

*Missions for America
Semper vigilans!
Semper volans!*



**Publication of the Thames River Composite
Squadron
Connecticut Wing, Civil Air Patrol
300 Tower Rd., Groton, CT,**

Issue 19.97

15 July, 2025

**Lt Col Stephen Rocketto, Editor
Capt Steven Deigen-Schmidt, Publisher
Maj Roy Bourque, Paparazzo
Maj Scott Farley, Roving Correspondent**

FEATURE ARTICLE

SPAM, GLORIOUS SPAM

**b y
Stephen M. Rocketto**

Many weapons have been praised as war-winning devices, the Jeep, the M-1 Garand, the Liberty ship, the Higgins boat, the Bailey Bridge, the A-11 wrist watch and the atomic bomb. The list goes on forever depending upon the confirmation bias of the opiner. One item which I would like to offer has had its reputation sullied by the co-opting of its name by a unsolicited, time-wasting and

annoying message called spam. *Oh tempora, O Mores*. The noble SPAM's, laurels are wilted by the the wicked broadcasting of spam to our communication devices.

The genesis of SPAM was a Hormel food product, spiced ham, created in 1927. It was a cheap luncheon meat but its sales suffered during the Great Depression, Jay Hormel, the company president decided to modify and rebrand the product using pork shoulder meat, not favored by the public but cheap to acquire.



Hormel ground the pork shoulder and mixing it with ham. The product was sold as a block of solid meat encased in a rectangular can with rounded edges and a flat top and bottom. The meat contains only five ingredients, pork with ham, water, salt, sugar, and sodium nitrate. Potato starch was added later.

One hundred grams of SPAM contains 310 kilocalories, 27 grams of fat, 13 grams of protein, and 1,369 mg of sodium. It was introduced to the market in 1937.

During a New Year's Eve party run by Hormel, a challenge was issued with a \$100 prize. You bought a drink by submitting a name for the new product and multiple entries were allowed. And son the guests were well-lubricated by adult beverages, According to legend, the winning entry, SPAM, was submitted by Kenneth Daigneau, brother to Hormel vice president R.H. Daigneau.

Hormel went hog-wild on an advertising campaign extolling the virtues of SPAM and sales boomed proving that pigs can fly. The price was 25 cents

for a 12 oz. Can.



1937 ad

But it was World War II which made SPAM famous (or infamous). Military rations demand specific criteria: long term shelf stability, a high nutritional value to weight ratio, portability ease of preparation and palatability.

The amount of SPAM produced in World War II has been difficult to ascertain. One figure is 150 million pounds which is equivalent to 200 million cans but this seems to be a low-ball estimate. Another figure is 315 million pounds but it includes all canned meat. SPAM became a generic label for all of the canned meat shipped. Consignments of canned meat consisted not only SPAM but other brands including *svinayya tushonka*, a preferred Soviet product consisting of whole pieces of pork, onions, and bay leaves. First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev stated that "Without Spam, we wouldn't have been able to feed our army."

*svinayya
tushonka*



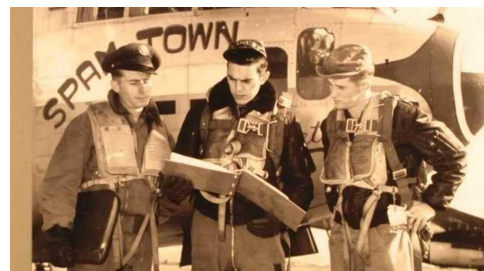
Under Lend-Lease, Great Britain received SPAM. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who worked in her parents' grocery store, called it "a

