

Dedication

This Newsletter is dedicated to the memory of our shipmate and friend Whit Felt.



The Pavilion at the Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg Texas was christened as the USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS, DE 413 Pavilion. John and Susan Walsh, along with Bob LeClercq, Dick Rohde and Jack Yusen as well as Admiral Charles Grojean, Executive Director of the Nimitz Foundation made it official on February 23 2008 under the beautiful sunny skies of the Texas hill country.

HOEL & JOHNSTON FIRE A TORPEDO IN OUR DIRECTION

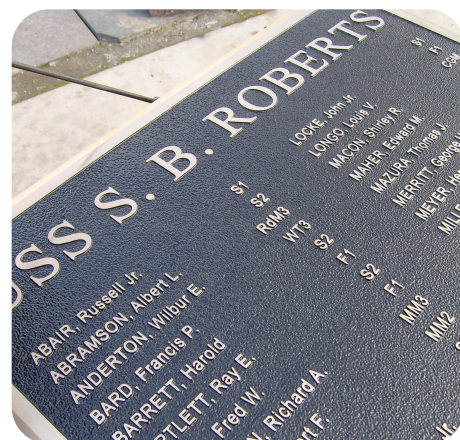
Glen Foster of Johnston/Hoel Association sent a letter to VA objecting to our affixing bronze nameplate to Fort Rosecrans Monument. VA Official overturned decision by Cemetery Officials which approved our action.

Despite the fact that we had received written approval to add a bronze plaque listing the names of all of our Missing in Action and Killed in Action shipmates over the currently fading names, Mr. William F. Tuerk, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs in the Department of Veterans Affairs ruled against us.

A letter has been written to Mr. Tuerk which details our position in the matter and requests a reconsideration of his decision. The picture to the right shows a close-up of a portion of the new plaque which will cover the existing two columns naming all of our shipmates lost in the Battle of Leyte Gulf.

On the following two pages, I shall reprint the letter in its entirety. To date there has been no reply, nor even an acknowledgment of having received our letter.

On March 6, a letter was written to Congressman Cliff Stearns of the Florida 6th District giving him all information about the situation and asking that he request that Mr. Tuerk respond to our letter of January 22, 2008.



Letter to Under Secretary Tuerk -

January 22, 2008

*The Honorable William F. Tuerk
Under Secretary for Memorial
Affairs*

*Department of Veterans Affairs
National Cemetery Association
810 Vermont Avenue
Washington, DC 20420*

Dear Sir,

I am writing on behalf of the Samuel B. Roberts Survivors Association. The USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS, DE 413 was a part of Task Unit 77.4.3 known as Taffy 3, involved in the battle of Leyte Gulf in October of 1944. It, together with USS HOEL, DD 533 and USS JOHNSTON, DD 557, were sunk by shellfire from the Japanese fleet in that battle. The efforts of Taffy 3 resulted in the saving of the Philippine invasion and our being awarded the Presidential Unit Citation.

A granite monument honoring our shipmates who died in that battle was dedicated at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego in 1995. This letter is in response to information we have received regarding a ruling you recently made concerning our monument.

Several granite monuments were erected honoring those Taffy 3 sailors who perished in the battle. Through time, the monuments

deteriorated to the point the names were difficult, if not impossible, to read. Other ships installed bronze plaques over their existing monuments to resolve that problem. We, the Samuel B. Roberts Survivors Association, decided to rectify that problem in the same manner. We solicited funds from our membership and friends, including family members of those killed, toward that end.

We raised the \$10,000 we were told was needed for the plaque for the USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS portion of the monument and then discovered the Johnston/Hoel Association decided not to do anything with their sections of the monument. At that point, we learned from the then Director of the National Cemetery, Bill Livingston, that he did not think that it would "look right" if we were to improve only our part of the monument and we were denied our request to have the plaque installed over the USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS section of the monument.

