



### **CA-30 BLUE BONNET**

#### **“The Galloping Ghost of the Java Coast”**

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**Co-editors: Otto Schwarz and Lin Drees**

## **REUNIONS**

### **LOST BATTALION / USS HOUSTON REUNION**

**August 13-14, 2004**

**Omni Hotel – Dallas Park West**

**1590 LBJ Freeway, Dallas, TX 75235**

**972 869-4300**

### **USS HOUSTON SURVIVORS MEMORIAL SERVICE**

**March 4-5, 2005**

**Doubletree- Allan Center**

**400 Dallas St, Houston, TX 77002**

**713 759-0202**

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Once again we say farewell to shipmates who have joined the crew standing watch in Sunda Strait.

#### **PARHAM, THOMAS E.**

Parham died suddenly at this home on December 10 of a massive coronary. Services were conducted on December 12 at the DFW National Cemetery. The above information was supplied by Kyle Thompson and Elmo Kennedy, who was a golfing buddy of Gene's.

### **KOOPER, "DUTCH"**

Received too late to include in the last Blue Bonnet was the following:

"Dutch" KOOPER was buried at Riverside National Cemetery on December 9. In attendance were about 30 family and friends. Representing the Houston Association was NED GALLAGHER, son Frank and Larry Krug, NG. A Navy Chaplain presented the Eulogy. NED related how he remembered DUTCH aboard ship during the sing-a-longs before the movie. After a Navy bugler sounded taps, NED sang The Lords Prayer. All joined him in silent prayer; a fitting and honorable farewell to a fine and honorable man.

### **SUOMI, SULO**

Suomi passed away on Dec. 3, 2003 at the Alameda California Hospital. His remains were brought to Trenton, N.J. for interment on Dec. 19, in a crypt in St. Mary's Cemetery. His widow, Connie, kept us informed of arrangements. In attendance were a good number of Connie's family and friends, and representing the Houston, Howard and Sylvia Brooks and Otto and Trudy Schwarz. SULO was interned with full military honors including a 21 gun salute by a naval honor guard. A live bugler sounded taps, and its effect inside the mausoleum was quite unique.

### **LOUIS, LAURENCE G.**

Louis passed away on December 11, 2003 of pneumonia. He was buried with full military honors at Tacoma National Cemetery, Washington State. This information was emailed to Val by his daughter, Gwen Kerber, on January 23, 2004. She requested to become a member of the Next Generation.

### **PAPISH, PAUL**

PAUL "PAP" PAPISH passed away on February 22, 2004 at the VA Hospital in Denver, and was interned at Fort Logan National Cemetery on March 1, 2004. "PAP" as he was known to all of us, was a valuable member of our association. Having been assigned to the Paymasters Office aboard ship, and having a tremendous memory, he was able to recall names of the crew leaving or coming aboard. "PAP" and Theresa were familiar attendees at our reunions. Sadly we miss these shipmates. Theresa requests that donations in PAP'S memory be sent to: USS Houston Survivors Assn., 107 Hallie Ct., Georgetown, TX 78628.

### **JOSEPH WOLF**

JOSPEH WOLF passed away on December 24, 2003 of heart failure. His widow, Rita, called Val in March to advise us of the loss of another shipmate. We send our thoughts and prayers to the family.

Sad news about another member of our Houston family. Jessie Dethloff reported that her son, Richard Lamarr Dethloff, passed away suddenly on January 22, at age 57. Richard was retired Navy and buried with full military honors in Natchez Place Memorial Park in Mississippi.

**SCUTTLEBUTT** - A recent letter from JOHN STANCZAK tells us that he is living in an assisted care facility and cannot join us at our reunion. He does ask to be informed about the reunion and who attended, which will be reported in this Blue Bonnet... A letter from Gavan Daws reveals that his book, "Prisoner of the Japanese" is now in its 9<sup>th</sup> paperback printing, after 9 printings in hard cover and is still selling well. We are happy for Gavan as he was a thoroughly researched account. He further indicates that an Australian edition is being printed for release there on Anzac Day...

LLOYD WILLEY writes us that his grandson, David, drove him and Dorothy to JACK SMITH'S memorial service at Fort Rosencranz. Lloyd proudly announces that David and his wife, Marti, will shortly be presenting them with their first great grandchild... A letter from Joyce Ranger indicates She has had a really bad year. While in Illinois, she was admitted to the hospital with a gangrenous gall bladder, and at that time they discovered problems with her liver. While in the hospital, someone stole her purse containing all personal ID's, etc, and it took her months to replace everything. She and son Jerry will be at the reunion and Jerry plans on leaving the day after for Sunda to dive on his father's ship.... Carter Conlin, Texas Commandery, Naval Order, recently gave a slide presentation about our Houston to a Kiwanis Club, and says it was very well received. Carter, who is very active, has been elected National Vice President of The Navy League, and Commander General-Elect of The Naval Order. He recently had gall bladder laparoscopic surgery, and was back on the tennis court in a few weeks. He and Nancy have celebrated their 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary. We extend them our very best wishes... The highlight of Linda Holmes' year was a September trip with a group of ex-pow's to visit their former pow camp in Mukden. Linda reported that the red carpet treatment from the Chinese officials on this emotional return by the pow's to that former place of such misery under the Japanese, was quite remarkable. We can look forward in the future to a book from Linda about Mukden, and the underground laboratories where the Japanese carried out their medieval experiments on animals, Chinese humans and some pow's .... On December 22 a unique retirement ceremony was conducted in the Punch Bowl in Honolulu. Capt. Susan Ficklin, daughter of Frank and Leta of the 131<sup>st</sup> FA, retired from the U.S. Navy in that sacred place near our monument. A full report from Kyle Thompson indicates that it was a truly unique event, especially since it was conducted near the monument which her father placed such an important part in having erected there. The ceremony was well attended by many friends and family, including JACK FALIZ and wife Marie, Jimmy Pryor, Pat Cook, Kyle and Vivian Thompson and others. Retiring at that same ceremony was Susan's cousin Col. Georgeanne Ficklin, U. S. Air Force.... A new book was brought to our attention by Johan Van Leer. The book is "Ships from Hell", by Raymond Lamont-Brown published by Sutton Publishing Limited. The book describes the transportation of pow's on Japanese hellships and traces their routes, giving facts and figures regarding numbers of pow's transported, ships sunk and loss of life.... A card from our pow friend, Dr. Paul Loang, who recently made a trip to Singapore where he was first imprisoned. Paul wants us to know that we would not recognize any of the old places where we were....

