

THE BLUE BONNET



U.S.S. HOUSTON

Volume 80, Issue 3 • December 2022

"Galloping Ghost of the Java Coast"

Newsletter of the USS Houston CA-30 Survivors' Association and Next Generations®

Now Hear This!

Association Address:

c/o John K. Schwarz,
Executive Director
2400 Clarendon Blvd., Apt. 211
Arlington, VA 22201

Association Phone Number:

703-867-0142

Address for Tax Deductible

Contributions:

USS Houston CA-30
Survivors' Association
c/o Pam Moura, Treasurer
2065 Sutter View Lane,
Lincoln, CA 95648
(Please specify which fund:
General or Scholarship)

Association Email Contact:

contact@usshouston.org

Association Founded 1947

By Otto and Trudy Schwarz

USS Houston (CA-30), HMAS Perth (D-29) Day of Remembrance 2023



Doubletree Houston by the Galleria, Houston, Texas

In This Issue...

- ◆ Day of Remembrance/ 1—2
- ◆ U.S. Naval Memorial/ 3—4
- ◆ Executive Director's Report/ 5
- ◆ Oil Leak Won the War/ 6—7
- ◆ Middle School Honors Vets/ 8
- ◆ Spotlight: Bob Charles/ 9—11
- ◆ Mailbag/ 12
- ◆ Sandra Norma in Thailand/ 13
- ◆ Washington, DC
Presentation/ 14
- ◆ AmazonSmile/ 14
- ◆ Ship's Store Sale/ 15
- ◆ Board of Managers/ 16
- ◆ Communication Channels/ 16
- ◆ Thanks to Donors/ 17
- ◆ Financial Report/ 17
- ◆ Masthead/ 17
- ◆ DOR Tentative Schedule/ 18
- ◆ DOR Registration Form/19

The Day of Remembrance 2023

By Dana Charles

Mark your calendars! The Association's 2023 Day of Remembrance (DOR) will be held in Houston, Texas on March 3—4, 2023. The gathering will mark the 81st anniversary of the March 1, 1942 loss of USS *Houston* (CA-30) and HMAS *Perth* (D-29) at the WWII Battle of Sunda Strait, as well as the second year in a row since the pandemic that we will have returned to Houston for our annual Memorial Service!

As in past years, a special block of hotel rooms and a meeting room have been reserved for us at the Doubletree Houston by the Galleria, which will again serve as our "DOR headquarters."

(Continued on next page)



Author and USS *Houston* (CA-30) Survivors' Association and Next Generation's® Historian Donald M. Kehn, Jr. presents a Power Point presentation during last year's DOR. In 2023, author Anthony Tully will speak during the DOR dinner on Friday Night, March 3, 2023.

Free bus transportation, generously provided by the Harris County Precinct Three Transportation Department, will be available to and from all DOR events. On Friday, March 3, a bus will depart the hotel at 1:30 p.m. for a visit to the "Cruiser *Houston* Collection" at the M.D. Anderson Library, University of Houston. Last year we were allowed access to the collection's many holdings, and we have received permission to access the holdings again in March 2023. The Friday night banquet at our hotel's "USS *Houston* (CA-30) meeting room" will feature keynote speaker Anthony Tully, who is the co-author of the book, Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway. The evening will also include a roundtable discussion on virtually anything and everything related to the USS *Houston* (CA-30) story. Documents, Ships Logs, Maps, and other USS *Houston* (CA-30)-related materials will be available for perusing. CA-30 Merchandise will also be available for purchase!

On Saturday, March 4th, we will gather at our hotel's "USS *Houston* (CA-30) meeting room" at 9:00 a.m. for breakfast. (The morning's speaker will be announced soon). At 12:30 p.m., buses will depart the hotel for the 28th annual USS *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Service at Sam Houston Park in downtown Houston. At 7:00 p.m. we will again gather together for dinner at our hotel's "USS *Houston* (CA-30) meeting room." See the complete Tentative Schedule of Events on page 18.

To register for the Day of Remembrance 2023, either:

1. Print out the **Registration Form** on page 19. Fill out the form, and mail it in with your check, as indicated at the bottom of the Form, as soon as possible, or...
2. Download and print out the **Registration Form** which is available on the Association's website (Click on the following link): www.usshouston.org/news.html. Fill out the form, and mail it in with your check, as indicated at the bottom of the Form, as soon as possible.

To reserve a hotel room at the special USS *Houston* CA-30 block rate:

1. Go to our Association's website (Click on the following link): www.usshouston.org/news.html then click on the link at the website marked: "Click here for reservations online."

Questions? Email: sue@usshouston.org or call: 720-313-6770.

See you at the Day Of Remembrance 2023...!



