

Now Hear This!

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Association Founded 1947

By Otto and Trudy Schwarz

USS Houston (CA-30) & HMAS Perth (D-29) Commemoration Held at Arlington



25 May 2018: USS Houston (CA-30), HMAS Perth (D-29), and all other WWII warships of ABDA Force were remembered at Arlington National Cemetery by naval representatives from the USA, Britain, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Australia.

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USS Houston and HMAS Perth Remembered at Arlington National Cemetery

By Dana Charles

Naval representatives of the USA, Britain, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Australia remembered the WWII crews of ABDA Force during a short ceremony at the USS *Houston* (CA-30) and HMAS *Perth* (D-29) marker at Arlington National Cemetery on 25 May 2018—the beginning of the Memorial Day weekend.
(Continued on next page)



25 May 2018: Participants in the ceremony at the USS Houston (CA-30)/HMAS Perth (D-29) Marker (L to R): Mass Communications Specialist 2nd Class Destiny Cheek, USN; CDR Erik Jan Looman EMSD; LCDR Andrew Thorpe, RAN; CDR Eddy Ha, USN, Chief of Staff, Naval History and Heritage Command; CDR Rob Smith, RN; Yeoman 3rd Class Robert Petrovic, USN.

(Continued from Page 1)

The USS Houston (CA-30) Survivors' Association and Next Generations® Executive Director John Schwarz initiated the event with the assistance and blessing of RADM Samuel Cox, USN (retired), Director of the Naval History and Heritage Command, and Curator of the Navy.

Participating in the ceremony were (Representing the USA): Commander Eddy Ha, Chief of Staff, Naval History and Heritage Command; Yeoman 3rd Class Robert Petrovic, Mass Communications Specialist 2nd Class Destiny Cheek; (Representing the UK): CDR Rob Smith, RN; (Representing the Kingdom of the Netherlands): CDR Erik Jan Looman EMSD; (Representing Australia): LCDR Andrew Thorpe, RAN. Each of the representatives placed a flag of their respective nation at the base of the marker, then hand-saluted their flag. "I will be trying to make this an annual occurrence if I possibly can," John Schwarz said.

MEMORIAL SERVICE HELD FOR BRYL G. BOWMAN, S2, USN

A memorial service was held on 13 April 2018 for USS *Houston* (CA-30) crewman Bryl G. Bowman, S2, USN at the Missouri State Veteran's Cemetery at Jacksonville, Missouri. American Legion Post #113 and V.F.W Post #6276 volunteered to render military honors for Mr. Bowman's service. Mr. Bowman's niece, Bonnie J. Kimbel organized the memorial service.



Bryl Gay Bowman

Born in June 1922 on a farm in Scotland County Missouri near the town of Rutledge, he was the third child of Bryl L. & Lena E. (nee Bradley) Bowman, having one older brother, one older sister and one younger sister. He enlisted for naval service at Los Angeles, California on 28 February 1941. Mr. Bowman was first assigned to the USS *Chester* and sailed aboard her from the mainland to Pearl Harbor where he was transferred to the USS *Henderson* on 20 August 1941. He departed from Pearl Harbor to Guam and then on to Manila where he was assigned his permanent duty station aboard the USS *Houston* (CA-30) on 14 September 1941. He served aboard the *Houston* until his death on 1 March 1942 at the Battle of Sunda Strait. He was 20 years-old. (Continued on page 23)



USS Houston (CA-30) Bell – After Conservation Work

USS Houston (CA-30) Monument Conservation

On 8 June 2018 Alex Irrera, Civic Art and Design Collection Coordinator of the Houston Arts Alliance, reported in an email that conservation work on the USS *Houston* (CA-30) Monument in Houston, TX was completed. The work began shortly after the Association's "2018 Day of Remembrance" in early March when the Association's Board of Managers alerted the City of Houston to the fact that the monument was showing signs of deterioration. Included in the conservation effort were: the ship's bell, the etched line drawing of the *Houston* and the etched words written on the sides of the monument, and portions of the Monument's platform. In thanking Ms. Irrera our Association's executive director, John Schwarz wrote: "We are immensely thankful for this work. [The Monument] is a fitting, continual tribute to the brave men who served gallantly—to those who lost their lives the night USS *Houston* CA-30 was lost on 1 March 1942, and to all other shipmates of this wonderful ship."



Before Restoration
(Photo by Bernice Harapat)



After Restoration
(Photo by Alex Irrera)



From the desk of the Executive Director

John K. Schwarz

Hello everyone! Some might think this summertime Blue Bonnet issue is appearing at a “down time” of the year for our Association’s Board of Managers; but I have to tell you, that’s far from accurate. Here are some things that your leadership team continues to work on day-to-day:

- The Internet presents constant and far-reaching correspondence challenges like NEVER before. We are lucky and blessed; we have the greatest correspondent we could ever ask or hope for in Dana Charles. He works daily on various inquiries, never knowing what will come in and what will be required. Dana often works with Sue Kreutzer as she has certain records and research resources that assist Dana in his work—all in the spirit of “helping the customer;” this dedicated research is carried on by two cherished Next Generationers. See “the Mailbag” (page 18) to read some of the recent correspondence.
- Sue Kreutzer has worked tirelessly in consolidating all the many amendments we have made to the by-laws since 2010 and has now made available to all one “complete version.” To read the complete by-laws refer to our Association’s website (www.usshouston.org). As you know, by-laws are something necessary for a recognized non-profit and they provide the fundamental description of how the business of the Association is conducted.
- Our tradition of hosting an annual memorial service in Houston, Texas at the USS *Houston* (CA-30) Monument—as close to March 1 every year as is possible—continues. Immediately after each service ends, planning for the next service begins. So really, that work is ongoing; there is little “down time.” Our organizer, Sue Kreutzer, works diligently throughout the year. The date of the next Memorial Service will be: Saturday, March 2, 2019. Mark your calendars and look for travel deals!
- Our finances remain strong due to your ongoing, steadfast support and our treasury continues to be handled brilliantly and responsibly by our Treasurer Pam Foster. We deeply appreciate all donations to our kitty as they not only help defray the cost of our “Day of Remembrance,” and other Association expenses, but they also help provide funding for permanent remembrances of the ship at those times when opportunities to obtain them present themselves. We are grateful, too, for all donations to our Scholarship Fund, which not only support our existing scholarship programs, but also provide us with the possibility of building capital for funding additional scholarships in the future. To read about our successful Scholarship program see page 17.
- Our newest Board of Manager Bernice has already taken on tasks and responsibilities and has been handling them beautifully.