### **FROM DOWN UNDER –**

An invitation has been received inviting us to the launching of the newest HMAS PERTH in Victoria, Australia on March 20, 2004. Val and I have sent greetings from our Association.... Another invitation was from Australia to attend the dedication of their Ex POW War Memorial in Ballarat, Victoria. This beautiful memorial will be erected in the Ballarat Botanical Gardens and will consist of 130 metre long polished granite wall as a tribute to the 35,000 Australians who were sacrificed from the Boer War 1899 to Korean War. This is only a thumbnail sketch of the beauty and enormity of the entire memorial. Val and I have sent greetings from the association and arranged for a wreath to be placed during the ceremony. Audrey Manning sends a detailed report about the Ceremony and placing of said wreath by our mate, and Audrey's beloved David. Terry Beaton was also in attendance, along with an estimated 11,000 people, and also sent on a good account of that memorable day complete with photographs. Our wreath was the only International Wreath placed at the memorial.... Lots of good news from Arthur (Blood) Bancroft and Mirla. Mirla celebrated her

80<sup>th</sup> birthday this year, and family was flown into Perth from all across Australia to join in the celebration. Trudy and I phoned her to convey our wishes on that happy day. Arthur and Mirla had an enjoyable trip to Adelaide, where they spent a 5 day ferry trip on the Murray River.... Perth survivor Eric Fraser passed away on December 11.... His daughter, Nicholle, sent the word to Lin Drees asking that she notify his friends here... Greetings from David and Audrey Manning conferring on Trudy and me the O.B.E. This used to stand for Order of the British Empire, but for us it is known as Over Bloody Eighty. David celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> this year, but says Audrey still has a few years to go to catch up.... Christmas greetings from Alan and Hazel Donaldson. Alan says he doesn't celebrate the holidays with much alcohol anymore, but is content with being surrounded by his 4 loving children and 6 grands. He and Hazel will travel with a group to attend the Ex Pow War Memorial dedication in Ballarat... A card from John Toon, who has been elected Secretary of Victoria Ex Pow Relatives Assn. A card also from Terry and Shiela Beaton say they are enjoying life back in Australia, with Terry having given 60 lectures on the Burma Railroad, and 15 already booked for 2004... A welcome letter from old friend Ernie Toovey reports to us that his beloved Jean is doing alright in the nursing home where she has been for a few years. Ernie manages to keep well enough to make his regular visits with her... A most thoughtful call from Chilla Goodchap's daughter bringing Christmas greetings. Chilla is doing well but missing his Ngaire after all those years together. What wonderful fun we had while visiting with them long ago.

## **2004 REUNION**

The 2004 reunion was an outstanding success, with 17 Houston survivors, and 207 Next Generation & friends in attendance. Survivors in attendance were: MARVIN BAIN, HOWARD BROOKS, EUGENE CRISPI, DAVID FLYNN, GUS FORSMAN, NED GALLAGHER, JORDAN "JOE" GARRETT, JOHN HOOD, WILLIAM "BILL" INGRAM, HARRY KELLEY, AL KOPP, ROBERT O'BRIEN, CLARENCE "SKIP" SCHILPEROORT, OTTO SCHWARZ, MARVIN SIZEMOR, GEORGE STODDARD AND GENE WILKINSON.

Having arranged so many reunions myself, I am amazed at the amount of effort that Val and Max, and Lin and Ron put into this event. We are certainly fortunate to have them and the help they enlisted from so many NG's. Each year the reunions get bigger and better.

The hotel was just great, and within walking distance to the monument.

The hospitality room was filled at all times, and the photo albums got a great work out.

The memorial service was the best ever, with NG John Schwarz as MC. (We got lucky this year with good weather).

There were so many helpers this year, and me not able to take notes, I can just say thanks to all of you. As the number of survivors dwindles, we take comfort in knowing that the memory of our beloved ship is in good, and loving, hands.

After all these years, our association was able this year to make the first scholarship award. How appropriate that it went to Gene Bankhead, the grandson of our Eugene Crispi, and the reading of the winning essay at Friday nights dinner was inspiring. Congratulations to the Crispi family. A lively auction was held later to enhance the scholarship fund and in excess of \$2,000 was collected.

It was good to see so many of our widows, and the families, joining us. It was also great to be joined by our 131<sup>st</sup> comrades, Frank Ficklin & Leta, and Buddy Clark and Wanda. We were all

saddened during the reunion to learn that our good friend and Secretary of the Lost Battalion Association, Kyle Thompson had passed away. His many years of faithful work for the Battalion is but a small part of the many talents Kyle' time with us enabled us to enjoy. He will be missed by all.