THE UNITED STATES NAVY MEMORIAL

On Friday, July 15th, Dr. Matthew Fash, National Coordinator of the United States Navy Memorial Stories of Service Program and Student Interview Program learned of an email from Mr. John K. Schwarz, son of Otto, and Executive Director of the USS *Houston* CA-30 Survivors' Association & Next Generations. Mr. Schwarz offered to make a presentation to the Navy Memorial focused on the story of the USS *Houston* CA-30 and the actions of her crew during WWII. Knowing the extraordinary story of the USS *Houston*, Dr. Fash corresponded with Mr. Schwarz and inquired about the opportunity of interviewing him at the Navy Memorial's Asiatic Fleet Room, a location dedicated to the ships of the Asiatic Fleet, including the USS *Houston*. Dr. Fash oversees a national effort, led by the Navy Memorial, to interview, archive, and preserve the stories of our Nation's Veterans, Active Service Personnel, and their families. Beginning in 2007, the United States Navy Memorial has published over 2800 Veteran Stories to its Interview Archive, which are preserved and presented to a national audience for free on its website.

At the time, Dr. Fash was working with a team of Interns from California who were part of a pilot program designed to welcome students from across the country to Washington D.C. The goals of the new program are for students to participate in training to conduct oral histories, as well as experiences, to bring the past to life. After completing the oral history training, the student team had visited the Vinson Hall Retirement Community and interviewed veterans and their family members from WWII, the Korean War, Vietnam War, and the Cold War. As Dr. Fash and Mr. Schwarz spoke, the Internship plan was discussed with the culminating experiences focusing on visiting Arlington National Cemetery on July 22nd.



July 22, 2022: John Schwarz (right) presents the story of USS *Houston* at the USS *Houston*/HMAS *Perth* marker at Arlington National Cemetery to a group of U.S. Navy Memorial interns.

In the morning, the students would learn stories of those buried at Arlington National Cemetery and bring to life the experiences of those honored. In the afternoon, the students were selected by the Navy Memorial to present a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Dr. Fash asked Mr. Schwarz if he could tell him the location of the USS *Houston* marker at Arlington National Cemetery. Over the weekend, the student interns had participated in training within the Asiatic Fleet Room at the Navy Memorial. Dr. Fash shared the history and meaning of the room. Much of the discussion focused on the ships represented which included the story of the USS *Houston*. Dr. Fash shared the objective of the internship and the students' passion for honoring Veterans and their memory with Mr. Schwarz. Upon learning of Dr. Fash's intent to visit the USS *Houston* marker, Mr. Schwarz immediately volunteered not only to share the location, but to drive to Arlington and personally present the history of the USS *Houston*, the significance of the marker, and stories of the survivors who are buried at Arlington National Cemetery, including his father, as well as his mother.

In the early morning hours of Friday, July the 22nd, Mr. Schwarz met the internship team. The four student interns were: Matthew Kropelnicki, Carlos Benavides, Artyom Yusupov, and Kieran Pederson. Overseeing the new Navy Memorial initiative were: Dr. Fash, a veteran Social Studies educator of 44 years and



member of the Navy Memorial teacher network; Nicole Kropelnicki, College Coordinator, St. Vincent de Paul High School; and Andrew Campbell, Programs and Engagement Coordinator at the Navy Memorial. The presentation made by Mr. Schwarz to the four student interns was an extraordinary experience. His words brought deep meaning to the service and sacrifice of the USS *Houston*, HMAS *Perth*, and the brave soldiers and sailors of our American crew and allies from Australia, Britain, and the Netherlands who are "Still Standing Watch in Sunda Strait." Mr. Schwarz then walked the students to specific grave sites of USS *Houston* survivors, each with the inscription of Prisoner

of War, indicating the harrowing experiences of those who not only had to abandon ship but were held by the Empire of Japan on hell ships and prison camps for the remainder of WWII.

Mr. Schwarz, so intrigued by the students and the mission of the Navy Memorial's Story of Service Program, requested to be a spectator to the students' presentation to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Mr. Schwarz went above and beyond and joined the internship effort to create a meaningful learning experience for the student interns. He was instrumental in the movement of the wreath and transporting the team in preparation for the presentation.



Mr. Schwarz brought the past to life for the students of the Navy Memorial Internship Pilot Program and forged a new relationship with the organization through collaboration with Dr. Fash based on their shared efforts and passion of honoring, recognizing, celebrating, and informing the public about the actions of the men and women of the Sea Services. —Dr. Matthew Fash.





*From the desk of the Executive Director
John K. Schwarz*

I hope this edition of the Blue Bonnet finds all of you healthy and getting ready for the Holiday season!