We then decided to look elsewhere for a way to honor our lost comrades, in a manner so that their names would not fade away. We found that the Nimitz Museum, also known as the Museum of the Pacific in Fredericksburg, Texas, was willing, for consideration, to name a pavilion and gazebo after our ship. We decided to go ahead with that project.

Just before we formally agreed to the Texas project, I contacted the cemetery in San Diego to make certain it was maintaining its position of denying our request to improve the monument in San Diego, since that was the original basis for our fund raising project. I spoke with the Interim Director, Charles Kahler, as Mr. Livingston was then away on a special assignment. I explained the situation to Mr. Kahler. He was familiar with our monument. He said he thought adding the bronze plaque was a good idea but he would have to talk with his supervisor, Don Rinker. Mr. Kahler thought, as we did, that once the Johnston/Hoel people saw our bronze plaque they would be inclined to do the same. I was then informed by Mr. Kahler that he had spoken with Mr. Rinker and Mr. Rinker had approved the project. I told him I would need something in writing before I committed our Association to an expense of almost \$10,000. Mr. Kahler then emailed me a copy of Mr. Rinker's email which approved of the project, and told me to "go ahead". Based on that approval, we proceeded.

Seaman-Poe Monument Company of San Diego was contacted. We signed a contract with it for a bronze plaque to go over the names on our portion of the monument. The total cost including installation and tax was \$9,143.14, which we paid on April 30, 2007. This completed 28" x 55" x .5" bronze casting is currently being held by Seaman-Poe Monument Company.

It is my understanding that Glen Foster, a member of the Johnston/Hoel Association, objected to the installation. Mr. Foster apparently stated he was the chairman of the USS JOHNSTON-USS HOEL-USS SB ROBERTS monument committee. He may have been the chairman of a committee during the planning stages, but I do not know that to be a fact. In any event, the memorial was completed and then turned over to Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery. If this committee still exists, there has never been a meeting to which any members of the Samuel B. Roberts Survivors Association have been invited or attended. Indeed, we are unaware of any reason for the continuance of this supposed committee since the memorial has been deeded over to the cemetery.

As you might suspect, we, the Samuel B. Roberts Association, are quite upset with your decision about the monument. We do not understand why we were not consulted about this matter. Officials of Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery were well aware of our existence and our interest in the bronze plaque. We do not understand why we would be provided with verbal and written authority to go forward with the project and then, after we relied on that authority, are being told the plaque we purchased cannot be used. We want the bronze plaque on the monument to preserve the names of our fallen shipmates.

We earnestly and respectfully request you reconsider your decision in this matter. Not only have we expended considerable funds based on approval from officials of the National Cemetery Association, but also have planned a reunion in San Diego in October of 2008 to rededicate the memorial with the new bronze name plate for our fallen shipmates. We fully respect the right of our sister ships, USS HOEL and USS JOHNSTON, to decide not to improve their portion of the monument but do not feel they should be able to deny us our right to improve our portion. We do not believe it is appropriate that one person, claiming to be chairman of a non-existent committee, should be able to thwart our desire to preserve the names of our fallen shipmates.

Our first hope, of course, is that in reconsidering your decision, you will allow us to install the bronze plaque. Please allow us, in the short time we have remaining on this earth, to honor our fallen shipmates in a way that will allow their names to remain after we are no longer here. If you are unwilling to grant us this request, we would expect you would reimburse us the \$9,143.14 we spent in reliance on the cemetery's telling us we could have the bronze plaque installed on the existing monument.

We look forward to hearing back from you in this matter. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Richard K. Rohde, for the Samuel B. Roberts Survivors Association

9045 SW 91st Circle

Ocala, FL, 34481

Telephone: 352-861-0616

Email: rkr6@cornell.edu

*cc: Directors of SBR Association
Kirk Leopard, Fort Rosecrans Natl. Cem't'y.
Peggy Haleen, Seaman-Poe Monument Co.
Charles Kahler, Fort Rosecrans Natl. Cem't'y.
Donald Rinker, National Cemetery Association*



“We few, we happy few, we band of brothers” Wm. Shakespeare

Slowly but surely, as time passes, the number of living survivors continues to decrease. We are now down to 21. There may be others of whom we have no information, but the following list is accurate to the best of our knowledge.

