

LEYTE NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE USS LEYTE (CV-32) ASSOCIATION

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

April 2011

I would like to thank everyone who helped make the reunion in Charleston a success. Everyone seemed to have a great time at the hotel and on the tours. The day on the Yorktown was especially eventful with the events on the ship including chow down and the Memorial service. During the Memorial service the shipmates scattered the ashes of our departed Richard (Dick) Bolin on the river to be carried out to sea. Dick was an ardent member of the Association and one of the original founders. He will be missed. Yorktown put up a special display of LEYTE artifacts and we donated many more items from our memorabilia collection.

Preparations for the Nashville reunion in September were finalized at the Executive Board of Directors Meeting in Pittsburgh on 2 April and forwarded to Military Reunion Planners (MRP) to put the package together which appears on other pages of this Newsletter. The reunion in Nashville will be the 25th for the Association and we are looking forward to a great turnout in the Country Music Capital. Some may think that the prices are a little high at first glance of the registration form, but (always has to be a but) included in the price we pay are the hospitality with setup and ice and memorabilia rooms, taxes, gratuities, and bar tender, etc. to meet our requirements. We will have Association run bar services in the hospitality room and the registration fee will cover some of the expenses there, for our guest speaker, and for MRP expenses. We have a super fine group of dedicated officers who will be running the activities so join in where you can and enjoy the stories and fun with your shipmates.

This year we have elections so be thinking of who you want running the Association especially in the leadership positions. A few of you younger shipmates, like me, step forward as I am sure many have experience with other organizations and can contribute much to the Association. If you would rather be selected for one of the Committees please step forward and help out. You can even just help out by assisting in the hospitality room, relief for the registration folks or taking tickets on the bus tours.

Next year we will be in the Philadelphia (not in town) in a nice area and great events are in the planning stages. You will be hearing some about them at the reunion. After 2012 we will be off to Orlando in 2013. We will be voting on a location for 2014 and need sponsors to step forward to make recommendations.

Several changes are being made to make us more portable going place to place. For example, Ship's Store has been reduced to only a few items, hats, pins, and a few small keepsakes. It was decided not to carry the clothing items as in the past since most people have already purchased the items and the custodians were getting worn out trying to handle and 'carry' the load from reunion to reunion and the mail orders have diminished. Then there are Memorabilia items that are brought to the reunion and just left to be collected by a small few when everyone else has checked out. In the future please bring the items that you wish to show off but take them along with you when you leave – it would be a big help. If you have

something that you wish to donate please see one of the officers to make special arrangements. We want to keep special items and photographs of LEYTE operations to show and to provide as mementos for historical purposes in locations such as in the Yorktown. They have an exceptionally interested and talented group that take care of items and display them as appropriate.

I want to encourage all to make their families including Grand and Great Grand children familiar with the Navy. LEYTE, and the Association and I encourage you to bring them along to the reunions to join in the fun.

I am looking for donations for the raffle. If you have some appropriate laying around the house to donate or if you have connections with a local place that may donate to you for the Association. Maybe a local product from your area.

Until we meet in Nashville, I wish everyone smooth sailing and fresh warm breezes. Charles Hill

LEYTE LADIES

By Betty Hill

I need suggestions from the ladies, and some of the men, on activities for them to do while at the hotel during the Leyte Reunions. There are some that stay at the hotel all the time. Especially those that cannot take part in the scheduled events. We need something that they can do while the others go on the tours. A few suggestions are: Cards and board games, book exchange, Music CD's exchange, movie DVD's exchange and working on craft projects while visiting. These things can be done with 2 people or a group of people getting together in the Hospitality Room. What do you think? Send your ideas and suggestions to me at P.O. Box 275 Mountain Ranch, CA 95246 or email hill1933@dishmail.net.

AIR GROUP CORNER

By Carl Jeckel & Neil Cocker

Hi to all! The Charleston reunion was enjoyable. Attendance was down and I would attribute that to the fact that we are all getting older. As it was in New London, I was the only member of VF-33 who attended. Not to worry, I secured a list of attendees and sought out all the 'Air Dales' who coame. We set up an Air Dale table at the banquet and had a great time swapping various stories. Had hoped to have other squadron members to help me sing the VF-33 squadron's song. Ken had suggested that I do it solo but I was reluctant. But, 'what the hey' why not! At the dinner they introduced me and I got up on the stage, took the mike and started to sing. I really goofed! I started to sing in the middle of the song. I did not sing the introduction. I was totally embarrassed. The crowd shouted 'Start over' and that's what I did.

When I recall our tour in Korean waters, I am reminded that we were flying strikes around the clock. I remember catching 'cat naps' on the hanger deck while the air group was night flying. The Leyte was at sea for 51 days during one operation off Korea. I used to consider that a long time but now I have to consider how long our subs are deployed. Of course they are not always engaged in offensive operations.

