



USS HOUSTON CA-30 BLUE BONNET

"The Galloping Ghost of the Java Coast"

Editor: Val Roberts-Poss 107 Hallie Ct. Georgetown, TX 78628-1985

Phone 512 763-1217 Fax 512 868-3385

Email: CA30NG@AOL.COM web: www.usshouston.org

Co-editors: Otto Schwarz and Lin Drees

REUNION

USS Houston Survivors and Next Generation

Feb. 26-28, 2004

DoubleTree Hotel – Allen Center

400 Dallas St, Houston, TX 77002

713 759-0202

Toll Free: 800 245-4378

FROM THE SURVIVORS

The following shipmates have joined our crew still standing watch on Sunda Strait:

JACK D. SMITH	10-31-03	Pancreatic Cancer
CLAUDE W. WASHBURN	10-31-03	Heart Failure
LEONARD "DUTCH" KOOPER	11-31-03	Malignant Brain Tumor
SULO SOUMI	12-02-03	Heart Failure

SMITH passed away on October 31, 2003 after a long battle with cancer. He will be remembered.

Lin Drees called to advise that Dutch had fallen at the nursing home and bumped his head. He was sent to the hospital where they found a malignant tumor. He died a few days later on November 31st peacefully with his nephew and friend "Big Mike" by his side.

SOUMI's death is reported as a heart attack on December 2, 2003. We weren't advised when the funeral was held but it was in his wife's home town of Trenton, NJ.

The death of these four shipmates brings our total living survivors to 56.

We were also saddened to hear of the death of Dottie Crispi, wife of shipmate GENE, who passed away on October 7, 2003. Dottie, like all of our dedicated wives, has been a faithful caregiver to GENE.

Again, sad news that Irene Stoddard, wife of GEORGE also died in October. We did not receive details of her death.

BITS N PIECES: I was overwhelmed at the messages received as a result of my medical problems. Trudy and I were also inundated with greetings on our birthdays and anniversary. Words of encouragement, in the form of phone calls and cards, were received from Australia, Honolulu and all parts of the US. It was a humbling experience. There is no way that I could list all your names to thank you personally, but be assured that each and everyone of you are so appreciated and cherished.

It looks like we have another book in the making. All of the survivors have already received a letter of introduction from Jim Hornfischer. Jim, who is from Austin, Texas, has already visited our home twice, Val's home twice, attended the last reunion, is really deep into research for the book, and I am looking forward to a good finished product. During his last visit here he also got to interview Howard Brooks. I am impressed with his work and hope that as many of you who can, will share your experiences with him.

FROM THE SICK BAY: This has been a particularly bad period for the survivors. Looks like our past is catching up to us. I am sure that we all wish peace and happiness for our great shipmate... .. PAUL 'PAP' PAPISH is suffering from cancer and has been in and out of the VA Hospital. Of course the same concerns go to him from all of us... . Likewise, our own LLOYD WILLEY has been our most faithful correspondent from the west coast and he, like the rest of us is experiencing his share of medical problems. LLOYD is approaching 89 and is still determined to make as many reunions as his health will permit... a welcome word from Tom Sledge, who was the pilot who bombed the second convoy carrying our men to the Burma RR... Our Dutch friend Johan van Leer, again a frequent correspondent and caller, sends information regarding the recent reparation payments of L10,000 to all former Japanese POW's and civilian internees. This

could get copies to sell at the reunion, however he had no more copies... . DAVE FLYNN called to tell me about another book he is reading titled, "Seas of Glory" by John Lehman, former Secretary of the Navy. In that book Lehman traces the history of the US naval battles dating back to the late 1700's. Of interest here, he reported that the final naval battle of the war of 1812 was fought in Sunda Strait... ..Jim Hornfischer's newest book, "The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors" is now in print. Johan also reports that "Ships from Hell – Japanese War Crimes on the High Seas by Raymond Lamont-Brown is also available through Edward R. Hamilton, Bookseller, Falls Village, CT 06031-5000 (www.edwardrhamilton.com)

... .. Otto

A Line from Lin -

I hope that you have made plans to attend the 2004 reunion. As always, we will continue to have some of the familiar activities, but introduce some new activities.

