

**USS HOUSTON CA-30 BLUE BONNET
“The Galloping Ghost of the Java Coast”**

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REUNION

USS Houston Survivors Memorial Service/Reunion
February 28 – March 1, 2003
Westchase Hilton, Houston, Texas

131st Lost Battalion/USS Houston
August 13 – 17, 2003
Omni Hotel (Park West), Dallas, Texas

~~~~~**FROM THE SURVIVORS**~~~~~

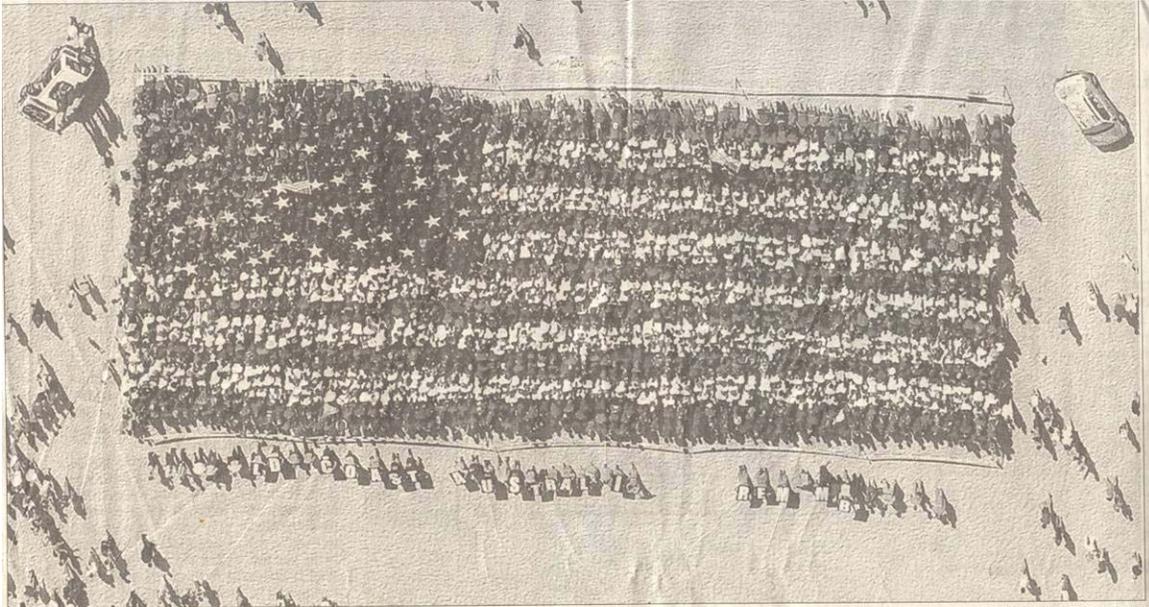
It seems appropriate I am starting notes for this Blue Bonnet on September 11, the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the cowardly attack on our home land - a most appropriate time to remember our shipmates who have left us since our last issue.

|                           |                 |           |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| <b>EARLE “JOE” SNYDER</b> | August 30, 2002 | Emphysema |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------|

**JOE** had suffered for a long time from emphysema and his warm welcome to everyone at reunions will be missed. Joe and I were captured together, made the march to Rangkasbtuang together and were “cubicle” mates together in Bicycle Camp.

**BACK PAY UP DATE:** Sorry that I cannot give a positive report this time. The amendment to correct the amount of back pay we recently received did not pass muster in the Appropriations Committee. I wish to thank those who made phone calls to their Representatives. We worked very hard to have the amendment passed, but with the nation at war it is understandable that every dollar in the Defense budget counts. I wish to especially thank **AL KOPP** who was in constant touch with me and who relayed info from his Senator’s office.

**FROM DOWN UNDER:** As would be expected, Australia has once again proven to be our closest allies. Their response to 9/11 was immediate. On the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary a photo appeared in one of their newspapers showing 500 Aussies forming a living American Flag.



More than 5,000 people dressed in red, white and blue form an American flag in tribute to the victims of Sept. 11 at Surfers Paradise, Australia.

STEVE HOLLAND/ASSOCIATED PRESS

**THIS N' THAT** – Those of us who were in Saigon celebrate September 6, 1945 as our liberation day. That date is significant to me for another reason. It was my 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday. This September 6<sup>th</sup> I was overwhelmed and humbled by the many cards and phone calls I received from shipmates, friends and n.o.k.'s from all over the world. The Japs may have taken 3 ½ years off our lives, but they never realized that they were replacing them with a lifetime of a loving bond that has lasted all these years. I cherish each and every one of you.... More than usual kudos must go to Val, and I'm sure to Max, for the unusual hardship they endured getting out the last Blue Bonnet. Val had a couple of procedures to correct back problems and then came down with pneumonia. Producing the newsletter is, in itself a major chore, but to accomplish it under those conditions is another matter.... In the same vein, special recognition must be given to Lin and Ron. Lin started her new year at school, Ron is at U.T seeking another degree, and Lin's mother is ill in Louisiana. Despite all that, they managed to make all the housing arrangements for the next reunion in Houston.

Shipmate **DUTCH KOOPER** has undergone some ticklish surgery. He told me that he almost didn't make it this time. I told him that a tough kid from the streets of Chicago, and a survivor, will be around for a while yet... On September 10, **HOWARD BROOKS** and Sylvia drove up and we enjoyed lunch and a few hours of chatter.... Then on the following Saturday we enjoyed lunch and a visit from Jack and Pat Mintzer, who celebrated our 56<sup>th</sup> anniversary with us..... Early in September Genence Warren, wife of Chaplin Bob, underwent cancer surgery. We are pleased to report that she is doing fine.