Eugene, Marcia and Sean Frey never cease to fill us with awe, as they make the long journey from Pennsylvania, bringing the magnificent model of our ship for us to see. As if that were not wonderful enough, they are always hard at work helping out where needed.... Dana Charles let the singing of "God Bless America" at the memorial service and also provided musical entertainment at the piano during the weekend.

Bashar Altbabba, the Engineer who confronted the Jap Engineer in the recent TV documentary, traveled from Boston to present a great slide show of pictures he took on the Railway in Thailand.... Cdr. Howard Furness, representing the Australian Navy, remained with us the entire weekend and joined in the singing around the piano. A special surprise for Trudy and I was the arrival of our older son Ed and younger grandson Marty. Unknown to us that they were planning to come, they checked in at a nearby hotel to keep the surprise. I could write pages about this years reunion, but I think this blind reporter should hang it up for now. I just hope these few words motivate you to join us next year. Our number has dwindled to 53, so it won't be long before we bid good-bye to the last of our crew. ....Otto

## **LINE FROM LIN**

Each year at our beautiful Memorial Service, I would love to be able to call out all the names of OUR MEN who served on the USS HOUSTON – and are named on the Monument, BUT it would take too long. So I try to call out all the names of ones who have family in the audience. This year the following deceased men had family to represent them: Joseph Davis, Charles Lynch, Leonard Bradley, James Raydell Wilson, George Cumming, James Gary, John Reas, Tony Russell, Vernon Koelling, Albert McGarvey, Samuel McMaster, John Stefanek, Thomas Pecina, Valdon Roberts, Fredrick H. Ramsey, Mason Dale Spencer, Roger Barnett, H.R. Read, and James Autrey. Representing their deceased husbands, the following Surviving Spouses were in attendance: Joyce Ranger, Erma Snyder, Eunell Weissinger, Jimmie Pryor, Lee Robinson, and Teresa Reilly. The following men are Living, but were unable to attend this year: Maurice Hurd, Bob Charles -- Maurice was represented by 2 of his daughters and Bob was represented by his son. Also represented was a deceased member of the 131st, Wilson "Dub" Reed. Also in attendance was Johnny Johnson who was a member of the 1000 Volunteers who were sworn in Memorial Day, 1942, to avenge the loss of the Cruiser HOUSTON. Elsewhere in the newsletter should be a list of the USS HOUSTON crew and 131st who were at our Memorial Service.

Saturday afternoon at 3 p.m. I sponsored an informal rededication of the Marker at 1000 Main where 1000 men stood to be sworn in to take the place of the HOUSTON crew when all were thought be lost. I could not have done this without the help of John and Jan Bradley, Danny and Joshua Spencer, Dana Charles, Audie Lynch, Jim Morgan, members of the Houston Brass Band who stayed to play Taps, and Ron Drees. The Marker has a beautiful setting with dancing fountains behind it. The Marker was recently replaced after the light rail was installed down Main Street. Jim Morgan, with the Harris County Department of Education and a companion of the Texas Commandery, spoke briefly of the history of the Marker - and introduced Johnny Johnson

who stood there at 1000 Main on Memorial Day in 1942 - Johnny was one of the 1000 men to be sworn in that day. Relatives of Robert Bradley were also there; Robert was a Volunteer, but also had a brother on the HOUSTON, Leonard Bradley, who did not come home. A younger brother of Leonard and Robert was in the audience, John Bradley, who was not old enough to be a Volunteer, but was old enough to be sworn in by the time the Volunteers reached the West Coast - so he was sworn in days later and also served in the Navy.

Lest you think that we have been resting, let me put that thought to rest. We have already invited the Houston Brass Band to come for our service next year. Phone calls have been made (MANY phone calls) - and we have determined that the Rodeo Parade is the same day again this next year ---- SO we have CHANGED the date of our Memorial Service -- next year our Service will be March 5th. Please make that change on your calendars. The DoubleTree has been reserved -- wasn't the location GREAT --- location, location, location -- again, thanks to Sharron Long and Patty Letze for making the hotel arrangements for us, both this year and next year.

There was a small photo in the Sunday issue of the Houston CHRONICLE, Joe Garrett and Marvin Bain (unfortunately Marvin's head was cut off in the photo), they were placing the USS HOUSTON wreath at the base of the Monument during the Memorial Service -- I have a few copies of the newspaper clipping. Please let me know if you would like a copy.

Also during the Memorial Service, Ron read the beautiful letter, written by Pap Papish's daughter, Sue, please also let me know if you would like a copy. I can snail mail it to you, via the postal service, or I can e-mail it to you.

The Difference - I have had several people ask me about the Lost Battalion versus the USS HOUSTON Survivors Association. Here is what I believe to be the main difference. The Lost Battalion represents all the men who were POWs from both the 131st Field Artillery and the USS HOUSTON. The USS HOUSTON group covers not only the men who survived the sinking, but the men who went down with the ship. There were over 1,000 men on the HOUSTON when sunk - about 700 did not make it ashore - we cannot forget those men, nor their families.

As always, we love putting together the reunion week-ends for our MEN - their families and friends ---- and appreciate all the volunteers during the week-end - without you we could not make it happen. Thank you so much for volunteering - there were too many volunteers to name everyone.

**Please mark March 4 and 5 on your 2005** calendar, and plan to come. This year we had MANY new faces - please join us in 2005.

