



Newsletter of the U.S.S. Houston CA-30 Survivors' Association and Next Generations™

Now Hear This!

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Association Founded 1946:

by Otto and Trudy Schwarz

Partner Nations Meet to Preserve, Protect USS *Houston* & Other Sunken WWII Wrecks



October 29, 2015: RADM Samuel J. Cox, USN (Ret.) Director of Naval History, Curator of the Navy, Director, Naval History and Heritage Command spoke at the Conference in Jakarta, Indonesia.

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JAKARTA, Indonesia (NNS) -- Nearly three dozen government officials from Indonesia, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom gathered in Jakarta, Oct. 29, to continue their efforts to protect and preserve sunken sovereign vessels in the Java Sea, many of which serve as war graves.

"This year's conference was another opportunity to raise awareness about the efforts to protect and preserve these maritime war wrecks," said Naval Attaché for the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta Capt. Mark Stacpoole. "The close collaboration during this year's meetings will enable us to unify our efforts to maintain recognition and respect for these final resting places of

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our service members, who, in the words of Lincoln, 'gave the last full measure of devotion.'"

Officials from participating countries included representatives from their embassies, navies, and cultural and educational ministries, as well as Indonesian maritime and civil police officers, who have been working to stem unauthorized activities that have impacted the state of preservation of wreck sites in the area.



Oct. 29, 2015: A Conference on the Preservation of Maritime War Wrecks met in Jakarta, Indonesia

During the course of meetings, participants provided background briefs on their protection efforts. The groups also collaborated on other ways to create and sustain awareness to dissuade criminal activity, recognizing there are mutual national interests in doing so.

The parties agreed to open a museum exhibit in Indonesia highlighting the history of the wrecks, which will help educate residents and foster a sense of joint responsibility for respecting the sanctity of those men lost in service. The group has an ambitious completion date of March 1, 2016, for the first phase of the exhibit, which coincides with 74th anniversary of the Battle of Sunda Strait. In addition to the museum exhibit, there is also a battle site commemoration planned to recognize and honor those lost during the war.

"I'm genuinely pleased with the resolve and determination by all involved," said retired Rear Adm. Sam Cox, director, Naval History and Heritage Command. "The partnering our nations have undertaken to ensure the sanctity of these war graves is something that transcends our borders."

Immediately preceding the multi-national gathering in Indonesia was an undersea dive conducted from the USNS *Safeguard* (T-ARS 50). U.S. Navy divers, assisted by personnel from the Indonesian Navy, revisited the WWII wrecks believed to be those of HMAS *Perth* (D29) and the cruiser USS *Houston* (CA 30). While the visit was limited to visual inspection and documentation, it served as a necessary and important follow up to the June 2014 survey which resulted in the initial assessment of the condition of the *Houston* wreck.

As part of the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) exercise in June 2014, U.S. Navy divers from Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit (MDSU) ONE, with personnel from the Indonesian Navy, surveyed the wreck. Over the course of 19 dive excursions, both ends of the wrecked vessel were marked with buoys, and the exposed port side, as well as the deck, was documented using video recording. U.S. In a November 2014 report, Navy underwater archaeologists assessed that was conclusive evidence of a pattern of unauthorized disturbance of the gravesite.

USS *Houston*, nicknamed "The Galloping Ghost of the Java Coast," was sunk in combat during the WWII Battle of Sunda Strait in 1942. Capt. Albert H. Rooks, the ship's commanding officer who was killed in action, posthumously received the Medal of Honor for extraordinary heroism, while USS *Houston* was awarded two battle stars, as well as the Presidential Unit Citation. The site of the sunken ship is the final resting place of nearly 650 Sailors and Marines.

For more information on the USS *Houston*, visit <http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/h8/houston-ii.htm>.

For more news from U.S. Pacific Fleet, visit www.cpf.navy.mil.

Story Number: NNS151029-17, Release Date: 10/29/2015
From U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs



**U.S.S. *Houston* (CL-81) Association's
Annual Reunion**
August 18 – 23, 2016
Sun N Sand Resort, Myrtle Beach, NC
Contact: Barbara Hillebrand 608-424-6095;
Bhillebrand@charter.net
Shipmates, families and friends are welcome!

From the desk of the Executive Director

John K. Schwarz

I'd like to report on a most wonderful experience I had recently as there-in lies a 'larger point' for us NG's.

My mother, Trudy Schwarz, received word that Colin Bancroft (the son of the late HMAS *Perth* survivor Arthur Bancroft) and his wife Cheryl would be coming to America to take a cruise. Since Colin and Cheryl would be in Trudy's area, they wanted to pay Trudy a visit. Of course, tremendous ties have existed with the Australians who struggled to survive alongside our U.S.S. *Houston* CA-30 survivors in many of the WWII prison camp locations, not to forget how both the Australian warship H.M.A.S. *Perth* and U.S.S. *Houston* CA-30 fought together and were sunk on the same fateful night of 1 March 1942 at the Battle of Sunda Strait. Since WWII those close bonds among these men have remained and many visits have been made on both sides of the world (Trudy & Otto alone went down-under 4 times). Arthur Bancroft was literally Otto's counterpart in Australia; they both served as facilitators of the activities of their respective Survivors' Associations.

Colin and Cheryl visited Trudy on 19 September 2015, which coincided with a visit I, too, was having with Mom (Trudy). Needless to say, we had a most wonderful day, talking about the men, their experiences; and bringing each up to date on activities here and down-under. During their visit, Trudy and I took Colin and Cheryl on a mini-tour of some sites near and around the New York City metropolitan area. I couldn't help but reflect on the fact that this special visit all traced back to that special bond and relationship forged so many years ago under such terrible conditions during the Pacific War. And there lies a larger point: These ties have been handed down to us and it is our responsibility to continue to foster them. Your Association leadership team embraces that responsibility and we strive to strengthen these ties at every opportunity. Here's thanking Colin & Cheryl for this most cherished get-together.