(Continued on page 13)

CAPTAIN ALBERT H. ROOKS' CENOTAPH DEDICATED

By Dana Charles

Under clear, azure skies on Monday morning, 28 May, Memorial Day 2018, about forty people gathered at 11:00 a.m. in Edens Cemetery, located approximately in the middle of tiny Guemes Island, Washington to attend a cenotaph dedication ceremony, honoring USS *Houston* (CA-30)'s commanding officer and Medal of Honor recipient CAPT Albert H. Rooks, USN. Except for a few Guemes Island residents, most attendees had crossed Puget Sound from Anacortes to the Island via a busy ferry boat. A large portion of the attendees were members of CAPT Rooks' family—grandsons, granddaughters, and several great-grandchildren.

The ceremony was the result of a recent decision made by the Medal of Honor Historical Society of the U.S. to formally recognize CAPT Rooks' Medal of Honor with a cenotaph (a grave marker: used when there is no body). The Society decided its most appropriate location should be next to the grave of CAPT Rooks' oldest son, Harold Rooks, at Edens Cemetery. Retired U.S. Air Force Colonel Andy Leech, an Edens Cemetery Commissioner, spearheaded the installation of the carved stone cenotaph, organized and conducted the Memorial Day ceremony.



(Photo: Dana Charles)



Rooks Family members attending the memorial service on 28 May 2018 (L to R): Gordon Rooks, grandson of CAPT Rooks; Donald Rooks, grandson of CAPT Rooks; Heidi Rooks, granddaughter of CAPT Rooks; Harold ("Hal") Rooks, Jr. oldest grandson of CAPT Rooks; Richard de Leon, husband of Heidi Rooks; USAF COL (ret.) Richard de Leon, son of Richard de Leon. (Photo: Dana Charles)

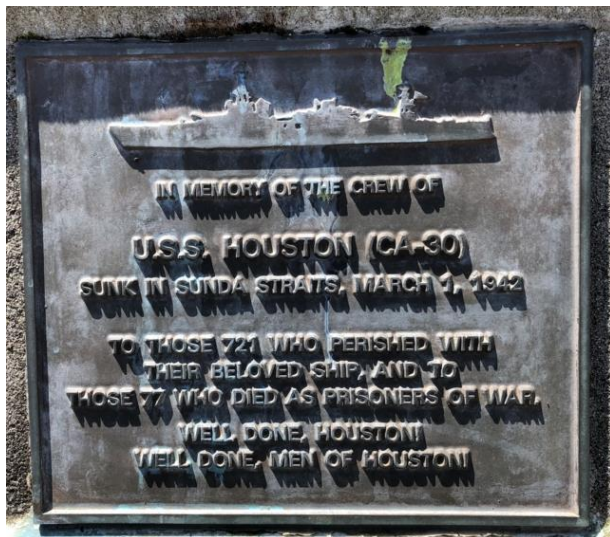
Bernice Harapat, our Association's secretary, worked with a local florist to create a memorial wreath provided by the Association, featuring beautiful red, white, and blue flowers. At the podium Andy Leech recited CAPT Rooks' Medal of Honor citation, and led everyone in singing the Navy Hymn. Speakers included CAPT Rook's eldest grandson Hal Rooks, and the Association's vice president Dana Charles. Two U.S. sailors from the Naval Air Station (NAS) located on Whidbey Island ceremoniously raised the U.S. Flag during the service. After the ceremony, attendees were invited to attend a reception at a local church on Guemes Island.



BETTY MILES RECOGNIZED

Betty Batchelor Miles was recognized at Edens Cemetery on Guemes Island, WA on Memorial Day, 28 May 2018 for her generous donation of a plaque honoring USS *Houston* (CA-30) and her crew, which is located at the Naval Air Station (NAS) on nearby Whidbey Island, Washington. According to Betty, she donated the plaque around 1990 in memory of her brother, USS *Houston* (CA-30) survivor William C. Batchelor, Jr., SM1/c, USN, who perished in Burma as a Prisoner of war, forced by the Imperial Japanese Army, along with most of his fellow USS *Houston* (CA-30) survivors, to work on the infamous Burma-Thailand Railway construction project.

During the Memorial Day service, retired U.S. Air Force Colonel Andy Leech presented Betty with a framed photograph of the plaque. The plaque reads:



**In Memory of the Crew of U.S.S. Houston (CA-30)
Sunk in Sunda Strait, March 1, 1942
To Those 721 Who Perished With Their Beloved
Ship
And To Those 77 Who Died As Prisoners of War
Well Done, Houston!
Well Done, Men of Houston!**

Betty's brother, William Charles Batchelor, Jr. was born 14 December 1921. He survived the 1 March 1942 loss of USS *Houston* (CA-30) and was captured by Imperial Japanese forces on Java on 4 March 1942. Mr. Batchelor was held at "Bicycle Camp" (POW camp) on Java until October 1942 when he

was among the Allied POWs transported via "hell ship" to Singapore, and later Burma, to work on the Burma-Thailand Railway. He died in Burma of Septicemia (due to a Tropical Ulcer) at 80 Kilo POW camp on 1 October 1943. He was a few months shy of his 22nd birthday. Mr. Batchelor is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. We thank Betty Miles for her tireless efforts to sustain the memory of her brother, and his USS *Houston* (CA-30) shipmates. – Dana Charles

NOTES FROM HERE AND THERE



ANZAC DAY 2018

56-year-old Australian amputee Tony Zahra completed a 300 kilometer walk on crutches along the route of the Burma-Thailand Railway on April 25, 2018--ANZAC Day. Mr. Zahra and his support team started the walk at the Three Pagodas on the Burma/Thailand border on 31 March. They went through Hell Fire Pass, across the Bridge on the River Kwai, through Kanchanaburi, and ended the walk at the Kanchanaburi War Cemetery where Mr. Zahra laid a wreath. Mr. Zahra undertook the arduous journey through the steamy jungle to help raise awareness of veterans with PTSD, anxiety, and depression, and to help people understand what allied POWs were forced to experience during WWII. "Too many of our servicemen and servicewomen are suffering in silence from mental illnesses. Not enough is being done to help them," Mr. Zahra said.

RECOGNITION OF DEATH RAILWAY PROPOSED

Kanchanaburi (Thailand) Governor Jirakiat Poomsawat presided over a public hearing on 5 May 2018 at the River Kwai Hotel to hear the views of local residents regarding a proposal by a national committee on the protection of

cultural world heritage sites to have the Burma-Thailand Railway line recognized as a Unesco World Heritage Site. Kanchanaburi (Thailand) Governor Jirakiat Poomsawat presided over a public hearing on 5 May 2018 at the River Kwai Hotel to hear the views of local residents regarding a proposal by a national committee on the protection of cultural world heritage sites to have the Burma-Thailand Railway line recognized as a Unesco World Heritage Site. According to results of a survey by the province's Cultural Office and Rajabhat Kanchanaburi University, some 52 -percent of local residents backed the proposal. A World Heritage Site is a landmark or area which the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) recognizes as possessing cultural, historical, scientific or other form of significance. Such sites are legally protected by international treaties. The proposal, which was first made in February 2014, resolves to seek recognition not only for the "death railway" but also 10 other sites in Thailand, according to Pisun Chansilp, Kanchanaburi's chief cultural official. Authorities plan to prepare a report to apply for World Heritage Site recognition following the public hearing.