Lin and Ron Drees, 14219 Wickersham, Houston, TX 77077, 281-493-5171 -- or [lindrees.usshou-ca30@juno.com](mailto:lindrees.usshou-ca30@juno.com)

**\*\*\* FROM THE NEXT GENERATION \*\*\***

**ABOUT THE REUNION** – Gene Wilkinson (1001 Cliff Dr, Santa Barbara, CA 93109) is formatting the video of the Memorial Service. Please send him \$15 for the cost of printing and mailing. Sharron Long (11402 Memorial Dr, Houston, TX 77024) is having copies made of the very moving video she and her husband took when they hired a boat to take them out over the site of the *Houston* wreckage to have a beautiful wreath taken down by a diver. Please send \$15 for the cost of printing and mailing. I want to thank each and every one of you that helped us this year. It literally would have not been possible to pull off this reunion without your help. As I told the NG's in our meeting, this isn't a club --- it's family.

Lin Drees was handed some unhappy news from the city that they will no longer donate chairs, podium, waive the fee, etc. When the time comes, we just might have a letter writing campaign to the powers that be. It's appalling that the survivors & families will have to pay for the right to honor their men and crew!! We just might duke it out with city hall..... I love a good challenge!

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS** - DALLAS CLARK, 1415 E Ocean View Ave, Norfolk, VA 23503. Matthey Atterberry, 38 Valley Oak Dr., Mayflower, AR 72106-9261 (501 470-9530). Shirley Gunnerson, 1267 Tucker Rd. Sp. 6, Hood River, OR 97031 ([shirleygun@charter.net](mailto:shirleygun@charter.net))

**DONATIONS** – (TAX ID NUMBER: DLN 17053122009007) Billie Reese, Anne DuHaime & family, Carter Conlin, Audrey & HARRY KELLEY, Theresa & PAUL PAPISH in memory of DUTCH KOOPER & EUGENE PARHAM, WILBUR SMITH, EUGENE WILKINSON, STANLEY WOODY, Erma Snyder, Fred Haring, Mattie Atterberry, Roy Kent, Henry "Matt" & Jane Matthews in memory of Irma & JOHN B. STEFANEK, Jane & Henry Matthews in memory of JOHN STEFANEK, Mattie Atterberry (widow of CHARLES, Marion L. Beardsley (widow of MARVIN) , Nancy & Pete Adams, Henry & Jane Matthews, the estate of LW "DUTCH" KOOPER, Jean Lansing, Joe & Carol Lochner, John Schwarz, Robert Cumming, Janet Espip in memory of her brother GEORG CUMMING, Stella Parham in memory of EUGENE PARHAM, Patricia Stoker in memory of Fern Fahs, sister of CHESTER SASS, Billie Johnson, Connie Soumi in memory of DUTCH KOOPER , EMIL BUKOWSKY, Joe & Melisse Kollmyer, Jane & LANSON HARRIS, Silvia & HOWARD BROOKS, Janet Espip, Ron & Lin Drees, Eugene Frey, Johnny Johnson (1000 Volunteers), Eunelle Weissinger.

**STORY OF THE SOC'S** – continued from last month:

Those old compressed air cats were the equivalent of an oversized sling shot! Once the wings were unfolded, engine started and the aircraft checked for launch, the catapult car, on which the aircraft was mounted, was drawn to the rear and locked to the catapult by a hold back key. This hold back key was designed to break once sufficient air pressure was attained for plane's launch. The catapult was deck mounted approximately 16' above the water line. In preparation for launch, the cat was trained outboard approximately 25 to 30 degrees. Concurrently, the ship would increase speed and make a slight turn to face the plane into the prevailing wind. On the signal, the pilot would open the throttle and indicate when he was ready. The launch valve was opened at the precise moment of the vessels up roll, when the hold key parted, the catapult car would plunge down the track. As the car hit the recoil plungers at the end of the cat, the plane would be launched into the air at an estimated speed of 60 plus miles per hour. Often the pilot and observer felt like flapping their arms like seagulls to make sure they got airborne. Launching on the down roll was a no-no. It could, and sometimes did, result in the plane being shot directly into the sea.

In those days, airborne search and find missions were flown on a prearranged plot, normally about a four-hour inverted triangle flight. In the event of radio silence, communication back with the ship was done at low altitude and low speed with the use of bean bags! Now this was not exactly easy, especially on a ship with four stacks as big in diameter as those old light cruisers!

Once the mission was completed, the idea was to get the plane and its crew back on the vessel safely. Aircraft recovery underway was a rather complicated procedure known as Cats Recovery. This system of retrieval required the dedicated concentration of almost all the deck divisions on the ship. The recovery device was a towed sled equipped with two special vanes mounted on its underside to keep the sled riding away from the side of the ship. The towing was performed by a bowline that ran forward to the forecastle where it was controlled by the 1<sup>st</sup> deck division. It was their responsibility to keep the sled riding parallel to the catapult. The sleds distance from the ships side was managed by the breast line handled by the 3<sup>rd</sup> division. Attached to the rear of the sled was a large manila net similar to a cargo net. When the aircraft returned from its flight and was ready to land, the sled would be streamed.