I want to take a moment to clarify the communication sources for the Association as these are the **only** sources for information coming to you from our Association's leadership:

- Blue Bonnet newsletter: Published three times annually (April, August, and December).
- Correspondence coming to and from our Association Correspondent, Dana Charles, at: contact@usshouston.org
- Association website: www.usshouston.org
- Writing to any of the Board of Managers individually: Example: johnk.schwarz@yahoo.com
- Facebook: Please note there is only one Association Facebook site: **USS Houston CA-30**
- Regular mail to the Association address: c/o John K. Schwarz, 2500 Clarendon Blvd., Apt. 121, Arlington, VA 22201
- Treasurer (donations/financial inquiries): c/o Pam Foster, 370 Lilac Lane, Lincoln, CA 95648

The USS *Houston* CA-30 Survivors' Association & Next Generations™ communicates with Association members only through these channels. See you all in March, 2016!

John
Son of Otto and Trudy Schwarz

Notes From Here and There...



NROTC Commanding Officer COL Patrick Malay (center) recently awarded 14 WWII medals and ribbons to U.S.S. *Houston* survivor and former Oxford, OH police officer Marvin Sizemore (right) at Miami University. (Photo: Gary Stelzer)



NG Jerry Ranger (left), son of the late John Ranger, Navy survivor of CA-30, visited with survivor Bill Ingram (right) in Florida.



19 September 2015: Aussie NGs visit Otto's New Jersey office. Left to Right: Association Secretary/Executive Director John K. Schwarz; Colin Bancroft (Son of the late Arthur Bancroft, HMAS *Perth* survivor) and his wife Cheryl Bancroft and Association co-founder Trudy Schwarz.

A Letter from the C.O...

Aloha from the Mighty Warship HOUSTON!

U.S.S. *Houston* (SSN-713) is a little more than two thirds of the way through her last deployment. I apologize for not writing more, but we have been out of communications for most of the time we have been deployed. The crew is doing fantastic and the ship is materially in great shape.

We deployed April 28th and have pulled in to Yokosuka, Japan, Guam and Singapore so far. In Singapore we hosted Rear Admiral Lai the Chief of Naval Operations of the Singaporean Navy. We also participated in an exercise with the Singaporean Navy and a few ships of our Navy as well. Unfortunately, due to operational commitments, we have not had the opportunity to visit the Sunda Strait to pay our respects to CA-30. I did receive an email from the Captain of the HMAS *Perth*, Captain Ingham who did get a chance to visit the Sunda Strait. He had this to say:

"We went through the Sunda Strait a little bit earlier than originally planned - and we laid our Wreaths over the wrecks of HMAS *Perth* and USS *Houston* late last night - we 'Cleared Lower Deck' of all personnel, mustering in our White uniforms under spot lights and a full moon...and having reduced speed from 24 knots to 4; looking at the shore lights and listening to the sound of the waves... in the exact location where those 2 gallant ships were lost - it was a very surreal, touching and profound experience. The depth of feelings from my people following last night's service, particularly from my younger Sailors, has been really encouraging/pleasing - it seems they now have a new context to their understanding and are better connected to their ship and its legacy!"

Also, the crew has seen some of the movie Mr. Raynor provided and I have covered a chapter of the book "The Last Battle Station" with the crew each Sunday at



General Military Training. We went over charts and have covered the U.S.S. *Houston* CA-30's story in great detail. We have begun to cover CL-81's heroic efforts in saving their ship, as well.

As much as I would like to get the ship through the Sunda Strait and to Perth, I don't think that it will happen during our deployment. The crew is disappointed in this but is eager to accomplish the operations we are tasked with. If this does turn out to be the case, maybe we can present the wreath at next year's March 1st ceremony in Houston, TX.

As you know in late March we transit to Bremerton, WA for our final port call and decommissioning. Hope all is well in the great city of Houston.

Very respectfully,

CDR Scott McGinnis
Commanding Officer
Warship HOUSTON (SSN 713)
(4 September 2015)

UPDATE:

PEARL HARBOR (Oct. 28, 2015) Cmdr. Scott McGinnis and his crew moor the Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS *Houston* (SSN 713) returning from a 6-month deployment to the Western Pacific Ocean. Cmdr. McGinnis successfully lead his crew through the *Houston's* final deployment and completing missions vital to national security. Houston is now slated to begin the deactivation process as Virginia-class submarines replace the aging Los Angeles-class. [U.S. Navy photo (above) by Lieutenant Brett Zimmerman/Released]

http://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=205327#.VjVFQbYuhuQ.ailto

U.S. Navy and Indonesian Divers Survey U.S.S. Houston CA-30 a Second Time

U.S. Navy divers, assisted by personnel from the Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL), surveyed the World War II wreck of the cruiser USS *Houston* (CA 30), Oct 16-24, 2015.

The nine-day operation was held aboard USNS *Safeguard* (T-ARS 50) with embarked divers from Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 11, Mobile Diving and Salvage Team Seven (MDS 11-7). The purpose of the diving survey was to assess the current condition of the vessel and document any patterns of unauthorized disturbance of the grave site.



U.S. Navy and Indonesian Divers conduct survey operations of U.S.S. Houston in Sunda Strait utilizing USNS *Safeguard* T-ARS 50 (in the background).

"The ongoing surveys of USS *Houston* are helping to preserve the final resting place for more than 700 Sailors who perished during WWII," said Rear Adm. Charlie Williams, commander, Task Force 73. "Our Navy divers and civilian-mariners are proud to be part of this meaningful operation that honors the legacy and sacrifice of these fallen service members."

Houston was sunk during the World War II Battle of Sunda Strait on Feb. 28, 1942. The ship remains sovereign property of the U.S. under customary international law, and is a popular dive site.

The survey mission concluded Oct 24. Divers found no evidence of recent salvaging. The ship's condition remains relatively unchanged since the previous survey operations in 2014. Sailors from *Safeguard* and Navy divers completed the current phase of survey operations with a wreath-laying ceremony in waters near the wreck of USS *Houston*.

"We were honored to be part of this mission," said Lt. Phil Westbrook, MDS 11-7 officer-in-charge. "Our divers made a tangible contribution to the preservation of this historic site for the fallen Sailors of USS *Houston*."

The Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC), located in Washington D.C., is responsible for the preservation, analysis and dissemination of U.S. naval history and heritage.