NAMES OF UNIT 731 MEMBERS DISCLOSED

According to an 17 April 2018 article in the Guardian, Japan's national archives has released for the first time 3,607 names of members of Unit 731, the infamous branch of the Imperial Japanese Army which experimented with chemical and biological weapons on Chinese civilians in the 1930s and 1940s. Unit 731 was formed in Harbin, north-eastern China where it conducted lethal experiments on some 3,000 mostly Chinese and Korean prisoners. (Continued on page 11)

CREW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

JOHN WISECUP

U.S. MARINE, BASEBALL PLAYER, CARTOONIST, POW, TOUGH GUY.

By Dana Charles



John Wisecup was born on May 15, 1919 in New Orleans, Louisiana. He left high school after three years without graduating, and found his way to the West Coast where he joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (the CCC). In November, 1939, he had only a few months left to stay in the CCC when he decided to enlist in the United States Marine Corps. “At that time jobs were very scarce,” he explained. “There was rumor of a draft starting up—war and all that. I figured, well I’d try and get into the best (military) outfit.”

About a month and a half after completing Boot Camp, Wisecup joined a Marine Corps baseball club. One day, he and another Marine decided to take “a little jaunt down into Mexico and ride a few of the freights around.” The two Marines were gone for about three weeks before they returned to the base, turned themselves in, then got two months in the brig for leaving the base without permission. Soon afterward, Wisecup was transferred to the Marine Barracks at Mare Island Naval Shipyard, and was due to be included in a draft to the 4th Marines stationed in Shanghai, China. But Wisecup got into a fight, and as punishment he was transferred not to Shanghai, but instead to the Marine Detachment aboard USS *Augusta*, which was flagship of the Asiatic Fleet at the time. “On the first liberty I pulled, I was over leave,” he said. “So, I got a deck court-martial for that and ten days in the brig on bread and water.” On his fifth day in the brig, USS *Houston* (CA-30) came alongside to relieve the *Augusta* as flagship of the Asiatic Fleet, and Wisecup was transferred to the *Houston*. “They transferred me from one brig to the other,” he said. “So I walked up the gangway and reported to the officer-of-the-deck. I said, “Sir, Private Wisecup reporting for duty. Where’s the brig?” So my first five days on the *Houston* were in the brig,” he explained.

Aboard the *Houston*, Wisecup’s battle station was at 5-inch gun number seven—one of the ship’s eight 5-inch guns. There, he served as one of the handlers of the gun’s 70-pound shells. Wisecup remembered that during the *Houston*’s final battle at Sunda Strait the Japanese were so close that his gun was unable to be lowered far enough to fire a broadside. “They got so (expletive) close that we couldn’t train on them. Then, what we were firing were (expletive) star shells,” he said.

When the *Houston* was sunk, Wisecup swam to a large raft. “There must have been about fifty guys on it; it was so loaded that she had maybe about an inch of freeboard,” he said. He hung on the side of the raft for three days. When the raft finally reached the Java shore, Wisecup and three other *Houston* survivors decided to head into the jungle and get away from the main group of survivors. After three days, a Japanese patrol captured them and transported them by truck to Pandeglang, where they were held with some HMAS *Perth* and USS *Houston* (CA-30) survivors for about a month in a compound surrounded by a large wall. The Japanese then transported the prisoners by stake-body truck to a civilian prison in Batavia, where they stayed for several weeks. “All I had was my skivvy shorts and a skivvy shirt,” Wisecup said. “But, we got Dutch pants there—blue ones like the prisoners wore. I didn’t get any shoes,” he said.

Eventually, the POWs were taken to Bicycle Camp in Batavia. There, Wisecup and the other POWs discovered it was best to remain inconspicuous relative to the Japanese guards. "It was very hard for me to do," he explained. "I got more than my share of clouts just because I was a big guy. After a while, hell, a bashing didn't mean anything to you. (Expletive) it was a way of life. You got used to that."

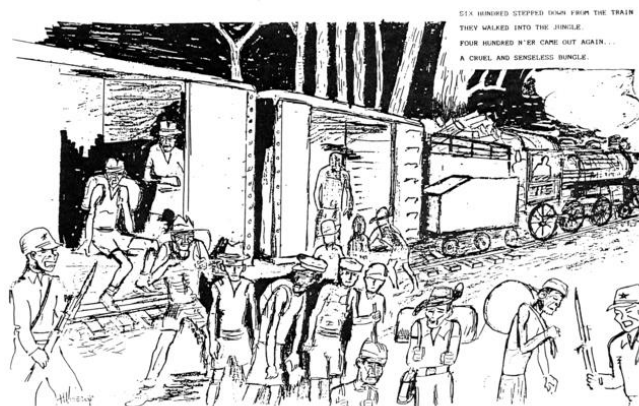
Shortly after arriving at Bicycle Camp, Wisecup "got dysentery and damn near died of it," he said. "For the type of dysentery I had—bacillary first and then I got amoebic with it—you needed a drug called emetine at that time that would knock it out. They didn't have it there." Wisecup couldn't go on working parties and he couldn't eat very much. "I was a walking wreck. People wouldn't even come near me," he remembered.

But, Wisecup refused to give in to his illness, and began drawing controversial cartoons. "I was always an agitator," he said. "I would go and stir up some kind of controversy and trouble. I used to do a lot of cartoons and hang them up and around...It was just something I enjoyed. The Nips would give you paper and pencils to draw pictures. Or...there were old ledgers and stuff like that readily available. Any kind of paper I'd get, I'd draw on." His buddies liked them, and used to look forward to them, he said.

Still sick with dysentery, Wisecup was among the 191 USS *Houston* survivors and 131st Field Artillery 2nd Battalion soldiers commanded by Army CAPT Arch Fitzsimmons, 131st FA/2nd BN, who were transported along with 1,500 other allied POWs to Singapore in early October, 1942 in the dark, filthy hold of the "hell ship," *Dai Nichi Maru*. The miserable trip lasted five days. "It was over 100-degrees down there," he said. "You're in the tropics, and the water is hot, too."

Arriving in Singapore, Wisecup was immediately taken to a hospital area. Eventually, he received seven shots of emetine—one per day—which eliminated the dysentery. "I started feeling like a human, and I could eat again," he said. While he was in the hospital, most of the POWs of the "Fitzsimmons group" were transported to Burma to work on the Burma-Thailand Railway construction project.

