



**Volume 9, No. 5**  
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*Dick Rohde, editor*

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**SAN DIEGO REUNION RECAP**

Another reunion goes into our memory banks and it was one that we shall certainly all remember. Old friends were greeted and new friends made. The facilities at the Quality Resort were more than adequate for our needs and the program of events allowed for lots

of time for visiting and catching up with one another. Highlights would certainly have to include the outstanding hospitality shown to us by Captain James J. Bird and the crew of the USS PEARL HARBOR, LSD 52. The memorial service will never be forgotten nor will the keynote speech given by author John Wukovits. Our thanks to Jack Yusen for making the arrangements for the hotel, the tours and for his usual excellent job in serving as Master of Ceremonies for our final banquet.

We had some first time reunion attendees and were happy to get to know them, and hopefully, they were happy to get to know us. John and Susan Walsh from Elmwood, Illinois (son of shipmate Robert L. Walsh), Virginia Interrante, widow of shipmate Sal Interrante was back for her second reunion along with her son and her daughter and two grandsons. Milt and Ruby Meehan joined us for the first day but unfortunately were called away for an emergency. Milt was on the USS TEAK in Leyte Harbor while the battle was going on. He wanted to be with us to thank us for saving the outcome of the invasion. He and his crew had been told to head for the jungle if the Japanese Navy broke through. We also met Don Young's family - four sons and their families. Son Jay and his wife Lisa and their children seemed to be especially touched by the events.

It seemed that there was just not enough time to visit with everyone and reminisce or catch up with what has been going on in our lives. We were not able to break bread with everyone, let alone sit with one another, but all in all, it certainly was an excellent reunion. I am already looking forward to the next one.

A brief review of the events will follow. Almost all arrived on Saturday although there were still some arrivals on Monday. Saturday evening was free and after dinner, most people gathered in or around the Hospitality Room. On Sunday, we tried something new with a planned breakfast followed by the Annual Business Meeting which was open to all. The business conducted at the meeting is reported on in another part of this NEWSLETTER.

Following the breakfast, we boarded the bus and headed to Point Loma to visit the memorial at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery. If there is a more beautiful, more peaceful, more meaningful site for this memorial, I wish someone would tell me where it is. As one stands there and gazes westward across the waters of the Pacific Ocean toward the final resting place of our shipmates and our ship, memories are evoked and tears fill the eyes. We pray for our departed brothers and we thank our God that we are still here even though we do not understand why.

We then proceeded to the San Diego waterfront and visited the Taffy 3 Memorial. It too brings back those memories. In a few years, the backdrop for the monument will be the USS MIDWAY which will be permanently berthed at the pier across the way. It will attract many visitors who will also see our monument. Jack Yusen pointed out the spot where a monument to Bob Hope will be situated. Plans for this recognition to Bob Hope are well underway. Our next stop was to a beautiful park on the waterfront on Coronado Island

where we enjoyed a picnic luncheon and enjoyed the view. The weather could not have been any better.

Dinner again was on our own and the Hospitality Room was used for the usual stories and songs. Tom Stevenson was in good voice and his rendition of "Skin" was thoroughly enjoyed.

Monday morning we were off to the Memorial Service which I reported on earlier. For dinner, we returned to Coronado Island and enjoyed a delicious meal out under the stars, on deck overlooking the water. There were heaters which we really needed. Back again we went to the Hospitality Room and we enjoyed, or at least some of us did, the sing-a-long and an encore of "Skin" along with "The Muffin Man" by our resident minstrel, Tom Stevenson.

On Tuesday, some of us departed for Sea World where we enjoyed seeing Shamu and his family - or is it her family? In any event, we did enjoy seeing the porpoises do their jumps and splashes. I don't understand just how Shamu gets back and forth from Orlando, but, does it really matter? I think not.

We visited a most interesting display called the shark encounter. We walked through a large tank, I say for lack of a better description, and we were in a large circular tunnel, standing on a moving walkway. We were surrounded by all manner of sharks of all sizes, including some that were quite large. Again some memories were awakened and for some of us, we were happy to finally see the exit sign.. This was not "Jaws". These were real!