This year we will have a surprise guest. John Schwarz was able to make contact with the American engineer who was featured in the PBS documentary that was shown on Wednesday, November 12, as a continuation of the Veteran's Day TV specials. Mr. Bashar Altabba, the American engineer, went to see the railway that our men built as slave labor. Please come to the reunion to hear more of what he has to say - and to see his slides that he took of the rail as it is today. He told of being amazed at the work done by the prisoners, especially considering their weakened condition and the amount of food they received as daily portions. His presentation will be on Friday night after dinner. If you did not see it on TV, you might watch for it again; the title is SECRETS OF THE DEAD: BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI, plus it is available for purchase through PBS. Our own Howard Brooks was featured, as was Fred Seiker who attended our reunion a few years ago. We are tremendously excited that Mr. Altabba will take time to come to our reunion; he hopes to meet as many survivors as are able to be at the reunion -- survivors of both the USS HOUSTON and 131st Field Artillery.

Recently Ron and I drove up to check on Val - and to visit with her (check on her progress since her surgery - and she is amazing - and is regularly taking therapy to continue to improve). While there the Drees and Poss put their heads together and came up with an innovative idea. On Saturday night we will have 2 drawings for money toward reunion expenses. One drawing will be for \$300 for a Survivor (USS HOUSTON or 131st), Spouse, or Surviving Spouse. A second drawing will be for \$100 for a Next Generation (family or friend of the USS HOUSTON). To enter the drawing, you will simply place your name on the back side of your Saturday night dinner ticket if you want to be included in the drawing -- you must have a Saturday night dinner ticket and you must be present in order to be a winner of the money toward your reunion expenses.

Our registration price is at bare bones - the meal prices went up - BUT we are staying right @ the Monument. We were sorry to raise the registration and meal prices. We are offering you the opportunity to save \$5 off your registration - or pay the full registration and consider \$5 as a

??)? We would love to make the auction an annual event - and a chance to add to the coffers of the Scholarship Fund. Please let me know if you would like to bring something to donate toward the auction.

Ron and I take seasonal silk flowers to the Monument – we always take silk poinsettias for December. As always we have bouquets to remember the ones who have passed and to honor the ones who are still living. This year we had a few special bouquets to remember our Men who have just this past year passed away and our Spouses who passed away this year. We also took a bouquet in memory of our Naval Commandery Companions who recently passed away. PLEASE remember if you would like to have any special bouquets to leave at the Monument after the Memorial Service, you are welcome to bring any bouquets.

Ron and I wish everyone a Very Merry Christmas - and a Very Happy New Year. And we hope to see you here in Houston for the 2004 reunion and Memorial Service. Our home address is 14219 Wickersham, Houston, TX. 77077 - phone - 281-493-5171 - my e-mail address is lindrees.usshou-ca30@juno.com.

FROM THE NEXT GENERATION

US NAVY CRUISER SAILORS ASSN – the 2003 Summer edition had a well written story by EMCM WILLIAM STEWART USN, Ret (survivor) titled "My Experience Aboard USS Houston CA-30 in WWII". I will bring a copy to the Houston Reunion 2004 to share with everyone.

IN SEARCH OF:

CHARLES BUTTON S1c (KIA): Al Foltz (cousin) 2105 Sam Bass Rd, Round Rock, TX 78681
Email: foltzara@prodigy.net Al was a little boy when Charles enlisted in Cape Girardeau, MO. As Al remembers, there were 8 men from Cape Girardeau that enlisted at the same time & were assigned to the *Houston*.

JAMES KNOWLTON, GM3c (KIA): Paul Hasley (great nephew) 6713 Devonshire Dr NE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402 (our records show the spelling of KNOWLETON)

Johan van Leer (230 Bay St, #6, Santa Monica, CA 90405, Phone/fax 310 396-3005) is helping me help a man in South Africa help his father (Carl Patterson – Royal Navy/POW in Japan) to find an *Houston* crew member sent to Japan that was a carpenter but can't remember his name...