- ANTHONY J. BLASZCZYK
- ROBERT R. BRENNAN
- GEORGE B. CARBON
- JAMES F. “BUD” COMET
- OLIVER E. COYLE
- HERBERT E. ESKINS
- ELBERT GENTRY
- ROBERT W. “MEL” HARDEN
- E. GLENN HUFFMAN
- WILLIAM KATSUR
- ALDRED C. LENOIR
- HAROLD R. MCCARL
- J. DUDLEY MOYLAN
- JAMES E. MYERS
- JAMES M. ROBERSON
- RICHARD K. ROHDE
- ALBERT ROSNER
- THOMAS J. STEVENSON
- EVERETT L. TOMLINSON
- WILLIAM H. WILSON
- JACK YUSEN

If you have any corrections to the above, or any additional information, please let me know.

The following shipmates have passed away since the last *Newsletter* was mailed.

- JAMES W. GRIGGS, SOM 3/C
- ROBERT E. OLSON, B 1/C
- PETER COOLEY, SOM 2/C
- EDWARD E. WHEATON, RT 1/C

May they rest in peace.

News from Here and There

Following are some excerpts from letters and emails received, mostly as a result of reading “The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors”.

Bob Parker wrote, “Earlier today I watched a very compelling re-enactment on The History Channel of the Battle off Samar that you guys were in and there was quite a story about the USS Samuel B. Roberts. I hope you got to see it. I had to laugh out loud at the audacity of you guys in attacking that bunch of Japanese ships. What balls! I am also listening to your interview that was taped a few years ago on WOCA. Thanks to you and all you WWII guys who gave it your all, we are still speaking English and not Japanese. I hope that you are doing well.”

Joey Schumann wrote, “I found your email address (possibly outdated) on a Survivors newsletter while doing some internet research on the battle of Samar. I’m in the last few pages of Hornfischer’s book. I realize that we Americans owe you and your crew members such a debt...hard to even put it into words. Thank you. As a medical student I’m privileged to meet many men from your generation in the clinics and hospitals around Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I always try to squeeze a few extra minutes into those meetings to coax memories out of you veterans. All absolutely amazing. All making me more and more aware and appreciative of what you and those young men had to endure to save the world. I try to shake as many of your hands as I can, and say a heart-felt THANKS.”

More Letters

Robert Kedney wrote the following, "My father, ELMER LEROY KEDNEY was on the USS Samuel B. Roberts, DE 413. I am trying to get as much information about him and his time on the DE as I can. Can you help? I am also trying to get a copy of the 'Spirit of the Sammy B'.

Can you help me with any information about my father's stay on the ship like I think he was a gunners mate but not sure. Did he receive any medals or awards? He died many years ago and while he was alive he did not talk much about his Navy time but the little he did showed his ship was sunk and he was in the water for several days. He also told me a little about the shark attack and many of his friends were taken by the sharks.

Whatever you can tell me is greatly appreciated. Thank you."

Ed. Note I responded to Robert's letter as follows:

Dear Robert,

Thanks for your email regarding your father. My records show that he was a Fireman 1/C which indicates that his job was below deck, in the engine rooms. The casualty rate for those with duties there during the battle were quite high. His job, when we went into battle could have been on one of the guns but I do not know that for sure. I wish that I could tell you that I remember your father, but you must remember that the ship only existed for six months after we were commissioned. We were really all still learning about the ship and getting acquainted with fellow crew members when the ship was sunk. He of course would know the others in "the black gang" as they were known. I will contact some of the remaining survivors to see if any of them remember your father.

