

Now Hear This!

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Association Founded 1947

By Otto and Trudy Schwarz

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**Memorial Day 2021 Remembrance
at Arlington National Cemetery**



Friday, 28 May 2021: Representatives of ABDA gathered at Arlington National Cemetery to honor USS *Houston* (CA-30) and HMAS *Perth* (D-29). (L to R): 2nd Class Petty Officer Lynnett S. Evans, USN; Commander Gary Milton, RAN; Commander Stefan Luteijn, EMSD; Commander Jim Morley, CEng FIMechE, RN. (Photo: MC1 Torrey Lee, Public Affairs, Naval History and Heritage Command).

Memorial Day 2021 Remembrance

By John K. Schwarz

In observance of Memorial Day, naval personnel representing the nations of the WWII combined armed forces known as the American-British-Dutch-Australian Command (ABDA) gathered in their white dress uniforms at 11:00 a.m. on 28 May 2021 to honor and remember the crewmen of USS *Houston* (CA-30), HMAS *Perth* (D-29) and all the crews of ABDA who perished during WWII.

(Continued on next page)

Representatives included:

United States of America: Petty Officer Second Class Lynnett S. Evans (SW/AW), USN; Petty Officer Third Class Caroline Ficklin, USN; Petty Officer Second Class Keeana A. Hodges, USN; and MC1 Torrey W. Lee, Public Affairs, Naval History and Heritage Command, Washington, D.C.

Great Britain: Commander Jim Morley, CEng FIMechE, Assistant Naval Attaché, Royal Navy, the British Embassy, Washington, D.C.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands: Commander Stefan Luteijn, EMSD, Assistant Naval and Defense Cooperation Attaché, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Washington, D.C..

Australia: Commander Gary Milton, RAN, Staff Officer, Aviation, Office of the Naval Attaché, the Embassy of Australia, Washington, D.C.



(L to R): PO2/c Lynnett S. Evans, USN; CDR Stefan Luteijn, EMSD; PO2/c Keeana A. Hodges, USN; CDR Jim Morley, RN; PO3/c Caroline Ficklin, USN; CDR Gary Milton, RAN. (Photo: John K. Schwarz).

Each participant placed a flag representing their country at the base of the marker. A military salute and a moment of silence followed, which honored the crewmen of USS *Houston* (CA-30), HMAS *Perth* (D-29), as well as all the brave allied servicemen of the entire ABDA fleet who fought and died during the naval defense of Java in February – March 1942.

Over the past few years the Memorial Day gathering at the USS *Houston*/HMAS *Perth* Marker at Arlington National Cemetery has been developing into an annual event. Our Association sincerely thanks all the participants. We owe special thanks to Rear Admiral (retired) Samuel Cox, USN, Director of the Naval History and Heritage Command, and Curator of the Navy, Navy Yard, Washington, DC, for providing this year both the U.S. representatives and a staff photographer, MC1 Torrey Lee, USN. Also, many thanks to MC1 Lee, not only for his photography work, but also for providing direction for this year's exercise, which he guided with the greatest of skill and sensitivity.



USS *Gabrielle Giffords*—one of USS *Canberra*'s sister ships.

USS Canberra Christening

By Dana Charles

In Mobile, Alabama on Saturday, 5 June 2021, the U.S. Navy christened its newest littoral warship, USS *Canberra* (LCS-30)—an Independence Class ship which is the only American combat vessel to be named for a foreign country's capital city. According to CNN, Commodore Matthew Hudson, Australia's military attaché at its embassy in Washington, said, "It says much to the strength of the friendship between our two nations that Australia is the only allied country whose capital the US Navy has used to name a ship."

At 412-feet in length, the Independence Class warships are trimarans which can operate at up to 50 miles-per-hour and carry a crew of up to 75 sailors. For more information, go to: [US Navy christens USS Canberra, only warship named for a foreign capital - CNN](#)



From the Desk of the Executive Director

John K. Schwarz

I know I speak for the entire Board of Managers in hoping that all in our USS *Houston* CA-30 family are doing well and getting “back to normal.” We are also hoping that the pandemic did not adversely impact you or anyone in your family or social circle.

As I’m sure you gathered from our April 2021 Blue Bonnet issue, as well as Steve Cutrer’s video that we circulated, we were elated and grateful to carry on our annual honoring of the crews of both USS *Houston* (CA-30) and HMAS *Perth* (D-29) (March 2021) at the monument in Houston as well as at the ship’s marker in Arlington National Cemetery. Particularly special was how so many dedicated folks stepped up to the occasion to conduct such dignified and respectful ceremonies at these two locations despite the Covid-19 challenges they faced in doing so. We thank all of them as well as the folks in the Mayor’s Office and at The Heritage Society in Houston, Texas.

We are happy to announce that a tentative date to conduct our **2022 USS *Houston* (CA-30) Day of Remembrance in Houston, Texas** has been set: **Friday, March 4 – Saturday, March 5, 2022**. Of course, this is dependent on conditions at the time. But the plan at this juncture is to proceed with an eye toward resuming “honoring as usual.” It would be so wonderful to see everyone next March!

A Reminder: The application deadline for submission for the 2022 USS *Houston* CA-30 Scholarship award will be November 1, 2021. Suggestion to all ‘coaches’ of this process: Advise candidates not to wait until the last minute to apply! The summer break from school activities is an opportune time for most student candidates to dedicate themselves to research and crafting of the important essay required by the program.

By now most of you have heard of the passing on June 2, 2021 of James D. Hornfischer, acclaimed author of naval history books, including Ship of Ghosts—the consummate account of USS *Houston* (CA-30): the ship, her Captain and crew, and the POW experiences of her survivors. Jim spent much time with several CA-30 survivors to understand their version of events. But Jim was much more than an important author; he was a good man in so many ways and a loyal supporter of the efforts of the Survivors’ Association. We thank our Association’s historian, Don Kehn, Jr., for writing his insightful and heart-felt tribute to Jim which is contained in this Blue Bonnet issue (page 8). Our hearts go out to Jim’s family.

Fundraising is the only way non-profits such as our Association can remain able to pursue identified missions. Our Board of Managers performs its fiduciary responsibility with our donated funds and carefully considers requests for donations from our Association. After completing a full assessment of requests, the Board has recently donated: \$500.00 to the National Museum of the Pacific War in memory of the late James D. Hornfischer; and \$100.00 toward the fundraising effort by Eagle Scout Dylan Hayden, great grandson of Frank W. Ficklin (131st) to build a monument to be installed at the Wise County Museum, Decatur, Texas in remembrance of the 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery—“the Lost Battalion.”