In May, 1943 the Japanese crowded some 600 allied POWs of "H Force," including Wisecup and twelve other American POWs, into boxcars and transported them by rail from Singapore to Banpong, Thailand. "There wasn't enough room to lie down," Wisecup explained. "Man, if you fell down on the floor, you'd strangle to death. You had to stand up. [It] was almost five days of standing up all the way to Banpong," he said. After they arrived, the Japanese forced them to begin marching with all their gear for some ten days—approximately ninety-six miles. They marched at night due to the heat of the day. Most of the British POWs were sick, Wisecup said. "We lost quite a few going up, and they just left them in the jungle..."



(Left): Cartoon by John Wisecup. The caption reads: "Six hundred stepped down from the train. They walked into the jungle. Four hundred n'er came out again. A cruel and senseless bungle."

When the POWS finally reached the Burma-Thailand Railway POW camp known as “Hintok” the Japanese immediately forced them to work, putting the camp together. “...We didn’t even get a day’s rest to put them camps up (sic),” he said. The monsoon rains began the day the POWS arrived, providing even more misery. “It [rained] constantly,” Wisecup said. “You’re wet all the time. Your tent is wet; your bunk is wet; your clothes are wet; your feet are wet. You’re falling down; you’re slipping. You’re muddy; you’re dirty. You’ve got body lice that you can’t get rid of, and you’ve got bamboo lice...,” he explained.



Cartoon by John
Wisecup entitled
“Hintok Bridge 1943”

It wasn’t long before some prisoners came down with cholera and others got dysentery. The camp, comprised of British Army tents, became filthy. “The Nips, when they came down to call out a working party, would never come in the camp,” Wisecup said. “They stood outside and hollered down because it was that filthy in there.” According to Wisecup, cholera began to claim many allied POW lives. “...We started losing about sixteen or seventeen guys a day, or something like that,” Wisecup said. He and another POW began to carry the dead men away, and bury them.

“In Hintok there was no sickbay, but you had a tent where you put people who [were] sick,” Wisecup said. “Usually, when they went in there that was it...The people who were sick didn’t get any rations. That was understood. If you didn’t work, you didn’t eat...If somebody didn’t bring them food...if you didn’t have somebody to bring you food, you were in trouble,” he said. “As far as sticking together, we must have stuck together pretty good up there because we were the only Americans. Three died. That’s all. One died at Kanchanaburi, I think; one died in Hintok, and the other one died at Tarsau on the way down.”

In October 1943, Wisecup and the other POWS who had survived Hintok were transported in the rain by barge and railway flatcar to the large POW camp at Kanchanaburi, Thailand. There, Wisecup worked for a few weeks on the Kwai River Bridge, putting up braces and side stays. “We got in on the end of [the bridge construction]; they were winding down,” he said. Wisecup worked after that in the ulcer ward, “hauling patients in and out to get operated on.” There were many POWS at that time at Kanchanaburi who were sick and couldn’t work. But Wisecup and a few of his POW buddies were “the walking wounded, and the Japanese could still get a little work out of us,” he explained.

In December, 1943, Wisecup was transported via a railway flatcar and boxcar to the POW camp at Siam Road, Singapore where he was reunited with a few other American POWS. Then, in early 1944 they were transferred to Changi prison where Wisecup and a few POWS of the 131st FA/2nd BN cut wood for the galley’s stoves, and stayed in cells located over the galley. Eventually, Wisecup and his American

buddies were placed in an atap hut with a wooden floor in the back of the prison—a shack which is mentioned in James Clavell's novel *King Rat*, Wisecup said.

One day, some British MPs caught Wisecup stealing two cups of rice to share with a few other POW buddies, and because the Japanese allowed the British to keep order in the POW camp, a British major sentenced him to ten days in an isolation jail cell. When he was released from the jail, Wisecup became part of a work party digging tunnels in which the officers and troops could take cover during expected B-29 air raids. "[The Japanese] were not happy; you could see they were worried. They showed it. But we started worrying, too, as to what they're going to do with us [if Changi became a target], but you threw it off in the back of your mind. You're so tired and hungry and disgusted that...I don't know... it didn't worry you that much. You knew that it was in the cards for them to do you in if there was an invasion. But, I don't know. I don't think anybody was really worried about it. We were just glad the thing was about to be over."

When the Japanese surrender did come in August, 1945, the Japanese at Changi never made an announcement. Instead, they kept the prisoners behind barbed wire until allied military units parachuted in. "We didn't have no celebrations (sic)," Wisecup explained. The Japanese began to provide prisoners with more rice and soybeans. "We were cooking up on our own. Fires going all night long, and guys were eating all night long. You just sit up there and eat and eat and eat, that's all," Wisecup said.

A few days later, two trucks came into Changi and took the 40-some Americans out of the camp and loaded them onto a C-47 cargo plane. The planes transported the Americans to a military hospital in Calcutta, India where they were offered their first "real food." "They had ham and eggs, steaks, everything," Wisecup said. "We must have ate (sic) for two hours. I don't remember anybody getting sick. We just ate. That was a highlight right there—just sitting down for that meal," Wisecup said.

After three weeks, Wisecup and another Marine survivor of USS *Houston*, Howard Robert Charles (my father) were flown to Washington, DC where they were taken to Marine Corps Headquarters. "There they treated us like real psycho cases," Wisecup explained. "They didn't put us in the hospital. What they did was put a corporal to stay with us at all times," Wisecup said. "After the second day they saw that we were okay."

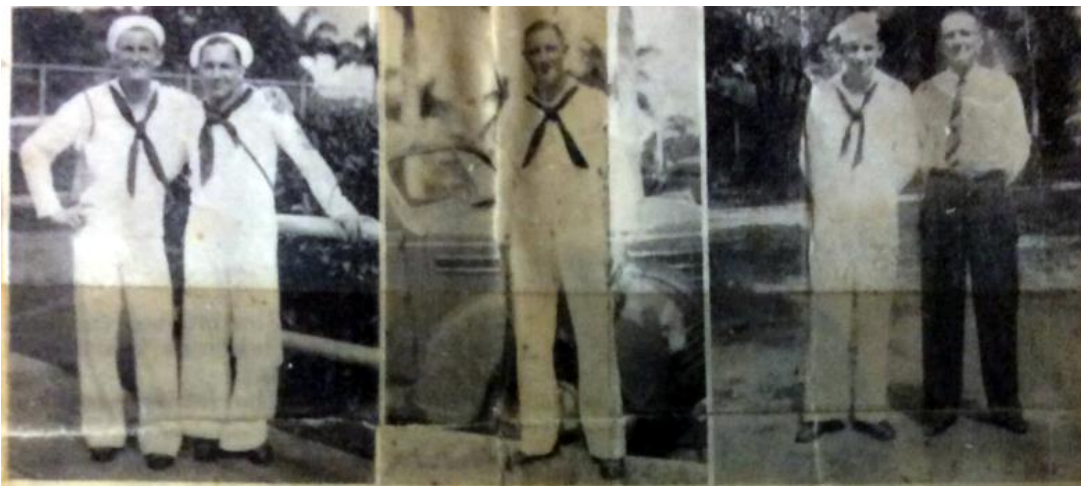
Wisecup and Charles were given three months leave, and in January, 1946 Wisecup reported for duty at Belle Chasse, Louisiana, where he soon decided to get out of the Marine Corps. After leaving the Marines, Wisecup found it difficult to readjust to civilian life. He had a series of jobs. Eventually, he became a merchant seaman for seventeen years, married his third wife (a Japanese woman) and moved to Japan. He visited the Thailand side of the Burma-Thailand Railway several times after the Pacific War. John Wisecup and his wife, Iku, both passed away in 2001.

