



**Volume 9, No. 4**  
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*Dick Rohde, editor*

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**Reunion Time Approaching**

This will be the last NEWSLETTER before we meet in San Diego for our reunion. Reservations have been slow coming in and I realize that there are many reasons for that. Some of you have indicated that there are medical problems and you can't be certain that you can make it. For others, there can be a problem in coming up with the \$\$\$\$. It is a long way to San Diego for those of us who do not live near the West Coast. Some of you are still making up your minds. We hope that you will be with us in body, but if not, we know that you will be with us in spirit and we will be thinking of you!

Following is a list of those who have indicated that they will be in San Diego for the

reunion:

- Bob & Billie LeClercq,
- Vince & Fran Goodrich,
- Dick & Helen Rohde,
- Tom Stevenson,
- Glenn Huffman & Jo Ann Kilpatrick,
- Henry Doscher,
- Leah Felt,
- Peggy & Harry Dodd,
- Jack & Ruth Yusen,
- Madeline & Morris Dadd,
- Bud & Lil Comet,
- Rita & Nancy Grove,
- Sam Stewart,
- John Wukovits,
- Don Young & family.

There will be more we know. It is not too late to sign up.

### **Contact with Family of John L. Conway**

Since the last NEWSLETTER I have heard from family members of shipmate John L. Conway, Coxswain on the Sammy B. His granddaughter, Patti Anne Johnson was the first contact. Her letter follows:

Dear Mr. Rohde

I was searching the internet for information on the Samuel B. Roberts and the Samar portion of the Battle of Leyte Gulf. I was lucky enough to stumble across a web site dedicated to this and in doing so found your name and address listed under the Survivor's Association for the Samuel B. Roberts. My interest in this stems from the fact that my grandfather, Chief Petty Officer John (Jack) L. Conway was a survivor of the Samuel B. when it was sunk on October 24, 1944. My grandfather passed away in 1966, four years before I was born, so I was never able to discuss this aspect of his life with him. It has become family legend though, and stories have been flying around for as long as I can remember. Apparently, my grandfather was not keen on discussing his role in war, though he did tell his eldest son, my uncle, some details. I am currently trying to write a thorough family history to pass down to my children and consider this to be an extremely important event. I am doing some book research, reading official reports, etc.

What I am more interested in, however, is asking some people who were there what happened. I am wondering if any of the survivors may remember my grandfather. I realize

that it was a large ship, but so few people actually survived the sinking and being in the water for so long that I thought it may be possible that someone remembers him. May I have the addresses of other members? Is there a newsletter and if so is it possible to receive a copy?

I have never met my grandfather, but I respect and admire him and wish to learn as much about him as possible. I'd like to pass on this story, though it may be difficult, to my children because I don't want anyone to ever forget what my grandfather, and men like him, sacrificed for our future. You may reach me at [roma@capital.net](mailto:roma@capital.net).

Thank you, sincerely,

Patti Anne Johnson

As you can imagine, I immediately responded to Patti Anne and we have been in contact. I recommended that she read "Little Wolf at Leyte" by Doscher and also "The Battle of Leyte Gulf" by Cutler. She was also referred to "The Spirit of the Sammy B" by Copeland which is available on the internet. I sent her copies of the NEWSLETTER and a copy of the program of our monument dedication. Many of Patti Anne's questions have been answered but I know that there are many of you who remember Jack Conway and can add to her information about her grandfather. He was mentioned in the GISMO several times.

In July, Dudley Moylan met with Patti Anne and her mother and had dinner with them. Patti Anne and her mother Patti along with other family members are planning on joining us in San Diego.

### **Dudley Moylan Reports on His Visit to the USS Slater**

The day of my planned visit to the USS Slater, DE-766--brought back from Greece and being restored by DESA-- in Albany from the family summer place in the mountains in New York turned out to be quite cloudy and with light rain. I was afraid to let the excuse stop me for fear I might not otherwise make it for the limited Thursday-through-Sunday and short hours each day schedule narrowed opportunities. I grabbed what I was glad I had there, a Samuel B. Roberts cap--the first one before all the other ships were added-- and made the 120 mile drive easily for only two miles were not freeway, and the final stretch I-787 which runs along the west bank of the Hudson river, went a little south of the center of Albany to the Madison exit with only a couple of blocks further south on Broadway.