On September 1 Irma, widow of shipmate **JOHN STEFANEK**, passed away in Venice, Florida where she lived with daughter Jane and family. Irma was buried in Arlington National Cemetery joining her beloved **JOHN**. **JOHN** was buried near shipmate **JOE GANS** and his Isabelle, in the

shadow of the USS HOUSTON Memorial tree. Jane described how emotional they felt during her mother's burial as the ceremony for the Pentagon Unknown dead was being conducted at the same time, complete with a military flyover.

Two of our survivors have become very adept at putting their feelings into poetry. I have not been able to give these shipmates due credit mainly because of space constrictions. **LLOYD WILLEY** and **JACK SMITH** have told the HOUSTON story, and the exploits of her gallant crew, in their many poems. Perhaps some day we can gather their material into a booklet, but in the meantime they deserve a heartfelt "WELL DONE" to both of them....Recently heard from Wayne, son of **JACK "FERGIE" FERGUSON**. Seems they found a uniform in their garage and it had my name stenciled in it. How this could be possible is a mystery, as I have not seen **FERGIE** since leaving Saigon in April 1943.

On the morning of 9/11/02 we received a phone call from Queensland, from Sue the daughter of Chilla and Ngaire Goodchap. Sue wanted to tell us that Australia was behind us all the way. She updated us on her "mum" and dad. Ngaire is in a nursing home and is visited daily by Chilla.... A copy of a speech delivered by David Manning, on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sinking of HMAS Perth.... Mirla Bancroft recently was rushed from the doctors office to the hospital where they installed a stint in her heart. Blood is now serving her (as he always has) morning tea. I am now working with Terry Beaton who is writing a visitors guide to the Burma/Thailand Railway. It will have a chapter on the Americans. He is also composing an "Honor Roll" of all who died on the road.

#### **A Line from Lin**

Here is the hotel info again - with a reminder to go ahead and make your reservations NOW.

WHAT - the 2003 USS HOUSTON CA30 Memorial Service / reunion

WHEN - Friday and Saturday, February 28 and March 1, 2003

WHERE - Westchase Hilton\* - \$77 (handicapped, single, double, king with upgrades to Tower Level for additional \$20, Executive Suites for additional \$20, Tower Level Suites for an additional \$40).

To make your reservations, please call 1-713-974-1000 or 1-800-HILTONS (by February 11, 2003) and identify yourself as a member of the USS HOUSTON group to receive the group rates as listed above. The rates will be available for those who want to arrive early.

\* - this is not the same Hilton as this past year - this hotel is located on the West side on Westheimer near the Tollroad (Galleria is about 5 miles to the east) - the UH Library will be under renovation and we will not be going to the UH campus.

WHY - The Memorial Service - To remember the ones who did not make it ashore that fateful night of February 28-March 1, 1942 - To remember the ones who passed away in the POW camps - To remember the ones who have passed away since returning home - and To honor the ones still with us.

I will still be making the local arrangements so feel free to contact me about the Houston arrangements (Lin Drees, 14219 Wickersham, Houston, Tx. 77077 or by phone @ 281-493-5171. Please send your registration form and money to Val as she will be taking care of the registration this year. Oh, for your information I have eaten at this hotel several times - the food is EXCELLENT as is the location.

Please change your address book on your computers - I have a new e-mail address - it is [lindrees.usshou-ca30@juno.com](mailto:lindrees.usshou-ca30@juno.com) -- I look forward to hearing from you with your news - BUT really do not have time to read your jokes.

Ron and I (along with Bammy, our Sheltie) wish you a VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS and a VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Mark your calendars - next year - February 28 - March 1, 2003 - with the Memorial Service being on March 1 at 11 a.m. We hope to see you there.