The ship would then perform a wide continuous turn into the wind to create a smooth landing surface by forming a slick on the water. The pilot would make his landing approach on to the slick and rapidly taxi up on the sled to engage the towing hook attached to the forward underside surface of his center float. Once engaged the pilot would reduce his throttle and be towed by the sled. Concurrently, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> deck division would begin taking in the bow and breast line to keep the aircraft in general proximity to the catapult. As the plane was eased in toward the ship's side, the ship itself would straighten its course into the wind. The 2<sup>nd</sup> deck division who operate the hoisting crane rigged it outboard to wait for the aircraft to be drawn in close enough to permit the engagement of its pelican hook into the hoisting sling of the planes center upper wing panel. The breast line had to be taken in slowly to bring the plane in close to the ship's side for hook up. Currently, the bowline was retrieved to maintain it's position parallel to the catapult. The plane crewman would climb from the rear cockpit, straddle the pilot, and open the hatch in the wing center section to break out the hoisting sling. The crane operator would then lower the pelican hook to the plane crewman whose job it was to engage the hook with the hoisting sling. During this part of the operation, aviation unit personnel stood by on the deck with long bamboo fending poles to keep the aircraft wing tip from contact with the side of the ship. Once the plane was of the water the pilot would shut down the engine. The crane operator then raised the aircraft and swung it inboard placing it back on the catapult car where it was locked in place.

Once the sled was recovered the entire operation was complete. During recovery, the vessel continued to maintain its same course and speed. The aircraft was immediately washed down with fresh water to remove as much salt as possible. The wings were then folded or had the storm strut installed. This was a very intricate sequence of events that takes more time to explain than to perform. It is especially dangerous when performed in a heavy sea. With the sea rising and falling several feet, it complicates the hook up between the rising and falling aircraft's extended hoisting sling and the crane's hook. The plane crewman must be quick to engage the hoisting hook in the sling without leaving part of his hand between the two! There were also limits to the fending crews ability to keep the plane from contacting the side of the ship. Occasionally, the surging sea might thrust the wing toward the ships side. In these circumstances the fending poles were useless in preventing damage. If the damage wasn't too severe, you might see one of the birds cleared to fly with the wing tip slightly crunched and patched over with some doped down fabric.

The main problem involving aviation duty at sea with the SOC Seagull was the total lack of space to perform maintenance. Maintaining these aircraft was a real chore. The aircrews working space was the plane itself and the deck space aft of the #4 stack. Further, this space was shared with the torpedo gang, who was responsible for servicing the catapult, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> division which was responsible for aircraft recovery and the area in which the aviation group worked. There was a steel aviation tool locker about 4 to 6 feet square and about 7 feet tall aft the stack. Our workbench consisted of a weighted .30 caliber ammunition case with a 4 inch vice mounted there on. The aviation crew itself, was often amazed at how it was able to keep two planes in up status capable of each flying 80 – 100 hours a month....In those days operating conditions and maintenance requirements were both dangerous as well as difficult to perform.

**FROM AROUND THE WORLD** - Di Elliott, Terry Beaton and Audrey Manning emailed with reports of the wreath laid at the Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial. Stephen Youll, President of the Perth Assn, has reported there will be a commissioning of the PERTH August of 2006. Start saving your change everyday..... I'll keep you posted! Fred & Liz Seiker keep in close touch via faxes. Some years ago (almost 3 decades), he lost track of his brother. Lo and behold – his brother saw a re-run of a documentary with Fred in it. The two brothers are to meet in Holland the end of the month. Carol Cooper (my counterpart in England) sends me the COFEPOW newsletters. My oh my, the group has grown and their projects are to be greatly admired!

**REPORT FROM FRANK "NED" GALLAGHER –**

Dear Lin and All,

Dutch had a fine memorial service at Riverside National Cemetery on Tuesday, December 9, 2003.

Houston was well represented by Larry Krug (NG), who traveled from Washington state, and my son Frank and me. My sons Brian and David were unable to attend due to business matters.

Thirty other people also attended the ceremony, including Dutch's nephew Clare Dunmore and his wife, and "Big" Mike, Dutch's fine friend from San Diego as well as many other friends from San Diego.

A retired Navy Captain in the Chaplain Corps performed the religious ceremony and also spoke of Houston's and Dutch's courageous stand in the early days of World War II in the Philippines and in the South China Sea. I followed with a few words describing Dutch as one of many thousands of young men who went to war for the United States of America and who fought against overwhelming initial odds and prevailed to accomplish a victory unmatched in the history of human conflict. I also mentioned that I remembered Dutch on many occasions on the quarterdeck of Houston, when we would have a sing-along of popular songs prior to the movies.

After inviting those present to join me in their silent prayers, I sang the Lord's Prayer for Dutch after a Navy bugler sounded taps, and a fitting and honorable ceremony for a fitting and honorable man, Leonard W. Kooper Chief Petty Officer USN, was concluded.

Afterwards, people lingered to share their favorite stories and memories of Dutch.

Regards,  
Ned

**DEDICATION OF A PAINTING** – Lt. Karen Wallace called to tell us that Michael Blaser ([www.michaelblaser.com](http://www.michaelblaser.com)) donated his painting of the USS Houston CA-30. Survivors JOHN HOOD AND DALE TIEFEL attended in Davenport, IA (309 782-6084). Michael developed an interest in the Houston and as an artist wanted to express his talents on the canvas.