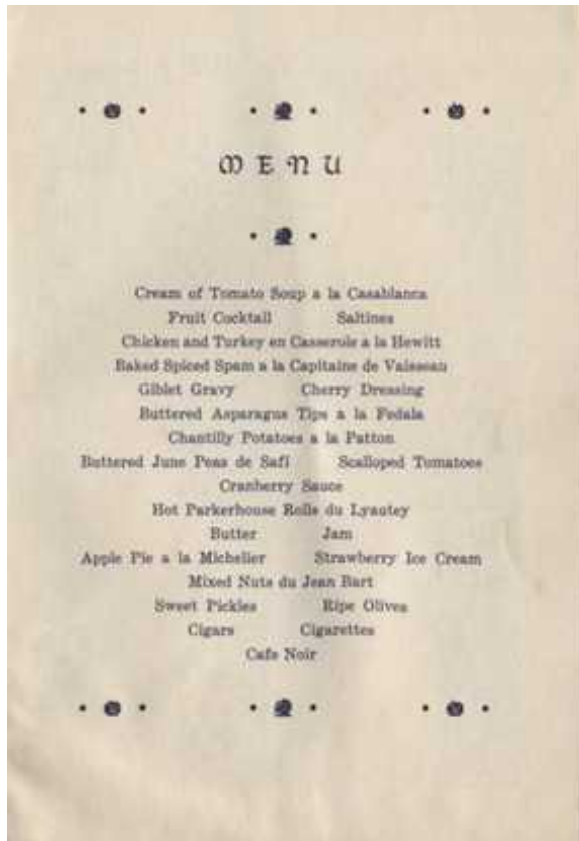
war-time delicacy." On Boxing Day, 1943, she recalled, "We had friends in and ... we opened a tin of Spam luncheon meat. We had some lettuce and tomatoes and peaches, so it was Spam and salad."

President Dwight Eisenhower, in a 1966 letter to Hormel related that "I ate my share of Spam along with millions of soldiers. I will even confess to a few unkind words about it — uttered during the strain of battle, you understand. But as a former Commander-in-Chief, I believe I can still officially forgive you your only sin: sending us so much of it."



Slammin' Sammy is tossing bombs and adorns the nose of a B-24 Liberator.





For the Thanksgiving Day Dinner in 1942, the cruiser Augusta served "Baked Spiced Spam a la Capitaine de Vaisseau." (U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command)



Spamville, USAAF



GI enjoying his SPAM from a can. (Credit: National Archives)

SPAM also has the butt of jokes and said SPAM was an acronym for "Specially Processed American Meat" and "Shoulder of Pork and Ham." But the mystery behind the actual name is the subject of much controversy. One argument is that SPAM," a portmanteau for spiced ham. But this makes little sense since its immediate predecessor produce was spiced ham. Soldiers labeled it as "meatloaf without basic training" and "ham that didn't pass its physical." But there is some agreement that there are far worse rations that SPAM.

During the Civil War, salt beef was labeled as "salt horse" It was sardonically said to be unfit for consumption and was cause of near mutinies by Union troops.

Maconochie, a canned British stew of sliced turnips, carrots, potatoes, onions, haricot beans, and beef in a thin broth issued during the Boer War and World War I was described as "an inferior grade of garbage"

The ham and lima beans supplied with the U.S. Army's C rations was considered the worst of the lot and the lemon juice powder was so bad it was eliminated.





While the author was at college, the mystery meat served in the the dormitory dining hall led to a food riot which made the Boston papers.

But SPAM is well loved. In 1940, a federal statute passed which forbid owners of large fishing boats from obtaining licenses if they weren't U.S. citizens. At the same time, there were laws preventing Japanese immigrants from obtaining U.S. citizenship. The next year, non-citizens were forbidden to use fishing nets within one mile of Hawaii's shoreline. Enter SPAM to substitute for this gaping hole in the Hawaiian food supply.

During and after the course of World War II, SPAM gained enormous popularity among Pacific Islanders and incorporated into their traditional dishes such as SPAM *musubi*, SPAM *burong babi*, SPAM *Sisig* and *Spamsilog*.

Today there are at least 16 flavors of SPAM, one of which is turkey, the only SPAM that has no porcine ingredient.

SPAM also has its imitators: Armour Treet, Klik a Canadian Spam wannabe and IGA Kam luncheon meats are blends of various kinds of meat. There is even a kosher SPAM, Loof. formerly issued in

Manot Krav, the IDG battle ration. It is a corned beef version of SPAM. It may still be found in ration issues but it is not popular. Israel is a small country, about the size of New Jersey. So many military facilities are close to nearby towns and soldiers order out and have pizza or falafel.



SPAM has its place in aviation. Back in my early days flying at Waterford Airport, a Luscombe Silvaire taxied by clanging as it passed over ruts in the grass. An old pelican sitting on the log rail in front of the office referred to it as a "spam can." The movie, *The Right Stuff*, Chuck Yeager and a coterie of test pilots are sitting in Pancho Barnes' Happy Bottom Riding Club, Yeager comments:

*These must be our gentlemen
from Washington...
scouting for astronauts.
Welcome to Edwards.
Scouting for lab rabbits, more likely.*

...