Anyone interested in our available merchandise, including pins, hats, and men’s medium polo shirts, please visit our “Ship’s Store” at the Association’s website (www.usshouston.org).

Memorial Bench on Panjang Island

By Dana Charles



Through the efforts of Australian David McGrath, grandson of Stoker Edward Arthur Thomas, (S/N 21793) who died on the HMAS *Perth* (D-29) during the battle of Sunda Strait, a large memorial/observation bench has been constructed at Munir Beach on Panjang Island—the closest land mass to the final resting places in Banten Bay of USS *Houston* (CA-30) and HMAS *Perth* (D-29). The bench is situated approximately 1600 metres away from the *Houston* and about 4500 metres away from the

Perth, according to McGrath, who got permission to build the bench from the site's landowner about 30 months ago. Local islanders began construction shortly thereafter.

McGrath wrote in an email, "All I wished to do was get the people to watch over our ships and report any illegal salvage operations near the ships. And I simply asked the landowner if I may build a memorial seat for other descendants to sit and reflect in the shade, while looking out towards 'the ships of heroes.' Everyone involved told me to do whatever I would like to do."



(Left): The memorial/observation bench at Munir Beach on Panjang Island; (Right): The dedication plaque in English which is installed on the back side of the bench. (Photos provided by David McGrath)

The bench sustained some damage last year, but it and the entire site was upgraded in June 2021, including the addition of a pergola and ceramic plaques engraved in Indonesian and English which share with the local people the reason behind the seat being there.

McGrath wrote, "I first went there for my late grandfather's 100th birthday and placed wreaths above both ships. I started 'Coast Watch' to give them donations of food and in return I asked them to please watch over our 'ships of heroes.' I now have 22 orphaned kids on the island [whom] I support every 6 months, along with the school library, and food to the poorest families. It has been a humbling experience. I love the people on this island. And they have helped me every step I have taken, along with local government and state government. The support I have been shown is unbelievable."

"I invite anyone who wishes to visit Panjang island to please do so," McGrath wrote. "The government of Banten Province has told me to tell all: YOU ARE MOST WELCOME TO VISIT, and I can assure you they are a very friendly lot."

P.O.W. POSTCARDS

By Joseph L. & Marlene Morris McCain

The Japanese would not sign the 1929 Geneva Convention that outlined acceptable treatment for prisoners of war. Instead, their military code (Bushido) taught that to be captured brought dishonor to both the Emperor of Japan and the family of the captive. Therefore, Japanese soldiers were not expected to return home unless complete victory was first achieved. Their only other option was to die for the Emperor. If Japanese soldiers were held to these standards, their government saw no need to sign any agreement regarding humane treatment for Allied soldiers and sailors who submitted to capture. That these captives were not Japanese and had never heard of Bushido seemed to have escaped them.

Many Japanese families notified the military authorities that they did not even want to receive any mail from their sons in combat. This became especially true after it was learned that a few Japanese soldiers had actually been captured.

Many negotiations were necessary between the Red Cross and the Japanese before the POWs were allowed to send or receive mail. The prisoners were frequently moved from one camp to another on work projects and the Japanese did not attempt to provide much information about who they held. Not surprisingly, at the end of the war, many men thought to have been lost in combat were found to have survived. For those who were allowed to write, strict censorship was imposed by the Japanese on all correspondence, both into and out of the camps. Twenty-five words or less was the limit. Some of the Japanese-issue postcards allowed hand-printed messages while others had blocks to check next to a pre-printed line (I am working, I am in good health, etc.)

A prisoner being allowed to write was one thing and delivery quite another. The card pictured with this article is the only one of about thirty written by the sender, Mus2C Edgar Morris, ever to reach the United States. It arrived in January 1945 and was the first word that his parents had that their son was still alive. We believe it was probably sent from Changi Prison Camp. The Japanese characters stamped on the front translate "prisoner of war post (or mail), Malaya prisoner assembly center." The message on the reverse, in block letters, says the sender is quite well, in good health and happy spirits – and not to worry.

Some prisoners were able to send several such postcards to their families while others never got any mail out. There were some instances known of the Japanese destroying these postcards rather than trying to forward them. Mail received by the prisoners from home was rare, and it seems that perhaps the British and Australians fared better than the Americans in this regard. Certainly, all mail sent in answer to the postcard shown here was not delivered, but returned to the senders by the Japanese. *(continued on next page)*



Postcard written by USS *Houston* (CA-30) survivor Mus2C Edgar Morris, USN while he was a POW.

It is also known that the Japanese read a few messages from POWs over short wave radio broadcasts from a Japanese-controlled station in Singapore. Probably they were reading directly from some of these postcards. Reception was usually poor and the broadcasts were in heavily accented English but, nevertheless, forwarded to the families by those stateside radio club members who heard them.

So that is the story of what is known about our USS *Houston* (CA-30) survivors' attempts to regain contact with their loved ones anxiously waiting back home. Under such circumstances, it should come as no surprise to know that many people in the United States attended memorial services first (1942-1943) and then, several years later, weddings and other events for USS *Houston* men once believed to have been lost with their ship in the Sunda Strait battle.

If you are fortunate enough to have one of these postcards, treasure it, for quite a story goes with it!

Sources:

Postal History of American POWs, by Norman Gruenzner, American Philatelic Society, 1979.

Interview of BMC (Ret.) William Ingram, National Museum of the Pacific War, 2003, USS *Houston* (CA-30) survivor.

Notes, photograph and other data from the authors' personal collection pertaining to the service of Mus2/c R. Edgar Morris, USN, USS *Houston* (CA-30) survivor.