Divers aboard USNS *Safeguard* preparing to dive

The NHHC provides the knowledge foundation for the Navy by maintaining historically relevant resources and products that reflect the Navy's unique and enduring contributions through the nation's history, and supports the Fleet by assisting with and delivering professional research, analysis and interpretive services.



October, 2015: U.S. Navy divers underwater in Sunda Strait

NHHC is composed of many activities including the Navy Department Library, the Navy Operational Archives, the Navy art and artifact collections, underwater archeology, Navy histories, nine museums, USS *Constitution* repair facility and the historic ship *Nautilus*.

For more news from Commander, Task Force 73, visit <http://www.navy.mil/local/ctf73/>



Change of Command

A Note from Julie Grob
Special Collections at the UH Libraries

Here in Special Collections at the UH Libraries, we are in an exciting period of fresh possibilities and important changes. This past summer we were joined by **Christian Kelleher, our new Head of Special Collections**. Christian previously held the position of Archivist and Assistant Head Librarian at the University of Texas at Austin’s Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, where he also served as Project Manager for the Human Rights Documentation Initiative. He is a strong advocate for making our unique collections more accessible to the public, and increasing the impact of UH Special Collections nationally and internationally.

With this change of command, we are realigning some collection area responsibilities among our librarians. I was honored to be invited to manage our 100,000 volume rare book collection, a role that former department head Pat Bozeman previously handled. In order to do take on this new challenge successfully, I will be stepping down from overseeing the USS *Houston* and Military History collections.

The very able Christian Kelleher will now be the curator for the Cruiser *Houston* and related collections, assisting with your research questions and assessing new materials for the collection. He is excited about learning more of the *Houston’s* amazing story and working with all of you.

I have been so proud to curate the Cruiser *Houston* Collection for the past fifteen years. It has been a very special part of my experience as a librarian. I have learned so much from all of you about honor, patriotism, brotherhood, and family. While it is time for me to take on a new professional challenge, I will always consider myself a member of the USS *Houston* “family.” I hope that you will stay in touch. Please give Christian a warm welcome in this role. You may reach him at cdkelleher@uh.edu if you would like to introduce yourself or have any questions about the collection.

Yesterday's "Bicycle Camp" Now a Luxury Hotel

By Dana Charles



March 2015: A panoramic view of the front of the 5-star Hotel Borobudur in Jakarta, Java, Indonesia, which was formerly the site of "Bicycle Camp." (Photo: Dana Charles)

As Imperial Japanese forces invaded Java in March 1942, they seized a large compound in Batavia (now: Jakarta), which had formerly served as the quarters for the Tenth Battalion Bicycle Force of the Netherlands East Indies Army, and transformed it into a large prisoner of war camp. Eventually, some 10,000 Australian, British, Dutch, American, Moluccan, Menadonese, and Timorese POWs would be housed under the red-tiled roofs of the barracks and houses of this former Dutch military encampment. Allied prisoners called it "Bicycle Camp." Most of the captured 368 U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivors—including my father, U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Marine Survivor Howard ("Bob") Charles—were moved from Serang, Java into this new camp in mid-April, 1942. About a month later, when some 500 soldiers of the 131st FA/2nd BN (except for E Battery) found themselves moved into the same camp, the men of these two American military units met and soon began friendships which were to last a lifetime.

Some seventy-three years later, in March 2015, I attended the commissioning of a new U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30)/H.M.A.S. *Perth* (D-29) Memorial at the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta. While I was at the Embassy, Captain R. Mark Stacpoole, USN, the U.S. Naval Attaché, introduced me to a Jakarta businessman, Kevin A. Parker, who had been researching the location of Bicycle Camp in modern-day Jakarta. Kevin informed me that what was once the 1942-1945 site of the large POW compound was now the grounds of a large, 5-Star hotel. I was immediately interested in seeing it.

On March 3, 2015, I took a taxi to the site which Kevin had mentioned—the 5-star Borobudur Hotel. Named after Borobudur, a 9th-century Mahayana Buddhist Temple in Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia, the large, white and luxurious 695-room hotel is located on 23 acres of land in Central Jakarta, not far from various government offices and foreign embassies. I walked through and took photos of its beautiful, well-tended grounds, which feature a swimming pool, tennis courts, and extensive tropical gardens. I recalled stories my father told me about "Bicycle Camp." I remembered that this was where U.S.S. *Houston* crewman Lieutenant Ross (USN) died; where *Houston* survivor James "Packrat" McCone (USMC) installed a makeshift shower; where Lester Rasbury (HQ Battery)

created and sold his “Rasbury’s Finer Fudge”; where *Houston* Survivors Freddie Quick (USMC), Jim Ewing (USN), and my father harmonized songs by the “Mills Brothers” and the “Inkspots;” and where Jess Stanbrough (HQ Battery) and Jack Karney (D Battery) secretly maintained a radio set. I also remembered that whenever the survivors looked back on their 42 months of POW captivity, they all agreed that conditions at “Bicycle Camp” had been “better” than at most other POW camps. Still, I’m sure no one could have imagined back then the 5-star accommodations here today, or the freedom folks have now to enjoy them.

As I finished my walk around the grounds of this luxury hotel, I realized I had noticed no sign, no plaque, no remembrance, no reference whatsoever to “Bicycle Camp.” It was as if the old POW compound—where the men of the *Houston* and 131st stayed until October, 1942 when the Japanese transported most of them from Java to the brutal labor camps of the Burma-Thailand Railway—had never existed. Though “Bicycle Camp” is completely gone now, I’m sure those men who were once POWS there and those of us who know and care about these men will never forget it.



The hotel’s pool, March 2015.
(Photo: Dana Charles)

To check out the website of the Borobudur Hotel go to: <http://hotelborobudur.com/>

[This article was originally published in the Lost Battalion Newsletter, summer, 2015.]



You Shop, Amazon Gives

By Pam Crispi Foster, Treasurer

Many of us already shop online at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Did you know that Amazon has a program where they will donate a portion of your purchase price to the USS Houston CA-30 Survivors Association and Next Generations? There is no additional cost to you or to the association and the proceeds help to perpetuate the memory of our ship and the sacrifices made by her crew. Visit our website: www.usshouston.org and click on the AmazonSmile link or go to the website shown below. This is a win-win situation for all of us.

- Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the **USS Houston CA-30 Survivors Association and Next Generations** whenever you shop on AmazonSmile.
- AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service.
- Support the **USS Houston CA-30 Survivors Association and Next Generations** by starting your shopping at [http://smile.amazon.com/ch/74-2814051](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/74-2814051).

...NOW HEAR THIS...!

INTERNAL ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM UPDATE

Applications for next year’s scholarship program competition are being accepted beginning June 1, 2016 with the deadline for submission extending to November 1, 2016.

To apply for the scholarship applicants can go to www.usshouston.org and click on the scholarship tab, scroll down to bottom of the page and click to download the application packet.

Application packets can also be obtained by writing to John Keith Schwarz, 2500 Clarendon Blvd. Apt. 121, Arlington, VA 22201.

Each year the amount our Association can award to the Internal Scholarship recipient depends on your generosity. The scholarship award available for 2017 will be \$3,000. Donations are always accepted and appreciated, and are necessary to perpetuate this program.

You can also remember the U.S.S. *Houston* CA-30 Scholarship Fund in your will, estate planning, or beneficiary designations. All donations are tax deductible.

Donations should be made out to: U.S.S. *Houston* CA-30 Survivors’ Association. Please note on your check: “Scholarship Donation.”

Mail Donations to: Pam Crispi Foster, 370 Lilac Lane, Lincoln, CA 95648

To-date and after approximately 15 years of program implementation, we have awarded **12** scholarships totaling **\$25,250.00**. This is an extremely successful program outcome by any measure.

We thank everyone who has donated and participated in this worthwhile endeavor.



Past Internal Annual Scholarship Winners

- 2004 – Gene Bankhead, grandson of Gene Crispi
- 2005 – Katy Fort, granddaughter of Cecil Chambliss
- 2006 – Gerald Agin, grandson of Gerald Agin
- 2007 – Jenny Garrett, granddaughter of Joe Garrett
- 2008 – Raymond Davis, great nephew of George Davis, Jr.
- 2009 – Alex James, great nephew of John Stefanek
- 2010 – Kevin Swick, grandson of John Reilly
- 2012 – Cody Karcher, great grandson of Richard H. Gingras
- 2013 – Laura Reilly, granddaughter of John Reilly and Maggie Tuttle, great niece of Howard Brooks
- 2014 – Stephanie Daigre, granddaughter-in-law of Gene Crispi
- 2015 – Stephen Reilly, grandson of John Reilly

Past U.S. Naval Academy Foundation Scholarship Winners

- 2010 – Stephen Scales
- 2011 – Lenu Gilchrist,
- 2013 – Robert Z. Sutherland
- 2014 – Evan S. Hovenden
- 2015 – Megan Cessna

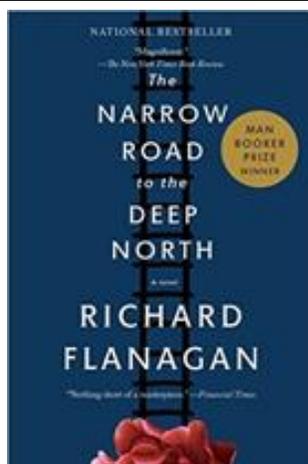


U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Due to the generosity of our Association members and others, and since its inception in 2008, this permanent scholarship—the U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Scholarship—has been awarded five times. This scholarship award enables a year of preparatory military school education, which helps these candidates enter the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), and helps produce proud Naval Officers. We are pleased to report that our first and second scholarship recipients have now graduated from the USNA and are currently serving as officers in the U.S. Navy. What a lasting tribute to the legacy of the men of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30)!

description on each photo. My Step father, **Charles W.W. Lohrig**, was a member of the crew and a POW in Japan...Thank you for all you do. **David DeMarco**.

- 9/7/15: Received the following email: Good Morning, I am in contact with the son of the late **Major F.I.N. McOstrich of Royal Signals (British Army)**. He has a bust of his father made out of mud from the River Kwai, which he is of the opinion that it was made by an American named Epstein who was also a prisoner in Burma. Do you know whether **Commander William Abraham Epstein** had such an ability to do the same. If you do not know can you put me in contact with a member of his family. At present the relative is of the mistaken view that it was sculpted by the famous Jacob Epstein who was never in the American forces. Trusting you can help, Regards, Roy Lear.”
- 9/7/15: After consulting with Sue Kreutzer, I wrote the following reply to **Roy Lear**: “Dear Roy, Thank you for your email regarding U.S.S. Houston CA-30 survivor **CMDR William Epstein, USN**. I’m sorry but we don’t have any information on CMDR Epstein’s artistic talents, or on any of his next-of-kin. However, I am able to report that CMDR Epstein was a medical doctor aboard U.S.S. *Houston* CA-30, as well as a medical officer in various POW camps of the Burma-Thailand Railway. Unfortunately, I don’t know if he had an ability to create a bust of anyone...” [NOTE: If anyone has any contact information re: family members of CMDR Epstein, please email me at: contact@usshouston.org. – Dana]
- 10/25/15: Received the following email inquiry from **Tim Alexander**: “Are the 48 crewmen of the USS *Houston* that died in the after turret still buried at the cemetery in Cilicap, Indonesia? Does the US Embassy there hire anyone to keep the graves presentable? Thanx, Tim Alexander.”
- 10/29/15: I emailed **Tim Alexander** as follows: “Dear Tim, Thank you for your email and for your service in the U.S. Marine Corps...Our **U.S.S. Houston CA-30 historian, Don Kehn, Jr.** has informed me that at some point after the Pacific War ended, the remains of the U.S.S. *Houston* CA-30 and U.S.S. *Marblehead* crewmen buried at Tjilatjap in 1942 were reburied in the Philippines. According to Don, ‘[the remains]--along with the **Marblehead** dead--had been subsequently removed to the Philippines & reinterred in the big Manila American Cemetery (along with 17,000 others). That's where **LT Davis** (our turret officer) & others--from both cruisers--are buried, it appears... It seems possible that some might have been brought home after the war, but this would have been a family/NOK decision, I believe, and I haven't found evidence yet of that.’ Thank you again for your inquiry, Tim.”
- 11/6/15: I received the following email from Houston-area resident **Steve Waldner**: “John/Dana, I trust this finds you doing well. Last week I attended a function at Sam Houston Park. So I went by the USS *Houston* monument just to pay my respect. I did notice that some of the graphics are starting weather very badly. I took pictures but they didn't come out when I got home. The graphic is of the *Houston* itself. I just thought I would pass this along. Steve.”
- 11/9/15: I replied to Steve as follows: “Thanks for bringing this to our attention. We'll have to see what needs to be done to fix the graphics.”