Source: North Texas State University Oral History Collection, Number 704, July 28, 1987.

CREW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

THE ALBERS BROTHERS AND USS HOUSTON (CA-30)

In 1942 three of four sons of Pittsburg, Kansas electrician Aaron W. Albers were shipmates aboard USS *Houston* (CA-30), including: Chief Aviation Machinist Mate Harold S. Albers; Storekeeper 2nd-class Aaron M. Albers; and Ensign Charles David Albers. Ensign Charles D. Albers was transferred off the *Houston* prior to her loss at the Battle of Sunda Strait. Harold S. Albers was among the approximately 700 crewmen who perished when the ship went down on 1 March 1942. Aaron M. Albers survived the sinking of the *Houston*; he was in the water for some 19 hours before he was captured on Java by Imperial Japanese Army forces, and became a prisoner of war.



(L to R): Harold S. Albers; Aaron M. Albers; Charles D. Albers; Billy Ray Albers; Aaron W. Albers (father).

Born on 13 March 1918, Aaron Albers—whose nickname aboard ship was “Demo”—was a few days shy of his 24th birthday when he was captured on 4 March 1942 and was held in a POW camp at Pandelang, then at Serang, Java. By October 1942 he was held at “Bicycle Camp” in Batavia when he was among the allied POWs on Java transferred via “hell ship” to Changi POW camp in Singapore. By 17 January 1943 Albers was transferred to Moulmein, Burma and on 27 January 1943 he began work on the Burma-Thailand Railway alongside the “main party” of American POWs (Group 5) at Alepauk, Burma. By 18 March 1944 Albers was at 105 Kilo Camp when he was transferred to the POW camp at Kanchanaburi, Thailand. On 3 April 1944 Albers was transferred under the command of CAPT I. H. Fowler of the 131st Field Artillery/2nd Battalion, US Army to a POW work camp in Saigon, French Indo-China. After the Japanese surrendered in August 1945, Albers was liberated and transported to a military hospital in Calcutta, India to recuperate for a few weeks before being returned by military air transport to the United States.

Aaron Albers stayed in the Navy, became a lieutenant, and fought in the Korean Conflict. He retired from the Navy in 1958. He and his wife Louisa raised eight children.

Back home in April, 1943, while Aaron Albers was a POW working on the Burma-Thailand Railway, the fourth Albers brother—Billy Ray Albers—joined the Navy, and became an Aviation Cadet.

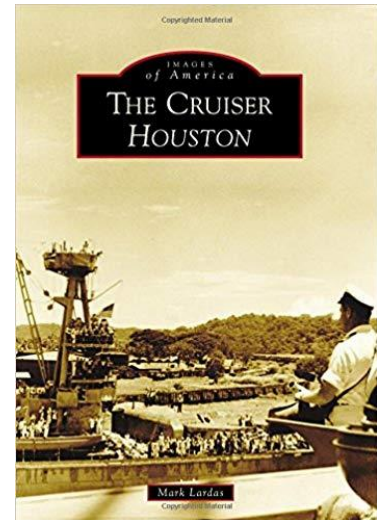


RECOMMENDED BOOK:

The Cruiser Houston (Images of America)

By Mark Lardas

The Cruiser Houston tells the story of USS *Houston* (CA-30) through an extensive collection of images which illustrate the history of the ship from her creation in the late 1920's to her final battle at Sunda Strait on 1 March 1942. This book was published on 6 November 2017. Highly recommended.



(Unit 731 - Continued from page 7)

At the end of the Pacific War, U.S. authorities gained access to Unit 731's research by secretly granting immunity from prosecution to unit officials. Several former Unit 731 officials went on to have successful careers in medicine, academia and business, according to the article. For more information, go to: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/17/japan-unit-731-imperial-army-second-world-war?CMP=share_btn_fb

(Executive Director's Message - Continued from page 4)

- Two important remembrance events took place this past Memorial Day weekend which you will find featured in this issue.
- Your Board meets monthly via conference call. We are always striving to improve on the work that we five people do in various corners of the USA. Please remember: our door is always open to your input. Just use our correspondence/contact resources and we will listen intently to what you have to offer.

Stay well. We're looking forward to seeing you in March 2019.

John

*Son of Otto and Trudy Schwarz
Association Co-Founders*

You Shop, Amazon Gives

By Pam Crispi Foster, Treasurer

Many of us already shop online at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Did you know that Amazon has a program to donate a portion of your purchase price to the USS Houston CA-30 Survivors' Association and Next Generations®? There is no additional cost to you or to the association and the proceeds help to perpetuate the memory of our ship and the sacrifices made by her crew. Visit our website: www.usshouston.org and click on the AmazonSmile link or go to the website shown below. This is a win-win situation for all of us.

- Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the **USS Houston CA-30 Survivors' Association and Next Generations®** whenever you shop on AmazonSmile.
- AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service.
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CAPTAIN ALBERT H. ROOKS, USN AND USS HOUSTON (CA-30)

By William Stein

[The following talk was written by William Stein for delivery during Albert H. Rooks' Cenotaph dedication ceremony on Memorial Day, 2018. Due to time constraints, the speech was not delivered on that day. We are very pleased to publish it here in the Blue Bonnet. – Editor.]

Given that we are here gathered to honor that bravest of men, Albert Harold Rooks, Captain of the USS *Houston*, it is only fitting that we hear of the vessel and crew that he so proudly commanded, and, so courageously led into harm's way:

2018 marks the 90th anniversary of the birth of Captain Rooks' last command, the heavy cruiser, USS *Houston*. Construction began in May 1928, and the following year she was christened by Miss Elizabeth Holcombe, daughter of the mayor of the vessel's namesake city.



Captain Albert H Rooks, USN

Commissioned into service on June 17, 1930, the *Houston's* first notable assignment was flagship of the US Asiatic Fleet in the Far East. A few years later, she returned to the States and joined the Scouting Force of the US Fleet. Such duties were routine for a vessel like the *Houston*, but in 1934 she became a household word when President Franklin Roosevelt sailed aboard. Roosevelt was impressed by what he saw, and when he completed a tour of the Pacific Northwest in 1935, it was the *Houston* he requested to pick him up in Seattle.

The *Houston* remained in the spotlight. It was on hand for the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937. This included a review of the US Fleet by President Roosevelt – a review held from the decks of the *Houston*.