Before Treatment, 2013

UPDATE:
**USS Houston (CA-30)'s
Recovered Trumpet**

By John K. Schwarz



After treatment, 2021

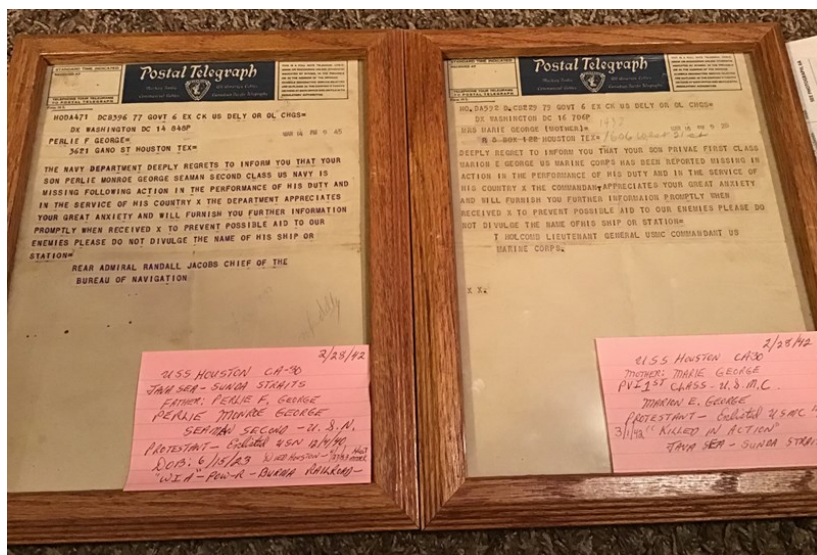
Our Association has learned that in February 2021 the Archaeology and Conservation Lab of the Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC) at the Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. completed the desalination process of the B-Flat Trumpet which was found by a recreational diver alongside the wreck of the *Houston* and eventually delivered in November 2013 to the NHHC. The goal of the treatment of the trumpet was to stabilize the artifact, which had been in seawater on the seabed for some 70 years. It is believed the trumpet was owned originally by a member of *Houston's* 18-member band.

Our Association will be looking into display opportunities for the trumpet—hopefully, to accompany the original shipbuilder's model of USS *Houston* (CA-30) now showcased at the National Museum of the U.S. Navy at the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C. Our sincere thanks to all at the NHHC who so diligently attended to the treatment of the trumpet.

To read more about the trumpet story, see the 2014 article "The Purloined Trumpet" posted online at the "News Section" of our website (www.ushouston.org). Photos: courtesy of the Naval History and Heritage Command.

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

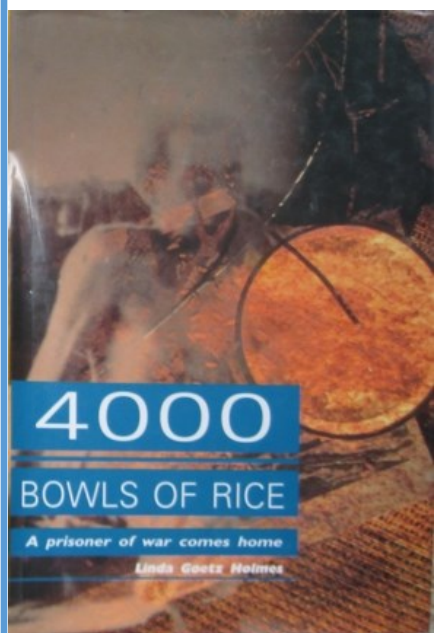
- 5/15/2021: Received from **David Lee Cottrell, Sr.** photos of two 1942 telegrams regarding the Missing In Action (MIA) status of two brothers who were USS *Houston* (CA-30) crewmen—**SM2/c Perlie Monroe George, USN**, and **PFC Marion E. George, USMC**. David found them in an antique store and asked that we contact any next-of-kin (NOK) of the two crewmen; he would like to provide the NOKs with the original telegrams. Anyone with NOK contact information, please email Dana Charles at: contact@usshouston.org.



Book Review

4000 Bowls of Rice – A Prisoner of War Comes Home

By Linda Goetz Holmes, (Allen & Unwin), 1993



This well-written book contains heartfelt correspondence of a Japanese-held Australian prisoner of war, Cecil Dickson, to his beloved wife in Australia. The letters were written between August and October of 1945, commencing after the signing of the Japanese surrender and prior to his arrival back in Australia by early November 1945. The letters provide a personal insight into a man who had struggled to survive as a POW of the Japanese. While visiting New York in 1988, Mr. Dickson's second wife, Margaret, made the letters available to author Linda Goetz Holmes.

4000 Bowls of Rice provides a sincere, touching, and poignant account which helps the reader understand the experiences of WWII POWs from Australia, America, Great Britain, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and indigenous civilians who were forced into slave labor to build the infamous Burma-Thailand “Death Railway.” Linda Goetz Holmes is also the author of the book *Unjust Enrichment*. – John K. Schwarz

TRIBUTE TO A FALLEN GIANT

By Donald M. Kehn, Jr.



James D. Hornfischer and Donald M. Kehn, Jr.
November 2006, MD Anderson Library, University of Houston

James D. Hornfischer will always occupy a very special place in the hearts of the *USS Houston (CA-30) Survivors' Association and Next Generations*®. That simple statement of fact, given in such prosaic terms, may inadvertently conceal a depth of respect and admiration that cannot be easily stated. However, we owe it to Jim now to once more express our gratitude and to recognize all that he did for the story of *USS Houston (CA-30)* and her crew.

In publishing his superb book Ship of Ghosts in 2006, Jim was able to shine a bright and illuminating light on one of WWII's darker and more obscure stories of courage, perseverance, and dedication to duty. Although a small number of fine books had already been authored on *Houston's* history, he brought a new level of focused research and a quality of writing that automatically ensured heightened public awareness. I will also add that my meeting and working with Jim on that book altered my own life profoundly, and in ways I would never have dreamed possible before meeting him.

For he was not merely a splendid naval historian in his own right, but a successful and important literary agent. Getting a serious book published that will garner any real attention from professionals as well as the wider reading public *without* having an agent, is a daunting task, to say the least, and one not to be attempted lightly. The list of WWII authors that Jim represented reads like a military history authors' Who's Who. And although he was still in his thirties when we first met, Jim at that time had already acquired more than a decade of experience working in New York's book-publishing industry at Harper/Collins. After moving to Texas he started up his own agency, and was off and running.

Accordingly, you can be sure that when he talked, I listened. And I well remember telling all in our Association within earshot back in 2004 that his involvement in a book project devoted to *Houston* was nothing short of a godsend for us. I'd read Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors just after first meeting Jim (March 2004) at our annual Memorial Reunion in Houston. Our relationship was cordial and open, but I admit I was a little vague about it all. Still, I offered to help him with any materials I had that he felt might be useful.



Max Poss with J.H. going through some *Houston* materials, CA-30 Reunion, Feb. 2004

Beginning in mid-September, I had a series of long talks over the phone with our Association founder and leading light, Otto C. Schwarz. Some of our conversations were about this new book that Jim Hornfischer was starting. Otto had already told Jim that he ought to *"....have Don Kehn proof-read his manuscript for accuracy."* God bless O.C. for his faith in me. And God bless Jim for listening to Otto's advice...by which I mean for listening to Otto and allowing me to participate (however marginally) in the long, grueling process of writing, editing, and publishing a serious work. It was an absolutely crucial learning experience for me.