FOR SALE - Caps \$15, Monument and Bell pins \$2 each, "Death Becomes the Ghost" videos \$15, Avenge the Houston posters \$10, schematic of the HOUSTON \$5 for small, \$10 for large, 60th Anniversary Memorial aboard the USS Blue Ridge video \$15 & Bumper stickers \$2.00.
All PLUS postage

SICK BAY: GENE CRISPI was in the hospital just as the last newsletter was mailed with heart

DONATIONS – Frances Stevens, Viva Wiley, Jo Goff in honor of her brother WILLIAM RUSSELL HAROLD, KIA, LLOYD & Dorothy WILLEY, ADM. ROBERT FULTON, HOWARD & Sylvia BROOKS, Helen & Howard Estes, GUS FORSMAN (“in honor of all the great work that Rachel is doing”), BASIL BUNYARD, MARVIN BAIN, Jimmie Pryor in memory of JB and CHARLIE, Bruce DeWald, Rita Jedinak, Theresa & PAUL PAPIISH in memory of Dottie Crispi, JACK SMITH & CLAUDE WASHBURN, Loretta Del Santro, WILBER SMITH.

GOLD IN NEW GUINEA – (Joyo Indonesia News 8 Oct 03) A villager has found a number of gold bars in rotting wooden crates believed to have been hidden by the Japanese forces during WWII. Reports indicate the secret stash is up to 10 tons of gold.

WHAT’S ON PBS – SECRETS OF THE DEAD: BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI was aired on PBS on November 12th. It showed rare film footage & still pictures of the POW’s in different camps. The entire piece was very well done. Of course, I’m prejudiced because our own Harold Brooks along with our dear & close friend Fred Seiker of England both received top billing. They provided excellent interviews. I have ordered some copies in hopes to have them by the next reunion (they are already back ordered). Check with PBS to catch this great documentary (www.PBS.org)!

MAILBAG - I had a nice call from Mary Martwick (surviving spouse). She had just been released from a two week stay in the hospital but seemed in fine spirits... Jo Goff included a note with her donation that she wants to remain on the birthday card project. A note from BASIL BUNYARD saying he planned to attend the USS Trenton Reunion ('36-'39) in Denver, CO. Francis Stevens, NG found out that MAURICE HURD live nearby & plans to visit... . MARVIN BAIN sent a whopping donation with a note his Rose has been in a nursing home for 3 years now but he’s nearby, in fair health & is still able to play golf at 83... EUGENE CRISPI sends his thanks for all of the cards and calls when Dottie was ill and died... .we will miss her. An email from Marilyn Messler, daughter of GEORGE STODDARD, tells us that Irene, his wife of 57 years died in October. He has since moved to a senior apartment complex where he has made several friends. Family is still nearby to visit often. The family hopes to attend the reunion in February. I chatted on line briefly with PAUL PAPIISH’S son in law. Although Paul has been diagnosed with lung and liver cancer, he’s still planning to attend the February reunion with the family. Jan Bradley, NG kept me posted on John’s stay in the hospital when he had stents put in to alleviate blockage in the heart. He’s back on his feet and busier than ever. Rita Jedinak writes that her nephew found a letter from her brother FRED MILLS, KIA written on USS Trenton stationery. They wonder if someone might have transferred with Fred to the *Houston* from the *Trenton*... . Lt. Col. Terry Beaton, Ret of Australia has sent us a rough draft of “A Traveller’s Guide to the Burma Railway”. It is a fascinating read and we will have copies available at the reunion. Anne DuHaime sent an email from her son’s computer giving her agenda and sending good thoughts - - that girl loves to stay moving! I received a

(pages in your VA or service medical record, final VA ratings determinations, a Purple Heart decoration award citation. Originals will NOT be returned. Documents will not need to be notarized. If you do not have all the required documentation, complete the application as best you can and send it to your Military Service. Applicants are strongly urged not to make their own request to VA and NPRC (National Personnel Records Center) to obtain the necessary information. The Dod has made arrangements with the VA & NPRC to obtain related records. MOAA members may obtain a form and assistance from the MOAA's Member Service Center (800 234-6622). NOTE the update – the veteran needs be retired according to the information I've received. Late breaking news- A compromise between Congress & the White House opened the door for military retirees with service connected disabilities rated at 50% or more to receive full VA disability compensation without a reduction in retired pay over a ten-year phase-in period starting January 2004. It will also extend coverage under last year's Combat-Related Special Compensation Program (CRSC) to disabled retirees with combat or operations-related disabilities rated from 10% - 100%. In both cases, Guard and Reserve retirees with 20 years service will be eligible. This proposal will affect around 200,000 of the approximate 550,000 disabled military retirees.