Your Board of Managers is busy preparing the program agenda for the 2023 “Day of Remembrance (DOR)” weekend gathering in Houston which will be held on March 3-4, 2023. This edition of Blue Bonnet will feature the tentative agenda as well as a registration form. We have once again been invited to visit the University of Houston library’s “Cruiser Houston” permanent exhibit where we will be provided access to archive files hosted by the library’s Christian Kelleher. That occurrence last year drew much interest and we wanted to secure additional time for us to fully review whatever might be of interest. We also feel fortunate that the co-author of Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway, Anthony Tully, will address the group during our Friday evening dinner on March 3rd regarding the significance of the allies' 1942 Java naval defense campaign.

Speaking of the rapidly approaching Holidays, please consider reviewing the “Ship’s Store” section of our Association’s website www.usshouston.org as we have men’s USS *Houston* CA-30-embroidered polo shirts available in various colors; two woman’s fleece jackets also wonderfully embroidered with the ship’s silhouette; and an ample supply of hats and challenge coins (see page 15). These items could provide meaningful gifts for those who would appreciate honoring the men of the USS *Houston* CA-30.

If you are not yet an Association member, please consider signing up soon to begin enjoying the benefits of membership, which include our Association’s direct email messages on key USS *Houston* CA-30 news in real-time (almost!).

Join us this coming March in Houston, Texas, where we will have another wonderful annual opportunity to: honor our heroes at their monument, share knowledge among ourselves about the *Houston* and her crew, and socialize with our terrific group of dedicated survivor families, friends, and Association guests.

Meanwhile, we thank you for your past generosity, and we ask you to please remember to make a donation to our Association in the new year!

We wish everyone good health and prosperity in 2023...!

John K. Schwarz

How a Japanese Oil Leak Helped Us Win the War

By Joseph L. McCain

The slightest (often purely random) circumstances can sometimes lead to monumental changes. This is the little known story of such an event which helped our country shorten and win the war against the Japanese Empire. It all happened because a Japanese airplane developed an oil leak.

Prior to the beginning of World War II, we and our allies severely underestimated Japan's military capabilities. Early intelligence briefings seemed to stress that the Japanese were flying antiquated and poorly-engineered aircraft. The Japanese were supposedly known for their inability to fly well, and all enemy pilots were said to wear corrective glasses.

The American Volunteer Group ("Flying Tigers") of China first encountered the Japanese air forces in August 1941. Each American pilot recruited by the Chinese government was promised a generous monthly salary plus a five hundred dollar bonus for each Japanese airplane brought down. They were soon to learn that Japanese pilots were, in fact, very skilled and their planes were in most respects superior to ours. Expectations of fantastic amounts of bonus money vanished.

The Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor in December 1941 introduced American servicemen to that most formidable of enemy aircraft, the carrier-based Mitsubishi 6M2, Type 0, Model 21, otherwise known as the "Zero". Strafing attacks on battleship row and our airfields at Oahu were devastating. The Japanese fighters also provided cover for their bombers during the attack. Within a few short hours American installations in the Philippines were subjected to similar attacks.

The Japanese Zero was perceived to be nearly invincible in aerial combat. Our strategy was to avoid them as we had nothing to equal the Zeroes in maneuverability, speed or fire power. Our American-made Brewster fighter planes in Malaya were quickly destroyed and even the famous British Spitfire was not able to compete with the Japanese plane.

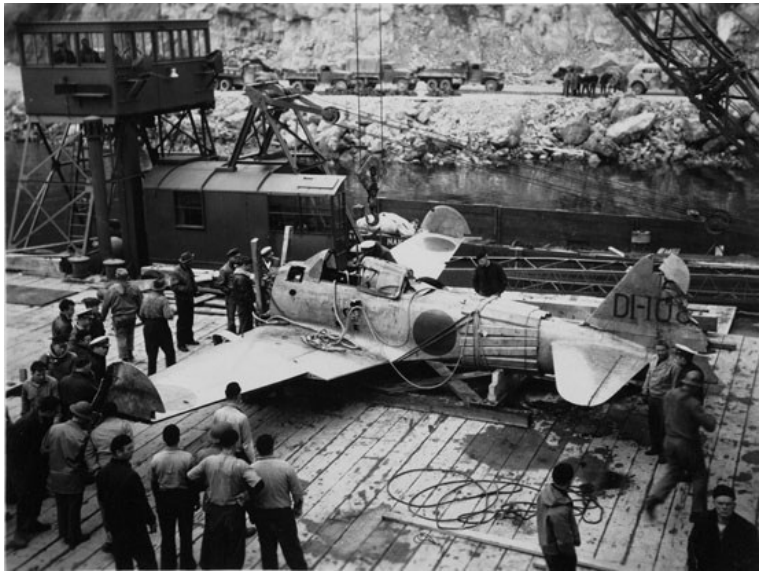
It seems strange then that Japan would divert any of its valuable Zero fighter planes to mount an attack on the far away Aleutian Islands in Alaska. These desolate rock-strewn islands are usually shrouded in a chilling fog and are mostly uninhabitable. However, an Allied base on Unalaska Island in the Aleutians known as "Dutch Harbor" did exist at the time and was bombed and strafed in June 1942. A young carrier-based fighter pilot, Tadayoshi Koga, was hit by return fire during this attack and his Zero had its main oil line damaged. Losing a steady stream of lubricant, Koga knew that his engine would soon fail and he would crash. He chose to try for Akutan Island which was known to have a long grassy strip where he thought he might be able to land. What he didn't know was that a wet boggy soil lurked beneath the grass. Koga's landing gear caught in the hidden bog and his plane was flipped upside down.