For some reason I still took this more lightly than I should have, though, not knowing that Jim--a consummate researcher if ever there was one--had already acquired a more sound knowledge of many aspects of CA-30's story than I realized.

This was not arrogance on my part, but simple naïveté. I hadn't fully grasped how good Jim was at what he did. Luckily for me, Jim had a friendly and generous spirit that was as oversized as his huge physical presence. He welcomed my input and in early October we arranged to meet at his home in Austin to share research materials.

That first visit in Tarrytown was a delight; Jim greeted me on his driveway and helped me lug in the stuff I had brought along. I met his wife, Sharon, who shook my hand, and a trio of lively young children. I'd filled a big plastic tub with documents, notebooks, photographs, and maps that I had assembled myself at home in Houston. We then spent two and a half hours in his study mulling over a variety of these items, many spread out on the floor. Among other things, Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) accounts of Sunda Strait as well as documents from his recent trip to the National Archives (NARA II) in College Park, Maryland were examined, along with a set of blueprints given to me by *Houston's* senior survivor, RADM Bob Fulton (USNA '32), which we also scrutinized. A clear bowl of parti-colored jellybeans sat atop a stand nearby, as I recall, which may have helped keep his seemingly inexhaustible energy fueled. I tried my darndest to answer his questions, but he was already working at a deeper level than I anticipated. I knew I would need to *really* knuckle down if I was going to be of any use to Jim and his project. It was also at that time that he mentioned something to me about a gigantic new book about to come out, well over a quarter million words in length even after much pruning, covering the Japanese side of the Battle of Midway in 1942. He was the agent involved in the book deal. It was to be called Shattered Sword...



Jim Hornfischer with Howard Brooks at the USS *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial, Houston TX, Feb. 28, 2004.

I left some of the most useful CA-30 material with him, including a very precious photo album filled with many shots of survivors I'd taken over the previous thirteen years. But, before we walked out of his study, with its floor-to-ceiling shelves filled with books, he grabbed three or four brand new volumes and shoved them in my hands. They were all works by authors he represented. Being a severe, lifelong bookaholic—although an impecunious one—I was quite touched and impressed.

Yet, I still did not grasp at first what meeting Jim would eventually do *for me*. Why? Because at that time I entertained no serious hopes of writing or being published at all. But, Jim would soon enough change that forever...

Over the next two years we would interact by phone or email often, discussing different aspects of the book. And I visited him again at his lovely house (the second one) in Tarrytown more than once. At length he sent me hardcopy pages of his manuscript to fact-check, telling me to give him my most severe critique. I did the best I could, although I may have been less helpful than I hoped to be...given my basic inexperience at that point.



CDR John Kreutzer & Jim Hornfischer interviewing USS *Houston* survivor Gus Forsman, 2005.

Also, I had left Jim with a 2" thick 3-ring binder with various CA-30 materials in it, including a few small pieces (no more than 2 or 3 pages each) I'd written myself on aspects of the cruiser's history which interested me. When he returned that to me later on, he made a remark that I first responded to with a laugh but later realized had potentially career-altering implications...

In late October, 2004, on the 60th anniversary of the engagements off Samar, which Jim had covered so magnificently in Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors, he attended reunions on the West Coast with USN veterans of that harrowing and heroic battle. At the same time I received a large mail parcel from my landlady. In excited anticipation I ripped the mailer open; it was the 103-page "*Estimate of the Situation*" written by CAPT Albert H. Rooks of *Houston* immediately before the war's outbreak in December, 1941. This was a rare piece that I'd wanted to obtain for almost twenty years. Jim had made a hardcopy of the entire document and sent it to me despite his hurried and very full schedule. That was but one small example of the quality of person he was.

Soon after that we met again in Austin and I gave him some books he wanted, one in exchange for a signed copy of Tin Can Sailors. Around that time, as he returned my 3-ring binder of CA-30 materials, Jim said, "*Don, you're really a good writer. If you ever want to sell out [meaning write a book of my own]...let me know.*" I chuckled a little at this, not taking it at face value or too seriously since the pieces I'd written were so slight.

Although an English Literature major—and a spectacularly poor, unsuccessful one—at UT-Austin in the 1970s, my lifelong interest in writing had never left me. I of course would have loved the chance to get published. And that meant to publish *anything* at all, because I was usually scribbling something or other...though not naval history.

As it turns out, though, that at the end of 2003 I *had* written a long letter to a WWII naval history magazine. It offered corrections to an earlier article they'd printed on the Battle of Sunda Strait. To my delight they published most of the letter. I wrote it politely, with the proper respect for the author (John Wukovits), but pointed up a number of factual errors. This minor 'success' had made me start to think about researching and writing something in the field of naval history, but in no very focused way yet. That letter was a well-intentioned effort, but one which subsequently led to some ironic consequences...

After I got home from Austin and settled back into the humdrum routine of my life again, Jim's remark stuck in my head...and began to glow. Soon thereafter it became a bright red alarm light, flashing over my

cranium. The message it was sending was not too complicated: *A Major Literary Agent is offering to Help You get Published. Don't be a Damned Fool. Seize the Opportunity.*

And the rest, as the cliché goes, is--quite literally--History...

I spent some time in the summer of 2005 going over his manuscript and trying my best to vet it properly, even though my real area of expertise was *Houston's* wartime career, and not the grim 'Railway of Death' travail of most of her survivors. Whatever suggestions or corrections I made were almost entirely in the



At the USS *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Service, Houston, TX 2005.

realm of technical details. Near the end of his project, as photos were being readied, I supplied some pics of vets I had taken at various reunions. Jim also contacted me late in the process, and as is so often the case, rather frantically, with a request for appropriate images of the cruiser for the book's cover. It became an amusingly daft episode that many published authors would recognize, but we took care of that issue, too.

At the same time I was already nose-to-the-grindstone on what would become my first book, *A Blue Sea of Blood*, although in its nascent form the manuscript was called *Shadow on the Sea*. A primitive and amateurish version of this, which I'd essentially made by hand, was left with Jim at his house at some point...To my utter astonishment he asked me to autograph it for him. It was then that he first encouraged me to enlarge the story. In fact, he plucked a slender volume from his shelves, perhaps 150 pages in length, and used it as an example of the size he thought my effort might be expanded to reach. I took him at his word, and soon set to work.