**MAILBAG** – David Manning (*Perth* survivor) from down under wrote that a friend's son was stationed with the Australian Embassy in Washington DC where he went to visit the Commemorative tree to the HOUSTON and PERTH in Arlington. HOWARD BROOKS was featured in the local "Senior Scoop" paper on January 5<sup>th</sup> telling of his 3 1/2 years as a POW – he looked most handsome in his USS HOUSTON shirt! Roy Kent (*Perth* survivor) sent a donation and note about a correction in his Christmas card. I enjoy hearing from the survivors of the *Perth & Houston* so much! I'm so lucky to have so many wonderful men in my life!! Not many women can say that. June Smith sent me a lovely bio on JACK that will be featured later in this edition under "Crew Member Spotlight) along with a lovely note that touched my heart. Both Max and I got teary eyed. What a surprise to receive a letter from Shirley Gee (widow of JIMMIE). It was full of praise and had me shuffling my feet with eyes down saying "awww shucks". Mattie Atterberry (widow of CHARLES) sent a donation and a long letter that I immensely enjoyed telling of family, the move to her new place (noted in "Change of Address"), baking bread and so forth. I suspect she and I could spend hours in the kitchen cooking and becoming fast friends. When Gwen Kerber emailed about her father's death (**LAURENCE LOUIS**), she wrote that she, her daughter and Laurence attended the change of command for the USS Houston SSN 713 on May 20, 2002. It was a very emotional experience for him. Lynette Gunning sent a picture of Gill Gunning (*Perth* survivor) taken in April '02 on Anzac Day (their Veteran's Day) wearing all of his medals. She reports that he died of heart failure 12 December '02. Robert Cumming sent an excerpt from a letter his brother (GEORGE CUMMING) wrote in '39 the traffic around the docks and shoreline with the crowds yelling, waving and blowing their horns as the ship left Miami port. The city gave them a big dance before they left. Pat Stoker wrote that NG Fern Fahs (sister of CHESTER SASS) died on Jan. 25<sup>th</sup> and sent a donation in her memory. Billie Johnson writes that she wanted to attend the reunion but she would be attending her grandson's graduation from boot camp (Marines) in San Diego. EMIL BUKOWSKY sent a note wishing he could attend the reunion but had appointments with the VA Hospital that he couldn't miss. OC MCMANUS writes he's unable to travel & keeps him from enjoying all the get togethers. LLOYD WILLEY continues to battle diabetes – he got a little scratch that manifested into a problem. Dorothy helps him with his walker & getting up and down from a chair, however he still writes his poetry. Leland Stewart emailed us the day we were leaving for the Houston reunion that a memorial service for cousin ROGER BARNETT, KIA was to be held on the 28<sup>th</sup> of Feb. BOB FULTON emailed to say he came within 4-5 blocks of the Memorial Service but the traffic prevented him from getting there. That just broke my heart that we missed him by just a short distance after his traveling so far... Shirley Gunnerson emailed with news of her move and successful knee replacement surgery in October. Rachel Watkins called (our archives scanner) to explain that she was unable to attend the reunion because of a death in the family. When arriving at the Doubletree a gentleman introduced himself as Kelly Cope, one of the divers that placed the 48 star flag on the *Houston* and participated in the satellite phone call during the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Small world!

**LOSS OF KYLE THOMPSON** - We attended the funeral held at 10am March 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hyde Park Baptist church where many friends and family attended. Wanda & Youngun Clark, Leta & Frank Ficklin & daughter Susan, Mariel & JL Summers & daughter along with widows, Pat Clark, Gwen McFarland, Butch Starnes, Nita Ogle, Treaila Burns, Rosalee Gregg and Next Generation Lori Buzzo, Cullen & Royce Brimage, Michael Buzzo, Diane Granbery, Becke and Michael Frietas, Ron & Lin Drees (Ron was a pall bearer) and Max & I were representing the 131st and USS Houston family. Kyle was buried in the Texas State Cemetery with military honors. After the services, we went back to the church for lunch. The family asked that donations be sent in Kyle's memory to:

Military Forces Museum, Camp Mabry, PO Box 5218, Austin, TX 78763.

**JERRY RANGER'S DIVE** – Jerry Ranger (son of JOHN RANGER) kept me posted during his days as he dived at the *USS Houston* wreckage following the reunion. He claims the trip to have been priceless. Having experienced the strength of the currents, he could better comprehend the difficulties the men had trying to swim to shore. The bag that had the tile he had made (and survivors at the reunion sign along with the POW pins & his dad's watch broke loose from him because of the rough currents and fell free somewhere by the aft mast at 120 feet. The people that hosted Jerry have promised to try to recover the bag later this summer. Jerry was able to make 8 dives and was able to see most of the ship – down both masts to the bottom, forward to aft and all around the hanger bay. We are happy that Jerry has fulfilled his dream.

### **CREW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT**

Jack Dale Smith, Jr.

Jack was born in Plasterco, Texas to James Arthur Smith and Lela Margaret Adams March 29, 1922. He completed his schooling in Rotan, Texas and was a star running back on his high school football team. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy on June 19, 1940. After basic training, he was sent to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and was stationed aboard the heavy cruiser U.S.S. HOUSTON. He and his shipmates were involved in several fierce sea battles against Japanese air and sea forces before being sunk March 1, 1942 in Sundra Strait. He was captured by the Japanese after its sinking as he swam in that vast ocean.

In December, 1942, Jack's family was notified he was "MIA" (Missing in Action). He remained in enemy hands in a Burmese prisoner of war camp until the war ended. Only the strongest of body and character survived to return home to their families.

After returning to the States in 1945, he married June George. They moved to Alpine, California in 1949 and had two children. He retired from the Navy in 1953 and started his own career as a building and electrical inspector. He began career with the County of San Diego and later accepted a position with the City of Chula Vista. Jack retired as inspector from the City of Chula Vista in 1982. Prior to his retirement, he taught classes in electrical code compliance for several years at Southwestern College in Chula Vista.

Jack and June taught square and round dancing classes over the years and started their first club, "Alpine Alamanders" in Alpine in the 1950's. They continued teaching classes at Norman Center in Chula Vista and attending various dance festivals until Jack was no longer well enough to continue. He enjoyed his computer and loved writing poetry about his war experiences and everyday life. He loved to fly airplanes and owned his own plane (Piper Clipper) for several years. He also loved the ocean and had owned several boats.

