

# Ship Named After Black Naval Officer

## Reflects legacy of officer who broke barriers

BY CONWAY JONES

The USS Gravelly, an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer, is the first U.S. Navy ship to be named in honor of an African-American commissioned Naval officer.

Vice Admiral Samuel Lee Gravelly Jr. was the first African-American to serve aboard a fighting ship as an officer, the first to command a U.S. Navy ship, the first to serve as a fleet commander and the first to become an admiral.

Gravelly was born in Richmond, Va, on June 4, 1922. He enlisted in the Naval Reserves in 1942 and was recalled to active duty in 1949. He served his initial assignment in the Washington, DC area, recruiting African Americans into the Navy.

He went on to have a successful career that lasted 38 years. His personal motto was: "Education, motivation and perseverance are a formula for success."

Gravelly's widow, Alma Bernice Clark Gravelly, was the sponsor of the ship, the



Samuel L. Gravelly Jr.

PCU Gravelly.

"He had to go through a lot," she said. "I think inside of him, he would be beaming, and he would feel so honored and so humble. But on the outside, I think he'd be saying: 'You mean you're going to name a ship after me?'"

Gravelly died in 2004.

The PCU Gravelly, which as commissioned last November in Wilmington, N.C., is more than 509 feet in length with a beam of 66 feet. It draws 31 feet of water and has a top speed of more than 30 knots. After joining the fleet with the



Vice Admiral Samuel L. Gravelly Jr. takes command of the 3rd Fleet in Honolulu, Hawaii in 1976.

name USS Gravelly, it will have a complement of 380 enlisted men and officers.

The ship will be capable of simultaneously fighting air, surface and subsurface battles. It contains offensive and

defensive weapons designed to support maritime military needs well into the 21st century.

For more information on the USS Gravelly, visit [friendsofussgravelly.org](http://friendsofussgravelly.org).



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