



VOSTOK on a new set from Kiribati. See page 16 for more information on this ship.



## HMS Chiffone and the Pirates of Persian Gulf, by John Masters.

**CHIFFONE, HMS** (5th Rate frigate, 36)

Seychelles #267 (1969) 1.50r

Oman #143-6 (1972) 30b-75b

**1801 - French Navy. 945 tbm; 145' x 38'. Arm: 12-32 pdrs., 26-12 pdrs., 4-9 pdrs.**

A series of 12 stamps was issued by Oman in 1972 with three illustrations of a British warship. The ship is the frigate **HMS CHIFFONE**. Her captain was John Wainwright and 1st Lieutenant was George Crichton, (*great, great grandfather of the writer John Masters.*)

John writes: "The story starts with one Mima Crichton, an eccentric great-aunt of mine, who died in Edinburgh in the mid-1950s. She left me a large box of letters, assorted documents, diaries, logbooks, and three large folios of watercolors, pen and ink, pencil, and wash sketches. They were left to me, following an old family tradition, since I was the last of four generations of British naval officers.

"Having been "invalided" out of the navy in 1950. I'd joined the computer business, which was rather busy between 1950 and 1975. Therefore, it was 25 years before I found time to sort through the box.. What I found was a complete daily history of the family from the last quarter of the 18th century to the first quarter of the 20th century, fully illustrated and backed by a hand-written genealogy of the family tracing it back to 1067 when, according to the Holinshead Chronicles "there came out of Hungary, with Queen Margaret wife of the King of Scotland, Malcom III (Canmore), five knights viz. Crichton, Fotringham, Giffort, Melville, and Borthwick." This knight Crichton was given land in Midlothian, Scotland.

"This genealogy was compiled in 1819 by Patrick Crichton, elder half-brother of George (my gr.-gr.-

grandfather) and traces the direct line with all its triumphs and disasters to that year. Suffice to say, that one of them became Chancellor to King James II and through their father, Alexander, inherited a considerable estate at Newington, Edinburgh. He lost the lot when James lost his crown, so George had to be sent to sea.

"At the age of 10 1/2, in the year 1801, George Crichton took up his first appointment: a midshipman in the Royal Navy, on August 19 of that year. The French frigate **LA CHIFFONE** was captured by **HMS SYBILLE**

in the Mae Roads off the Seychelles in 1807. On Feb. 21, 1808, Lt. George Crichton joined **HMS CHIFFONE** as her senior executive officer (not bad for a lad of 18) after having been in over 40 actions by then.

"On May 24, 1808 the **CHIFFONE**, a 36-gun ship with a crew of 260 officers, marines, and seaman, left for Calcutta, India. She was not to return to Spithead, England until August 1811, having sailed to India, the Persian Gulf, Malaya, the Philippines, China, Ceylon,



and St. Helena.

"On reaching India 15 weeks later, they found the East India Company was becoming increasingly concerned about the pirates in the Persian Gulf. Two incidents in 1808 and 1809 persuaded the British to take action. Both were described by Lt. Crichton. "In the first, the armed cruiser **SYLPH** was attacked and captured in the entrance to the Gulf within sight of the British frigate **NEREIDI**. One of the pirate ship chows was sunk, but virtually all the cruiser's crew was killed in the attack, and the pirate chow's crew was rescued by another vessel, which escaped to a nearby harbor.

(HMS CHIFFONE, continued on page 16)