

PHILO MCGIFFIN, ADVENTURER

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

When Pennsylvania's Richard Harding Davis, adventurer-writer was putting together his 1906 "Real Soldiers of Fortune", he included the name of Philo Norton McGiffin. McGiffin was one of the real ones; daring, adventuresome and fearless. His family background prepared him for the adventures which were to follow his birth in Little Washington, Pennsylvania--his grandfather had fought in the Revolution, his father in the Mexican and Civil Wars. He entered the U. S. Naval Academy at 17. He distinguished himself not academically, but with adventurous escapades, and when he had graduated he was assigned to the "Hartford", the flagship of the Pacific Squadron. It was a time when commissions in the service could be granted only as vacancies occurred--instead of being promoted, many--like McGiffin--were honorably discharged and given a year's pay. But adventure was in his very soul and in the spring of 1885, the Tonkin Affair broke out in the East and he applied in person to the viceroy Li-Hung Chang and was given a commission in the Chinese Navy. When peace had been declared with France, he was made a professor of seamanship and gunnery at the Naval College in Tien-Tsin. He supervised the construction of four Chinese ironclads in England; taught gunnery and seamanship for ten years and developed the Chinese officers who were destined to serve in the Sino-Japanese War. McGiffin was in command of the "Chen Yuen" when hostilities broke out. A Japanese writing about a major battle along the

Yalu River said that although the ship was afire eight different times, McGiffin of Washington, Pennsylvania brought her through safely, although severely wounded and burned. He had taken on almost the entire Japanese squadron; had buoyed up his Chinese commanders with his own bravery and emerged from his wounds, a complete physical and mental wreck. Three years later he died in New York City. Although China has not since been remotely a naval power, Philo Norton McGiffin has been referred to as the Father of the Chinese Navy. Throughout his life-time he treasured the hope that Congress might reinstate former navy men who had been denied commissions, but such an act was never passed. Absolutely fearless, when given the opportunity, he excelled in action. McGiffin was not so much impelled by a spirit of patriotism, or self-sacrifice, but rather by a love of adventure. Philo Norton McGiffin, who in days when his country was at peace, fought France and Japan and himself--burning with an insatiable desire for adventure; who unfortunately died two years before he might have been recalled to the Navy to serve with Dewey at Manila. An adventurer from Washington, Pennsylvania.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.