Slater is tied up at the Snow Dock of the Port of Albany with the bow upriver and portside to the dock. There is an ample parking lot and a small ticket and information building. This was obviously staffed by DE families, who were very pleasant and friendly. Admission was four dollars for adults or with a DE Historical Society Card.

You are given a very well done Self-Guided Tour brochure with easily understood drawings of deck layouts and explanation of various items. I eventually learned that the guided tour followed pretty much the same route.

I didn't join the tour that was just starting, partly because I needed a little standing on my own after the driving, but mostly because I did not know how I would really feel being on a DE again, and so walked forward with lots of stops on my own.

Everything seemed very crowded and with less room than I remember--not room on the outside main deck for those dress white inspections. Some things were in the right place: hedgehogs where they should be, the pilot house familiar but I missed the easy access from there to the Captain's or Open Bridge. The wardroom was probably in about the same place but had portholes and was fitted out for battle medical care, there being no other comparable space. I did not see radio, radar or sonar equipment, but I may have just missed them for joining up with the guided tour, which was very well led. I also talked to a college student who is writing a book on the Slater, and he was very interested in some of the differences I pointed out. I'm sure most of the tour people had DE connections, even if just to please grandpa. One man seeing my cap spoke of the "Roberts" as if he knew about her.

Vince Goodrich had warned me that the 3-inch were very different from the 413, and I must agree with him, though the ship is far from completely open as yet. So far there are not many places you can be and say this is where I was at such and such a time or occasion.

It began raining before the tour was over which left room for further socializing afterward impossible, though I would have liked it. One thing, the size, is just the same, and I kept being aware of how small it seemed to me, my principal impression. It seems right to borrow someone else's phrase: "Little Ship, Big War" really says it.

## **OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS of The Samuel B. Roberts Survivors' Association**

- President ..... Jack Yusen
- Vice President ..... Dudley Moylan
- Co-Treasurer..... Vince Goodrich
- Co-Treasurer ..... Mel Harden
- Directors .....Those listed above and John Harrington and Dick Rohde

## **Some Correspondence from 1945 between Capt. Copeland and Yeoman Second Class Robert H. Cronin, Jr.**

On the following pages you will find an exchange of correspondence that I think you will find very interesting. The letters were written in February and perhaps March of 1945, just

5 months after "the battle". I hope you enjoy them as much as I did. One was provided by Cronin's daughter and the other by Bud Comet, from some papers given him by Harriet Copeland. Read on.....

## LETTER FROM COPELAND TO CRONIN

25 February, 1945

Dear Cronin:

Just received your address from Mr. Moylan, and not knowing exactly where you might be at the present time am writing to you at your home address assuming that this will be forwarded to you in due time.

I finally got out of the hospital on 18 December and was home for Christmas, leaving on the 27th in order to be here in time to start classes at the Naval War College on 1 January. My leg is still weak and I wouldn't yet be able to take the gaff of sea duty so this is working out very nicely, however I know I will be more than ready and anxious to get back to sea when 31 May and the end of this course rolls around. Am hoping this time to get command of a DD, although the natural duty for us after completion of this course is to go to some admirals staff. However, the latter does not appeal to me in the least.

Mr. Roberts, Mr. Gurnett and Mr. Burton are at present all going to the Fire Control and Gunnery School in Washington, D.C. and Mr. Stevenson just got assigned to a new APD (DE hull) building I believe at Boston. Mr. Moore is in the South Pacific, from his description it sounds like Noumea. Of the others I know very little at the moment. I called on Mrs Trowbridge, and so far have written to about fifteen families of our casualties, the total number of which I have so far obtained addresses.

Have been working on tentative plans for a book on the 413, somewhat in the nature of a high school or college year book. Have sent the tentative plans to Mr. Roberts for perusal and on getting them back, if you are interested, will forward them on to you. Hope you will be willing to take an active part in this for the general consensus of opinion so far as I have been able to sound it out is that all hands would enjoy having one, and I think you are undoubtedly one of our best qualified men to work on it and the book would be all the better for your having a very large part in its editing. We have as yet only tentative plans, and our estimates of the pro-rata cost as being somewhere between fifteen and twenty dollars each for the survivors, with free copies to the next of kin of casualties is conjecture rather than factual estimate.