~~~~~FROM THE NEXT GENERATION~~~~~

THIS N THAT – I knew it! I knew I'd forget a name! How could I forget to mention our sweet John Hood attending the August reunion? My apologies to any more that I missed.

WEB SITES OF INTREST - <http://www.asiaticfleet.com/javasea.html>,
<http://www.asiaticfleet.com/ships.htm>, <http://www.asiaticfleet.com/orbat.htm>, www.expows.com ,
www.justiceforveterans.com

IN SEARCH OF: Survivors, your numbers are down to 66. These people would cherish a response from you before there are no more to assist in their search.

RYMAN "BUD" CALAWAY – CONTACT Paul Calaway (cousin), PO Box 95, Marble, NC 28905. Phone 888 411-1412 Email: HighRockRanch@webtv.net

WILLIAM "BILL" STEVENS (Electricians Mate 2nd Class) – Contact: Frances Stevens (sister), 111 Modoc Trail W., Lake Kiowa, TX 76240

MAILBAG – We were sad to receive news that Margaurite Rogers, widow of **CAPTAIN LEON ROGERS** died August 21 of heart failure. Also Erma Stefanek, widow of **JOHN STEFANEK** died September 1 of fluid on the lungs. I finally received a copy of the tape from the Navy/Marine Corps News – remember the interviews you survivors gave a couple of years ago? It is very short and not that impressive.... Sorry fellas! Terry Willis sent a postcard of appreciation along with positive input about David Faltot's letter on his visit to China. Of course, **RAY GOODSON**, Joann Pryor and Dottie Crispie keep me in good humor with their emailed jokes. Jean Burroughs is on the constant go. Shortly after a trip to Alaska, she's on her way to New Zealand for several weeks. She and others have reported they have written their government leaders urging the Back Pay for Promotion to be increased to today's dollars. Ann, widow of **ART DUHAIME**, widow has moved to her new retirement center home and enjoys it whenever home from her travels. Joe Kollmyer wrote to advise that Walter Gaston, Sr., former crew member of the USS Houston (1934-1939) died in San Angelo, Texas on November 16, 2002.

MAIL OUT – I have reviewed the list of recipients of our Blue Bonnet & realized that approximately ½ are receiving complimentary copies. I don't want to bankrupt the organization by sending newsletters out to folks that have shown no interest. When you see a red @ by your name, it

indicates this will be your last newsletter. The money saved would enable us to at least buy lunch or dinner for our speakers for the Memorial Service weekend, don't you think?

DECLASSIFIED: (continued from previous newsletter)

SUBJECT: Action Report of the USS Houston CA-30 in defense of convoy air attacks by horizontal bombers by Arthur Maher. (Continued from last newsletter)

Performance of enemy ordnance material:

The bombing of the Japanese on the 16th was very accurate, and bomb patterns were very small. The reason no hits were scored is principally due to the excellent avoiding maneuvers taken by the Captain. After the attack on the 4th of February, a maneuvering table was prepared by the senior aviator for the bridge use. It was also devised that the Captain could put the rudder over about 10 seconds before the planes reached their bomb release point. The bridge was informed of the planes' speed and altitude at the start of each attack. An officer with a sextant kept the Captain informed of the planes' position angle. When the proper angle was reached by the planes, the rudder was put hard over. The following speeds were computed for the attacking planes: four-engine bombers – 110 – 120 knots, and two-engine bombers – 170 – 180 knots.

The bombs dropped by the Japanese appeared much smaller than the heavy bombs dropped on the HOUSTON on the 4th of February. Some of the splashes made by these bombs were of a greenish-yellow color.

PART V. Damage

The HOUSTON was damaged in no way. A near-miss damaged the S.S. Mauna Loa slightly and killed one man. Damage to enemy units is unknown. The convoy ships reported 7 planes shot down. No information could be gained from the Japanese papers and magazines concerning the attack.

PART VI. Special comments and information

The effectiveness of the avoiding action taken by the Captain was particularly noticeable during this attack. The length of time involved as well as the number of individual bomb salvos dropped, none of which did damage to or hit the ship, served as an excellent test of the type of avoiding action employed.

During the initial stages of this attack, the HOUSTON was maneuvered in relatively close proximity to the convoy until it became evident that the air attack was being concentrated against the HOUSTON. She was then maneuvered further away from the convoy in order to draw the effect of the bombing away from the convoy. Not until the final salvos were dropped was any attempt made to drop bombs on other than the HOUSTON. It is considered that the particular attention given to the HOUSTON during all contacts with the Japanese air force was caused by the reappearance of the ship after it had been repeatedly reported sunk by the Imperial General Headquarters in previous engagements.

PART VII. Personnel performance and casualties.

After completion of the attack, the convoy commander on board the U.S.A.T. MEIGS sent a dispatch to the HOUSTON, the gist of which was as follows:

FROM: USAT MEIGS
TO: USS HOUSTON
EXCEEDINGLY WELL DONE (SIGNED)

PART VIII. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

In view of the great lapse of time since this action and the great progress made in anti-aircraft, it is believed that no lessons can be learned from this action.