Meanwhile, both Jim and I understood from the get-go that his project was, in many ways, a race against time; CA-30 survivors were dying at an increased rate by then. I believe this energized Jim, and I know he was always grateful that he got a chance to go to Union, New Jersey and spend time at the home of Otto and Trudy Schwarz. Otto had founded the *USS Houston CA-30 Survivors Association* in the late 1940s, and owned a massive collection of CA-30 materials from all corners of the globe.

Before Otto passed away that summer, Jim even managed to get a copy of his page proof manuscript to New Jersey, where Otto's wife Trudy read portions of it to Otto during his final weeks. By all accounts Otto was pleased with the work, which I know gave Jim a real and durable sense of satisfaction.

In Sept. 2006 I drove up from Texas to Washington, D.C. for Otto's funeral at Arlington National Cemetery. After that I also went to the National Archives (NARA II) at College Park, Maryland where I uncovered more materials pertaining to the *USS Edsall* mystery. It was through Jim's advice and coaching that I had any idea at all how one goes about research at that wonderful but carefully structured facility.



And it was Jim who put me in touch with NARA II archivist deluxe, Patrick Osborn, who was so instrumental in locating any number of valuable Asiatic Fleet documents for me.

It would take another thirteen months before I could give Jim hardcopies of a preliminary draft (all 175 pages of it) of my book so that he could begin to try to shop it to publishers. That took place at the big Texas Book Festival near the grounds of the state capitol on a sparkling fall day in 2006. And it was at that event, when I handed over my precious hardcopy manuscript to Jim, that a funny thing happened...

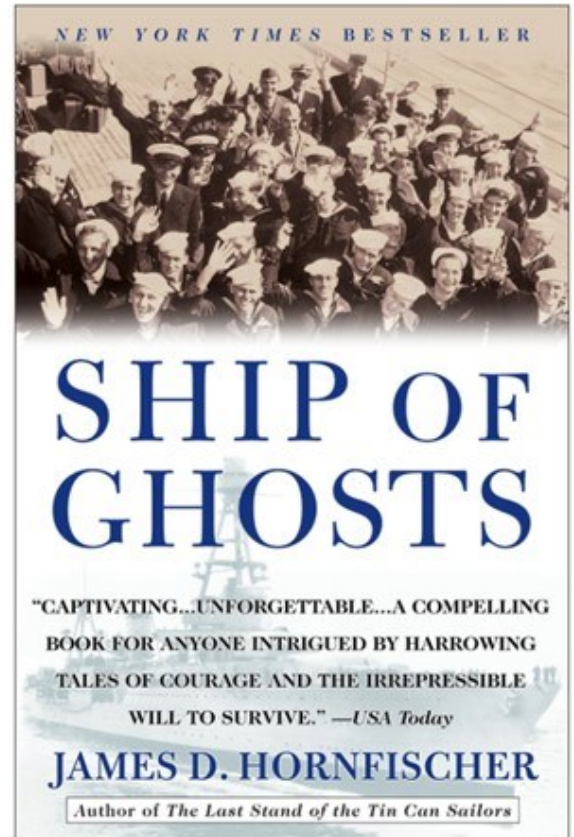
Standing in the crush of people inside one of the big tents set up for distributors and authors, I waited in line like everyone else to get a copy of Ship of Ghosts. Jim was there, larger than life, selling and signing copies alongside another gentleman, an author who was obviously doing the same thing with his book(s). They seemed to know each other, talking back and forth between customers. When I got to Jim, he signed the copy for me, writing, *"To Don Kehn--My friend and brother-in-arms in the war to preserve and celebrate our proud naval history. Thank you for your vital help in research and reviewing the manuscript. Texas Book Festival, Oct. 28, 2006."*

As he was signing the book, he turned his head to the fellow next to him...whose nametag I could only then read: John Wukovits. Before I could squirm my way out of there, or find a person large enough to hide behind, I heard Jim say, *"This is the guy who wrote that letter..."* Need I say that I avoided eye contact with Mr. Wukovits...Simultaneously a famous section from Marlowe's *"Doctor Faustus"* sprang into my old English major's brain: *"No, no--Then will I headlong run into the earth: Earth, gape! O no, it will not harbor me."*

There is a type of moral there, I suspect, for folks sometimes too smart for their own good, but let's just call it another learning experience, and a humbling one. Fortunately, Jim and Wukovits were both smiling, still busily engrossed in selling and signing copies of their books, glad-handing and gabbing, and it was no more than an amusing and mercifully brief interlude to them.

A few days later I went to a book-signing and talk in Houston that Jim gave at the University of Houston's M. D. Anderson Library, which was filmed for C-SPAN. It was well-attended, and I purchased several additional copies myself for various friends and colleagues, which he signed. Afterwards we chatted, took photos, and he teased me about the joys of such personal appearances, recalling other events where he ended up sitting alone at a desk behind a pile of books and not one person showed up. An experience which he described as *"soul-killing,"* before nudging me good naturedly, saying, *"Don't worry, Don, you'll get there."*

For those who knew him personally, that big stentorian voice carried a lot of weight, and was capable of both strictly professional seriousness as well as impish humor. I didn't take his words as a warning at all, but instead looked forward to such trials as part of the authorial rites of passage. (In fact, it reminded me of my literary hero, Nathanael West, and a public talk about films and his newly-released novel, The Day of the Locust, that he'd given in June, 1939, at a Hollywood department store. An event West agreed to submit himself to partially out of curiosity for the types of persons who would actually show up to meet an author at such a business.)



For another six months or so, Jim worked the market for a publisher for my book while I continued to enlarge the manuscript and flesh out various chapters. I was still employed full-time, so all of my work was done in the evening and on weekends. Finally, one day at work in the late spring of 2007 my cellphone rang. It was that moment every wannabe author dreams about. I heard Jim say, "*This is the call I've been wanting to make...*" and I knew he meant it sincerely, and I knew what it meant. We had a deal with Zenith Books. There has never been the *slightest* question in my mind that this would never have happened without his help.

So, the straight truth is that as a published historian I owe Jim just about everything. And I must note that even after he had become a major figure in the naval history world, he found time to remain involved in the *USS Houston (CA-30) Survivors' Association and Next Generations*®. Jim attended our annual memorial reunions in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2010. Over the course of his career, he gave many talks on *Houston's* story and published magazine articles as well on the cruiser's wartime adventures. We stayed in touch, naturally, while I struggled through the lengthy ordeal of writing a much larger and extensively researched book on the Asiatic Fleet, and he cast about for houses to publish it. And he still found time for his friends and writers.