Recommended Novel

Winner of the 2014 Man Booker Prize, Richard Flanagan’s novel ***The Narrow Road to the Deep North*** tells the story of an Australian POW physician—a flawed, complex man—who battles tropical disease and his own demons as he tends to his fellow emaciated POWs in the brutal WWII camps of the Burma-Thailand Railway. The multi-layered novel explores the ephemeral nature of experience, of love, of the good, and even the horrific. A good read. – Dana Charles

Did you know...

How Houston's Crewmen Were Organized?



Our Association's Historian Don Kehn, Jr. Reveals:

THE ORGANIZATION OF USS HOUSTON (CA-30)

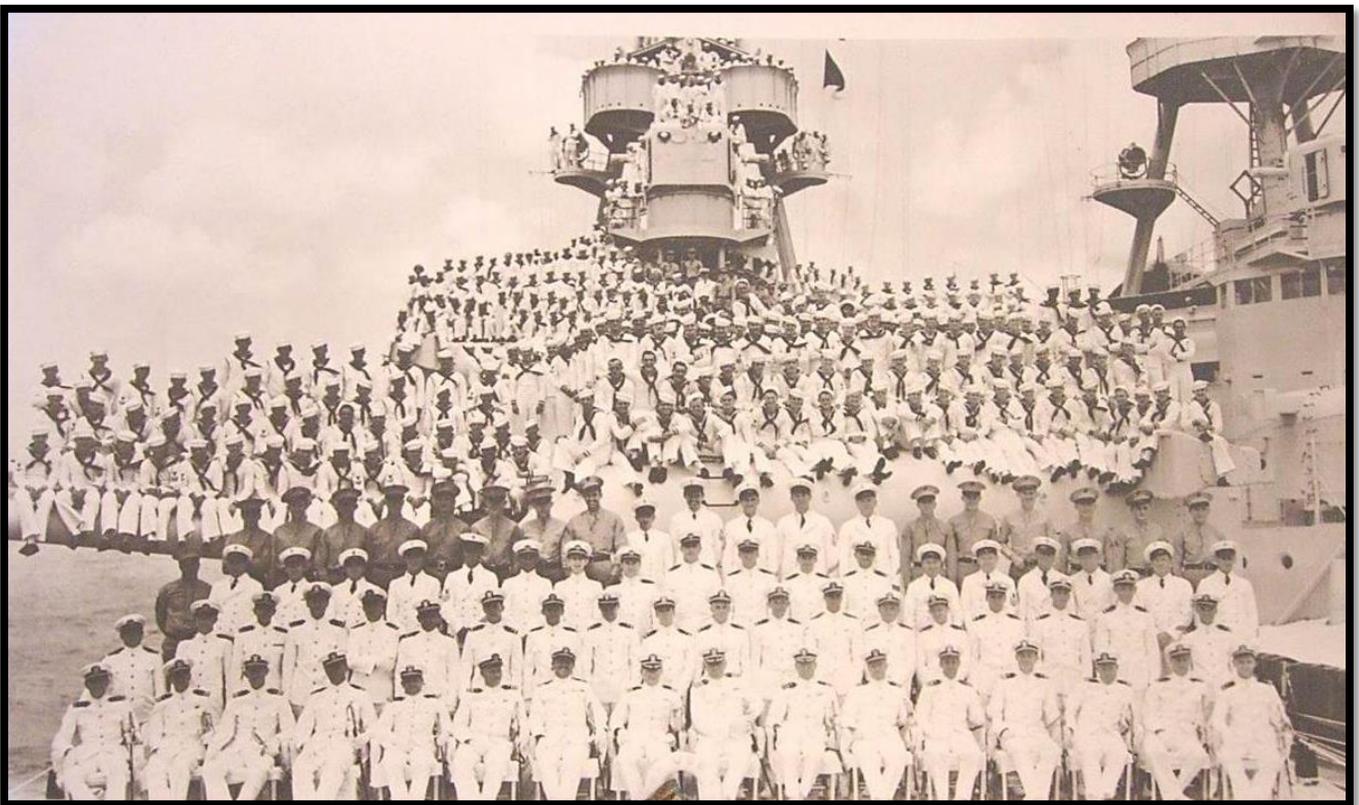
- 1st Division: Main Battery—Turret One, under LTJG H. S. Hamlin, Jr. (Turret Officer)
- 2nd Division: Main Battery—Turret Two, under ENS C. D. Smith (Turret Officer),
- 3rd Division: Main Battery—Turret Three, under LT George Davis, Jr. (Turret Officer, KIA 2/4/42)—Rendered inoperable on Feb. 4th, 1942 by bomb damage & fire.
- 4th & 5th Divisions: Secondary Battery—Eight (8) 5"/25cal AA guns, their directors & magazines. Under LTCDR W. J. Galbraith, Air Defense Officer w/several assistants including Rogers, Gallagher, Kirkpatrick, Ross & Dalton. Anton Manista, CGM (PA) was in charge of all ammunition. These two divisions consisted of a considerable percentage of the ship's company, up to three hundred men.
- 6th Division: AA battery—1.1" quad "pom-pom" mounts. The forward portside mount was commanded by ENS F. Bourgeois. One source says LT Ross commanded the 1.1" mounts overall, but I am skeptical of this. Robert O'Brien, FC1/c, was mount captain on one of the aft mounts. The entire crew of the forward starboard 1.1" mount was killed by the same salvo of shells which mortally wounded CAPT Rooks.
- 7th Division: AA battery—USMC detachment—one (or two) 5" guns + four .50cal MGs on the foremast. The USMC detachment was under CAPT F. Ramsey, whose battle station as Air

Control Officer was w/Galbraith at Sky Aft. Marines manned some of the non-main-battery magazines. Miles Barrett also apparently commanded one of the 1.1" mounts, but I don't think it was manned entirely by Marines. Galbraith & Ramsey sat in the open on steel observer's chairs next to the MK19 director itself.

