



**Volume 10, No. 1**  
**January-February 2000**  
*Dick Rohde, editor*

**REUNION IN OCTOBER**

Your directors have been hard at work making plans for the reunion which is scheduled to run from Sat., Oct. 21 through Weds., October 25 in the Washington D.C. area. Although plans are not finalized at this time, present plans call for a luncheon on Oct. 23 with the Midshipmen at Annapolis for the survivors. Wives and other attendees will have a luncheon at the same time, hopefully at the Naval Academy. Plans are also being made to hold our Memorial Service at the Navy Memorial on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C.

Hotels are being checked for their facilities, rates, location and proximity to the Metro to make it easy to get into the downtown DC area speedily and with a minimum of expense. You will be kept informed as plans are finalized.

To help in the planning, it is vital that we get some kind of an idea as to how many of you plan to attend. I know it is difficult when you do not know the costs or what is being offered, however, please fill out and return the questionnaire that you will find elsewhere in this NEWSLETTER. Thanks for your cooperation!

**NEWS FROM FFG 58**

I received an e-mail from CDR Mike Davis, Commanding Officer of the USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS (FFG 58) which follows:

"Thought that I'd send you a quick note to let you know that FFG 58 is making final preps for our upcoming Middle East Force and Mediterranean deployment. We will be leaving Norfolk on 18 February, make a few stops in the Med, spend a couple months in the Arabian Gulf, then fill out the remainder of our deployment in the Med. Unfortunately, my days in the current-day SAMMY B are numbered. Today I had the opportunity to meet CDR Dave Labarbara, who will relieve me in April. Both of us joined CAPT Chris Wode, who was visiting Norfolk today to preside at the commissioning ceremony of Ensign Demetrious Etheridge, who until a year ago

was a Radioman Chief in SAMMY B.

Have you seen the SAMMY B homepage recently? We are at << [<< http://www.spear.navy.mil/ships/ffg58? >>](http://www.spear.navy.mil/ships/ffg58?) >> We'll try to keep it updated frequently during the next 6 months while we are deployed. With the latest technology that has been installed in our ship, we will be able to send and receive e-mail throughout the deployment, as well as keep our home page updated from sea. We even will have a satellite lease that will continuously pipe a pair of Armed Forces TV stations to our Sailors while at sea! I'm sure you will agree that's pretty exciting stuff!

Keep up the great work with the newsletter and home page and remember that today's SAMMY B Sailors value the sacrifices you and your generation made for us. Now it's our turn and there is "NO HIGHER HONOR".

### **Please Keep Them In Your Prayers**

Fran Goodrich is scheduled for surgery on February 15th and she and Vince would appreciate your prayers. Cards would also be in order. Their address is 7 Brown Avenue, Bradford, PA 16701. Fran is in good spirits and the prognosis is good.

Helen Rohde is scheduled for back surgery on February 23rd. Hopefully this will take care of the pain she has been suffering from over the last several years. The procedure is called a laminectomy and should correct the stenosis of the spine which puts pressure on the nerves. Your prayers would be appreciated.

### **NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE**

George Bray is hoping that he will be able to attend the reunion in October. We'll be looking for you George, we need to hear some more of those stories of what really went on aboard the Sammy B.

Lou Gould sent an e-mail to let me know that he married Barbara last November 11th in Reno, then visited his son in California and made a few side trips including the Wine Country. It sounds like they will be with us for the next reunion. Congratulations and best wishes to you both. We look forward to meeting Barbara.

In "Tides and Currents", the Newsletter written on the Home Page of FFG 58, CDR Mike Davis writes that there is a plan to move the ship to Mayport, near Jacksonville, Florida during the upcoming fiscal year. It appears that the home port shift will be physically completed on July 1, 2001.

### **FELIX F. (BUTCH) JACOBS**

I was very saddened to learn of the death of our shipmate Butch Jacobs. His wife, Madelyn sent the following letter.

I lost my dearly beloved husband on January 31, 2000. Felix (Butch) Jacobs lived his life with me for fifty-six years when the Lord took him to his heavenly home.