*... you don't need
honest-to-God pilots.
What you ought to get is a lab rabbit
to curl up in your damn capsule...
with its heart beating...
and a wire up the kazoo.*

...

*Some peckerwood's
got to take the beast up.
And some peckerwood's got to land it.
And that peckerwood is called a pilot.*

....

*Anybody goes up in the damn thing
is gonna be Spam in a can.*

There is a later reference using a monkey as the capsule occupant and the line which follows is “ham in a can.” This is a clever allusion to Ham, a chimpanzee who was the first great ape to ride into space aboard the Mercury-Redstone 2 capsule.



Hormel Foods of Austin, Minnesota has sold over six billion cans since its launch in 1937; but spam has become synonymous with unsolicited commercial e-mail messages, a larger number of which are sent across the internet every day.

It wasn't until the 1970s that E-mail became a common use of public communication. Two lawyers in Phoenix, Arizona flooded newsgroups with an e-mail promoting their services. Someone (nobody seems to know who) compared it to the 1970 Monty Python sketch in which spam was unavoidable.

Most readers are probably familiar with the 1970 Monty Python sketch about a restaurant which serves SPAM with everything. Daven Hiskey connects the repeated use of “SPAM” with spam, in that sketch. Like the sketch, E-mail is the repeated volume of junk messages which clogs our communication channels. The analogy holds true and this is a plausible choice for the coining of “spam.”

Hormel has been the plaintiff in a number of suits related to the use and abuse of the SPAM

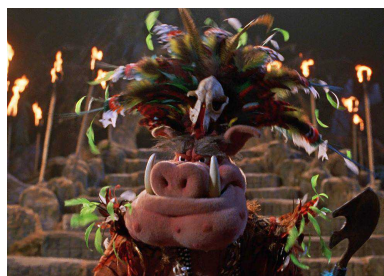
trademark..

Hormel accepts the use of spam to designate junk mail. It lost a suit tangential to this problem when it was ruled that the public is unlikely to confuse SPAM with spam.

Hormel took on SpamArrest LLC, a Seattle spam filtering company which, in its opinion, was damaging its goodwill and reputation. SpamArrest told Hormel that it was "acting like a corporate crybaby and ought to can it." A three-judge panel found that Hormel's trademark "does not extend to computer software for filtering spam." Hormel lost.

However, Hormel has won a number of suits against firms for using Hormel trademarks on products which could be confused with SPAM and infringe their proprietary rights. Johnsonville, a competitor in the sausage market, hired a former Hormel employee whom held Hormel trade secrets and has signed a non-disclosure agreement. A cursory reading of the legal transcript indicated that Hormel was granted relief and Johnsonville was restricted in its commercial activities.

Hormel also sued Jim Henson Productions over a muppet character in their film *Muppet Treasure Island*. The character is Spa'am, the “boarish” chief of the pigs populating the island. Hormel lost the suit, the judge Hormel failed to prove damages and stating that "one might think Hormel would welcome the association with a genuine source of pork."

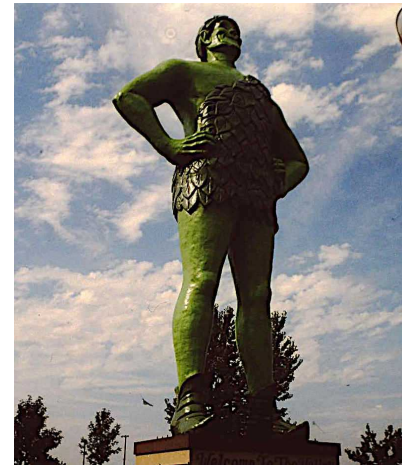


The Author and his close friend, Shawn Carpenter spent five summers traveling across the United States, Canada and parts of Mexico seeking unique culinary sights such as the SPAM Museum in Austin, Minnesota.



Other sites of culinary interest include the following:

Middleton, Wisconsin's Mustard Festival (free hotdogs-\$10 surcharge for ketchup), Tabasco plant on Avery Island, Louisiana, the International Vinegar Museum in Roslyn, South Dakota and the next state from the SPAM museum, the 55 high tall statue of the Jolly Green Giant in Blue Earth, Minnesota.



The Jolly Green Giant.