Signed: Arthur L. Maher

FROM DOWN UNDER - Bill Flowers, *Perth* survivor has been gracious enough to mail me the correspondence he received from **JOHN WISECUP** over the years. It is something we will add to our archives and treasure. Our friend, Di Elliot, who's father was also in the camps, send emails full of hope and support for the USA during these trying times.

CREWMEMBER SPOTLIGHT
Charles Leslie Lynch

In the early hours of March 1, 1942, Charles Leslie Lynch, Gunners Mate Second Class, a native of Scotland, Arkansas, lost his life when the *U.S.S. Houston, CA30* was sunk in the Battle of the Java Sea. So far as this writer has been able to determine, Lynch was the first serviceman from Van Buren County to be killed in action in World War II.

Charles Lynch was born January 7, 1919, five miles southwest of Scotland, Arkansas in Liberty Township, a son of Elvin Warner and Maye Stroud Lynch. He attended elementary school at Suggs and high school at Scotland, having completed one year at the Clinton Vocational School. In January, 1937, having completed the required number of units for high school completion and having reached his eighteenth birthday, he enlisted in the United States Navy and was sent to the Naval Training Station at San Diego, California for "boot camp" or basic training.

Upon completion of basic training, Lynch was selected to attend an electrical ordnance school in San Diego. When he completed this school he was assigned to the *U.S.S. Mississippi, BB41* where he served until April 26, 1940, when he applied for and was transferred to the *Houston*. This ship was being deployed to the Far East for a two-year tour and to serve as the flagship of naval forces in that area. Lynch had requested this transfer because of his interest in serving in and seeing this part of the world.

At the time Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Charles had attained the rating of Gunners Mate Second Class and was a gun captain on a five-inch gun. This was primarily an anti-aircraft gun, but it could also be used in surface action. In a letter to his parents dated January 2,

1942, Lynch wrote, "Don't worry about the news reports as to the progress of this war. The Japs reported us as sunk two or three times and that's a long ways from the truth."

.....The Navy Department notified Charles' parents on March 16, 1942 that he was missing. This was his status until December 28, 1945, when after prisoners from the *Houston* has been repatriated and the navy had debriefed them that Charles was declared dead. It is not known how he died. He, along with 149 other men, was seen in the water after the *Houston* sank, but these men were never heard from again. Survivors did report that the Japanese engaged in some machine gun strafing, but no one can be sure of how these men died.

..... For his part, Lynch was awarded the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star Medal and other medals posthumously. These medals were sent to his parents after he was declared dead.

Submitted by: Audie J. Lynch EdD

NAVAL ORDER OF THE UNITED STATES – The NOUS NEWS notes that the Texas Commandrey was host to the Annual Congress during October 17 – 20 with LCDR Clarke Coldrin as the host committee chairman. They had an array of speakers along with two special awards. The first Admiral of the Navy George Dewey Award, presented to a distinguished American who has made extraordinary contributions to the US Navy and the Nation – former President George H.W. Bush. Also, the 2002 Distinguished Sea Service Award being presented to ADM Archie C lemins, USN (Ret) at the annual DSSA Banquet. Max and I were disappointed that we had to miss it. We were saddened to learn that Capt. Warren Meehan died November 25th. Chaplain Meehan had graciously agreed to lead us in prayer at every reunion & will be truly missed.

FOR SALE – Bumper Stickers \$1.50, Caps \$15, Monument and Bell pins \$2 each, "Death Becomes the Ghost" videos \$15, Avenge the Houston posters \$10, schematic of the HOUSTON \$5 for small, \$10 for large, 60th Anniversary Memorial aboard the USS Blue Ridge or 60th Anniversary Houston Memorial service and reunion video @ \$10. We are out of shirts – I am pricing different businesses for the best deal before re-ordering. Please note the bumper sticker price change.... Paper and postage has forced the increase.

DONATIONS -

Survivors: **BASIL BUNYARD, GUS FORSMAN**, Sylvia & **HOWARD BROOKS, ROBERT FULTON**, Eileen & **ROBERT HANLEY, ANONYMOUS**, Theresa & **PAUL PAPISH**, Dorothy & **LLOYD WILLEY, EUGENE PARHAM**, Mary & **BILL STEWART**.

NG's : Billie Johnson, George Jones, Robert Moga, Al Novak, Bruce Olson, John Schwarz, Frances Stevens, Arva Kvam, Walter Grice

Friends of the Houston: Faye Slate, Roger White, Fred and Bette Haring, Col. Tom Sledge, Richard Jenke

In memory of **JOE SNYDER**: Theresa & **PAUL PAPISH, GUS FORSMAN**, Erma Snyder – memorials received from friends & loved ones

In memory of **ART DUHAIME**: Tom & Jean Murray, Aron & Janet Davidson, Harry & Mary Jane Koper, George & Rita Virquti, George & Harriett O'Neill

CHANGE OF ADDRESS – Geneva King emailed to advise she has moved to 4109 S. Hwy 28, La Union, NM 88021. Please let me know your email address. I always appreciate notification of a change of mailing or email address!