He would be entitled to wear the following ribbons: Atlantic Theater, Pacific Theater with 1 battle star, Philippine Liberation Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, Philippine Unit Citation, Victory Medal and I

believe the Surface Warfare Ribbon. My records do not show the Purple Heart. The best way to check the above is to contact the following:

Navy Liaison Office
Room 3475
National Personnel Records Center
9700 Page Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63132

When you do so, provide any information that you have such as his full name, copies of his Discharge, his Separation Notice, Social Security Number, Service Serial Number and the fact that he served on USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS, DE 413 until October 25, 1944. I realize that you will not have all of the above information, but provide whatever you have. Be prepared to wait a bit for a reply but they will respond.

You can purchase copies of "The Spirit of the Sammy B" online at : << <http://www.lulu.com/content/235241> >>. They will charge \$9.99 plus shipping and handling. I have some copies at home and will be happy to mail one to you for \$10.00 total. If you are interested, send me your home address and a check made out to SBR Survivors Association. I'll also send you a copy of our Newsletter.

I wish that I could have been more helpful with information about your dad.

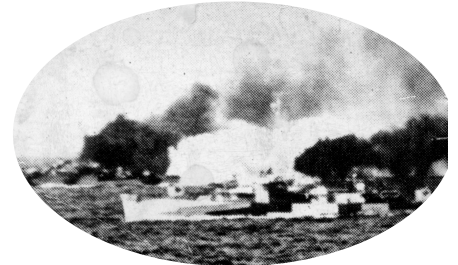
Please let me know your wishes regarding the book and do keep in touch.

Dick Rohde

Keena Brown wrote, "My name is Keena Brown and my uncle was Cloy Wethington, MM 2c. He was killed in action on the Samuel B. Roberts. I would very much like to become a member of the Association. I would be interested in receiving newsletters and attending any reunions in the future. My husband is in the Marine Corps and we are currently stationed at Edwards AFB in California.

Following my response, she wrote, "Thanks so much for your quick response. As much as I wish you knew my uncle I

understand that you did not. Six months really isn't a very long time. I do hope to meet someone one day that might share stories of him with me. You are correct, Joyce is my aunt. I would like to take my father, Cloy's brother to the reunion in September. I am sure he would love to be there. If we cannot make it this year I hope there will be another reunion in 2008. I will mail the check today."



The above picture is of the DE 413 making smoke. Picture taken from The USS Kalinin Bay, CVE 68. courtesy of Tom Stevenson

Good News from John Wukovits

I had a chance to visit with our old friend John Wukovits while we were in Fredericksburg last month. When I first met John back in Michigan in 1994 he was a teacher and author. He contacted me about the possibility of writing a book about our ship. I think that most of you know John as the author of "Devotion to Duty" the biography of Admiral Clifton A. F. Sprague, "Pacific Alamo" the story of Wake Island and "One Square Mile of Hell" about The Battle of Tarawa. A new book about Carlson's raiders will soon be available.

John has informed me that his next project will be a book about our ship, USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS, DE 413. According to John, the time has come to get to work and tell the stories of the ship, the crew and their families who waited at home.



THE MEMORIAL COURTYARD PAVILION
IN HONOR OF USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS, DE 413
OCTOBER 25, 1944

This pavilion is dedicated to the crew of the "Sammy B" who along with sister ships of Taffy 3 battled a major force of the Japanese Navy on October 25, 1944 in the battle of Leyte Gulf. In this action, the American Force of 6 escort carriers, 3 destroyers and 4 destroyer escorts fought a Japanese fleet of 4 battleships, 8 cruisers and 12 destroyers. The Japanese broke off the battle and retreated thus saving the Philippine invasion. The Roberts sank losing 91 officers and men. 132 survivors were rescued after 50 hours adrift in the Pacific Ocean. In addition, 2 destroyers and 2 jeep carriers were lost with many casualties. The name and heritage of this valiant ship has been maintained through the commissioning of 4 Naval Vessels; 2 named USS Samuel B. Roberts, a ship named after the Captain, USS Copeland and another named after an heroic Gunners Mate, USS Carr.