The wreckage of Koga's plane on Akutan Island, June 1942.

To protect the secrets of this valuable aircraft, all Japanese pilots knew their standing orders dictated that downed Zeroes were to be destroyed immediately. But Koga's wingmen were also his friends and they thought he might have survived. They could not shoot their friend's plane and set it afire as he was still in the cockpit. So they disobeyed their orders, not knowing that Koga had died in the crash landing.

For more than a month, Koga's Zero lay hidden in the fog of Akutan Island. In July, a break in the weather allowed a US Navy plane to see it during a routine reconnaissance flight. Following several recovery efforts, the Navy was able to retrieve Koga's plane from the bog. The damaged Zero was shipped to San Diego, California, to undergo restoration by the US Navy. By autumn, Koga's now renovated fighter was ready to fly again. Lieutenant Commander Eddie Sanders made 24 test flights and found it to be a great aircraft, but also one with several hidden flaws. Commander Sanders discovered that the Zero could not perform a roll at high speeds and the fuel system's carburetor was inadequate for high speed dives, causing the engine to sputter and lose power.



The U.S. Navy restoring Koga's plane in San Diego, CA.

In reconstructing the captured Zero, the Navy also learned the Mitsubishi engineers had sacrificed protective armor for the pilots and even self-sealing gas tanks to limit weight. The Japanese had forgone a strong (and heavier) airframe for the Zero in order to gain the speed and maneuverability of a lighter aircraft. This made the airplane very fast (330 mph) and gave it a range of over a thousand miles (about twice that of Allied fighter planes of the time).

With this knowledge, the United States was able to develop newer and more powerful fighter aircraft to combat the Mitsubishi Zeroes. Two of the best were the Vought F4U Corsair and the Grumman F6F Hellcat, which were first used in combat in 1943. Our pilots in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater were trained in new tactics developed to exploit the Zero's newly discovered weaknesses. And, an improved Allied strategy was embraced. To command the sea, we had learned that it was necessary to also control the skies. Japan was now on the defensive.

Sources used for this article:

Air Power by Stephen Budiansky, 2004.

Baa Baa Black Sheep by Colonel Gregory Boyington, USMC, 1958. "Pappy" Boyington flew for the Flying Tigers in China and later fought the Japanese as commander of the famous "Black Sheep" squadron. He was shot down, becoming a Japanese POW for two years. Credited with shooting down 28 Japanese planes, he was awarded the Medal of Honor and the Navy Cross.

The Naked Island by Russell Braddon, 1953. Australian Artilleryman Braddon was captured during the Japanese invasion of Malaya. Sent into forced labor on the "Death Railway", he survived to write his book describing the battle for Malaya. He stated that the Australians soon learned that "airplanes were pieces of machinery produced only in Japan."

The Akutan Zero by Elizabeth Hanes, the Internet History site, 2012 and rev. 2018.

Pictures are as found on the Internet and were (most probably) Official US Navy Photographs that have since been declassified and released to the public.

Tohickon Middle School Honors Veterans

By John K. Schwarz



15 November 2022: John K. Schwarz presenting the story of USS *Houston* CA-30 and her Survivors' POW experiences to students at Tohickon Middle School.

On November 15, 2022, USS *Houston* CA-30 Survivors' Association and Next Generation's® Executive Director John K. Schwarz and a group of U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force veterans presented military-related stories to classes at the Tohickon Middle School of Doylestown, PA. The presentations were part of the school's 2022 Veterans Day program. During the day, which was hosted by Assistant Principal Dr. Matt Fash, John and the veterans were each assigned to a class. John spent the school day with history teacher Scott Felton and addressed five 9th grade classes, presenting to approximately 110 students the story of the USS *Houston* CA-30 and the POW experiences of her survivors.

The day proved to be among the most satisfying presentation opportunities I've had to date. The entire staff of the Tohickon Middle School did a marvelous job in coordinating this full day honoring veterans, and the students could not have been more receptive. Students asked very thoughtful questions. This was a unique opportunity not just to present the USS *Houston* story, but also to deliver a special learning experience to the middle school students as they prepare for a more extensive look at WWII commencing in January 2023.



Pictured are the group of veterans who addressed the students at the Tohickon Middle School Veterans Day and others including: John K. Schwarz (bottom row, far left); school principal and event sponsor Mr. Kevin Marton (back row, far left); Dr. Matt Fash, event coordinator (back row, far right); coordinating classroom history teacher Scott Felton (second from right, back row).