**USS Houston CA-30 Reunion,
Houston, Texas, March 2010.**

In 2010, Tony Tully and I went to Jim's home in Austin and had an excellent meeting with him to discuss book projects we had in mind. While he struggled with a recalcitrant garden hose in his backyard flower bed, Jim gave us solid advice and useful suggestions. He also discussed in some detail with us his latest work, Neptune's Inferno. To my amazement he spent nearly two hours of his valuable time going over these matters. I was again struck by his big, positive spirit and down-to-earth generosity--an impression I'm absolutely certain Tony also shared.

Eight years after the Zenith deal, in 2015, he would come through for me again by finding a wonderful publisher (University of Nebraska's Potomac Books) for my second Pacific War history, In the Highest Degree Tragic. Once more I must acknowledge his central and crucial role in making it happen.

My impression is he did this countless times in his career for a multitude of writers, which is an extraordinary accomplishment. And, yes, of course I know *that* was his profession. I have not by any means included all of the small and large things Jim did to further my career as a writer. From instructing me on the ins & outs of promotional minutiae for one's own work to organizing book-signings and public talks; from how to craft a book proposal to how to set up radio interviews, he helped me in unnumbered practical ways.

I was an unknown guy who hadn't received his first real shot at getting published until in his fifties; not an easy undertaking that late in life. It bothers me not a single iota to admit that without Jim's friendship, generosity, and professionalism it might *never* have happened.

In the *USS Houston (CA-30) Survivors' Association and Next Generations*® we take the motto "*Lest We Forget*" seriously, and that applies as well, and in full, to Jim Hornfischer, the big man uniquely blessed with an oversized spirit and the literary talents to match.

As tribute to his Germanic heritage, let me borrow from Schopenhauer and say Jim possessed both the "*grosse Herz*" (large heart) required for great deeds and the "*grosse Kopf*" (large mind) for great works. In recent decades, America has produced few better writers dealing with the sprawling complexities of the Pacific War.

That I was able to make some impression with my research, however one views its quality, in the published body of works on WWII naval history, owes an immense amount to Jim Hornfischer. As the historian since 1994 for the *USS Houston (CA-30) Survivors' Association and Next Generations*®, that we were able to work together, if only for a brief period of two or three years on the story of *USS Houston (CA-30)*, has to be regarded as one of the most fortuitous occasions in my adult life. That Jim was able to enlarge the reading public's understanding of *Houston's* remarkable history through his finely crafted writing is a gift that cannot be repaid. But, it is one for which we—and I'm speaking for all of the Association—will always remain both deeply indebted and profoundly grateful.



Donald M. Kehn, Jr. and James D. Hornfischer, March 2005, Houston, Texas

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Photos by Donald M. Kehn, Jr. and Shawn Flynn.

You Shop, Amazon Gives

By Pam Crispi Moura, 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.

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Virtual Award Ceremony for James D. Hornfischer

On 17 May 2021, Naval History and Heritage Command hosted a virtual awards ceremony for Mr. James D. Hornfischer. I had submitted Jim for the award of the Navy Distinguished Public Service Medal, the highest award that the Navy can give to a non-military person. The award was created in 1951 to recognize heroism or service of great enduring value to the U.S. Navy. One of the first recipients was Mr. Joe Rosenthal, who took the famous picture on Iwo Jima. The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Gilday, and Acting Secretary of the Navy Harker approved the award. At the ceremony, Jim was at his home, surrounded by many friends and family. Among many “virtual” friends on the net was General (Ret.) Hagee, USMC (President and CEO of the Admiral Nimitz Foundation), Admiral (Ret.) Fallon, USN (Chairman of the Board of the Naval Historical Foundation), and Vice Admiral (Ret.) Daly, USN (CEO of the U.S. Naval Institute.) I made the opening remarks for the presentation. Present at the house was Jim’s nephew, Captain Marcus Lockard, USN, in summer white uniform who read the award citation. Also present at the house was Rear Admiral Ted LeClair, USN, a close friend of the family and also in uniform; he physically presented the medal and pinned it on Jim’s collar. GEN Hagee, ADM Fallon and VADM Daly then made additional remarks. ADM Fallon also presented Jim with the Naval Historical Foundation Distinguished Service Award. We all would much prefer that Jim would be with us much longer, writing more great books about naval history, but by all appearance the award was greatly appreciated by Jim and his family. It was the least we could do to pay our respects.

Samuel J. Cox
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)
Director of Naval History
Curator for the Navy
Director, Naval History and Heritage Command



Navy Distinguished Public Service Medal

USS HOUSTON CA-30 MERCHANDISE UPDATE

Now Hear This!

We have...

- Received a new shipment of USS *Houston* (CA-30) hats so orders can be placed and filled; \$15.00 ea. plus shipping.
- Two new men's Polo shirts available due to our most recent special order, both in men's medium, one dark grey and the other red. Both are embroidered with the USS *Houston* (CA-30) logo; \$23.00 ea. plus shipping.
- Plenty of USS *Houston* (CA-30) challenge coins available; \$9.50 ea. plus shipping.
- USS *Houston* (CA-30) ship pins—Gold or Silver trimmed; 2 for \$5.00 plus shipping.

Contact: johnk.schwarz@yahoo.com for all merchandise questions and information.

Wear your USS *Houston* (CA-30) apparel proudly and
help keep the memory of the ship alive!



USS *Houston* (CA-30) hat
(Navy Blue)



USS *Houston* (CA-30) Polo Shirt
(Dark grey)



USS *Houston* (CA-30) Polo Shirt
(Red)

CA-30 and the *Enigmysterious* ECM

By Donald M. Kehn, Jr.

Over twenty years ago I became intrigued by some vague remarks attributed to a former officer who had served USS *Houston* (CA-30) as part of her original complement in 1930-31. That officer was CDR Henri ("Hank") Smith-Hutton, USN, one of the unjustly neglected figures in the Navy's intelligence services during the late Thirties and through WWII. The remarks by Hank that first caught my eye came a decade later, though.



(Front row, third from right): Commander Henri Smith-Hutton, USN

By late 1941, CDR Smith-Hutton was the US Naval attaché in Tokyo when war broke out. He was incarcerated with his family for about seven months before being repatriated in June-July, 1942 in the *Asama Maru/Conte Verde/Gripsholm* exchanges. Almost 2800 Westerners from Japan and Asia (military attachés, journalists, oil company executives, diplomats) were swapped for a similar number of Japanese coming from America. The exchanges took place at the neutral Portuguese port of Lourenço Marques (present-day Maputo) in Mozambique on Africa's southeast coast. Hank and family sailed from Japan on the *Asama Maru*.