During that 51 days, I became 'Gung Ho', and decided to ship over. I went down to the Yeoman's office and he told me to come back the next day as he was to busy. That night my chief accused me of an incident that I had not been involved with. My chief, shall I say did not like 'Yankees'. Rather than

risk future service with him I did not return to the Yeoman's office.

I will be apparent to you all that the foregoing is all about me. I really need some input from any squadron shipmates to make this portion of the newsletter worth reading. My e-mail – seajays@sbcglobal.net; phone 860-536-6006. I would appreciate hearing from any of you, especially 'Air Stories' and hope to see more of you in Nashville.

Neil Cocker, LT, CIC sent in the following article titled 'Skyraider in the Drink – Happy Ending. In the summer or fall of 1956, the USS LEYTE (then CVS-32) was operating in the Atlantic, conducting ASW searches with a screen of six destroyers and one or two US submarines. Embarked aboard were VS-32 with a squadron of S2F Trackers and a detachment of AD-4 Skyraiders from, I believe VC-4.

I was on watch in CIC as air controller, controlling one S2F in a search pattern about sixty miles north and a pair of ADs in a search pattern about forty miles north, switching voice communications from one search unit to the other every ten or fifteen seconds. LT Roger Flather, pilot of the lead AD, suddenly called in and said 'Rugby, this is Rugby Two, I have an oil problem. I'm losing pressure.' I immediately broke off his search and vectored him and his wingman toward the ship, shifting the S2F to another controller on a different frequency. A few minutes later, Roger reported that he didn't know what the problem was, but his oil pressure was going back up and everything seemed okay. By the time he had the ship in sight, he reported that his oil pressure was again fluctuating.

When the word got to Air Ops and the bridge, the Captain decided to launch the relief S2Fs early; they were spotted for deck launch and that was the easiest way to clear the deck for an emergency recovery. Even so, I had to put the AD in a 'dog' pattern about five miles astern to wait until the deck was clear. While he was in the 'dog' pattern, Roger's voice changed from calm to very concerned when he reported that he had completely lost all oil pressure. I reported this to Landing Approach Control (installed next to CIC at the Brooklyn Navy Yard early that year) and they took control on my frequency to avoid the possibility of losing the radio contact. I got permission to go up to vultures' row and watch the plane come in.

The 'Angel', a HUP helicopter, was already airborne and took its recovery station on the starboard quarter. LT Flather managed to get his wheels down but couldn't get any flaps, so the LSO brought him in high and slow – in a sort of half mush. When he cut the throttle, the plane dropped like a brick. The after section of the plane spanked the curved ramp at the end of the flight deck and bounced back into the air. Roger immediately gave the engine full throttle, but with it back now broken the plane did not respond to the rudder or elevators. It zoomed up until it hung on its prop. Roger cut the throttle and the AD fell off into a stall. As it gained speed, he applied throttle again, with the same result. With each 'swoop' the plane gained some altitude. After several 'swoops', the plane was up to 1200 feet. Roger chopped the power and kicked himself out over the back of the plane. As he was floating down in his parachute, the pilotless plane nearly hit him as it spiraled uncontrolled toward the water. Roger landed in the water near a destroyer that had slowed and was maneuvering to pick him up. As I recall, the destroyer didn't even lower a boat; they threw him a line and pulled him up on deck. The 'Angel' picked him up from the deck of the destroyer and

brought him aboard LEYTE, shaken, soaking wet, but uninjured. Now that was skillful flying.

Neil goes on to tell about another accident in 1956 while he was OI Division Officer and an Air Controller in CIC. A squadron of AD-6Qs (Hunter-Killers) came aboard for a cruise. The AD-6Q was a two-man configuration of the AD adapted for ASW work. It had a long canopy with the pilot forward of the Aviation Radarman, who was in his own little radar room completely blocked off from the pilot. His portion of the canopy was painted blue to block out the light so he could operate his equipment during daylight hours. The squadron was probably a VS squadron although VC-4 comes to mind for some reason. I know it was NOT VS-31 or VS-32 as they flew S2Fs.

Anyhow, the pilot I'm referring to was a handsome young black man, either an ensign or a JG, and was well-liked by his mates. One sunny day he was launched and immediately called back to PriFly for permission to land. He said he had a 'personal emergency' meaning he had the trots. Permission was given, but he made a bad approach and the LSO gave him a waveoff. Apparently he jammed the throttle forward but forgot to compensate for the tremendous torque of that big engine. The plane tipped up on its port wing very close to the port side of the island. The starboard wing struck the port yardarm shearing off the wing near the wheel well. The starboard wheel fell down and struck one of my two lookouts who were on the O-10 level. (All lookouts had recently been transferred from the deck force to OI Division). The injured man was a black kid named John? Blue. He was lucky, the wheel glanced off his head and back so as to put him in sick bay for a short time, but only gave him a helluva headache. Back to the plane. With all the lift on the port wing, the plane rolled to the right, took down several of the foldable stick antennas at flight deck level and hit the water immediately alongside. The badly injured radarman stepped out on the wing stub and the plane sank under him. He was picked up by the whaleboat but the pilot could not be found. No one saw him get out, either. The radarman spent a long time in the hospital at Quonset Point. Maybe one of the Air Group members of the LEYTE Association can recall the pilot's name. The incident is obviously on record with whatever Navy activity maintains ships logs or records of these types of incidents.