The wonderful memories I have of Butch will remain, but I shall miss him terribly.

We had a lovely service at the cemetery and I was presented with the flag of our country.

He was a wonderful man and lived to be eighty-eight years old. He was proud to be a member of the Samuel B. Roberts Association and I hope I can continue to be a part of your group.

Sincerely,

Madelyn A. Jacobs

His obituary indicates that he was survived by two daughters and one granddaughter in addition to his wife. He had retired from Allis-Chalmers Company after 43 years of service

I wrote Madelyn to let her know that she would always be a part of The Samuel B. Roberts family and that a memorial will be made in her husband's name to the Destroyer Escort Sailors Association Foundation. His name will also be listed in the Taps section of the DESA NEWS.

### ***The Spirit of the "Sammy B"***

The reprints of the "Spirit of the Sammy B" by our Captain, Robert W. Copeland have made their way to Ocala and in fact some have been sent out to those who ordered them. They are 8 1/2 by 11 in size, soft cover, and about 80 pages in length. Other than some minor corrections of typographical errors and the correction of the spelling of some of our shipmates names, this edition holds true to that of the original manuscript. We are indebted to Leah Felt who underwrote the expense of the printing. The charge of \$10.00 for each book will not only pay for the shipping and handling charges but will also provide the funds to offset the expense of the NEWSLETTER.

Dues Some of you may have noticed that another year has come and gone. That means, and I hate to be the bearer of bad news, that dues are now payable. Survivors \$15.00 per year. Associates \$10.00 per year.

Over payments will be cheerfully accepted. Please make checks payable to SBR Survivors' Association and send them to me. Thank you.

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For all of you drivers out there..... Our hero, the senior citizen driver was tooling along at about 75 mph on California Freeway #280 when his beloved spouse broke in on his CB radio urgently warning him, "Herman, I just heard on the news that a car was going the wrong way on 280 - be careful!" Herman responded, "It's not just one car! It's hundreds of them!"

**REMEMBER ERNIE PYLE?**

During the past year, I have had many e-mail messages and telephone conversations with a wonderful woman named Eileen McNamara. Eileen's father, Robert Louis McNamara was a Radioman 3/C on the USS CONKLIN (DE 439). He and I went to Radio School at about the same time in Boston, Mass. and lived at the Hotel Somerset. She has taken it on herself to research everything she can about her father's ship so that she could learn about him. The Conklin and the Roberts were in the same place at the same time on a number of occasions. The Conklin distinguished herself by sinking a Japanese submarine off Ulithi Atoll in January 1945. This submarine was the mother sub of Kaitens which were miniature suicide subs, actually torpedoes which had been rigged to accommodate a pilot who sat in a canvas chair on the deck of the Kaiten with a crude periscope and controls to steer the torpedo.

Eileen is writing a book about the Conklin, and in her preface, she quotes from Ernie Pyle. Although he is better known for reporting on the war in Europe, he did move to the Pacific and reported on the actions in the Pacific. He was present when our Flag was raised at Iwo Jima. Ernie was also a friend of the Navy and spent some time on the Conklin. This is what he wrote.

"Drenched from head to foot with salt water. Sleep with a leg crooked around my rack so I won't fall out. Put wet bread under my dinner tray to keep it from sliding.

A DE, my friend, is a Destroyer Escort. It is a ship long and narrow and sleek, something like a destroyer but much smaller.

They are rough and tumble little ships. Their decks are laden with depth charges. They can turn in half the space of a destroyer.

They roll and they plunge. They buck and they twist. They shudder and they fall through space. They are in the air half the time, under water half the time, their sailors say they should have flight pay and submarine pay both."

Friend of the crew of the Conklin,

Ernie Pyle

War Correspondent, Ulithi, 1945

Thanks Eileen and Ernie for letting me quote this.

### **Bob Roberts Remembers**

About a year ago, I had some e-mail correspondence with our Executive Officer, Everett E. "Bob" Roberts.