- LT Russell R. Ross was inside & in charge of the Sky Aft MK19 director during some of the actions and LT Joe Dalton during others. (Dalton in the bombings of Feb. 15/16 on the Timor relief convoy operations; Ross during the Battle of Sunda Strait.)
- Secondary Control (*Secondary Conn, or Battle Two*) was just below Sky Aft. It had a small group of about four men manning it, commanded by LT J. C. Patty, Jr. He was assisted by ENS J. B. Nelson, a 3rd Division officer. This was a poorly sited position, low and easily fouled by funnel smoke, and although it had a spotting glass, was not much use in battle.
- Sky Forward—the MK19 director above the bridge—was commanded by LTJG Lee Rogers, with 2nd LT Ned Gallagher, USMC, alternating with him depending on Condition Watches.
- CDR Maher was in the Primary Control Station on the foremast. Above him in Spotting Top (*Spot One*) was LT Bruce Skidmore in the MK24 Main Battery director itself.
- LT CDR Smith was in Plot—part of Central Station—in the lower section of the midships area, deep inside the hull.
- B Division: Boilers, under LT CDR Richard Gingras overall, assisted by LT Bob Fulton, Frank D. Ellis, CWT (*Houston's "Oil King"*), and CWT Archie Terry, plus WO C. V. May.
- C Division: Communications, under LT E. D. Hodge; this would include all radiomen and coding personnel. ENS Herb Levitt was part of the coding group.
- E Division: Electrical.
- F Division: Fire-control, both AA & MB (Main Battery). The cruiser's main battery gunnery was directed by CDR Arthur Maher via LT CDR Sid Smith in Plot. Along with Skidmore, LTJG Francis B. Weiler was another F Division officer. The ship's senior enlisted gunner was WO J. E. ("Gunner") Hogan.
- H Division: Medical, incl. dental, under CDR Wm Epstein (MC), assisted by LT Clement Burroughs (MC), and enlisted men such as Raymond "Rainy" Day, PhM2/c.
- V Division: Air. SOCs, pilots, mechanics, etc. Senior aviator was LT Tom Payne. It is my understanding that plane catapults were the responsibility of men from one of the gunnery divisions since they utilized a black powder charge to fire the catapults.
- There were undoubtedly several other significant divisions, such as N (Navigation), A (Evaporators, boats, auxiliaries, ice machines), M (Main engines), R (Repair & construction),

& S (Supply), but I've not found specifics on these or their officers yet. Typically, the band would have been under R Div.

- The ship also had several Damage Repair Parties. These were groups of anywhere from 30 to 40 men each. Information on these remains spotty, but here is some of what I have at present: The ship's Executive Officer, CDR David Roberts was also its Damage Control Officer. His assistant in this responsibility was LTJG J. F. Woodruff. Woodruff's battle station, however, was far below in Central Station. Various warrant officers handled most of these duties.
- Forward Damage Repair Party – under WO Louis (“Chips”) Biechlin, the senior carpenter.
- Midships Damage Repair Party – under WO Earl V. (“The Red Torpedo”) May (who claimed there were also separate Engine Room & Boiler Room repair parties, but this is not yet substantiated.) May was the roommate of Joe Bienert for 3 years and was deeply upset by Bienert's death [on 4 February 1942 when Turret Three was destroyed – Ed.].
- After Damage Repair Party—under CWO Joseph (“Bosun”) Bienert (KIA 2/4/42); subsequently it came under the command of ENS Alva F. Nethken.



The Crew of U.S.S. Houston CA-30, date unknown.

Crewmember Spotlight

Joseph Grady Black, Jr., S1/c, USN

By Jim Kelly



Joseph Grady Black, Jr. was born on July 5, 1920 to Joseph Grady Black and Ollie (Burleson) Black, the first of three children. 'JG', as he was known, graduated from Bethel High School with the class of 1938. JG had a younger brother, William, and Roy Lee Black, who died as an infant. JG's dad was known to have a pack of hounds. Often they would hunt for fox in the vicinity of Sam Black Road, Midland, NC. JG would tag along as a youngster.

It is believed that 'JG' felt the winds of war approaching and decided early on to enlist in the United States Navy. At age 21, on July 15, 1940, he did join the Navy. His first letter home is dated July 24, 1940. JG was appointed Master at Arms, (MAA), Platoon 89, U.S.N.T.S Norfolk, with a compliment of 72 recruits. Upon graduation JG received orders to Long Beach, California. After a brief stay in southern California JG received orders to USS *St. Louis* (CL-49) at Pearl Harbor, Oahu, Hawaiian Territory.

In a letter home which was dated, Thursday, December 19, 1940, 'JG' was at sea aboard USS *St. Louis* (CL-49), as the cruiser conducted local operations. USS *St. Louis* was scheduled for an extensive overhaul at Mare Island, San Francisco, California in January 1941. The ship would not need her full complement of personnel and transfers became common place. While still aboard USS *St. Louis* (CL-49) 'JG' was advanced in rank to S 1/c and would begin earning \$54.00 per month. 'JG' wanted to get off the deck force and become either a Gunner's Mate, an Electrician's Mate or maybe a Fireman in one of the engine rooms, 'JG' later mentions that he may want to try for Radioman rate.

[When] USS *St. Louis* (CL-49) departed Pearl Harbor bound for California, 'JG' was still a crewman aboard the *St. Louis*. The ship completed her overhaul at Mare Island and took on ammunition, and got underway for Long Beach, California, arriving on June 6th, 1941. Within days the ship received sailing orders, and 'JG' and USS *St. Louis* were bound for Pearl Harbor, Oahu, Hawaiian Territory.

'JG' was transferred to USS *Houston* (CA-30) in late August 1941. 'JG' was assigned to the 6th Division, as he had been aboard the *St. Louis*. He was later transferred to "F" Division.