That evening included the Closing Banquet which again has been reported on elsewhere. The Hospitality Room was enjoyed and some of us were up much later than we had planned. Wednesday morning we enjoyed a final, farewell breakfast and then made our way back to our homes.

See you next year in Washington D.C.

## **NEW OFFICERS TO TAKE US INTO THE NEXT MILLENNIUM**

At the business meeting of the Samuel B. Roberts Survivors' Association held on Sunday, October 3, 1999, the following business was transacted.

1. Board Members decided to change the makeup of the Board from having a President and Vice President to having Co-Chairmen run the organization for the coming year with Directors to provide the necessary advice and continuity. Accordingly, the following were elected:

- Co-Chairman #1 Glenn Huffman\*
- Co-Chairman #2 Don Young

- Co-Chairman #3 Dudley Moylan
- Co-Chairman #4 Jack Yusen

Serving as Directors will be

- Co-Treasurer Vince Goodrich
- Co-Treasurer Mel Harden
- Newsletter Editor Dick Rohde

\*Glenn Huffman will serve as coordinator of Co-Chairmen.

2. The 2000 Reunion will be held in the Washington D.C. area early in October. The same format of gathering on a Saturday and adjourning on Wednesday morning will be followed. Members residing in the area will be asked to assist in the planning.

3. In the light of increasing costs of the Newsletter and other related expenses, the Board voted an increase in annual dues to take effect immediately.

- Survivors \$15.00 was \$10
- Associates \$10.00 was \$ 5
- Donations above these amounts will be gratefully accepted

4. The Board approved the reprinting of Captain Copeland's book, "The Spirit of the Sammy B" which will be made available to new members and those who do not have a copy of the published version.

### **The Memorial Service Aboard The USS Pearl Harbor, LSD 52**

On Monday morning, October 4, we boarded our bus and proceeded to the Navy Yard and to the pier at which the USS PEARL HARBOR was berthed. On the pier many of the crew were gathered in their summer whites. As we arrived, they were assembled by divisions and called to attention by the Executive Officer, LCDR Martin P. Keutel, USN. After everyone was in place, the party on the platform and the formation leaders held their salute through the playing of the National Anthem and the Parading of the Colors. Chaplain CDR Tom Nichols then offered the Invocation and everyone was seated.

At that point, CDR James J. Bird, USN, Commanding Officer of the USS PEARL HARBOR greeted us, welcoming us to his ship and indicating how pleased they were to be able to have us with them for our Wreath Laying Ceremony. He then addressed his crew and other guests assembled, including some Pearl Harbor Survivors, relating to them the story of our ship in the Battle of Leyte Gulf. At this point, I was introduced by the Exec. and thanked Captain Bird for his courtesy and hospitality in having us on his ship. I also thanked the crew for their turnout for the occasion and complimented them for their

fine appearance. Captain Bird then whispered to me that I could give them the order, Parade Rest, which I did and which I know they appreciated. Tom Stevenson was then introduced and he remarked on the occasion and acknowledged our two shipmates who had passed away during the past year, Whit Felt and John Macko. He also recognized the passing of Associate Member Leotha Wells, widow of shipmate Fred Grove. She had never missed one of our reunions.

At this point, at the order "Man the Motor Whaleboat", Captain Bird along with the youngest sailor and our committee of Madeline Hinken, Bob LeClercq and Sam Stewart left the pier in the boat and moved to a point off the bow of the ship where they could be seen. The wreath was placed in the water as Taps was sounded. On their return to the pier, the Formation was called to order, the Benediction was offered and the Colors were retired. The Navy Hymn was played as was Anchors Aweigh and the Marine Hymn. We were then all invited by the Captain to join him for luncheon in the ballroom. We were treated to an excellent meal, beautifully served, and then were given a tour of the ship and the opportunity to visit the Ship's Store. It was a wonderful occasion which will never be forgotten. BRAVO ZULU to Captain Bird and his crew.

## **THE CLOSING BANQUET**

On Tuesday evening, we gathered at 6:00 p.m. for our closing banquet at the Quality Inn. There were about 50 persons in attendance and we were all delighted with the evening.