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Phase I (planning) and Phase II (soliciting) have been completed and a Scholarship Fund of \$10,000 has been established as indicated in our last Bluebonnet.

This initial amount of our Fund was received from the generous donations of our members and friends, and is a fine start for our Fund. You will recall however, that an additional source of revenue is necessary because of diminishing and widely dispersed base of individual contributors solicited quarterly through our Bluebonnet would not be adequate to establish a sufficient fund from which the annual interest income would provide a significant annual scholarship.

In light of this the Texas Commandery of the Naval Order of the United States - the fine organization that was responsible for the planning and building of our USS Houston Monument in Sam Houston Park - has been contacted and their much needed help has been requested. The response from the Commandery was that they may be able to help us, but that from a time point of view, the Commandery would be hosting their National Organization in Houston and that they may not be able to help us until October 2002 or later.

It should be made clear that the Commandery has not made a commitment to us but that they may be able to do so. Therefore our Scholarship committee will now reopen this subject with the Commandery and hopefully will be able to report a favorable response at our next reunion.

In the meantime, your comments and suggestions - especially those from the Scholarship Committee are most welcome and strongly encouraged in order to learn your opinions of the foregoing and to set an agreed course of action for the future. You may reach me by mail or email.

Thank you.

Ned Gallagher
440 Melville Ave.
Palo Alto, Ca 94301
email: nedg@sbcglobal.net

TWENTY ONE GUN SALUTE - Do you know that at military funerals, the 21-gun salute stands for the sum of the numbers in the year 1776?

OVER THERE – I continue to be amazed at the progress COFEPOW (our sister Next Generation organization in England). Of course, they have a dozen people working together and their hard work is impressive – especially their fund raising. Our friends, Fred & Liz Seiker keep us posted on the Brits news coverage about our War on Terrorism along with warm wishes to us “Yanks”.

The Ohashi Adventure

by Judy L. Bunch
(jbunch@myrealbox.com)

In the spring of 2001 I finally completed a “pilgrimage” I began 20 years ago—a journey to discover who my father, Jerry J. Bunch, Jr., was. I went to Ohashi, Japan, to see where Dad spent most of his 3 ½ years as a Japanese POW during WWII. Dad was a Radioman on the USS Houston when it was sunk in Sunda Straits on March 1, 1942. Surviving that, he was captured by the Japanese upon reaching the shore of Java. During the remainder of the war he was a POW in Serang and Jakarta in Indonesia, Changi Prison in Singapore, and, finally, in Ohasi (now called Ohashi) Camp on the island of Honshu in Japan. In 1981, three years after Dad’s untimely and tragic death in an automobile accident, my sister Susie and I traveled with a tour group of ex-POWs and visited all but Ohashi. Since then I have longed to complete the journey.

There is a certain amount of irony and, perhaps, some poetic justice in the fact that the bulk of the expenses involved in the final leg of my journey were paid for by a Japanese company. Obie and I were working for a Japanese client who paid our travel expenses to and from Japan (business class!!). Working with the Japanese client was a fascinating, frustrating, and growthful experience! What I learned about the differences in culture and conceptual thinking gives me great pause when I think about the even greater differences half a century ago. Over the previous two years I had made six trips to Tokyo for the client and finally was able to take some time off and go to Ohashi.

The Journey

Ohashi is the site of an iron mine in Iwate prefecture which, in turn, is in Tohoku, the northern region of the main island of Honshu. Western visitors are rare there. Unlike Tokyo, few people speak English in this region and there are few English words on signage. I don’t speak Japanese but we managed with the few basic words I do know, sign language, and a Japanese phrase book. My interpreter in Tokyo was kind enough to call ahead to Kamaishi Kozan Co. (the current name of the enterprise at the iron mine where Dad was enslaved). She also wrote a note in Japanese explaining that I was traveling there to “honor my father’s memory”—a phrase that has meaning to a culture that reveres their ancestors. The Japanese Tourist Office (JTO) in Tokyo also helped by finding the accommodations nearest to Ohashi—a ryokan (Japanese Inn) in Kosano which was two train stops from Ohashi. The JTO also told us about a museum in Kamaishi, the largest city near Ohashi.

Easily enough we took the bullet train from Tokyo to Hanamaki—a three hour trip. Then it got difficult. We wanted to know when the train was going to depart for Kosano. After pointing to my watch and the map several times, the station attendant left his post and dashed off only to return with a booklet (in Japanese) that contained the train schedule for every JR train in Japan. I could recognize the times but had no idea of the stations to which they applied. That was when we began learning the Japanese characters (or kanji) for the cities we were visiting. We eventually learned that it was a two hour train ride to Kosano with many stops along the way. The train only had two cars and many school children got on and off. We were surprised that few people seemed to stare at us (unlike Kyoto and other places). The JTO had given me an English map of the region and I was able to follow the stops as we wound our way through the mountainous terrain. This map showed a place called Rikuchu-Ohashi but we were not yet sure this was the location of the mine.