PFC Howard Robert Charles, USMC

By Dana Charles



Howard Robert Charles, 1940

Howard Robert Charles was born on August 6, 1919, in Pitcher, Oklahoma, becoming the younger of the two boys of Spurgeon and Vennie Charles. Howard's father, Spurgeon Charles, was employed as a miner in the local lead mine. Howard was only 2 when his parents divorced and Vennie, his mother, took her two boys and moved into an apartment in Kansas City, Missouri. One day, while Vennie was away, Howard and his brother Kermit played with matches and accidentally started a fire which burned out the apartment. Vennie and the boys were evicted. Howard was sent to live with his father who by this time had moved to Arkansas to live with his parents, Robert and Mary Charles. It was the time of the Great Depression. Dirt poor, Robert, Mary, Spurgeon, and Howard lived in a shack along the White River in Arkansas, struggling to survive by fishing and harvesting mussel shells to sell.

Meanwhile, Vennie remarried—twice. Her third husband owned a large farm in Kansas and at age 14, Howard was brought to live there at the farm. But at sixteen, because his new stepfather would regularly beat him, Howard ran away. He was taken in by two local schoolteachers who insisted that no matter what, he must continue with his education. Howard attended a junior college for about a year and a half. In June 1940 he decided to join the Marines rather than wait to be drafted.

After completing Basic Training in San Diego, California, Howard was selected to receive 14 weeks of special training in Marine Field Intelligence which included many hours of swimming—a skill which, as it turned out, would serve him well later. In June 1941, he was transferred to the Marine Detachment aboard USS *Houston* (CA-30), which was then berthed in Manila, the Philippines. He was soon promoted to Private First Class. Initially, Howard was assigned to duty below decks, passing .50 caliber ammunition up to the Marine's machine gun platform located midway up the *Houston's* foremast, manned by 10 Marines. But he hated duty below decks, especially during air attacks. He requested reassignment and became a machine gunner on the foremast machine gun platform, as well as one of the Marine orderlies to the ship's commanding officer, CAPT Albert Rooks, USN.

During the final moments of the Battle of Sunda Strait, the *Houston's* largest guns ran out of ammunition and Japanese cruisers and destroyers closed in, their searchlights slicing through the dark, sweeping the dying American cruiser. The Japanese ships were suddenly so close that they came within range of *Houston's* .50 caliber machine guns. Howard was ordered to shoot out the enemy searchlights. Three Japanese torpedoes and countless heavy shells blasted into the *Houston*. Captain Rooks ordered abandon ship and was killed moments later by shrapnel from an exploding enemy shell.

On the decks below the machine gun platform, bright light from the enemy's searchlights was making it easy for Japanese gunners to pick off *Houston's* sailors and Marines who were slipping on lifejackets, removing their shoes, and abandoning ship. Gripped by rage, Howard squeezed the trigger, felt the .50 caliber shudder, aimed the bursts of blazing tracers spitting out into the approaching searchlights.



Machineguns aboard *Houston* firing at enemy searchlights during the Battle of Sunda Strait.

As one enemy light blinked out, another searchlight grabbed his attention. He swung his machine gun, worked the barrel left then right, sending red-hot tracers into the light until nothing but darkness was there. Still, searchlights kept appearing. He aimed, squeezed the trigger. Suddenly, nothing. “More ammo!” he yelled, staring back down the barrel of his empty gun into the enemy light sweeping back at him. But Howard’s loader was gone. On the platform there was now only his boss, Marine Gunnery Sergeant Walter Standish, and himself, and Standish was telling him to stop.

“It’s all over,” Standish said. “There’s nothing more we can do. Time to go, Charlie.” Though the order to abandon ship had been given once, rescinded, then given again, Howard and Gunny Sergeant Standish had stayed, firing Howard’s machine gun the whole time.

Scrambling down the ladder from his battle station atop the foremast, Commander Arthur Maher, the ship’s gunnery officer, stepped onto the platform, ordered Standish and Howard to abandon ship “before it sucked them under.” As Maher left the platform, Standish ordered Howard to save himself. “I can’t swim,” Standish said. Howard climbed down from the platform alone. It was the last time anyone saw Standish alive. For the next nine hours, Howard swam for his life, alone, toward the dark island shape on the horizon—Java. As he neared the shore, exhausted, Japanese sailors aboard a small boat threw him a line and dragged him to the beach.

The Japanese transport carrying horses had been sunk during the Battle of Sunda Strait, so the Japanese forced the *Houston* survivors they’d captured, including Howard, to pull supply carts inland from the beach. After reaching Serang, Java, Howard was among the exhausted *Houston* survivors who found themselves crammed into crowded cells of a local jail. There was little food and water. After several weeks, the survivors were transported to “Bicycle Camp” in Batavia where conditions were improved. Marine survivor Fred Quick, Navy survivor Jim Ewing, and Howard even formed a singing trio and entertained fellow prisoners with songs by the Ink Spots and the Mills Brothers.