We gathered on the patio outside the dining room for cocktails and conversation. Although Captain Bird could not be with us, the USS PEARL HARBOR was well represented with Executive Officer and several enlisted men who had received honors such as sailor of the year and sailor of the quarter. Also joining us for dinner were John Ibe and his wife Marie and brother Adam. Bill Hewson of the Fanshaw Bay also joined us as did Chaplain CDR Tom Nichols and his wife Jo Anne.

The meeting opened with the Invocation by the Reverend Harry Dodd and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Bill Wilson. After our MC Jack Yusen had introduced all guests and following dinner, our own Bud Comet gave a heartfelt and beautiful tribute to Whit Felt. Leah Felt was most gracious in her response. She is truly our "first lady". The new officers were introduced. A plaque was presented to John Ibe in recognition of his work in ensuring the success in our having the memorial in Fort Rosecrans and the Taffy 3 Memorial at the harbor. We thank you John.

John F. Wukovits, author of "Devotion to Duty" a biography of Admiral Clifton A. F. Sprague was then introduced and he gave a spellbinding story of three different people whose lives were influenced in one way or another by the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Much of the information came from letters that had been written by shipmate Norbert Brady to his then one year old daughter Judy Bruce. He closed with comments from his students which

made me feel that the future of America was in good hands.

The tradition of presenting long stemmed red roses to all the ladies present was carried out by the four new co-chairmen and the meeting was closed following the Benediction by Chaplain Nichols. The party then moved to the Hospitality Room and surrounding area for some final stories and songs.

On Wednesday morning, we gathered for our final breakfast and then started on our way home, filled with memories and determined to attend the next reunion in Washington, D.C.

### **A Letter to Tom Stevenson from Captain Copeland 18 August, 1945**

Tom Stevenson sent along the following letter that he received from Captain Copeland in 1945. In the accompanying letter, Tom says that it was to go to all members of the crew but it may have been difficult to find everyone. It reads as follows:

Ex USS Samuel B. Roberts (DE 413)

18 August, 1945

From: The Former Commanding Officer

To: Lieut. (jg) Thomas J. Stevenson, Jr. USNR

Via: (1) The Commandant Fifth Naval District (2) The Chief of Naval Personnel

Subject: Commendation

1. On 16 July 1945 your former Commanding Officer was presented with a Navy Cross and accompanying citation, awarded by the Commander Seventh Fleet. The non-classified citation which accompanied the award is quoted herewith:

For distinguishing himself by extraordinary heroism as Commanding Officer of a warship ..... in a surface action with a large task force of the Japanese Fleet ..... in Philippine waters ..... Against an enemy force vastly superior in numbers, armament and armor, with cool determination he closed to deliver a ..... attack on heavy ships of the rapidly advancing enemy who had taken him under fire from their large caliber guns. By this heroic action, he thus diverted enemy fire to himself from the almost defenseless vessels which he was protecting. Although his ship was lost in this engagement, his heroic actions were instrumental in turning back, sorely crippled, a vastly superior enemy force. His extraordinary courage and magnificent fighting spirit in the face of terrific odds will live forever in the memory of the officers and men who served with him that day. His conduct was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Navy of the United States.

2. Your former Commanding Officer, while deeply appreciative of the honor thus

conferred, feels nevertheless that no award is due him individually for personal heroism or bravery, but being extremely proud of the collective heroism, courage, and intrepidity of the entire ship's company of the U.S.S. SAMUEL B. ROBERTS, has therefore accepted this award not as an individual but in the capacity of Commanding Officer, on the behalf of the officers and men who so heroically served their ship and their country on that memorable day.

3. Notwithstanding any other awards or commendations you may have received for your participation in this action you are directed by me to consider the language of this citation as reflecting as much to your credit as to mine, for without the unswerving attention and devotion to duty of all hands the conduct of our ship could not have merited the honor which has been paid to me as your Commanding Officer and nominal addressee of the written evidence of such honor.

4. It is requested that a copy of this letter be placed in your jacket by the Chief of Naval Personnel and that an additional copy be furnished to your present commanding officer.