So far I have collected about 35 home and temporary addresses and if you have any would like to get them, also if you are in contact with any of our men who have any please get them for me. At the moment am particularly interested in the following as a few suggested

ones.

KING, GREGORY, STANSBERRY, DAVIS, KHOUREY, GOGGINS, SHAEFER, G. (COX), MACON, LOCKE, GOHEEN, SCHAFFER, D. (CM), CARR, MILLER, LILLARD, KATSUR, CHAMBLESS, NATTER, GENTRY, ROHDE, THURMOND, SMITH, GROVE, STAUBACH, OLIVER, McCASKILL, ROBERTS, J.G., MORIARITY, LOBUS.

I have underlined those who were casualties. These or any others you can send will be most appreciated. Would also like a list of all the men you can remember in addition to the following who were with us but detached prior to 25 October.

PELLS CST, DALFIN CST, CASTRANOVA WT2C, JOHNSON STM2C, TODD RDM3C, LEDFORD S2C, LAW CRM, MIXON S2C, HOOBERRY F2C, SMITH Y1C, SIZEMORE QM1C, WILLIAMS COX.

There was one of the seamen whose name began with Z who joined in Boston and left at Pearl, but his name slips me. There were also several others I can't remember at the moment.

Would like to hear from you when you have the opportunity and inclination to write. Trust that you had a pleasant leave with your family and that your next duty will be to your liking.

Your friend,

(signed)

RW Copeland

## **LETTER FROM CRONIN TO COPELAND**

(undated)

Dear Captain,

Your letter was delivered finally after being routed via Pittsburgh, Kansas and the Receiving Ship at Treasure Island. It was as appreciated as unexpected.

Ooten and I are assigned to the Bodoeng Straits CVE 116 building at Portland and not scheduled for commissioning until October 25, the anniversary date. Both have our wives here and living at Port Orchard. Lieder, Harrington and Brennan are assigned to the CVE 115 which has a much earlier commissioning date. Nearly all the seamen from the Roberts were ordered here on the same draft and then assigned to the Naval Ammunition Depot for eighteen months.

All the radarmen went to Brooklyn for new construction on a cruiser. Tuck and two other seamen sent east on the same type assignment. Gentry was assigned to a destroyer ready to sail as soon as we returned from the thirty day leave. Goodrich was given an old APL at Frisco. Gene Wallace, now CY is still at T.I. awaiting assignment.

King, for my money the goat of the whole deal still is a PH1C and already in Hawaii awaiting assignment further west. As recently as last month he hadn't received the commendatory rate nor the regular promotion to which he was entitled with time in rate, course on the record and recommendation of his division officer.

Hoffman the fireman went to New Orleans for a new refrigeration ship and Olson received shore duty at NAS, Jacksonville. The bulk of the engineers went to San Diego for assignment to small craft as did Masters. After a series of operations of dubious success Katsur was sent to the Philadelphia Naval Hospital and now is receiving further treatment at another Pennsylvania hospital. His home address is 44 Lawn Street, Pittsburgh, Penna. I know that he would be grateful for a letter from you if you haven't written already.

During the leave I made a trip to Bupers to try for an assignment to Stenographic School as per your request from the Lurline. I didn't make the grade and while there tried to talk someone into waiving the shorthand requirement for first-class. Despite the 30 months in rate I couldn't get him to make the recommendation. It would have been contrary to the "book" but not at all unusual in the wartime navy. The Johnston and the Hoel recommended every survivor for promotion in rate and the Bureau granted the promotion to every man from those ships with sufficient time in rate.

Incidentally, your request to the Bureau for schools for about a dozen men and shore duty for Keefe and Sam Blue was ignored 100%. None of the school requests were granted and Blue had already been assigned to a DD pool at Frisco. when I left.