Sikorsky HH-3E Jolly Green Giant



To finish this essay, let us read some poetry relating to SPAM. The first is from an anonymous World War II wag:

*Now Jackson had his acorns
And Grant his precious rye;
Teddy had his poisoned beef —
Worse you couldn't buy.
The doughboy had his hardtack
Without the navy's jam,
But armies on their stomachs move —
And this one moves on Spam.*

And to add some class to the article, a classic Japanese *haiku* which features three lines of five, seven, and five syllables.

*Can of SPAM looks up,
Contemplates an airliner.
Thinks, "it's just like me."*



Can of SPAM in the Marianas Trench, 16,300 feet under the Pacific Ocean. The pressure is around 3,000 psi. (Credit: NOAA)

Hormel's First Pilot Glenn Hoyland

An excerpt from the Minnesotal Aviation Hall of Fame.



Glenn Hovland was a native of Austin, MN. Glenn's aviation interest was sparked at a young age after his first airplane ride in a Piper Cub. In 1941 he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and became a flight cadet; soloing in 1942. He went on to earn his wings and a Commission as a 2nd Lieutenant.

...

In 1946, he moved back to Austin, MN. There he flew charter flights across the country for local businessmen in a Navion aircraft, which was named "Spam Town" after his hometown's most famous product. He partnered with Austin Aero Service and continued flight instruction while serving as a Civil Air Patrol Commander.

...

Hovland worked as a "chase" pilot for high-altitude balloons. These balloon flights were launched for weather research by Winzen Research (under contract to the US military), General Mills, University of Minnesota and Raven Industries. By 1959, Hovland was recognized as one of the world's top balloon trackers using special tracking equipment on his various airplanes. He tracked balloons piloted by Joseph Kittinger in the "Man-High" Project from South St. Paul.

...

Hormel executives requested Hovland's aviation expertise to select a new corporate aircraft for the company; they hired Hovland as the pilot. He then began a 21-year career as a Hormel Corporate pilot. During his career with Hormel he selected several of the company aircraft. Hovland received the National Business Aircraft Association's prestigious "Pilot Safety Award" for flying over 2 million air miles without a personal or property mishap.....

Plan Your 2026 Vacation

Waikiki SPAM Jam, April 18-May 3, 2026. It is a charity event so plan for it now. Enjoy the food, music, block party and entertainment. Start planning for it now.



THAMES RIVER COMPOSITE SQUADRON RECEIVES SQUADRON OF MERIT AWARD

Squadron Commander Capt. Schmidt announced

that TRCS has been recognized as a Squadron of Merit. This was the second time in four years that TRCS was so honored.



Pictured left to right in the group photo (from the award's acceptance) is Maj. Farley (TRCS Advisor to the Commander), Maj. Kopycienski (TRCS Communications Officer), C/Capt Grogan (former TRCS Cadet Commander), Col LaPlante (CTWG Commander), Capt Deignan-Schmidt (TRCS Commander), Capt Thornell (TRCS Deputy Commander for Cadets), Capt Spreccace (TRCS Deputy Commander for Seniors), and 2Lt Regan (TRCS Admin Officer)

A NOTE FROM A READER

SM Jim Skiff comments on a past Coasstwatcher reference about Ace Lt. Col. William A. Shomo\.

The certificate reads, "Thames River Composite Squadron NER-CT-075 Has been designated a Civil Air Patrol Squadron of Merit 2025 award winner for exceptional cadet programs performance throughout the year 2024." Only one cadet or composite squadron in each CAP wing is selected for this honor each year.

Two individual TRCS members received awards. Lt Col Rocketto and 2Lt Regan. Lt Col Rocketto (TRCS' Historian and primary PAO) received the CTWG and NER Historian of the Year Award, and 2Lt Regan (our squadron's primary Admin Officer, and Assistant Personnel and Supply Officer) received the CTWG Property Manager of the Year Award.

After the war Shomo returned to Pittsburgh and at the request of the newly formed Air Force he interviewed pilots toward the establishment of an Air National Guard (ANG) unit. His efforts contributed to the formation and federal recognition the 146th Fighter Squadron at the Greater Pittsburgh Airport. Shomo returned to active duty in 1948 retiring in 1962. That unit is presently part of the 171 Air Refueling Wing that came under the command of the Pa Air National Guard which I (ed. Note-Maj Gen James M. Skiff) had the privilege of commanding at the end of my career. In 1989 Shomo was inducted into the newly formed Pa Air National Guard Hall of Fame for significant contributions in the ANG's formation after WW2.