He was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and U.S. Naval Fleet Reserve. He remained active with his surviving HOUSTON POWs and often returned to attend annual reunions in Texas.

Jack died October 31, 2003 and was survived by his adoring wife of 57 years (June). Children – Dr. Jack Sale Smith, Jr. and daughter Sandy June Stell. Grandchildren: Wendi, Eric, Jeffrey and Breatt Stell, Megan & Lindsey Satterfield – Smith and Great grand daughter Katelyn June Button. A celebration of Jack's life, a square dance/round dance party, was held on November 23, 2003 per his wishes. Over 300 family and friends attended.

**EYE WITNESS NEWS** – To receive a copy of Dan Rather interviewing survivor ROBERT O'BRIEN on Eye Witness News December 7, 1999, please contact Robert O'Brien, Jr. at 18 E. Oakwood Dr, Carlisle, PA 17013. Phone 717 249-8994

**ATTENTION** - Vic Campbell, our webmaster, has created a disk of archival photos and documents that we are more than willing to share..... a donation to the kitty to cover expenses (disk, mailing container and postage) would be appreciated.

**NOW HEAR THIS!** – The Scholarship Committee announces they will be accepting applications for a \$1,000 Scholarship to be announced at the March '04 reunion! Please send your inquiries to: Marilyn Messier, USS Houston Survivors Scholarship, 49 Derby Ct., San Ramon, CA 94583. She will in turn mail the application & instructions to be **completed and returned no later than November 1<sup>st</sup>**. Criteria: Be at least a high school senior assured of entering/attending college up to and including a college junior who will enter his/her final year of undergraduate education. Be related (blood/marriage) to/or associated in some way with a crew member/descendant of the USS Houston (CA-30), Next Generation, the USS Houston Survivors Association and the Next Generation organization and/or has shown a keen interest in the history of the USS Houston CA-30's history and/or crew's legacy. This interest could come, for example, in the form of having participated in communications with any of the survivors and/or the organization while striving to learn more. Eligibility will be determined by the scholarship selection sub-committee, whose decisions are final. Be able to document current academic grades. Be able to document community/civic activity(s). Present an essay (not to exceed 5 pages) on; 'What does the memory of the USS Houston (CA-30) mean to me. Complete each item as indicated on the scholarship application including all necessary supporting documents.

## **ESSAY BY OUR FIRST SCHOLARSHIP WINNER -**

### **Personal Heroes:**

#### **What the Memory of the USS Houston (CA-30) Means to Me**

When people hear the word "hero," they generally thin of super heroes such as Batman or Superman: sometimes a more rational person will give the title to one or both of their parents. The men of the SS Houston (CA-30) are heroes in my eyes. To endure the pain and suffering that they must have gone through is unimaginable. I speak not only of the survivors, but also of those who did not make it home. When it comes to stories of survival, people tend to forget that those who did not make it also deserve recognition. These men fought with every part of their being, and died for our country. No one is more deserving of the title of "Hero" than someone who would selflessly give their lives to protect others.

It is not my intention in the least to take any glory away for those who survived, as they too are more than deserving of the title "hero." To begin with, they joined the US Navy in order to serve and protect their country. Next, while fighting their ship sank, and those who survived were taken prisoner. Finally, those survivors were made to endure the pain and suffering of a prison camp until their rescue several years later. What could be more heroic than t hat? The strength of each of these men, as individuals and as a group, baffles the mind.

I have had the extraordinary opportunity to meet and talk with a number of the men who survived this horrific ordeal. Though it has been many years since the end of World War II, the

memories of these men are still as clear as crystal. The stories I have heard are so surreal that it may not be too far-fetched to call these survivors superheroes. Living off of rice and water, receiving beatings almost daily, and seeing their friends hurt and dying; it is hard to believe that anyone could come away from such circumstances without blocking these memories out. This is also a testament to the strength of these men: their ability to relive the harshness of that time of their life through memories and stories.

Throughout my life there have been few times of war, and none have been on the same scale as WWII. Because of this, it is hard to picture exactly what happened to the people of that time. True, there are textbooks and classes to teach the material, but rarely does one get the chance to hear personal accounts of what happened. I have had that chance, and it has changed my perception of the war completely. When studying history for school, one is usually only taught the general "big picture" of things. This style of learning makes the event seem like some ominous historical occurrence. After hearing multiple personal accounts of what occurred during the war, it brought about a sort of enlightenment upon me. Finally WWII was no longer an ominous event, but a real and tangible occurrence that consisted of real people; people I knew. It was amazing to think about such a huge event on such a personal level.

The memory of the USS Houston (CA-30) is a memory of heroes. These men gave their lives to protect our freedom; they endured Hell on Earth to return to their friends and families; they brought home memories of their own – stories that taught at least one person about the reality of war. I have learned much from the heroes I have met, and what I learned from them has already been tested.

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 the US was attacked by foreign terrorists. When the airplanes struck, people died. Firefighters and policemen were on the scene almost instantly, trying to save whomever they could find. When the Twin Towers fell, many people perished, including the Firemen and women, and police officers within the buildings. This was an act of war, and I saw it with my own eyes. I saw people running from Ground Zero; individuals. I saw the event unfold from start to finish and I never once thought of it as some ominous happening. It was a real event that hurt real people. Though I was not in New York when it happened I could see past the newscasts and view the disaster on a more personal level, and thought it was more painful this way, it made me understand that the people in those buildings were real. The people in those buildings were heroes.