After departing Yokohama, and also stopping at Hong Kong, Saigon, and Singapore to pick up other passengers, the *Asamu Maru* headed south through the East Indies. Following the well-established commercial shipping lanes of that era, she and her consort, the *Conte Verde*, passed through Sunda Strait's narrow waterway in column, then steamed due west across the Indian Ocean.

At Sunda Strait CDR Smith-Hutton had recognized the general location as that of *Houston's* sinking and noted there were no signs of wreckage or flotsam from his old flagship. I wondered how he could have known this, since he, his wife and daughter had all been kept interned in the Tokyo Embassy compound in the months after Pearl Harbor. It turned out that Hank was a thorough and daring intelligence operative. When he departed Japan on the *Asama Maru* he smuggled out a large collection of newspapers (among other documents), including a full set of the English-language *Japan Times* (a propaganda organ of notoriously inflated claims) and the Japanese-language *Tokyo Nichi Nichi*. Either one, or both, of these newspapers could have mentioned the site of the Imperial Navy's victory over Allied naval forces in the Java Sea.

Soon I found other intriguing naval clues to this seeming enigma. These pertained to operations below the sea. Finding those *really* sparked my curiosity.

I already knew that we had extracted masses of important documents from Japan's former 5th Fleet flagship, heavy cruiser *Nachi*—an adversary of *Houston* in the Battle of the Java Sea, in fact—after she was sunk off Manila Bay in late 1944. It seemed reasonable to conclude that *Houston*, last flagship of the Asiatic Fleet, also contained a trove of documents, many of them undoubtedly classified. Of course in 1945 (when *Nachi* was located and explored) the war was almost over, and those Japanese papers would've had primarily only historical interest. But, in the first year of the war, *Houston* still had something other than classified documents on board that might've been of value to the enemy. Moreover, they could have had a dire impact on the prosecution of the war against Japan.

I was led to both new answers and more questions when I began reading two classic histories of our submarine operations against Japan: W. J. Holmes' Underseas Victory (1966) and Clay Blair's exhaustive book, Silent Victory (1975). Two boats mentioned stood out in particular; these were the subs *Thresher* and *Tambor*. The basic operational facts follow.

On her 7th patrol USS *Thresher* (SS-200) left Fremantle on Jan. 25, 1943, cruising NW for the East Indies. Her orders were to reconnoiter Christmas Island first, on the alert for any Japanese ships near that location or activity on the island, and then proceed up to Sunda Strait. She was instructed to "*patrol Soenda Strait*" with particular attention to Thwart-way (present-day Sangiang) Island, looking for signs of salvage operations on *Houston*. *Thresher* was to remain on station there another six (6) days before returning.

Thresher duly spent two weeks patrolling Sunda Strait, but only between Krakatoa and the southern approaches to Thwart-way Island in the northern end of the strait. This is apparently where the navy then believed that *Houston* had been sunk.

Thresher saw next-to-nothing, only an occasional IJN torpedo boat, destroyer, or an enemy submarine. It was an unrewarding mission.

Soon another sub, USS *Tambor* (SS-198), was also sent up from Australia to patrol off Sunda Strait. *Tambor's* orders were virtually identical to those of *Thresher*; clearly our navy was still concerned about the sunken *Houston*. It didn't take much insight for me to realize that as 1942 went on, our codebreaking successes against Japan became ever-more critical (think Battle of Midway), and concerns about protecting our own Communications Intelligence elevated sharply.





USS Tambor (SS-198)

Yet, despite spending a whopping 26 days on station searching from Christmas Island to the upper reaches of Sunda Strait, *Tambor* saw nothing. So much for the accuracy of our knowledge at that time for the location of *Houston*.

But, what was the navy *really* worried about anyway? It became increasingly clear to me that it might not be documents at all. Soon, background work I had conducted for my first two books inadvertently played into this line of research.

In 2006 and 2010 I spent the better part of a week at the National Archives (NARA II) in College Park, Maryland, searching through Asiatic Fleet documents as well as war crimes records. In the Asiatic Fleet records I stumbled across communications mentioning concerns we had for the ECM (*Electrical Coding Machine*) still aboard the destroyer USS *Peary*, sunk at anchor in the IJN's aerial attack on Darwin in February 1942. There were fears that the Japanese, if they seized Darwin, could dive on the destroyer and salvage her ECM.

Years before I had also noticed that the Action Report of *Houston's* loss at Sunda Strait, written after WWII by her senior surviving officer, CDR Lawrence Maher (Gunnery Officer), stated the ECMs on CA-30 were allegedly destroyed as the ship was being abandoned. But the navy couldn't have known definitively about this destruction in 1942. Maher's document describes these as an ECM Mk 1 and ECM Mk III, but the typing in that part of his report also appears to have been doctored.

Later, I found references to *Edsall* having delivered an ECM to Singapore when she went there with DesDiv 57 after December 8. It was needed badly for the upsurge in communications traffic once the war broke out. Yet another ECM was mentioned in the messages between *Whipple* and *Langley* on Feb. 27, 1942 in which the four-piper offered her communication services because *she* possessed a coding machine (and presumably, *Langley* did not.)

These examples all stuck in my mind and made me ask how it was that so many old Asiatic Fleet ships—of presumably low combat value—appeared to have had these crucial ECM devices. And which particular Mark was involved? ECMs had been produced for our military in varying Marks since the mid-1930s.

Therefore, I began investigating this component of the puzzle: the coding machines that our navy had on its warships in the war's first months. They were top secret devices, and as such could potentially have been of more value to the enemy than reams of water-logged paper...

It was quickly apparent that the most successful model was actually the MK II, also used by the US Army under the name SIGABA. My original research had led me to believe it wasn't available until after the war started.

So, two questions sprang to mind:

1) What type of ECM did our venerable Asiatic Fleet ships actually have?

2) Why didn't *Houston* (a flagship, after all) seem to have had the MK II? Twenty years ago, I simply could not figure out the answers, and I moved on to other projects.

But it turns out there was a good reason I couldn't find more information: the official paper written by the navy which documented the history of the Mk. II ECM was not declassified and released by the NSA until Sept. 2013...Some 70 years after it was written.

Not surprisingly, I was startled to discover it recently. Produced in October 1943 by CAPT Laurance Safford—an original head of the navy's "Research Desk" (a bland title disguising its highly secretive function as the navy's primary code & cypher-breaking unit), and later in charge of the larger, more fully realized OP-20-G—the report details with considerable precision the ECM II innovations, and its production history. Of greater interest to me, it contains accurate information re: the distribution of these machines to the Asiatic Fleet in 1941.