With war clouds brewing in Asia, the *Houston* was needed in the Far East to be once again the Asiatic Fleet flagship. When the war in the Pacific began, the Japanese immediately began moving southwards to capture the oil-rich Dutch East Indies. The US Asiatic Fleet was suddenly the first line of defense. Outnumbered in ships, planes, and men, the US and its allies had little chance of stemming the onslaught. Still, they were determined to sell themselves dearly. There is no better example of that determination than the *Houston*.

Now, she was a beautiful ship, famous, known to millions. But she, like the rest of the US Fleet, had gone through lean years in the Depression-era navy. *Houston* needed overhaul. Her ammunition had lain unused for 10 years; the shells too expensive to fire or replace. Now the account for these shortfalls would have to be settled.

Captain Rooks had taken command of *Houston* in 1941. He was fully aware of his ship's vulnerability. But he also knew that he would fight with what he had, and with a determined crew, and a little luck, the *Houston* could give a good account of herself. In this, he entirely succeeded.

Having been sent south from their homeport in the Philippines to join the "ABDA" Force, or "American-British-Dutch-Australian", *Houston's* first major action was February 4, 1942, in what became known as

the Battle of the Flores Sea. Despite defective anti-aircraft ammunition, and being under constant aerial attack, *Houston* shot down 4 Japanese aircraft. For over an hour, Captain Rooks brilliantly maneuvered *Houston*, which, with blazing guns, dodged and twisted to avoid a hail of Japanese bombs. Tragically, her luck ran out when the last attacking aircraft hit her near the stern turret. 48 men were killed, and the #3 turret, which constituted 1/3 of *Houston's* main offensive power was rendered useless.

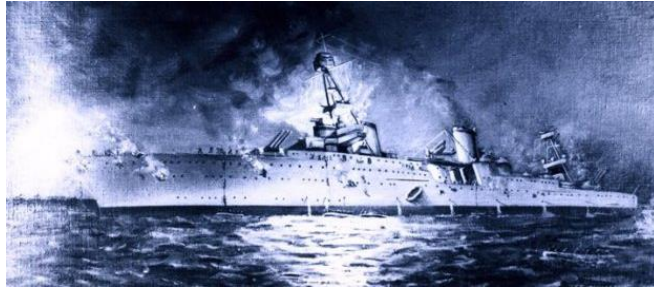
Though badly crippled, *Houston* was still full of fight, and she put to sea on February 15th to escort a convoy of troop ships en route to defend the Dutch East Indies. Soon discovered by the Japanese, the convoy was attacked by waves of aircraft. Little hope was given for the slow-moving transports, but Captain Rooks and the *Houston* were there. For hours, she raced among the undefended ships, her anti-aircraft guns blazing. Described by witnesses as “a sheet of flame”, the *Houston* knocked down 7 of the attackers, and when the Japanese finally gave up, not a single ship had been lost.

Houston had little time to celebrate. On February 27th, she was part of the ABDA fleet sent to head off a Japanese invasion force. This coalition force had had little time to coordinate, and though all fought bravely, the fleet was decisively defeated. The survivors of the Java Sea battle limped back to port. Little remained now of the ABDA force. With the Japanese closing in, the decision was made to send the *Houston*, and the Australian cruiser HMAS *Perth*, south to Tjilatjap, Java.

Departing the next day, Feb. 28th *Houston* and *Perth*, under cover of darkness, made their way to the narrow passage that leads to the Indian ocean and open seas, the Sunda Strait. Steaming silently through the darkened seas, they neared the Strait. Once clear of the Sunda Strait's confines, daybreak would find the ships comparatively safe in the open waters of the Indian Ocean. But fate had decreed otherwise: at 2300 hours, lookouts on *Houston* and *Perth* sighted strange ships – it was a Japanese invasion force, one protected by dozens of warships.

Houston and *Perth* immediately opened fire. For over an hour, the two ships—outnumbered in everything but courage—did battle with the superior forces. Three Japanese cruisers and nine destroyers hammered at *Houston* and *Perth*. The sea was boiling with torpedoes and explosions. Illumination shells lit the night sky. Searchlights streaked the dark. *Houston*, with only two of her turrets operational, slammed shell after shell into the attacking ships. Despite their desperate situation, there was hope that luck might allow *Houston* and *Perth* to escape the trap.

Then suddenly, *Perth*, after a ferocious fight, was torpedoed and sunk. Now, it was *Houston* vs. the Japanese fleet. With *Perth* gone, every other ship was the enemy. Low on ammunition, hit repeatedly by shellfire, *Houston* fought on. Then came the inevitable. Shortly after midnight on March 1st, torpedoes ripped into *Houston's* sides. She went dead in the water and began to sink.



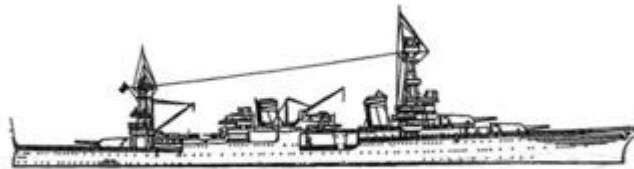
The sinking of USS *Houston* (CA-30) on 1 March 1942

Captain Rooks knew it was over. With his crew in mind, he ordered abandon ship. *Houston*, illuminated by Japanese searchlights from ships moving in for the kill, was rocked by explosions as shells continued crashing into her sides. And then, one shell hit a 1.1" Pom-pom gun. Captain Rooks was killed instantly. It was a heart-broken crew who, in obeying their captain's last command, sought safety in the sea from the bursting shells and sloping decks of the *Houston*.

As the ship settled lower and lower, crewmen carried Captain Rooks' body to his cabin. There Captain Rooks' steward, a Chinese man who was good-naturedly known to the crew as "Buddha," sat cross-legged on the deck, sobbing. Cradled in his arms was the body of his beloved captain, Albert Harold Rooks. Crewmen told Buddha there was nothing he could do for the captain now, and that he must save himself. Buddha just shook his head, and wept "Captain die, *Houston* die, Buddha die too." Together, he and Captain Rooks went down with their ship.

Of the 1,087 men aboard the *Houston* that night, there were only 368 survivors. Their ordeal was not over. Every man was taken prisoner by the Japanese, and in their ensuing 3 ½ years of captivity, 77 died.

The *Houston* was duly declared "lost", her captain and crew, "Missing in Action." But we know this was never so. The USS *Houston* may have been sunk, but she was never lost. She rested then in 1942, as she does today, peacefully on her side in the shallow waters of the Sunda Strait. Captain Rooks was never "missing." We know exactly where he lays: with his faithful crew, and his final command. He and his USS *Houston* rest together, never gone, never apart. He, his ship, and his brave sailors and marines will always be remembered. They shall always be young, they shall always, both in our memories and in our hearts, remain forever.