Read the story of our disaster -- as told by an Admiral in command of the group in which we were operating -- in the January American. It seems logical now that there will be no unit commendation as expected by all the survivors to whom I have talked. The story casually mentioned that the Roberts, Johnston and Hoel were sunk and 90% of the space went to the heroics in getting a few planes into the air - none of which our group of survivors saw. That plus a few old and corny jokes such as the signalman remarking - when the Japs turned - "they're getting away." Maybe I'm losing my sense of humor.

I started the story of the sinking several times and finally gave up. That is the first time I've ever done that on any story. To submit it for sale it would have had to be glamorized and I couldn't get around to that. That too is a funny situation because I spent three years of my life as a press agent. The main trouble was the the selfishness and cowardice - in the water - made an indelible impression and from what I witnessed only Sokol was any part the hero. Personally, I could never forgive some of those whose rate and rank was used to ride

the raft for 50 hours out of 50 when there were so many wounded men compelled to stay in the water.

Your plans for the book greatly interest me and I'm more than willing to give whatever help I can. I can visualize the type book you are planning and I know that it would be treasured by everyone connected with the ship and especially by the families of those who were lost. The fact that the men are so widely scattered is going to triple the work and my guess is that the secretarial work involved in collecting information will be many times greater than the writing, rewriting and editing of the publication. My own assistance will be limited not by my desire to help but by the amount of time I'm scheduled at this base.

Of the addresses for which you asked the only one that I can supply is King's. That is RS#128, c/o FPO, San Francisco.

Any of the Roberts' officers still in Washington can secure a list of the home addresses for the whole crew from Bupers.

Again Captain thanks for a much appreciated letter.

Respectfully,

(Signed)

C.H. Cronin

### ***Editor's Note***

These two letters certainly bring back a lot of memories. The book referred to by Capt. Copeland is of course *The Spirit of the Sammy B* which was finally printed by Chip Seymour, CO of the Copeland at the time the FFG 25 was commissioned. I confess to editing, very slightly, the letter from Robert Cronin to Bob Copeland. The reasons involved references to individuals which I felt could better be left out for the present. Hope you enjoyed the letters as I did.

### **Another Trip Down Memory Lane - with Tom Stevenson**

After seeing the movie "Saving Private Ryan" I was reminded of my quest of "Finding Chief Radioman Tullio J. Serafini". Serafini was in my survivors group after the sinking of the ROBERTS. He was standing next to Rohde on the port side of the vessel after being driven from the radio room by steam and was seriously wounded with shrapnel from a burst. He was kept in the raft for all the time in the water but he was in severe pain. Near the end of the second day he told me that he did not think that he could make it.

We had become very close during his time on the ship as he was my prime assistant and



coding man. (He could sign my initials to any document as he was TJS {Serafini} as I was TJS {Stevenson}). The Capt. could not detect the difference.

On the third day we were picked up by an LCI. Tullio was still alive and was hoisted up on the deck in a wire stretcher. I spoke to him as he lay on the deck and said, "Congratulations Tullio, you made it!" He looked at me and smiled and seemed very happy. Unfortunately there was no doctor on the LCI and by the time we got into Leyte at the Tacloban anchorage where the doctors came aboard, Tullio had died of his wounds and exhaustion. That morning all of us were whisked away to other vessels for medical care and none of us knew what became of Tullio. We were reunited in Hollandia, New Guinea and sent home but no one knew where Tullio's body had gone. After spending some time in the States on our survivors leave I received orders to join USS JOSEPH E. CAMPBELL APD 49 in Leyte Gulf and I flew to Tacloban to join the vessel. When I arrived, the ship was at sea so I stayed in Tacloban (the capital of Leyte). After a few days seeing the sights of that grand metropolis, I decided to see if there were any of the dead from the ROBERTS buried there. The grave registration officer said that they had a small combat cemetery and that they had a few bodies from the ROBERTS which washed ashore and one who died at sea, Tullio Serafini. He told me that the bodies were being disinterred that day to be moved to a National Cemetery on Samar or Manila and he gave me transportation to the cemetery.