I have learned so much from the survivors of the USS Houston (CA-30), but I am sure there is still much more to be learned. I will never tire of hearing the same stories over and over again, because they mean so much. I could never tire of spending time with the strongest group of people I know. I will never be tired of my heroes.

-Gene R. Bankhead,  
Grandson of Eugene Crispi

" Dutch"

Dutch Kooper's going to Eternal Rest,  
Surrounded by memories loved the best,  
Of gallant ships and braver men  
He knew them all, spent years with them,  
The Navy was his only "wife" he knew  
Dedicated to her through and through,  
Also he devoted his time to Ex-POW's  
and the many families he learned to know.

The cards he bought and always sent,  
no matter the cause or what event,  
Birthday, anniversary, holidays were the same to him,  
now the days will draw dark and dim,  
Memories of Dutch will not go away,  
We'll remember him in our life today,  
as huge and strong, and loving life,  
above the turmoil and the strife.

We'll miss his always "helping hand",  
selling daises, or being in demand,  
for any project that would keep our band,  
of ex-POW chapter #1 solvent, and ready to stand  
behind any POW that did not have his way  
to the hospital or the nearest Veterans, VA  
To claim his compensation for years of toil  
as a slave to a nation of foreign soil

So we'll say "Good-bye" to a U. S. S. Houston shipmate  
may his flight to a new life be smoother than  
he had on planet earth.

Lloyd V. Willey  
December 6, 2003  
U. S. M. C. Detachment  
U. S. S. Houston

## REFLECTION ON HELLFIRE PASS by Bessie Schwarz

I never understood my grandfather, as he sat, strong, tattooed and surviving in his big chair. As a pig-tailed eight year old, cross-legged on the gray carpet, I memorized the story from the shipwreck to the Japanese search boat. Yesterday, as a college bound eighteen year old, I learned his story.

On December 8, 1941, the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor and the United States entered into the Second World War as Allies. In the proceeding years, from 1941 to 1945, while the world was consumed by the atrocities of genocide and "the war to end all wars," young men and boys were sent to the Pacific to fight the overwhelming Japanese Navy. At seventeen, aboard the *U.S.S. Houston*, Otto Schwarz shoved off of American soil. At twenty-two he was released from a Japanese prison camp. This was his first birthday present in five years.

The floor of the Hellfire Pass Museum is cold, especially because they don't let you bring your shoes in. That was my first sense of the museum: It was cold. However, as soon as I saw the crude, charcoal sketches on the hallway inside, all my senses drained. I began to see through tears images of protruding rib cages and diseased boys, but felt nothing else. I fled from the images to the next room, but froze as I entered. There stood my broken grandfather and another emaciated, ragged boy, who pleaded at me, as they carried logs larger than their bodies in my direction. My tears stopped. My eighteen year old grandfather stared at me for the first time through the eyes of someone else's sculpture. Sixty years after the war I confronted what had happened during those five years.

I never understood my grandfather. He always began his story as deserved grandiose description, but left out any detail of the prison camp. I guess that history was for me to discover by myself. For five years he was beaten, for five years he ate rice filled with maggots, for five years he could only dream of a future.

He was my age when he entered the prison camp. The least I can do is try to understand his story; and I feel indebted for having had the chance to be his granddaughter and to do so.

**FOR SALE** - Caps \$15 (wool – Navy with gold lettering, twill – Navy with gold lettering or kaki with Navy lettering), T-shirts (Navy with gold lettering) \$15, coffee mugs (Navy with gold lettering) \$10, Monument and Bell pins \$2 each, "Death Becomes the Ghost" videos \$15, Avenger the Houston posters \$10, schematic of the HOUSTON \$5 for small, \$10 for large, 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memorial aboard the USS Blue Ridge video \$15, Bumper stickers \$2.00, "A Traveller's Guide to the Burma Railway" by Lt Col Ron Beaton, (Ret.) \$16, "Mr. Michel's War" by John J A Michel \$10, "The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors" by James D. Hornfischer \$25 (only 1 left) **All PLUS postage.** I am still looking for some Next Generation items --- caps would run an extra \$4 PER cap so I'm hoping to find something more reasonable.

PLEASE – contact me with your change of mailing address or email address. Unfortunately, I've had to put those little red \*'s by several last names due to lack of participation. We are a non profit organization and appreciate you all that have kicked in to the kitty. I will send out complimentary newsletters until the funds no longer permit.

**SCHOLARSHIP ASSETS REPORT**

Balance Forward 19 Feb 2004		\$10285.59	DEBITS	
Interest	30.72		Postage	\$ 66.40
Auction	655.00		Scholarship check	1000.00
In Memory--Others		1190.00	Total	1066.40
In Memory of Crew		595.00		
Total	2470.72	+\$ 2470.72		
Ending balance as of 19 Feb 2004		+\$11689.91		

2004 Reunion Report

Totals collected from 2004 Auction	\$2072.00	
Other donations	280.00	
Interest	1.45	
Total	+\$2353.45	
Ending balance as of 16 March 2004		+\$14043.36

This is a true and accurate account to the best of my knowledge.  
Susan A. Krug, Treasurer

**FINANCIAL REPORT**

<b>DEBITS</b>		<b>CREDITS</b>	
Newsletter printing	375.00	Previous Balance	4842.35
Newsletter postage	151.67	Donations/sales	
Books	75.00	reunion meals	
Videos	262.30	registrations	16178.24
Telephone	338.40	Total	21020.59
Postage	207.25		
Supplies	829.09		
Refunds	1019.00		
Reunion expenses	11333.17		
Total	14590.88	CURRENT BALANCE	\$6429.71

**Until June..... God Bless!**