Since I have your attention there are two other incidents in which personnel were lost. The first, I believe, occurred sometime in mid-to-late 1955. We had taken aboard a group of Reservists at Quonset Point for a two-week cruise to the Caribbean. As we were pulling into Kingston Harbor in Jamaica, and the ship was creeping along, a motor launch was lowered to the water's edge. At that point there must have been a glitch in communication, because someone said 'let go' or someone thought he heard someone say it, and the bow line was released. The boat broached and dumped four men into the harbor. The fore-and-aft harness on the motor launch was still attached and must have crushed one of the men against the gunnel as the launch tipped on its side. Three men were picked out of the drink; the fourth man was never found (to my knowledge). One of those saved told me that it happened so quickly that when he opened his eyes, one of the still-moving screws came up and grazed the side of his head just enough to break the skin. He was lucky! The details I know

because the Officer in Charge of the boat launching was my cabin mate, Frank H. Mahan (from Maine I believe).

The other incident occurred shortly after I left the LEYTE for the Rushmore. I heard about a brand new ensign in LEYTE who decided to inspect 'his assigned spaces'. He went unaccompanied into a sealed compartment without any oxygen equipment. He suffocated in the noxious air in that compartment. They found him after Muster the next morning. Does any one remember?

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MAIL BAG

A big thanks to George Van Valen for rushing reunion photos to the editor for coordinating for the reunion booklet. I believe that there was at least one other that sent photos in so that we could get an eagle's eye view of the shipmates attending. Don't put your camera away as we will need more this year.

From Neil Cocker a surprise gift to the association of stamps to be used for business mail to supplement his gift to the Life Members support fund. See also his contribution of interesting articles under the Air Group heading. Looking forward to other items on LEYTE incidents from him.

The Hampton Roads naval Museum's Civil War Navy Sesquicentennial blog has been selected for archiving in the Library of congress. The blog, at www.civilwarnavy150.blogspot.com, will be archived with the library's historic collection of internet materials. The museum, inside Norfolk's Nauticus, created the blog in 2009. It catalogs information on Civil War navy-related activities across the United States.

HONORED PASSINGS

It has been requested that the passing of shipmate's spouses/significant other be listed in the Newsletter so that

those who knew them could take a moment to remember them, especially those that frequented the reunions. It is a little late for the current issue but for some that have passed already please send them in. Please send the names to the Chaplain or the Newsletter Editor.

Isabelle Seals – friend to Clarkson Farnsworth

NEWSLETTER AND ROSTER EDITOR

Shipmate R.C. Hall sent in the following which may have been in the thoughts of some members. As the most knowledgeable in this area, having maintained the Roster and assembled the Newsletter for some 25 years, the Editor will comment following each item.

"A few months ago Clarkson Farnsworth, our founding President and all around good guy, asked the life members (LM) to contribute some extra needed cash as our financial situation was not too wonderful. Many did contribute, but I refrained from doing so for a few reasons. (1) Several years ago it was noted that hundreds of members did not pay dues although the association continued to carry them on the books and mail the newsletter and such to them. The reason being, that it as in the interest of all members to supply these shipmates with information and so they got more or less a free ride. In my opinion ten bucks a year did not take a whole lot of sacrifice and felt they need to be informed to start paying their fair share instead of asking other shipmates to cover them. Ed.

In the early days of the Association there were no Life members and it was believed that continuing to provide as many shipmates as could be contacted with reunion information and other Association news would bring them aboard. Later came the Life Members who paid a one time fee forever and later still the Associate Wives of departed LM who asked to continue to receive the newsletter. It is noted that we continue to receive occasional donations of \$15, 20 and 30 from a number of wonderful AW. A good number of years ago it was determined that many were not going to join, passed on, and many let their dues lapse. After a short grace period they no longer received newsletters. (2) The Treasurer used to give a report to the general membership at the business meeting and that also seems lost to only the Association Officers. I feel we ordinary seamen have a right to all aspects of our organization and even some input at times. I do not challenge anything, just the right to be informed. Ed.

As part of the formal reports provided at each Board of Directors and Membership meeting is a report from the Treasurer following the Secretaries report. In his report he provides summarized information on expenditures and receipts and status of the treasury. Details are available for any member that elects to review them, normally none do. His books are audited at least twice a year at the BOD meeting in March and at the BOD meeting at the reunion.

(3) So there you go. How about letting us know how many shipmates have sailed along and never pay a dime towards expenses of out group. The names are not important, just exactly how many and for how many years. Maybe our Treasurer, Angelo Masi, can find some time to get a rough estimate. We should appreciate his long service for doing a good job for many years as other volunteers have also done. Okay LEYTE shipmates if you are one of the non dues paying ones how about kicking in and helping out to cover expenses.