On October 3, 1942, approximately 1,500 allied POWs, including Howard and 190 other American POWs (USS *Houston* survivors and soldiers of the 131st Field Artillery/2nd Battalion, also known as the “Texas Lost Battalion”) were transported to Singapore in the filthy hold of a hellship. About a week later, other hellships transported the prisoners to Burma where the Japanese forced them to work on the Burma-Thailand Death Railway project. In the tropical heat Howard and his Marine buddy, James “Packrat” McCone, were forced to build railway embankments by hauling dirt using “Yoho” poles attached to rice sacks. When the railway was completed in October 1943, Howard was among the American POWs transported by rail to Thailand, and later to Saigon where the Japanese forced POWs to work on an airfield, and as stevedores at the docks. He was eventually liberated in early September 1945 and airlifted with other American POWs to the 142nd military hospital in Calcutta, India, for recuperation. After a few weeks, Howard was flown to Marine Headquarters in Washington, DC, then to Kansas, where his mother still lived. Throughout his POW incarceration, he had ruminated over how, if he survived, he would confront his stepfather for having beaten him before the war. But when he finally saw his stepfather in Kansas, he couldn’t bring himself to take his revenge out on the aging man. Howard’s wartime years of witnessing so much suffering had changed him; revenge was no longer within him.

Howard's wartime experiences had profound physical and mental effects on the rest of his life. In late 1945, he checked himself in to the Great Lakes Naval Hospital where doctors diagnosed him as having "Battle Fatigue"—what today is known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). After several months of rest, he left the hospital, used the GI Bill, and enrolled in the Journalism school at Northwestern University. There, he met Marti, a young N.U. coed who would become his wife in 1947. The couple had three children between 1948 and 1959.



December 1945

My father was determined to ignore his ongoing PTSD symptoms—mainly nightmares and anxiety—by working hard. He began calling himself by his middle name, Robert, instead of Howard. He worked mainly in public relations until 1960 when he was named Family Home Editor of Parents' Magazine and moved with his family to Connecticut. At night, he would attempt to write a book about his WWII experiences, but the topic caused nightmares and he was forced to shelve the project until some 20 years later. His memoir, Last Man Out was finally completed in the early 1980's and was published in hardback in 1988, and in paperback in 2006. Today, it's available on Kindle. Once his book was finished, his nightmares stopped.

Later in life, though he endured such war-related difficulties as osteoporosis, ulcers, and a heart bypass operation, he never lost his love of writing and penned several (unpublished) books. He also never lost his love of the Marine Corps. Marines who had been with him during the war were some of his closest, life-long friends. The phrase "Once a Marine, always a Marine" fully applied to my father. In 2009 he died at age 90 in Rockwall, Texas, and received full U.S. Marine Corps honors there at his funeral.



The Marine Detachment, USS *Houston* (CA-30), Fall 1941. PFC Charles stands in the third row, 4th Marine to the left. GSGT Walter Standish stands in the third row, 1st Marine on the right. 74 Marines were aboard the *Houston* at the beginning of the Battle of Sunda Strait on February 28, 1942. Only 33 survived the battle and became POWs. By the time the war ended in 1945, only 28 Marines came home.

Notes on news received via email at contact@usshoustons.org and via regular mail...