I wonder just how many of you may have received this letter from Captain Copeland? I was not discharged from the Navy until November 2, 1945 and so conceivably I should have received the same letter. I did not. Did you? Whether or not I did, I appreciate what Capt. Copeland said and wholeheartedly agree with his sentiments. I do feel that he was deserving of receiving the Navy Cross.

### **Some Observations about our Reunion**

1. Lil Comet was the only one I noticed in the pool doing her exercises. Why aren't we all as smart as she was?
2. I wondered just who would dare to sit in Leotha's seat on the tour buses. Can any of you guess? None other than our own Jack Yusen, but after all, he is the one who chartered the buses and had to make sure that the driver knew just where he was going.
3. On our trip to Sea World, the wheelchair brigade was out. I was pushing Helen, Harry Dodd was pushing Peggy and Tom Stevenson was pushing Virginia. Tom was the rookie and kept hitting into the heels of innocent persons who got in his way, much to the embarrassment of Virginia.
4. I do remember the words and name of "Heart of My Heart" and promise never to forget them again. You'll be sorry.
5. Bud Comet was just a bit put out that the restaurant did not offer corn bread. Have to admit that I would have enjoyed some myself.
6. Although the Hospitality Room was a bit small, we quickly adapted and moved outside. Our singing, I'm sure, was enjoyed by the other guests of the hotel. Thanks again to Bud and Lil for the song sheets and special thanks to Tom Stevenson for "Skin" and "The Muffin Man".

7. We sure missed George Bray telling us some of his stories on the bus. Jack called on him, but, no answer. We missed you George.
8. Mel and Leona Harden didn't make this reunion and accordingly we missed the large banner with the drawing of the DE 413. I'm sure that we'll see it again next year in Washington, D.C. I understand that they attended the reunion of the DD 823, so we'll give him credit for a make up meeting.
9. When we left the USS PEARL HARBOR, I couldn't find my hat or my jacket. Found out that Bob LeClercq was wearing my jacket and Jack Yusen was wearing my hat. We finally got things straightened out.
10. It was wonderful to see Ruth Yusen looking so well. I don't think that she has ever looked better. After what she had been through I wasn't sure what to expect. Ruth, you are looking great and don't change that hair style.
11. Thanks to Capt. Bird, I finally was able to go back into a Radio Room. First time since October 25, 1944. I was completely amazed at how things are now handled. No sense reenlisting - my skills are no longer needed.
12. We picked up some new Associate Members at the reunion. Norman and Shirley Levin, friends of Jack and Ruth Yusen joined as did Faith and Todd Canale. Faith is the daughter of Sal and Ginny Interrante and a Colonel in the Air Force.

## **Red Harrington Writes**

Red Harrington was good enough to send along the following items, which I am happy to include in the NEWSLETTER. He included the following message, "To All S.B.R. Family. Let's all hang in there for D.C. in October 2000." I echo his sentiments.

The following was sent to him by Bill Mercer and was written and presented to Tin Can Sailors Association Banquet at the annual conference in Las Vegas, Nevada on February 6, 1996 by H. Maury Drummond, Exec. Director, LOUISIANA NAVY WAR MEMORIAL

### **"JUST A PIECE OF CLOTH"**

A few years ago, I was in my car listening to a radio call-in talk show and the topic of conversation was that of whether it was proper for people to burn the American flag in protest or if was a protected individual freedom. During the talk show, someone called in and said they didn't understand what all the controversy was about over "just a piece of cloth." The image struck me immediately of the Marines on Iwo Jima with their faces down in volcanic ash and looking up at Mount Suribachi to see the flag being raised. Surely, they didn't consider it to be just a piece of cloth.

When I arrived home that evening, I put the following thoughts down on paper and I believe that this expresses my beliefs and my feelings of who I am and the love that I have for this country. I entitled it:



## "JUST A PIECE OF CLOTH"

I was with Colonel Parker and the Minutemen at Lexington and Concord to hear "The Shot Heard 'Round The World" that began the American Revolution. I was with General Washington when he crossed the Delaware and suffered with his men in the harsh winter at Valley Forge.

Did they fight and die for just a piece of cloth?