He shared an autobiographical sketch which he had written for his children and grandchildren about his time on the Sammy B. Tom Stevenson and I were privileged to read it, and naturally, I wanted to put it in the NEWSLETTER. At first he did not think it proper unless others wrote their memoirs also but he later relented and gave permission.

Bob's wife, Dorothy, passed away just before our last reunion in San Diego.

1944 Ordered to USS Samuel B. Roberts (DE 413) also being built in Houston. Sailed to Bermuda for shakedown training (my first experience at celestial navigation [using a sextant and HO 14]... I was greatly relieved when Bermuda came in sight as predicted). Returned to Boston for post-shakedown upkeep (escorting tug and tow at very slow speed). Leave at home (Ridgefield) with very pregnant Dorothy. Sailed from Boston to WESPAC via Panama Canal, Honolulu, Eniwetok, Manus. While en route, Everett was born in Danbury (CT) Hospital 7/12/44.

In October of 1944 the Samuel B. Roberts took part in the Battle of Leyte Gulf. We were cruising with a light carrier (CVE) task force about fifty miles east of Leyte Gulf. We had listened to the radio reports of the major battle between Japanese and US battleships in Surigao Straits during the night. At sunrise I was at my battle station in CIC and noted (as did other ships) radar contacts approaching from the north. Someone (I think it was me) passed the word over the loudspeaker system that the fleeing Japanese fleet could be seen and invited the crew topside to see this historical sight. About this time colored splashes were seen in the formation. Our Recognition Officer (Lt. j.g. William S. Burton, son of US Supreme Court Justice and former US Senator Harold S. Burton and one of the finest officers I have ever known) identified the contacts as Japanese battleships, including one with 18 inch guns. The captain (R. W. Copeland) passed the word that we were about to engage in a battle "from which survival could not be expected".

The enemy closed rapidly. We (the screening DE's and DD's were ordered to "interpose" ourselves between the carriers and the enemy and to make a smoke screen. The captain ordered a torpedo attack. I computed the course to bring us within launch range. My hands were ice cold from fear. I wished he had ordered me to find a course that would be an escape route. We launched the torpedoes and fired our 5-inch guns at the battleships from a very close range. Finally they started to hit us with their shells. The large shells went through the hull without detonating, but a salvo of five inch shells in the engineering spaces stopped us dead in the water. All the engineering personnel in those spaces were killed. The CIC room, became full of asbestos from the insulation being jarred off the piping. It became clear that the ship was sinking, and the captain ordered abandon ship.

Burton and I met on the starboard side of the quarter-deck. We had our life jackets on and our pistols. We ceremoniously threw the pistols, underhandedly, into the water away from the ship and jumped in the water. We swam together as fast as we could to get away from the sinking ship. As we swam we could hear men calling for help, but because of the limited horizon we had, being low in the water, we couldn't see who they were or where they were. We continued swimming away from the ship. A division of three Japanese cruisers steamed by, in line. I could see officers taking movies of us in the water and of the sinking ship, which sunk stern down, displaying her bow numerals (413) as she sank. Finally we sighted and joined a raft on which there were several officers, including the captain, and enlisted men.

The captain had been wounded by shrapnel in his chest, but was coherent and in charge. Most, if not all, of the others on the raft were wounded. Those not wounded were in the water, towing the raft. As navigator I knew we were about fifty miles east of the Philippines, and directed our swimming, towing the raft, to the west. I used my estimated azimuth of the sun as a function of time and the North star (during the two nights) to determine which way was west. There was a keg of water on the raft and the Captain controlled its administration, allowing each of us a few sips each day.

We were in the middle of a large patch of fuel oil that proved to be a blessing. The sun was bright, and we would all have been severely sunburned if we had not been covered with oil. The oil did bother some of our eyes, but

the pharmacist's mate (King) had some solvent that he used to clean eyes.

There were sharks around us but they kept clear of the oil patch. One sailor, being fastidious and regular, swam away from the group, out of the oil patch, to defecate. When he lowered his pants a shark nudged him. He returned to the group in the oil patch.

Hallucinations, due to the sun, exposure and fatigue, were common. An officer swam up to me, saluted and requested "permission to go below." I gave it and he swam away. One sailor on the raft went out of his head and kept sticking his foot in a gaping wound in the side of another sailor, causing him to scream. Neither of them survived. During the second night I saw that we were being swept by the current past a point of land on which there were lovely homes. There was a gala dinner party taking place in one of them. The men wore tuxes and the women wore beautiful gowns ..... Daybreak brought me back to reality.

I tried to bargain with God. I explained to Him that my wife had just had a baby boy whom I had never seen, and that though I was ready and willing to die, if He would allow it I would take care of them as long as I lived. I tried to keep morale up. I told the group once that we would be picked up, that we would return to the States on the Lurline (which I knew had been converted into a transport), and that we would then get survivors' leave. All of this in fact came true.

The morning of the third day we could see land on the horizon. We assumed the Japanese had wiped out General MacArthur's landing force and were in control of the island, so we made plans to sneak ashore and find some friendly forces. A little later we sighted ships on the horizon. We couldn't make out the flag, but could see a lot of red in it. Most of us thought it was Japanese, but it turned out to be American. As they drew closer the bridge personnel called out questions to us such as "Who won the World Series? Who pitched the last game?" Fortunately we had people who knew all the answers since after they took us aboard I was told that they had thought that we were Japanese and were going to machine gun us (not take movies), but someone saw a redhead in the water and decided to investigate further. When they lowered a line to bring aboard the unwounded they told me that a swimmer would help me up. I answered that I could pull myself up (rope-climbing had been a Phys Ed requirement at the Naval Academy). When I tugged on the line, I couldn't raise myself an inch out of the water.

We were transferred in Leyte Gulf to an LST that took us to Australia via Hollandia where I got off a letter that let my wife and parents know that I was alive. (The Navy had departed from their usual custom and announced the names of the ships that had been sunk before notifying relatives of personnel on the ships. As I remember, my mother hemorrhaged and my wife broke down when they heard that the Samuel B. Roberts had been sunk.) From Brisbane, Australia we returned to the states via the Lurline for survivors leave. I saw Robbie for the first time . After Christmas 1944, Lt. Burton and I were ordered to the Bureau of Naval Personnel in Washington DC to write letters of condolences to the next of kin of half of the crew that did not survive.. (Capt. Copeland was hospitalized with his wound.)

"If you are going to publish the autobio excerpt, please add a note to the effect that when we abandoned ship I was impressed with the coolness with which Tom Stevenson, communication officer, ordered to abandon ship, went down to his stateroom, opened his safe, and put the classified documents in a weighted bag so they would sink. I don't think there is any way I would have remembered the combination. As we were swimming away, watching the ship sink, I also wondered about Lloyd Gurnett, the damage control officer, who was, next to the

Captain I believe, the last to leave the ship. (These thoughts, of course, were not really autobiographical material.)"

## **United States Navy Memorial Foundation**

Many of you are familiar with the Navy Memorial and I'm sure that some of you have visited there when in Washington D.C. We are planning to hold our Memorial Service there during our reunion. I know that some of you have enrolled in the NAVY LOG. The Log is part of the U.S. Navy Memorial and Naval Heritage Center which is located between the White House and the Capitol. Each Log entry contains the entrant's name, date and place of birth, dates and branch of naval service, highest rate or rank attained, duty stations and awards received. The cost is a donation of a minimum of \$25. For an additional \$25, a head and shoulders portrait photo may be added. Enrollments are also sought from relatives of deceased naval veterans.

For information, contact the United States Navy Memorial, 701 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 123, Washington, DC 20004-2608. You may also send e-mail to: [ahoy@lonesailor.org](mailto:ahoy@lonesailor.org) or visit their home page: <http://www.lonesailor.org>

They will soon have a new listing, depending on funding, LOST AT SEA LOG.