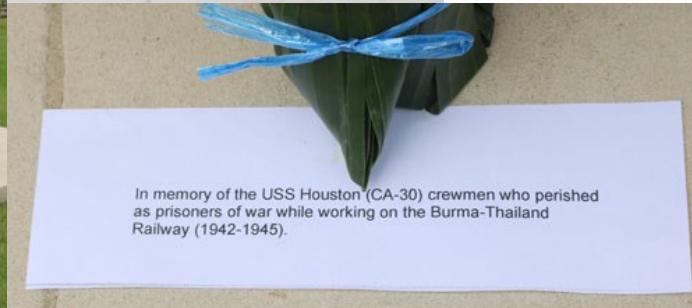
- 8/15/2022: Received the following email from retired Dutch **Vice Admiral Ben Bekkering** in response to our Association's email message regarding VJ Day 2022: "A short reaction from The Netherlands. It is indeed a memorable day. I am about to go to The Hague, where the national commemoration of the end of WW2 for the Kingdom of The Netherlands will take place, in the presence of our prime minister and a considerable (yet smaller and smaller) number of survivors, military and civilian, in a way brothers in arms of the *Houston's* crew... I will represent the Karel Doorman Foundation and as *USS Houston* was part of the Combined Striking Fleet under command of RADM Karel Doorman, in the 1 minute of silence I will also think of the crew of *USS Houston* and their comrades in the British, Australian, and Netherlands ships that fought against an overwhelming force and did so with great honor... I will take the liberty of sending you a few pictures of the event. Although the battle in the Java Sea and Sunda Strait are just small paragraphs in the WW2 history books, to me the history of the sailors of the Combined Striking Fleet should be written in capitals." —Ben Bekkering, VADM, retired, Chairman, Karel Doorman Foundation.
- 8/16/2022: Received the following follow-up email from VADM Bekkering: "As promised, the impressions from the National Commemorations VJ-day in The Netherlands. Our prime minister was there (third wreath-stand from the right) and so were the ambassadors of U.S., U.K., Australia, and Indonesia (See photo at right). It was a well-attended event with people from all walks of life. Broadcast on national television (live), it reached a lot of people. The military was well represented by an honour guard and all the service chiefs. The efforts of the allied navies were mentioned. Lest we forget."
- 10/20/2022: Received the following email from Mindy Kolter: "Dear Mr. Charles, A while back, you were kind enough to share with me a list of the Chinese aboard the *USS Houston*. It looks like the four survivors of the sinking all ended up on the Thai Burma Death Railway. Do you know if they survived? Where were they moved after the work on the Railway was done? Most important, do you know where the Chinese crew came from? Were any American nationals (born on Hawaii or a US territory) or American citizens (born in California)? Thank you again for your time, patience, and help. Sincerely, Mindy Kolter Smith."
- 10/21/2022: In my email reply to Mindy, I explained that 5 Chinese mess attendants of *USS Houston* CA-30 were known to have survived WWII according to a photo in our Association's collection. (Right) I emailed her POW records kept during the war on three of the five men. According to their records, these three survivors all worked on the Burma-Thailand Railway, and had been born in China. For some unknown reason, our Association's survivors list contains only four names, not five. *NOTE: If anyone has any information about any of these survivors, please let me know.* — Dana



Notes From Here and There



20 September 2022: Sandra Norman, daughter of Lance Corporal Arthur W. Cole, 1st Battalion, Cambridgeshire Regiment, HQ Company—a British WWII POW who worked on the Burma-Thailand Death Railway—and her husband, Peter, laid flowers at the base of the cross at the Kanchanaburi War Cemetery in Kanchanaburi, Thailand (See photos at Left) to honor USS *Houston* survivors who perished as POWs while working on the railway. We thank Sandra and Peter for remembering and honoring these men.



Sandra Norma has helped raise funds for the Thailand-Burma Railway Center during the pandemic crisis. Here, Sandra (4th from left, Back Row) poses with the staff of the Center during her September 2022 visit to Kanchanaburi, Thailand.

Notes From Here and There



The *USS Houston* CA-30 Survivors' Association and Next Generation's® Executive Director John K. Schwarz (Right) delivered a Power Point presentation about *USS Houston* and her Survivors to a veterans group in Washington, DC on September 22, 2022. Captain Stacey Prescott, USN, (Left) former U.S. Naval Attaché at the U.S. Embassy, Jakarta, Indonesia, who was recently transferred to Washington, DC, participated in John's presentation.

You Shop, Amazon Gives

By Pam Crispi Moura, Treasurer

Many of us already shop online at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Did you know that Amazon has a program to 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).

SHIP'S STORE HOLIDAY GIFTS!

USS Houston (CA-30) Merchandise!

Email johnk.schwarz@yahoo.com if you desire to place an order.

- USS Houston (CA-30) Challenge Coins – (\$10.00 ea.)
- USS Houston (CA-30) Hats – (\$25.00 ea.)
- USS Houston (CA-30) Large Men's Polos – (\$28.00 ea.) (2) in Navy Blue; (2) in Black; (1) in Red; (1) in Light Green; and (1) in Caribbean Blue.
- (1) Navy Blue USS Houston (CA-30) Woman's Large Embroidered Fleece Jacket— \$45.00 (plus shipping)
- (1) Navy Blue USS Houston (CA-30) Woman's X-Large Embroidered Fleece Jacket— \$45.00 (plus shipping)

Visit our website's 'Ship's Store' at www.usshouston.org/shipsstore.html and see all of the USS Houston CA-30 items!

Order Now while supplies are still available!

USS Houston CA-30 Challenge Coin



Front

Back



USS Houston CA-30 Hats



USS Houston CA-30 Men's Polo Shirts



USS Houston CA-30
Women's Fleece Jackets

Meet your...