The next and last letter home was mailed from USS *Houston* on February 18, 1942. USS *Houston* and 'JG' are now at war with Imperial Japan. Excerpted here from this letter:

"I am well and still in a safe place. Our food is good and we have plenty of it. The health of the ship's crew is as good as ever. Due to the war I cannot tell you where we are, but in case of an emergency you can write to me in care of the Navy Department, Washington, D.C. I will write at my next chance. Until you hear from me again, keep your faith and don't worry. I took out \$3,000 worth of insurance the first of February and you should receive the policy in a few months."

Ten days later, 'JG' Black was killed in action and went down with his ship. J.G. was the first casualty, killed in action, from Cabarrus County, North Carolina. May he rest in peace. God save his soul.

THE BATTLE OF THE JAVA SEA

Bandsman G.D. Vanselow, R.A.N., HMAS Perth

THURSDAY 26th. FEBRUARY 1942

In Sourabaya Roads at close of day
Gnant and grim the squadron lay.
Enveloped in the folds of night,
One by one they slid from sight
To sweep and search the Java seas
And intercept the Japanese.

The darkness fled, the dawn awoke
With not a sign of ship or smoke,
But they had found our squadron there,
We saw their spotters in the air.

Having lost the convoy we had sought
The course was changed to make for port.
By night the Japs had passed ahead,
And gained advantage in our stead.

FRIDAY 27th. FEBRUARY 1942

On Friday afternoon at "Four"
The forces met: Loud was the roar.
Of heavy guns in cannonade,
That day, that night, history was made.

Ships were sunk or fired and shattered
The forces dwindled, bruised and battered.
The "Java" and "De Ruyter" sank,
And others, too, of lesser rank.

The "Exeter", forced to retire
Reduced the punch of our squadron fire.
There were foes on the "green" and foes on the "red",
A squadron lay aft and another ahead.

Two cruisers fought on, the "Houston" and "Perth"
Battling it out for all they were worth.
The odds overwhelmed us. We broke off the fight,
When low ammunition forced escape in the night

The crew at "stations" slept tired and worn
For the few brief hours till "Stand to the dawn"

(Continued on the next page)

SATURDAY 28th. FEBRUARY 1942

At Tandjong Priok for Stores and oil
We fought off the "Zeros" that swooped to despoil.
We fuelled and slipped as the evening grew late,
For cover of darkness through the dangerous strait

Then came news from an aerial source
That Japs were ahead on an opposite course.
With reasonable luck we might get through,
This, in general, was the Captains view.

The ELEVENTH HOUR, February Twenty Eight
Began the battle of Sunda Strait.
A convoy was landing its troops on the shore,
While the "narrows" were bottled by Jap ships of war.

The last stand was made that night at Eleven
As enemy ships were blown to "high heaven".
Torpedoes for'ard, amidships, and aft,
Brought a swift end to our brave little craft.

The din and the turmoil, the blood and the slaughter
The cries of the wounded, the shrieks from the water.
These live in the mind, we feel them yet,
A horror of war we shall never forget.

This poem was first published in the Blue Bonnet, February, 1980 Issue.



Clarence "Skip" Schilperoort Remembered in Sunnyside, Washington

NG Nancy Schilperoort Green emailed a photo of a new Memorial (left) that was dedicated in Sunnyside, Washington on Veterans' Day, 11 November 2015. The beautiful memorial honors Prisoners of War from the Sunnyside area, including Nancy's late father, U.S.S. *Houston* CA-30 Survivor Clarence "Skip" Schilperoort.

Notes from Down-under...

The last issue of the *Blue Bonnet* (August, 2015) featured several stories about the experiences of U.S.S. *Houston* CA-30 survivors seventy years ago as the news of the Japanese surrender led to their liberation from POW camps in S.E. Asia. After reading those stories, H.M.A.S. *Perth* survivor **David Manning** was kind enough to share his own experiences as follows...



David Manning

For the last 6 months of the war I was a member of a small working party who lived with, and worked for, a Japanese Army battalion. It was multi national of 100 only who all appreciated being away from the mindset of the guards, both Jap. and Korean, and in fact there were two "solitaries" in the group in that I was the only sailor, and Jose Garcia of the 131st P.A. was the only American. A couple of moves with the battalion found us living in a rubber plantation near Chumphon in southern Thailand, and we were in total isolation as regards any news or other POW.

One day we were told that the next day would be a Yasme (holiday) for us, an unexpected pleasure for us, but when the next day arrived we were instructed to assemble at an open space in the plantation, and when we got there found the entire battalion assembled and armed. The Commanding Officer arrived in his best uniform complete with ceremonial sword and our apprehension grew as he proceeded to make a long speech of which we understood nothing of what he was saying to his armed troops.

When his speech concluded he turned to us and bowed, and at that instant we knew the war was over and that we had won it. Naturally the conditions called for a very restrained response from us, like smiles and complete lack of any other joyous display. Thereafter our former captors carefully returned us to bigger camps over the next couple of weeks, amongst our mixed emotions of finding friends or finding others had not made it to the finish.



H.M.A.S. *Perth* Tree at the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne, Australia, Feb, 2015. (Photo: Dana Charles)

U.S.S. HOUSTON CA-30 ITEMS FOR SALE

DVD "Last Stand" (8 oz.) \$20.00
 Bumper Sticker (1-3 is 1 oz.) \$2.00
 Challenge Coin (3 oz.) \$10.00
 Bell or Monument Lapel Pin (specify type)
 (1 - 6 pins is 1 oz.) \$3.00
 Ship Lapel Pin (specify silver or gold highlights)
 (1 - 3 pins are 1 oz.) \$4.00



Polo Shirts - Short Sleeve, Navy Blue
 with Gold Embroidery of the USS Houston:

Men's - sizes M-2XL \$25.00

Women's - sizes S-XL \$25.00

(Shipping Weight-10 oz.)