I have sent them a list of our shipmates who were lost at sea and they will be included when the new log is available.

## **WWW.DE413.ORG**

Do not forget to visit our website. Cliff does well in keeping it up to date and interesting. There are links to many other sites and organizations which are of interest to all of us. There is an area for discussions or to ask questions. Check it out. The address is [www.de413.org](http://www.de413.org). If you have any ideas for additions or improvements, contact Cliff or me. We'd be happy to receive them. I'm sure that there are more of you out there with e-mail addresses. If you will send them to me, I'll try to get out an up-to-date Directory. My e-mail address is [RKRohde@aol.com](mailto:RKRohde@aol.com).

## **A Letter from Cyberspace**

I thought that you would be interested in the following e-mail which arrived the other day.

I have been honored to look around your web site.

I am a Vietnam era Navy Vet who served on the Coral Sea. Knowing that she was not the first to bear the name, but I was surprised to learn she was not even the second to bear the name. Further examination revealed that our sister ship was not the first to bear that name, and that brought me to the St. Lo which saw action in the Battle off Samar.

I have never thought much of Admiral Halsey, but never before had a reason. To learn of the heroic action of the Taffy III units (and others) is a source of great pride. I often wonder if our society today realizes what a sacrifice was made, and what it meant. I have read one book on the 413, "Little Wolf at Leyte" which was informative

and provided mini bios of some of the crew. It is so unjust that for sacrifices of equal or greater significance as Coral Sea and Midway that the Battle off Samar is so unknown.

Very Respectfully,  
Al Kleveno

## **SAMUEL B. ROBERTS SURVIVORS ASSOCIATION OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS**

Co-Chairman #1 Glenn Huffman\*  
Co-Chairman #2 Don Young  
Co-Chairman #3 Dudley Moylan  
Co-Chairman #4 Jack Yusen

Directors

Co-Treasurer Vince Goodrich  
Co-Treasurer Mel Harden  
Newsletter Editor Dick Rohde  
\*Coordinator of Co-Chairmen.

### **Reunion Questionnaire**

As you know, we do have a reunion planned for the Washington D.C. area in October 2000. The co-chairmen have been hard at work planning this event. In order for them to make plans and negotiate the best prices with hotels, buses and other groups, it is all important that we have some idea as to how many people will be attending.

The dates of Saturday, October 21 through Wednesday, October 25 have been selected. Bearing that in mind, please complete the following [if sending email, simply cut and paste into the text of an email.]

1. For the above dates:

a. I will attend \_\_\_\_\_

b. I will probably attend \_\_\_\_\_

c. I don't think I'll attend \_\_\_\_\_

d. I will not be there \_\_\_\_\_

2. There will (would) be \_\_\_\_\_ of us.

3. Name \_\_\_\_\_

4. Comment \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Please return the above to:

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or send e-mail to: rkrohde@aol.com or call: 352 861-0616

## **EDITORIAL**

Since I have the title of "Editor" I suppose that it is proper for me to write an editorial, so here goes.

As you can guess, the only way that I can write a News Letter is if I have some news. I rely on you, survivors, friends, family, to talk to me, by mail, e-mail, telephone, personal visit or Morse Code. Yes, I can still read that code.

As you can probably tell from this NEWSLETTER, I really didn't get very much input from you readers. I can remember how Whit used to plead for us to correspond and I would try to send him something. I could fill up this column and several others with funny stories, witticisms and perhaps my views on how we should all vote in the coming presidential elections, but I would much rather report on what is happening to all of you out there. I could always count on hearing from some of you. Where are you Maggie Hayes, Red Harrington and Bill Katsur to name a few?

With this next reunion being held in Washington, D.C. I should think that a lot of you along the east coast will be able to make it. Wouldn't it be great if my old friend, Bob Brennan, RM 3/C would send in his reservation? I have not seen you since Oct. 25, 1944, Bob, but I'm ready to pick up on our friendship. Hope that things are going well with you!

Take care of one another out there and I'll look forward to seeing you at our reunion in Washington.

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