I was surprised to learn that the AF had priority in getting the Mk. II ECMs, but I shouldn't have been. The secret codebreaking work being done by our intelligence group—referred to informally as Hart's "Purple Gang"—situated in the bowels of Corregidor ("Station CAST") was among the most important and valuable in the immediate prewar period, and continued through the early months of the war. Much of their work went to direct our submarine ops.



After ironing out production kinks, the Navy saw to it that four (4) new Mk. II ECMs first went to the Philippines. ADM Hart's Asiatic Fleet got 2 as did RADM Rockwell's 16th Naval District in May, 1941; these were made effective on July 1. Another twenty-five (25) machines went out on the USS *Henderson* (AP-1) later that fall. These were the units that ended up on various Asiatic Fleet subs, destroyers and possibly *Houston*. On orders from Hart, they became effective on Nov. 20, 1941, less than 3 weeks before the Pearl Harbor attacks.

Safford's paper also suggests that the larger ships in the Navy were more resistant to the changeover to the Mk II ECM.

Indeed Pearl Harbor complained that the Pacific Fleet had so many on hand in storage that the units were eating up valuable space. Many heavy ships refused to draw an ECM except under direct orders from CINCPAC! Counter-intuitively, the bulk initially went to minor ships, *"...the small ones at the bottom of the priority list."*

I can only speculate that this may also help explain both the prevalence of ECMs on destroyers and the situation on *Houston*. CDR Maher's rather ambiguous remarks in his Sunda Strait *Action Report* note that Mk 1 & Mk III ECM machines were destroyed as CA-30 was abandoned on 1 March, 1942. It is possible that the flagship retained her older machines and never received or activated the new Mk II model before she was sunk. The Mk III (also called CSP 1127) was a revamped Mk I, gave relatively good service by then, and was apparently retained in certain sensitive applications well after the Mk II ECM had been standardized.

At least we now know that the old Asiatic Fleet, deficient in so many combat preparations and technologies, was actually fairly well-prepared for the war insofar as high-grade intelligence communications went. And the Japanese, who did know the real location of *Houston*, never dove on her to endanger those invaluable and *enigmysterious* ECMs.

Sources: Reminiscences of CAPT Henri Smith-Hutton, USN (Ret.); W. J. Holmes' Underseas Victory (1966) and Clay Blair's Silent Victory (1975); War Patrols of *Thresher* and *Tambor*; "*History of Invention and Development of the Mark II ECM*" by CAPT. L. S. Safford, Oct. 1943; Battle of Sunda Strait, Action Report of CDR L. Maher, USN, USS *Houston* (CA-30); *Edsall* Report, ca. 1944, by CAPT Edwin Crouch, USN.

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Forever Friends

By Marlene Morris McCain

Sometimes "forever friendships" are forged in unusual places. High School or college friends, people who work together for a lengthy time, neighbors who just have a lot in common – these friendships are not out of the ordinary. But a friendship forged during the horror of a global conflict, half a world away from home, and while being daily mistreated and starved in a prisoner-of-war camp – that is out of the ordinary! Still, that happened many times over in the Japanese POW camps of the Malaya peninsula during the Pacific War.

Otto C. Schwarz, who grew up in New Jersey, USA, and Jim Donaldson, who was from Forster, New South Wales, Australia, became friends in just such a situation. Otto was serving on the *USS Houston* off the coast of Java when his ship was sunk on March 1, 1942. Jim was an Australian soldier serving with the 8th Division Army Supply Corps of Australia, who was taken captive when Singapore, Malaya, fell to the Japanese. They met while both were being transported via Japanese "hell ship" to camps where they would work on the Burma Railway. Per correspondence from Jim's daughter, "a really special bond was formed between them. They narrowly escaped being executed by the Japanese after their 'unauthorized departure' from a prison camp in Saigon." She also said that "Otto had a lifelong love of Aussies," and this was reflected in Otto and Trudy making more than one trip to Australia during their marriage. On at least one such trip, they spent time with Jim and Hazel Donaldson.



Hazel Donaldson (4th from left) is about to cut the cake on her 100th Birthday.

Trudy and Hazel continued the friendship with correspondence at Christmastime, even after their husbands had both passed away. Trudy is also gone now. But Mrs. Hazel Donaldson just turned 100 years young last March and was feted then at the local Golf Club in Forster, NSW, Australia. Her party was planned for the Golf Club because Hazel still loves to play golf, does so on a regular basis – and SHE STILL WINS!!

What an amazing lady she is; they don't make them like Mrs. Hazel and Mrs. Trudy anymore!

(Special thanks to our Australian friend, Frank Craven, for the information and the picture included in this article.)

Meet your...

Board of Managers

...here to serve you!*



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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 Association continues to grow as more folks reach us—through such avenues as our websites—and want to know more about the *Houston*, or just simply seek to contribute to the perpetuation of the memory of this gallant warship. To those interested in taking it further and joining our Association: go to www.usshouston.org, click on the “news tab,” scroll to the bottom and review the Association’s bylaws, then click on the link to membership form (<http://www.usshouston.org/memberform.pdf>). After filling out the form, send it in as directed on the form. Our Association is funded through voluntary donations rather than mandatory annual dues. To make a donation, please refer to page one of this newsletter, or review the instructions on the “news tab” of our website.

Association Communication Channels

- Association information, including current and archived newsletter editions, is available at the Association's official website: www.usshouston.org.
- All email correspondence for the Association is directed through: contact@usshouston.org
- The Association’s regular mailing address and phone number is listed on the first page of each issue of the *Blue Bonnet* newsletter.
- Our Association's only social media presence is on Facebook at: **USS Houston CA-30**.



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

Thank you...!

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

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March 15, – July 11, 2021

In Memory of John Stefanek
Henry and Jane Matthews

Other Donations

Eric Carlson
Bernice Harapat
Sue Kreutzer
John Schwarz

Amazon Smile Donations Received YTD - \$96.51

Financial Report

by Pam Moura, Treasurer

January 1 – July 11, 2021

General Fund

Beginning Balance	\$26,844.57
Receipts:	+861.51
Expenses:	<u>-967.78</u>
Ending Balance:	\$26,738.30



Scholarship Fund

Beginning Balance:	\$23,040.58
Receipts:	+101.10
Expenses:	<u>-3,000.00</u>
Ending Balance:	\$20,141.68



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Wearing "Panjang Island Coast Watch" T-shirts, David McGrath (left) and Indonesian friends laid wreaths in Banten Bay over the sites of the remains of USS Houston (CA-30) and HMAS Perth (D-29).