T-Shirts (size Medium) (9 oz.) \$10.00

T-Shirts (size Small, large, and X-Large) (9 oz.) \$20.00

T-Shirts (size 2XL or 3 XL) (9 oz.) \$25.00



T-Shirt

Note Cards of the USS Houston Ship (pack of 10) (5 oz.) \$10.00

Shipping Costs:

1 oz. - 6 oz. = \$4.00

7 oz. - 12 oz. = \$7.50

13 oz. - 5 lb. = \$10.50

Make checks payable to:

USS Houston CA-30 Survivors' Association

Mail checks to:

Sue Kreutzer

43156 Meadowbrook Cir.

Parker, CO 80138

Questions? Email: Sue@USSHouston.org

Blue Ball Cap ("USS Houston CA-30", 10 oz.) \$15.00

Brown Ball Cap ("USS Houston CA-30", 10 oz.) \$5.00

Brown & Black Ball Cap

("U.S.S. Houston CA-30 2nd Generation", 10 oz.) \$5.00



Blue Ball Cap



Brown & Black Ball Cap



Women's Polo Shirt



Men's Polo Shirt

Meet your...

Board of Managers

...here to serve

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Treasurer: Pam Foster
Daughter of USN survivor Eugene Crispi
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Scholarship Committee
Email: Pam@usshouston.org



Membership

Our U.S.S. *Houston* "family" continues to grow weekly as more and more folks want to know about the gallant crew of U.S.S. *Houston* CA-30. If you have relatives and friends who have not yet joined our Association, please encourage them to join us! Members do not have yearly dues. However we do operate based on the generosity of our membership. All donations are gratefully accepted. For more information and a membership form, click on: <http://www.usshouston.org/memberform.pdf>, fill out the form and send it in!

Welcome Aboard!

We would like to extend a hearty welcome to everyone who has recently joined our U.S.S. Houston (CA-30) Survivors' Association and Next Generations™!



Association Website:
www.usshouston.org

Facebook Group Site:
[USS Houston CA-30](#)

Notice of U.S.S. Houston CA-30 Survivors' Association and Next Generations

Annual Meeting

Saturday, 27 February 2016

10:00 a.m. (EST)

2500 Clarendon Blvd., Apt. 121

Arlington, VA 22201

Reservations are needed. Please email RSVP to: johnk.schwarz@yahoo.com

In Memoriam

In Memoriam



George C. McCandless



10/20/2015
Idaho

U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivor



In Memoriam



Nadine Faulk



10/29/2015
Oklahoma

Widow of
U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivor
Corporal Hugh Faulk, USMC

In Memoriam

In addition to remembering those of our U.S.S. *Houston* Family who have passed on from this life, the **Blue Bonnet** also remembers H.M.A.S. *Perth* (D-29) and 131st/ 2nd BN survivors and their family members who have recently passed away.

They too will never be forgotten.



In Memoriam



Betty Reed



9/14/2015
Wichita, Texas

Widow of
131st FA/2nd BN Survivor
Wilson "Dub" Reed

In Memoriam



John Woods



8/21/2015
Australia

H.M.A.S. *Perth* (D-29) Survivor



In Memoriam



Bruce Constable



July, 2015
Australia

Son of
H.M.A.S. *Perth* (D-29) Survivor
George Constable;
Founder of www.perthone.com





**U.S.S. HOUSTON (CA-30) SURVIVORS' ASSOCIATION
AND THE NEXT GENERATIONS™**

Day of Remembrance

March 4-5, 2016

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY (March 4)

Registration & Hospitality Room	6:00 – 10:00 PM	Hospitality
Friday Group Dinner	6:00 PM	At a Local Eatery (TBD)

*Please indicate on your registration form if you are interested so reservations will give an accurate count.
Each guest responsible for own payment.*

Group transport will be arranged.

SATURDAY (March 5)

Breakfast	8:00 AM – 10:00 AM	To Be Announced
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Executive Director's Year-end Report• Announcement of Scholarship Winner• Speaker: RADM Samuel Cox, USN (Ret.), Director, Naval Heritage and History Command		

2016 Memorial Service	2:00 PM	Sam Houston Park
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Transportation provided to and from the park.

Saturday Group Dinner	6:00 PM	At a Local Eatery (TBD)
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*Please indicate on your registration form if you are interested so reservations will give an accurate count.
Each guest responsible for own payment.*

Group transport will be arranged.

REGISTRATION FORM

74th Anniversary – Loss of U.S.S. Houston CA-30

Day of Remembrance

March 4-5, 2016

DoubleTree Suites by Hilton Houston by the Galleria
5353 Westheimer Road, Houston, TX, 77056
(713) 961-9000

Hotel Reservations can be made by [clicking here.](#)

DEADLINE – MUST BE RECEIVED BY FEBRUARY 21, 2016

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY AND LIST THE NAME OF EACH PERSON INCLUDED IN THIS REGISTRATION (Use the back of this form if necessary)

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Name of crew member you are honoring and relationship (or state you are a friend). Please include branch of service: _____

Anticipated date and time of arrival: _____

Saturday Breakfast – 8:00 AM # _____ X \$33.00 = \$ _____

Registration # _____ X \$40 per person = \$ _____

Late Registration # _____ X \$15 per person = \$ _____

(Received after February 21, 2016)

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Friday Group Dinner # _____

Saturday Group Dinner # _____

Please include a check for the total cost made payable to: USS Houston-Next Generations (your check is your receipt). Payment is non-refundable.

Mail registration to: Pam Foster, 370 Lilac Lane, Lincoln, CA 95648

Thank you

...on behalf of the Association to those who have made donations, as follows:

Donations, June 1 – November 30, 2015:

Mark & Stephanie Daigre
Bruce DeWald
Billie Marie Johnson
Sue Kreutzer
David Manning
Patricia Mintzer
John Schwarz
Trudy Schwarz
Tony Whaley

Amazon Smile donations received
August 7, 2014 to November 16, 2015 - \$35.06

Financial Report

by Pam Foster, Treasurer

Fiscal Year 2015

January 1 – November 16, 2015

Scholarship Fund

Beginning Balance	\$13,245.84
Receipts	+4,736.26
Expenses	<u>-3,000.00</u>
Ending Balance	\$14,982.10



General Fund

Beginning Balance	\$15,706.27
Receipts	+7,131.23
Expenses	<u>-6,510.38</u>
Ending Balance	\$16,327.12



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contact@usshouston.org or Bluebonnet@usshouston.org.

All articles submitted are subject to editing.

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of this Association, its members, or its Board of Managers.

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Happy
Holidays!