When I arrived, the sergeant in charge took me to Serafini's grave and several natives were digging up his body. All the bodies had been buried in shelter halves (the half a tent that infantry men carried). Their feet were sticking out and when Tullio came up, the body had infantry men's boots on the feet. I told the sergeant that no way was our Chief Radioman wearing infantry men's combat boots and he told me that when he buried the men, there was combat going on and he had only a few natives to bury the men and they took the dog tags and put them on the grave markers indiscriminately, but that it would all be straightened out when the men were given a proper burial in coffins at the National Cemetery. I hope that it was true.

After the war, I often wondered what had finally become of my friend Tullio, but I had no records to locate his family. Some years later I built a summer home in the mountains of Pennsylvania and I remembered that Tullio came from a coal mining town called Carbondale. It was only 30 miles from me. I got a phone book and wrote to all the Serafinis in Carbondale, but got no reply. I was driving down the highway one day and saw a sign "VOTE FOR JAMES SERAFINI, COUNCILMAN, SCRANTON/CARBONDALE". I wrote to James and his father called me and said that they were not related but that he knew Tullio and he put me in touch with his son who told me that his wife had brought Tullio home and that they were buried together in the main cemetery in Carbondale and directed me to the graveyard. After wandering around the large graveyard, I found the lovely plot with an attractive gravestone, but with nothing

indicating that Tullio had given his life for his country. I placed a flag on the grave and will go back every Memorial Day to put a fresh flag on it.

Tullio J. Serafini had served in the Navy in WW 1. He rejoined the Navy and came aboard the ROBERTS in Norfolk as a Radioman First. He was quickly promoted to Chief. The oldest man on the ship, he was one of the most popular men aboard. I know that all our survivors will remember him well - he was Father Neptune when we crossed the Equator and we all of us (including the Captain) had to kiss his belly button which was smeared with heavy engine room grease.

It is nice to know that he found a final resting place among his neighbors, friends and family.

### **A Letter from Red Harrington**

July 22, 1999

At Home, Easton, Maryland

Dear Shipmates, Families, Friends, Associates of the USS Samuel B. Roberts Survivors' Association and those that know of the Sammy B. History,

With the happenings of the past few days I felt that I should share with you my thoughts about the U.S. Navy, Coast Guard, history and communication. I am so proud to be an American, a Navy man and to watch events unfold that only reinforce my belief that this is the greatest country in the world whose only desire is to better conditions on this planet we share.

Three young people taken from us that had so much to offer. Already the masses have been heard - mostly in praise but a few cynics as well. I am so proud of the American people, the U.S. Navy's men and women along with the other services that I think the good that we show the world will outlast any bad. My life for the past 76 - almost 77 years, has been tied to America and the U.S. Navy, the men I served with and the men and women of today's Armed Forces as well as those that preceded us starting in 1775 to the present days. A burial at sea was such a fitting tribute to young John John whose salute will live with us forever and whose ashes join the ocean along with his loved wife and sister-in-law.

In my estimation the Navy has never looked better and the American people to me have said we care, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo are yesterday's Tripoli, Montezuma and Valley Forge that we encountered on our way to enhance this planet and all of our God given rights for mankind.

In closing I am so proud of the ones who I met and who taught me along the way.

Red Harrington

CBM USN Ret.

## **WWW.DE413.ORG**

From the count indicated on our website there is no question that you and others have been checking out this spot on the Internet. We have received many compliments as to the depth of information available and the professional presentation. Thanks to Cliff Rohde for his work in keeping things updated and interesting. Have you checked out the discussion area? This would seem to be a great spot to not only ask questions but to get them answered as well. Check it out!

### **This and That**

I tried to visit the websites for the Carr and the Samuel B. Roberts but both were shut down, so, no news from them in this issue.

Make sure that you have made your hotel reservations for the reunion. The address and telephone number follows:

Quality Resort - Mission Valley

875 Hotel Circle South

San Diego, CA 92137

Telephone: 800 226-7477

Be sure to mention that you are part of the DE 413 Survivors Group to ensure your reduced rate.

Please keep me informed and updated as to changes of address or telephone number. I would also appreciate receiving your email addresses. Most importantly, send me items for the NEWSLETTER.

Richard K. Rohde, Editor

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