Most of the information I had was kindly told to me by Jack Feliz, Dad's best friend in prison camp. Very important to our journey were pictures I carried with me of the Ohashi camp and iron mine. Years ago I had obtained them from Otto Schwarz and other generous ex-POWs. These were invaluable for this journey. Although Ohashi has changed dramatically over the past 56 years or so, it was very exciting to be able to use the pictures to confirm that Rikuchu-Ohashi was indeed the place we were seeking. Several structures remain that are clearly visible in a couple of photos. As the train passed through the Rikuchu-Ohashi area, I was relieved to assure myself that it was indeed the right place!

Kamaishi

First, however, we went to Kamaishi, the nearest city with hopes of gathering additional information about Ohashi. A coastal town, Kamaishi has two primary industries—fishing and an iron refinery. It also has a fairly primitive museum devoted to itself. With pictures in hand, we went to the museum and immediately met the curator who, of course, was curious about these “gaijin” or foreigners. He spoke no English at all so I showed him the Japanese message my interpreter had so kindly written as well as the pictures. His face showed recognition and he was clearly very eager to help. Apparently, the museum had many of the same pictures and a few others in storage and he retrieved them in moments. Their photos had been enlarged and dry-mounted on foam board. One of the enlarged photos was of a group of prisoners—I had seen this one many times before and knew that Dad was in the picture. I was completely overcome with emotion when I saw it. With tears streaming down my face I could only point to Dad's image and whisper the word “chi-chi” which means “my father.” The curator stood there nodding and graciously allowed me my emotions. After a few moments he hurried back to the storage room and retrieved every picture he had of the camp and quickly flipped through them—he seemed to be hoping to find another image of Dad for me. No more of Dad. To my delight, however, there were two individual photos of other ex-POWs I have known: Jack Feliz (aka Big Snake or Uncle Jack) and Jess Stanbrough. I was deeply moved to see these pictures and recognize some people. I was also pleased that, although none of the pictures were on public display, they were well cared for. I had a few pictures that the museum did not have-- the curator eagerly photocopied them.

The museum itself was very junky and dusty. It seemed to be a collection of anything and everything from furniture to clothing. It was more like going to an indoor flea market with items—some neatly and some not so neatly—laid out on tables. Very little was behind glass. One of the more prominent displays showed pictures of the destruction to Kamaishi caused by the allied attacks in July and August of 1945. The curator managed to convey to me that 400 civilians lost their lives. I had not known before that allied ships had attacked Japan in such close proximity to Ohashi. Later I learned that there was a POW camp in Kamaishi and some allied POWs lost their lives during the bombing. The surviving POWs in Kamaishi were then sent to Ohashi for the remainder of the war.

Another interesting display was of antique iron teapots. While researching information about the region I learned that it is well known for two things—its folklore and its iron teapots. The folklore factors into the story later. The teapots are one of Japan's traditional crafts. Now I could see for myself how important the teapots are to the area's history. They come in many sizes and shapes. This was especially interesting to me because, while in Tokyo on this trip, our interpreter invited us to her home. Prominently displayed in her sparsely decorated home was a very large and lovely

iron teapot (it probably cost over \$500). This prominent display obviously meant that the teapot was very important to her. When I asked her about it, she told me that it came from the Kamaishi area and that she was impressed by the beauty and elegance of its shape. She was very surprised when I told her we were preparing to go to Kamaishi. Now when I see an iron teapot, especially an old one, I wonder if the iron came out of the Ohashi mine which is said to be the oldest iron mine in Japan, dating back to 1863.

Before we left the museum I was determined to find out the location of the prison camp or, at the very least, where it was in relation to the mine at Ohashi. My intent was to walk the same two mile route that Dad and his fellow prisoners walked every day for so long (rain, snow, or shine). The curator seemed to be very knowledgeable about these places so he was just the person to ask. However, my Japanese was worse than his English so I spent a long time pointing at pictures and at the map with no success. Finally, he disappeared for a few moments and returned with a young man who spoke only slightly more English than he did. I wasn't going to leave until I had the information. We both persevered and I finally learned that there are no remaining traces of the camp and that it was located east of the mine. At least now we knew the direction in which to walk once we got to the mine.

Before we left, the curator asked for my name and address which, of course, I was happy to provide. He and his interpreter were extremely gracious and bowed very deeply as they saw us off. While in Kamaishi we decided to look for some iron goods to take home. We found what we were looking for and waited while each item we purchased was individually wrapped. When we inquired about mailing the items, the shopkeeper motioned for us to wait while they made some telephone calls. Eventually we learned that they had called someone who spoke English who then tried to help us but it all got very confusing so we decided to carry our bag full of iron. I thought it would make the rest of our journey too cumbersome but there was something fitting about being laden with a heavy load during the two mile trek we were to take from the mine to the campsite.