Jack, John & Susan, Dick



Dick, Bob and Jack



Billie and Bob LeClercq



Dick, Jack, Bob, Susan and John

On February 23rd, at the Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg Texas, the Pavilion was officially christened as the *USS Samuel B. Roberts, DE 413 Pavilion*.

Included in the ceremony were Executive Director of The Admiral Nimitz Foundation RADM Chuck Grojean, Former CO of USS Samuel B. Roberts FFG 58 RADM John Townes, Author John Wukovits, DE 413 survivors Dick Rohde and Jack Yusen, Bob LeClercq, brother of. John LeClercq, fallen crew member of DE 413 and major contributors John and Susan Walsh. John is the son of deceased crew member Robert Walsh.

Board of Directors

Mel Harden, Co-Treasurer

Bob LeClercq, Director

Dudley Moylan, Chairman

Dick Rohde, Co Treasurer

Sam Stewart, Director

John Walsh, Director

Bill Wilson, Director

Newsletter Editor

Richard K. Rohde

9045 SW 91st Circle

Ocala, FL 34481-8404

Email: rkr6@cornell.edu

Telephone: 352-861-0616

Cell Phone: 518-852-0368

Website: www.de413.org

General Information

Dues

The question of dues for our Association comes up from time to time and perhaps now would be a good time to talk about it. For years, the annual dues for survivors has been \$15 per year and the dues for all others has been \$10 per year. The last several years we have suggested that for all the amount of \$15 would be acceptable with the following understanding. We never have and never will drop a member for non-payment of dues. We also have no problem accepting dues in a higher amount than \$15. As the years have passed, our income source has decreased significantly. We do have ongoing expenses such as postage and printing the Newsletter. We do try to make the reunions pay for themselves but occasionally have had unforeseen expenses. If you have not paid your dues for a while, this might be a good time.

News of Members

It was good to see **Jack Yusen** again. He has not been with us for quite a while and we've missed both Jack and Ruth. Ruth has had more than her share of health problems and we hope and pray that things will take a good turn for her soon. Jack, as you know has been very busy with the Bob Hope Memorial. Now that the memorial is in place, we hope to see them both more often at our meetings.

Patti Hedgeman wrote to let me know that husband Joe was doing better. Further surgery has been canceled due to risks involved. He is contemplating retirement next year. Patty suggests that Albany might be a good spot for a reunion if plans for San Diego change. Good thought.

George Carbon has been under the weather and was in a Rehab facility. His wife Mary wants him to start walking again. Do you hear that George? We all echo her thoughts.

Dudley Moylan is back in Minneapolis hoping that some sign of spring may show itself soon. He'll be happy again when those Blue Devils take the NCAA Basketball Championship and the bridge across the Mississippi is rebuilt.

Not too long ago, I spoke with **Bob and Norma Bingaman**. They have had a long tough journey since Bob's stroke. He is coming along well but your prayers will be appreciated.

Louise Blue called to say that she is getting along well but misses her "funny old man". So do we Louise!

I hear from **Tom Stevenson, Maxine Sinclair, Bob LeClercq, Bud Comet and Sam Stewart** regularly. Would love to hear from more of you.

REUNION

My closing thought has to do with this year's gathering. We wanted to meet in San Diego in October to dedicate the new plaque at Fort Rosecrans, but?

As soon as a decision is made, we will let you know. In the meantime, remember to hug one another.

May God bless all of you, home and at sea!



**SAMUEL B. ROBERTS, DE 413
SURVIVORS ASSOCIATION**

NEWSLETTER 18,1

**RICHARD K. ROHDE, EDITOR
9045 SW 91ST CIRCLE
OCALA, FL 34481-8404**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED