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INTERNET NEWSPAPER ARTICLE, "COLUMNIST SHOULD GET HIS FACTS STRAIGHT ON  
SHIPYARD" NSY PORTSMOUTH ME  
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SEACOAST ONLINE

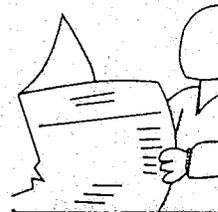
# OPINION

## Seacoast Soundings

### Columnist should get his facts straight on shipyard

By GENE FOSTER

**T**his letter is in response to Steve Haberman's published comments in the March 13 edition of the Portsmouth Herald regarding the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. I'd like to know Haberman's credentials upon which he draws to reach his conclusions about the shipyard. And, in fairness, he's entitled to know something about my credentials. I've been an employee of this shipyard since 1976 with 10 years' previous experience in another public shipyard. I have a bachelor's degree in business management and credit toward an advanced degree from George Washington University.



#### READER'S VIEW

From his article, Haberman's opinion is clear — he wants the shipyard closed. It must have been an easy article to write since it contained little fact and, therefore, required little research. I would like to address some of his opinions with the facts.

Haberman states that the shipyard has "finally outlived its usefulness." **FACT:** In many respects, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard is the Navy's most modern shipyard. It has unique capabilities not found at any other public or private shipyards in the world.

Portsmouth is the Navy's only shipyard that performs back-to-back Los Angeles-class submarine modernization and refueling.

Haberman implies that there isn't enough work to keep the shipyard open. **FACT:** Shipyard officials are continually striving to get work assigned to the shipyard — but it's not due to a lack of it. In fact, the Navy's backlog of required maintenance work is overwhelming — but the issue is maintenance money is very limited. Shipyard managers and submarine fleet "owners" work hard to schedule, plan and perform the world's most complex work so as to maximize use of taxpayer dollars.

Haberman states that many people in this region have sentimental feelings about the shipyard. In my opinion, he's confusing sentiment with loyalty. I have been to all the remaining public naval shipyards as well as to several private shipyards. I can say without reservation that Portsmouth Naval Shipyard employees are the most loyal — a trait any Fortune 500 company would give up market share to get.

Haberman states that "we must face the fact that the submarine overhaul business is dwindling or being shifted to newer military facilities. Soon there will be no work for this yard." **FACT:** The amount of submarine overhaul work has been increasing and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. How many businesses can say that their workload is steady or increasing for the next decade? In terms of facilities, no other shipyard is "newer" or better suited to perform Navy submarine work than Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

Haberman states that shipyard management has begun efforts to cut maintenance and operations costs at the facility. This is one fact that Haberman has right. However, his innuendos surrounding this fact are misleading. **FACT:** Like any successful business, the shipyard is looking for ways to reduce overhead costs. Leasing underused facilities is one way to lower operating costs.

Haberman cites our declining work force as proof the shipyard should be closed. FACT: With the end of the Cold War and reductions in defense spending, the work force has been reduced. Most reductions were achieved through early retirements that averaged about five years early, though there were several layoffs. Today, the work force is at the right level to perform our workload and we are hiring hundreds of new employees annually to keep up with normal attrition.

Haberman claims only some creative bookkeeping and congressional support has kept the shipyard operating. Mr. Haberman, if you have evidence of "creative bookkeeping," bring it forth now! This inference of wrongdoing is incredulous. FACT: I know of no private company anywhere that has the amount of financial oversight as does a public shipyard. No less than eight different organizations from multiple agencies are continually auditing our books. In the past, it was sometimes difficult for the shipyard to meet annual financial objectives. Not so today. For the last two years, the shipyard has met its financial objectives. At this point, it looks like this year will be a "three-peat."

And finally, Haberman states that "it's time to put the old yard out of its misery and replace it with something that will benefit the region and not be a detriment to it." Mr. Haberman, please consider the following facts and explain how they are a detriment:

Shipyard military and civilian employees annually contribute in excess of a quarter-million dollars to the Combined Federal Campaign, much of which goes to local charities.

Shipyard military and civilian employees annually donate approximately 1,500 productive pints of blood to the Red Cross.

Shipyard military and civilian employees annually contribute thousands of dollars to go toward buying Christmas gifts for needy children in our communities.

The shipyard provides 24-hour-a-day mutual-aid emergency response to the surrounding communities.

The shipyard economic impact on the region is impressive: \$200 million payroll and \$65 million in goods, services and contracts.

Mr. Haberman, you finish your article with, "If you feel the same way, let your congressional representatives know." I will let my congressional representatives know how I feel. Better than that, I'm going to give them the facts.

*Gene Foster is a resident of Eliot.*