Ohashi – the mine

Next stop: Rikuchu Ohashi Station. We knew the mine was a short walk from the train station. As we walked we could see the foundations of what were once buildings lining either side of the road. We had a lovely view of the surrounding mountains and it was hard to imagine the view being obscured by so many buildings so long ago. As we neared the entrance to the mine complex, we could hear rushing water nearby. That was the first we realized that the mine and the road paralleled a river. As we looked at the beautiful rapids, I wondered if they had ever provided any solace to the POWs and if anything could.

Our contact at the mine was expecting us and she guided us to a museum in the main administration building. We decided that, with so much stuff on display, the company must have kept one of every item ever used or found in the mine complex. It seemed to display one of everything except anything related to the POW years. We could not find any maps or pictures of the mid 1940s. Nothing quite matched our pictures but certain telltale landmarks showed us that it was definitely the same place during different eras.

Dad had worked in the mine's electrical shop repairing equipment as well as telephones and radios. One by one he would steal parts to build his own radio. He smuggled them out of the mine

by concealing them in a false bottom under a Dutch hat he had acquired from a fellow prisoner who was Dutch. Of course, he would make sure that the telephones and radios he was repairing still worked. They just operated with one less transistor or one less of whatever part he needed and the Japanese would be none the wiser. As we looked around the museum we saw many old telephones and radios. We wondered how many of them were missing some parts.

We had difficulty communicating with our guide so she found someone who spoke a little bit of English to help us. We learned that many buildings dating back to WWII have been torn down. No one who worked there now knew anything about the mine during the war. Our hosts thought, but were not certain, that what used to be the electrical shop was still standing. They showed us the long dilapidated wooden building that now serves as storage. We took pictures from every angle and as we stood outside of the building I tried to memorize the views of the surrounding mountains knowing that Dad had seen much of the same view I was seeing (although I am told the weather was not usually as nice as it was the day we were there).

It was very hard to imagine what it must have been like to be a POW there. Now it is a very quiet place. We saw a total of three people, two of whom were escorting us. Iron, it turns out, is seldom mined there these days. The newest enterprise is bottling the Sen-nin Hisui brand of mineral water. I wasn't sure whether or not to be happy about their gift of two one-liter bottles of Ohashi mineral water. Now we had two bottles to carry along with the iron goods we had purchased in Kamaishi. As we departed, they told us they would remember us for a long time because it was so rare to have foreign visitors. I knew I would never forget them or the mine complex.

The Camp

I wanted to walk the two miles to camp and retrace the steps the POWs took every day no matter the weather conditions. During the walk we had a hard time comprehending what it must have been like in four feet of snow as is so often the weather in that region.

From the mine we headed east along the main road with the intention of finding where the camp was located. The only clues we had were two pictures that showed the shape of the mountains behind the camp. The road followed the river and we admired the beauty of the mountains. They were like steep green mounds that rose from the valley floor. They were so steep that there were seldom any buildings on them. Although we saw clearcutting in a few places, most of the mountains were covered with lush green forest. Along the roadside we discovered wildflowers we had never seen before.

After a couple of miles we came to a cemetery in an area now called Dosen. I remembered stories about a cemetery that the POWs passed every day as they marched to the mines and I thought that it was near the camp. As a result of walking by the cemetery daily, the POWs discovered that the Japanese guards were afraid of ghosts because they would always make a lot of noise as they walked by. The belief in and fear of ghosts in this region turns out to be part of the folklore that is told today. Uncle Jack was able to successfully use this fear as he stood lookout when Dad was building the radio (in the latrine). If a guard approached, Jack would make sounds like a ghost which would simultaneously scare the guard off and warn Dad.

We compared our photos to the mountains near the cemetery but could not be certain we were in the right place. It was hard to be sure of the right place to stand to get the angles in the photos. It was, however, the best match we had seen or would see. There were a few houses and a concrete factory was in the background. When we saw an elderly woman walking we stopped and showed her the photographs hoping that she might have been a little girl at the time and recognize it. Our communication was terrible so we were disappointed not to learn anything helpful.

I was confident that we were in the right place. Jack later confirmed that it was.

After trying to imprint the sights in our memories, we continued walking another two miles with the idea that we would come across a train station. The train station never appeared and eventually we caught a bus back to Kosano. With the help of many kind people, we had accomplished our goal! My journey, begun so long ago, was complete. I felt close to my Dad again for a short while and was so happy that Obie could be there to share it with me.

Some related websites

This one has a picture of the train station at Rikuchu-Ohashi as well as of the mines:

<http://www.seaple.icc.ne.jp/~nkoizumi/kamaishi4.htm>

Information on the mineral water enterprise:

<http://www.sennin-hisui.com/> [Keep clicking on the links on the left side of the main page and you will see pictures of the museum in the old administrative building(about the 11th link down) and one of the mountains surrounding the mine (about the 12th link down).]

