM, on the Overseas bridge: Our picture features Aunt Ida Siegmund and her grand daughter saying good bye. They were the only ones to climb on the Ponton to say good bye to her nephew Harry Siegmund who is a cadet on the American cruiser "USS Des Moines ". Harry's Uncle Gustav Siegmund was the director of the port for many years. Pure luck brought Aunt Ida and her American nephew together this morning. Some thousand boys and girls from Hamburg closely gathered on the kai to wish their American friends a good journey, were witnesses to the intimate family good bye

The ship's band played to say good bye and the horn was blown three times. The cruiser was before the last ship of the fleet on its way across the Atlantic to Cuba.

The good bye was hard to both the Americans and the Germans. Hamburg was the favorite port of the sailors of their European tour. When the boys in blue return to home in about two months, some will go back to school, just as Harry Siegmund. Harry is a student at Columbia University in New York and will receive his officer's bars next year. He dreams to return to Hamburg as a Navy Officer. His uncle was the director of the port for many years.

**The following story is from one of the Midshipman who served on board when the ship visited Hamburg and was not in the newspaper article:**

**From: John Paepcke  
Midshipman Cruise**

I'll add a story here that might at least rate a smile. While the ship was in Stockholm, a notice was posted, asking for volunteers for an Ambassador's party. My buddy and I had met a couple of young ladies, through the help of a couple of Swedish Naval Cadets and had arranged a date for that same evening, so we did not volunteer. As we were leaving the ship the next evening to pick up our dates, our liberty cards were collected and we were told that we could not leave the ship, because our names were on the party list. Obviously, they did not get enough volunteers.

Anyway, we were formed up on the pier in a column, two abreast, and marched off for the Ambassador's ball. Being taught to be resourceful, we managed to be the file closers. When we passed the first alley in town, we did a right flank and parted company with the main body. As it happened, the two in front of us were also non-volunteers and copied what we did at the next alley.

I was told later that the column was so depleted when it arrived at the party, that they took a roll call. Needless-to-say, the missing personnel were put on report for failing to attend a "volunteer" function for which we had not volunteered. You really have to love Navy command logic. Side-boy duty in Hamburg wasn't too bad.