USS HOUSTON (CA-30) SURVIVORS' ASSOCIATION
AND NEXT GENERATIONS®

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

The USS Houston CA-30 Survivors' Association & Next Generations® sponsors two scholarship programs:

USS HOUSTON (CA-30) ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP

This is an "internal program" in that it is administered by the Association's Scholarship Committee. It is funded through the generosity of our group's constituency and other associated donors and is targeted to be awarded annually given sufficient funding and applications from eligible candidates. The program's window to apply extends from **June 1** through **November 1**. Candidates are then evaluated and a deserving applicant is awarded based on a documented grading system. Funding comes through donations to our Association's Treasurer, Pam Foster, P. O. Box 163, Ripon, CA 95366-0163. For any donations please annotate that it is for the scholarship program. You can also remember the USS *Houston* CA-30 scholarship fund in your will, estate planning or beneficiary designations. All donations are tax deductible. Since its inception in the year **2000**, **15** scholarships have been awarded totaling **\$34, 250.00** dedicated to the further educational pursuits of winning candidates. For a complete listing of all scholarship winners and applications visit our Association's website, www.usshouston.org (scholarship page). Applications can also be obtained by making request to the Association's Executive Director at the address for the Association listed on page one of the Blue Bonnet newsletter.

USS HOUSTON CA-30 MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

In 2008, and again due to the generosity of our group's constituency and other associated donors, the Association made a one-time purchase for a permanent scholarship with the United States Naval Academy Foundation, Inc. This program, targeted for an every-other-year scholarship award, is named the **USS Houston CA-30 Memorial Scholarship**. This scholarship affords the U.S. Naval Academy candidate a year of preparatory school education prior to entering the Academy. This contributes to an improved success rate for awardees. Since it was obtained we have had **seven** awardees which has already produced **four** Naval Officers with the remaining three designees progressing satisfactorily toward graduation. For a full listing of all U.S. Naval Academy scholarship winners please visit our Association's website, www.usshouston.org (scholarship page). What a tribute to the men of the USS *Houston* CA-30!

For both programs: a huge **Thank You** to all who contribute to these important scholarships in honor of USS *Houston* (CA-30) and her crewmen.



Notes on news received via email at contact@usshouston.org and via regular mail...

- 5/15/2018: Received the following email from Western Australian Dion Marinis: "Dear USS *Houston* historical member, I am a WW2 Researcher who has researched the Japanese air raid on Broome, Western Australia on 3rd March 1942... Not sure if you have much information regarding **LT Jack Lamade and observer Stubbs** [who] came to Broome after being catapulted off the *Houston*. I have audio recordings of LT Jack Lamade and his story about being catapulted off the *Houston* and his flight to Broome. What information do you have regarding LT Lamade? Do you have his account in Broome? Please advise if you would like any information regarding LT Lamade and also please let me know what information you have or even a relative contact for Jack, as I would like to make contact with them."
- 5/15/2018: I replied to Mr. Marinis as follows: "Dear Dion, Thank you for contacting us regarding USS *Houston* (CA-30) crewman **LT Jack Lamade, USN**. Actually, we do not have much information about LT Lamade except for the fact that he reportedly flew off the *Houston* on a mission in Mid-February 1942 and did not rendezvous later on with her as planned. Thus, he was not aboard the *Houston* the night she and HMAS *Perth* were lost at the Battle of Sunda Strait on 1 March 1942. We do not have any information about his next-of-kin. We would truly appreciate any information you might share with us regarding LT Lamade and Mr. Stubbs."
- 5/16/2018: Received the following email from **Dion Marinis**: "Hello Dana, Thank you for your prompt reply. I have two 20 minute audio tapes [LT Jack Lamade] made back in the 1990's. I guess he has passed on by now. He talks about catapulting off the *Houston* and then just making it to the town of Broome, Western Australia, running out of fuel over the town and doing a dead stick landing in Roebuck Bay. Then about trying to get back to the *Houston*, but due to delays, the time the message came to him to return, the time of the rendezvous back to the *Houston* had already passed. He then flew, hopping south to Perth where his SOC was sunk in the Swan River by Catalinas' wake as the SOC tipped over and sunk. I am currently trying to find out if the SOC was recovered or left in the river.... Lamade had a decorated future with the USN and he ended up flying Hell Cats off a carrier."
- 5/29/2018: Received an inquiry from **Hal Rooks (Grandson of CAPT Albert H. Rooks)** who wanted to know if the Albert H. Rooks Center for Tactical Development still exists at the Norfolk Naval Base. Hal wrote: << A sizeable contingent of Rooks family members – including my father and uncle – attended the dedication of a facility on the Norfolk (Virginia) Naval base in 1993 named for CAPT A. H. Rooks, but that I can find no reference to it now in Google searches. It's as if the facility never existed, which—of course—we know it did. Two admirals spoke at the dedication, and if/when I get the house back in shape from my renovation efforts and can root through my files, we have pictures and memorabilia from the event. I'd be interested if anyone in the Survivors' Association can shine any light on this puzzle. Hal Rooks >> I forwarded this inquiry to Rear Admiral Samuel Cox, USN (Retired), who is the Curator of the Navy, and Director of the Naval History and Heritage Command. I wrote: "Do you know if the 'Albert H. Rooks Center for Tactical Development' is still in use today? Thank you for all you do. Sincerely, Dana."
- RADM Samuel Cox replied to our inquiry re: the Albert H. Rooks Center for Tactical Development facility explaining that the building still exists and "the quarterdeck still contains the artifacts and models associated with Captain Rooks. However, there is nothing outside of the building to identify it as being associated with Captain Rooks, and there is much confusion (and no paperwork) as to whether the building was ever 'officially' (and legally) named after Captain Rooks, ceremony notwithstanding. The tenant commands in the building have changed multiple times but are still generally associated with naval surface warfare."

USS HOUSTON (CA-30) ITEMS FOR SALE

DVD "Last Stand" (8 oz.) \$20.00
 Bumper Sticker (1-3 is 1 oz.) \$2.00
 Challenge Coin (3 oz.) \$10.00
 Bell or Monument Lapel Pin (specify type)
 (1 - 6 pins is 1 oz.) \$3.00
 Ship Lapel Pin (specify silver or gold highlights)
 (1 - 3 pins are 1 oz.) \$4.00



Blue Ball Cap ("USS Houston CA-30", 10 oz.) \$15.00



Polo Shirts - Short Sleeve, Navy Blue
 with Gold Embroidery of USS Houston:

Men's - sizes M-2XL \$25.00

Women's - sizes S-XL \$25.00

(Shipping Weight-10 oz.)