Board of Managers

...here to serve you!*



Executive Director: John Schwarz
Son of USN survivor Otto Schwarz and Trudy Schwarz
Association strategy/outreach, Special Projects,
Scholarship Committee, Merchandise
Email: John@usshouston.org



President: Sue Kreutzer
Daughter of USN survivor Paul Papish
Webmaster, archives, membership,
Scholarship Committee
Email: Sue@usshouston.org



Vice President: Dana Charles
Son of USMC survivor Bob Charles
Crew and POW camp records,
Blue Bonnet Editor, researcher, correspondent
Email: Dana@usshouston.org



Treasurer: Pam Moura
Daughter of USN survivor Eugene Crispi
Financial and IRS records,
Scholarship Committee
Email: Pam@usshouston.org



Secretary: Bernice Harapat
Daughter of KNIL POW Survivor Willem Terluin
Special Projects, Scholarship Committee
Email: Bernice@usshouston.org

* The Board of Managers is available to members for questions, concerns, input, or to clarify any matter regarding the Association via email (to contact@usshouston.org), phone, or regular mail.

Membership

Our Association continues to grow as more folks reach us—through such avenues as our websites—and want to know more about the *Houston*, or just simply seek to contribute to the perpetuation of the memory of this gallant warship. To those interested in taking it further and joining our Association: go to www.usshouston.org, click on the “news tab,” scroll to the bottom and review the Association’s bylaws, then click on the link to membership form (<http://www.usshouston.org/memberform.pdf>). After filling out the form, send it in as directed on the form. Our Association is funded through voluntary donations rather than mandatory annual dues. To make a donation, please refer to page one of this newsletter, or review the instructions on the “news tab” of our website.

Association Communication Channels

- Association information, including current and archived newsletter editions, is available at the Association's official website: www.usshouston.org.
- All email correspondence for the Association is directed through: contact@usshouston.org
- The Association’s regular mailing address and phone number is listed on the first page of each issue of the Blue Bonnet newsletter.
- Our Association's only social media presence is on Facebook at: **USS Houston CA-30**.



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

Thank you...!

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

Donations

July 14, 2022 - November 13, 2022

In Memory of David Flynn
Donna Mae Flynn

In Memory of Trudy Schwarz
Donna Mae Flynn

Other Donations

Bernice Harapat

Henry & Jane Matthews

Leland Stewart

Amazon Smile Donations Received YTD: \$96.74

Financial Report

by Pam Moura, Treasurer

January 1 – November 13, 2022

General Fund

Beginning Balance	\$27,589.25
Receipts:	+9,680.78
Expenses:	<u>-6,961.81</u>
Ending Balance:	\$30,308.22



Scholarship Fund

Beginning Balance:	\$21,202.55
Receipts:	+3,101.84
Expenses:	<u>-0.00</u>
Ending Balance:	\$24,304.39



Published by:

USS Houston CA-30 Survivors' Association and Next Generations® (April, August, December)

Editor: Dana Charles

Proofreaders: Pam Moura, John Schwarz, Sue Kreutzer, Bernice Harapat, Marlene McCain.

Distribution: Dana Charles, Pam Moura

Articles or information may be sent to:

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.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

**USS HOUSTON (CA-30) SURVIVORS' ASSOCIATION
AND NEXT GENERATIONS®**

Day of Remembrance 2023

**81st Anniversary of the Loss of
USS *Houston* (CA-30) and HMAS *Perth* (D-29)**

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

Tentative Schedule of Events

March 3-4, 2023

FRIDAY (March 3)

Visit to the University of Houston's M.D. Anderson Library,
Cruiser *Houston* Collection
2:00 p.m.

*A Bus will leave from the DoubleTree promptly at 1:30 p.m. to take guests
to the University. Please be on board by 1:15 p.m.*

Registration/Hospitality	6:00 – 10:00 p.m.	Hospitality
Dinner	6:30 p.m.	Hotel
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Executive Director's Year-end Report Presentation• Keynote Speaker: Anthony Tully, co-author of <u>Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway</u>		

SATURDAY (March 4)

Breakfast	9:00 – 11 a.m.	Hotel
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speaker to be announced		

*Buses will leave from the DoubleTree promptly at 12:30 p.m. to take guests
to Sam Houston Park. Please be on board by 12:15 p.m.*

2023 Memorial Service	1:30 p.m.	Sam Houston Park
Dinner	7:00 p.m.	Hotel

REGISTRATION FORM
81st Anniversary USS *Houston* CA-30 Survivors' Association & Next Generations®

Day of Remembrance
March 3-4, 2023

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

DEADLINE – MUST BE RECEIVED BY FEBRUARY 21, 2023

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: _____

Friday Dinner - 6:30 PM

Pasta Primavera # _____ X \$35.00 = \$ _____

Chicken Boursin # _____ X \$35.00 = \$ _____

Saturday Breakfast – 9:00 AM # _____ X \$33.00 = \$ _____

Saturday Dinner – 7:00 PM

Sonoma Chicken # _____ X \$35.00 = \$ _____

Pan Roasted Salmon # _____ X \$35.00 = \$ _____

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

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

(Received after February 21, 2023)

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

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 Moura, 2065 Sutter View Lane, Lincoln, CA 95648