<http://www.nittetsukou.co.jp/miningconcession/pdf/cp2002a.pdf> (see page 10 on Natural Water-- it's in English!)

General information about Kamaishi:

<http://www.city.kamaishi.iwate.jp/english/overview.htm>

Memoirs of a POW in Kamaishi:

<http://harrisonheritage.com/adbc/mck.htm>

Documents describing the US attacks on Kamaishi:

http://polyticks.com/bbma/friendly_fire.htm

http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs/2109.pdf

<http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/Quarters/7858/log/shipslog8.html>

Supply drops to Ohashi after the war are mentioned here:

<http://home.att.net/~sallyann5/b29/schifferli4.html>

AND SO IT GOES – This quarter has been much calmer than the first few! Not to say it hasn't been busy. Our son in law just received orders to report for duty for the Middle East on December 6th for an indefinite period of time. Max & I will be filling in to take the grandsons to cub scouts, etc. until he returns. In other words, I will be in and out of the house here as I will be at our daughter's home quite a lot. She graduates from Nursing School December 12 (I am in charge of decorating for the reception). We are patiently awaiting the arrival of our 5th grandchild due in June.... Our son and his wife are expecting their first child! I spoke to the Lion's Club here in Austin. As I

understand, it is the oldest Lion Club in the USA. I was forewarned there would be several retired Congressmen, college presidents and such at the luncheon and they were a tough crowd to keep their interest. It didn't intimidate me as I had excellent material for my speech. One of the men brought their grandson in his full dress Marine uniform. When I was finished, there wasn't a dry eye in the house and I received a standing ovation...including the Marine! Why not? I spoke about the men of the Houston and their gallant ship! I have had a long range goal to scan our archives onto discs. I knew it would be a slow process (even if I knew what I was doing). Yvonne Wright of the Texas School for the Blind was in the audience & told me they could get it done for the cost of the discs. One of the students by the name of Rachel is sight impaired but not totally blind & has willingly taken on the job. I have to sort through each folder (I've gone through a boat load of "post its") and label how I want it formatted for her & she is scanning it for us. In two weeks, she has scanned 10 folders. It's getting done!! I have at least 40 more folders & some are MUCH thicker than others, but it's getting done!!! I will be giving her a USS HOUSTON cap, monument pin and bell pin for Christmas as a thank you from the organization. I sincerely appreciate the members that have participated in the editorials this issue and encourage more to do the same. The Birthday List team is ever faithful with their cards. As always, it's such an honor to work for this group. Max and I send our love and a heart felt Merry Christmas greeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT

| DEBITS | | CREDITS | |
|---------------------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| Postage newsletter | 79.35 | Old Balance | 3664.82 |
| Printing newsletter | 228.44 | Donations & | |
| Postage | 117.00 | Sales | 2863.71 |
| Supplies | 1214.90 | TOTAL | 5528.53 |
| Bumper Stickers | 445.00 | | |
| Phone | 237.34 | NEW BALANCE | \$3206.50 |

Our Tax ID # is 17053122009007

**Merry Christmas
And
Happy New Year**

REGISTRATION FORM

USS HOUSTON Memorial Service/Reunion February 28 – March 1, 2002
Room Reservations MUST be made by YOU – see separate article for information
PLEASE PRINT

Name _____

Home Address: _____

Phone: _____ Office phone: _____

Fax: _____ Email: _____

Relationship to the HOUSTON (survivor, spouse, NOK, 131st survivor, friend):

Arrival date: _____ (am/pm) Departure date: _____ (am/pm)

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Friday night dinner 7:30PM | #Beef _____ | #Fish _____ |
| Saturday Luncheon | #Beef Lasagna _____ | |
| Saturday night dinner 6:30PM | #Beef _____ | #Chicken _____ |
| Dinner Friday \$24 x # eating | _____ = \$ _____ | |
| Lunch Saturday \$12 x # eating | _____ = \$ _____ | |
| Saturday Dinner \$24 x # eating | _____ = \$ _____ | |
| Registration \$20 per person x # | _____ = \$ _____ | |
| Bus to Memorial Service x # | _____ = \$ _____ | |
| TOTAL | | \$ _____ |

NOTE: LATE MEAL REGISTRATION – AFTER FEBURARY 7 - \$5 PER MEAL

Please include a check for the total cost (your check is your receipt)

Make payable to: USS Houston – Next Generation

Send to: Val Poss
107 Hallie Ct.
Georgetown, TX 78628

Hotel: Westchase Hilton, 9999 Westheimer, Houston, TX. Call 1 713 974-1000 or 1 800-HILTONS by **February 11, 2003!** Please advise you are with the USS Houston group. If you have difficulties walking, tell them and ask for a room near the elevator. Handicapped rooms are available~please ask if you need one.