Woman's Polo Shirt



Men's Polo Shirt



T-Shirts (size Medium) (9 oz.) **\$10.00**

T-Shirts (size Small) (9 oz.) \$20.00

T-Shirts (size 2XL or 3 XL) (9 oz.) \$25.00



T-Shirt

Note Cards of the USS Houston Ship (pack of 10) (5 oz.) \$10.00

Shipping Costs:

1 oz. - 6 oz. = \$4.00

7 oz. - 12 oz. = \$7.50

13 oz. - 5 lb. = \$10.50

Make checks payable to:

USS Houston CA-30 Survivors' Association

Mail checks to:

Sue Kreutzer

43156 Meadowbrook Cir.

Parker, CO 80138

Include the following information
 (please print clearly):

Name

Address

City, State and Zip Code

Phone Number

Items Ordered, Size and Quantity

Meet your...

Board of Managers

...here to serve you!*

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Son of USN survivor Otto Schwarz
Association strategy/outreach, Special Projects,
Scholarship Committee, Membership liaison
Email: John@usshouston.org



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Daughter of USN survivor Paul Papish
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Email: Sue@usshouston.org



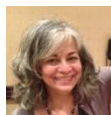
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* The Board of Managers is available to members for questions, concerns, input, or to clarify any matter regarding the Association via email (to contact@usshouston.org), phone, or regular mail.

Membership

Our "USS Houston family" continues to grow weekly as more and more folks want to know about the gallant crew of USS *Houston* CA-30. If you have relatives and friends who have not yet joined our Association, please encourage them to join us! Members do not have yearly dues. However we do operate based on the generosity of our membership. All donations are gratefully accepted. For more information and a membership form, click on: <http://www.usshouston.org/memberform.pdf>, fill out the form and send it in!



We would like to extend a hearty welcome to everyone who has recently joined our USS Houston (CA-30) Survivors' Association and Next Generations®!

Association Website:

www.usshouston.org

Facebook Group Site:

USS Houston CA-30



Red Lead

"*W*hat have we here, Collins?" asked the Old Man,
"It looks like a cat Sir", he answers as innocent as he can.
There have been nicknames for ships and a mascot or two,
But a paint tracking cat, that story is new.
The story started by knocking over a can of red paint,
She tracked it all over, the painter's not so silent complaint.
But, the cat is now named Red Lead and with the Captain would occasionally play,
Red Lead went with them as they unknowingly sailed into harm's way.
HMAS Perth had Red Lead, The USS Houston known as the Galloping Ghost,
Sailed together into a fight along the Java coast.
Early in 42, the battle at sea raged at great cost,
27 Feb the Allies battled bravely but lost.
The Dutch and British ships had Java to defend,
Sadly but proudly, men and Colors descended to their watery end.
One day later the Perth and Houston met their fate,
They valiantly continued this fight to the last, in Sunda Strait.
These ships sailed into history's books,
Led ferociously by Waller and Rooks.
What happened to Red Lead isn't exactly known,
Into the water with shipmates she was thrown.
Today the Crew of the Perth III learn of the cat who lived and died,
They pass the battle emblem likeness of Red Lead with pride.
Perth I and Red Lead, their day is done,
Perhaps she is flicking her tail somewhere, basking in the Sun.
Red Lead's memory is painted on the Perth III deck,
Tradition from HMAS Perth 1, commanded proudly by Captain "Hec."

Barry Barlow©
25 MAR, 2018

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

The Story behind Red Lead the Cat

As Told by HMAS Perth Survivor Arthur Bancroft

Able Seaman Bob Collins from New South Wales was at the Man O' War steps in Sydney waiting for the liberty boat to return to HMAS *Perth*, when the daughter of a friend thrust a little grey and white tabby female cat at him. There wasn't much he could do but take it, so he stuffed it inside his jacket and smuggled it aboard. The crew named her Red Lead after she knocked over a pot of red lead paint. Collins realized the only way he could get the cat included in the ship's company was if the Old Man, Captain Hec Waller officially recognized her.

So while up on the bridge with Red Lead in his jacket and with the Old Man sitting in his chair, Collins put Red Lead down and the cat went up to Hec Waller and said "Meow, Meow" as cats do. Captain Waller's response was "What have we here, Collins?" to which Bob replied "It looks like a cat, sir." Captain Waller quickly responded, "Well, don't just stand there. Get something I can give it to play with." Collins passed him a piece of paper and string and the Captain proceeded to play with Red Lead as she chased the string around the bridge prompted by Captain Waller. From this point onwards Red Lead was given the seal of approval and she was free to roam the ship.

Red Lead enjoyed life onboard until plunged into battle during the Battle of the Java Sea on the 27th February 1942 on returning to port at Tanjung Priok , Red Lead tried 3 times to abandon ship before being clapped in irons by the Master-at-Arms, Jan Creber, via a kerosene can with holes cut in it.

The following day during the Battle of Sunda Strait, when HMAS *Perth* & USS *Houston* were both fatally wounded and sinking, Bob Collins jumped overboard, clinging onto Red Lead. But he was heartbroken when in the confusion and desperation to survive, Red Lead floated away from him during the night. Collins survived the Burma-Thailand Railway and having returned to Australia, was a Groomsman at Arthur Bancroft's wedding.

Today, Red Lead is depicted as the "Battle emblem" of the current HMAS *Perth* (III)—a battle ready stylized Cat with Red Paws (picture below). The Emblem was launched on board HMAS *Perth* III during February, 2012 and three HMAS *Perth* 1 Survivors were present at this cocktail party giving the emblem the seal of approval.



In Memoriam

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Frederik Johannes Hekking



Sept 6, 1930 – June 13, 2018

Waxahachie, Texas
Son of Dr. Henri and May Hekking

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Memorial - Continued from page 2:



13 April 1918: Bonnie J. Kimbel spoke at the memorial service she organized for her uncle, USS *Houston* (CA-30) crewman Bryl G. Bowman, S2, USN at the Missouri State Veteran's Cemetery at Jacksonville, Missouri. Mr. Bowman died during the Battle of Sunda Strait on 1 March 1942.

Thank you!

...on behalf of the Association to those who have made donations, as follows:

March 24 – July 8, 2018

Donations

In Memory of Howard Brooks
Silvia Brooks

In Memory of Jimmie Pryor
Silvia Brooks

Other Donations

Anne DuHaime
Bernice Harapat
Larry & Bonnie Kimbel
John Schwarz
Thomas Underwood
Matt & Jane Matthews

AmazonSmile Donations \$66.48 YTD

Financial Report *by Pam Foster, Treasurer*

March 24 – July 8, 2018

General Fund

Beginning Balance:	\$24,553.04
Receipts:	+8,499.14
Expenses:	<u>-6,732.61</u>
Ending Balance:	\$26,319.57



Scholarship Fund

Beginning Balance:	\$19,086.13
Receipts:	3,701.06
Expenses:	<u>-3,000.00</u>
Ending Balance:	\$19,787.19



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contact@usshouston.org or Bluebonnet@usshouston.org.

All articles submitted are subject to editing.

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of this Association, its members, or its Board of Managers.

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USS Houston (CA-30) Monument restoration in progress, May 2018. (Photo by Alex Irrera)