I was with Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys at Ticonderoga and with Washington, Hancock, and the Marquis de Lafayette to accept surrender terms at Yorktown with the British playing that old European tune "The World Turned Upside Down".

Did they fight and die for just a piece of cloth?

I was with Andrew Jackson and Jean Lafitte at the Battle of New Orleans in 1812. I was with Bowie, Crockett and Travis at the Alamo.

Did they fight and die for just a piece of cloth?

I was with Lee and Longstreet and all the Boys in Gray at Gettysburg and I was with all the Boys in Blue with General Meade and Colonel Chamberlain on Little Round Top. I was with Grant in the Wilderness and at Vicksburg. I was with both the Blue and the Gray when our country was healed at Appomattox.

Did they fight and die for just a piece of cloth?

I was with Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders on San Juan Hill and with Admiral Dewey and the Great White Fleet in Manila Bay. I was with the Doughboys in World War 1, the "War To End All Wars" who now lie buried in Flanders Field.

Did they fight and die for just a piece of cloth?

I was with Admiral Isaac Kidd aboard the ARIZONA that fateful Sunday morning in 1941. I was with the infantry that landed on beaches so far away named Omaha, Juno, Utah, Sword and Gold.

Did they fight and die for just a piece of cloth?

I was with General Wainwright on Corregidor. I was with Admiral Fletcher in the Battle of the Coral Sea. I was aboard ENTERPRISE, HORNET AND YORKTOWN at Midway.

Did they fight and die for just a piece of cloth?

I fought at Kwajalein, The Battle of Leyte Gulf, at bloody Tarawa, Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima and served on destroyers on picket duty off Okinawa.

Did they fight and die for just a piece of cloth?

I flew Saber Jets in MIG Alley in North Korea and I was with the Marines at Chosen Reservoir. I was with the Navy at Inchon Harbor and fought on hills and ridges called Bloody, Heartbreak, Old Baldy and Porkchop.

Did they fight and die for just a piece of cloth?

I flew bombing missions over Hanoi and was on Rat patrol in the Mekong Delta. I was with the Navy on Yankee Station in the Tonkin Gulf. I flew night missions over Baghdad and was with the battalions in Desert Storm.

Did they fight and die for just a piece of cloth?

Freedom is not free. It has a price and it has been paid many times by many people. I am a product of my past. I am an American and I am free.

**Red Harrington also sent the following:**

TIME

Time is an essence, an aroma of Greatness. That's with us each day of our life. >From the gentle spring rain to the wild hurricane Through the turmoil, torment and strife.

Time is a joy to spend with our loved ones, Over seasons that rapidly grow >From the green of the spring when the birds always Sing, to a landscape that's covered with snow.

Time is the memories we made long ago. We traveled for freedom and defeated our foe. The young lives then lost are remembered with pain Their eternal youth is the one cry for fame.

Time is the moment of actual conception. The wonderful start to our soul. A mother and father to cherish forever A precious prize greater than gold.

Time is the sunset of life, Fast approaching the hours of total time. The good and the bad, the sweet and the sad This life that has fallen into rhyme.

Time finally over, our hours have been totaled Our friends stand in honor, we part to a land Now unknown in a spot marked with stone. To finally rest, a so weary heart.

Time is so fleeting, a blink and it's gone. It has passed by so quickly, as you head to the dawn And a new beginning in a world yet unknown And a peaceful resting in a site

"marked with stone".

These words penned to show we are shepherds to our own clock and time spent in foolishness and anger can never be restored.

John E. Harrington, CBM USN RET Age 76

## **JAMES M. REID**

I have been in touch with the granddaughter and daughter of shipmate James M. Reid . I brought to the reunion some materials that were sent to me and I know that some of you do remember him. Please contact his granddaughter Melanie Bartow or his daughter, Brenda Reed if you have some memories of Jim Reid. They would really appreciate hearing from you. Melanie's email address is Mellyrene@email.com. I will provide more information about them in the next issue.

I would appreciate receiving your email addresses. Most importantly, send me items for the NEWSLETTER. Richard K. Rohde, Editor Email: rkrohde@aol.com

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