RESOLUTION OF CLAIMS OF AMERICAN POW'S OF THE JAPANESE ACT OF 2003 -

Also known as HR 2658, Title IX, Section 901 & 903. Note: HR 2658 is registered six different ways but can only be found under HR 2658EAS or HR 2658PP (the other 4 suffix's have no mention of Title IX, etc). Also note that Section 902 is missing/blank/omitted. I had been in touch with my Congressman's office (Chet Edwards) on Aug. 27th with a promise that status of this bill would be investigated. Due to health issues, I wasn't able to follow up until Nov. 19th. I received the cursory apology and was promised that it would be looked into. Bottom line: HR 2568 was passed without mention of Title IX... .. no denial of passage, no vote, no discussions noted. I also emailed the President but have had no response.

USS HOUSTON ASSN. DIVE TEAM – Our USS Houston Assn. Dive Team has poured over the CA-30's blueprints and looked her over for damages several times. The interior walls tend to be in better shape than the exterior because oxygenated water is less likely to continually flow thru the interior walls causing corrosion. However, there is substantial battle damage to the interior walls and movement within interior compartments is extremely hazardous. It is the assessment of the dive team that they found an entrance into the ship that had never been explored before nor was there any evidence that looters had been in this area although, obviously, other areas of the ship have literally been stripped by scavengers over the last 60 decades. Our dive team (which includes assistance from the Naval Attaché from the US Embassy in Jakarta) is very concerned about diving into the HOUSTON primarily because she is a war grave and secondly concerning the safety issues. On October 30th they dove down to the HOUSTON using some new equipment to

into the wall. "A personal piece of memorabilia from a place those men knew as home long ago". David currently has the fan stabilized in salt water at his home in Jakarta and he & the Naval Attaché are now communicating with the curator at the USS Lexington Museum about how to ship it & protect it from corrosion. The Lexington has approximately 200,000 visitors each year and has a display area strictly for the CA-30. David reports that they hope to figure out a way to close off the entrances they found into the hull (or at least post warnings) not only because this is hallowed ground but also because it is "far too dangerous". He reports that "monitoring what is going on to keep looters away is the extent of their future plans". We appreciate David's concerns about the ship and respect for the crewmembers still buried deep beneath the silt. We are especially glad he will fully recover.

OUR LOSSES THIS QUARTER – This has been the hardest quarter yet. I already miss swapping funny emails with Dottie Crispi. We knew that when we went to California this summer that we probably wouldn't see JACK SMITH or DUTCH KOOPER again. But we had hoped to have more time... .. JACK was my man watching our messages posted on our website. He was the first to respond to an inquiry and gave so many NG's peace in their hearts about their loved one. I'd spoken to CLAUDE "SWEETPEA" WASHBURN just once & it was an honor. Although I'd never had the pleasure of meeting Irene Stoddard or SULO SOUMI, they are *Houston* family & we are deeply sorry to learn of their deaths. DUTCH's death has touched us all --- he never failed to remember us on a special occasion with a card or phone call. Those of us that were members of the "Fruitcake Club" will never be able to look at one again without having a rush of warm, sweet memories of him. He may have been a confirmed bachelor but the Navy and especially his fellow shipmates were his family. We NG's were the children he never had. WE were the ones blessed by knowing him.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: BOB O'BRIEN, 68 Magaw Ave, Carlisle, PA 17013. Jean Burroughs, surviving spouse: 100 Christwood Blvd, Apt 255, Covington, LA 70433. GEORGE STODDARD, 7418 Stock Ranch Rd #1114, Citrus Heights, CA 94521. (916 725-2812)

IN CONCLUSION – My back had slowed me down to a snails pace and I finally agreed to surgery on Oct. 1st. The strangest thing happened... ..I had a heart attack somewhere between them sewing me up and getting me to recovery. My blood pressure plummeted. I've been told that they had those paddles ready to shock me back but I was able to avoid it. Our daughter is a nurse, if she wasn't there, Max or Ron Drees was there whenever I opened my eyes. I was bed ridden for 6 weeks and restricted from the computer to 30 minutes – 1 hour a day. I've been told that it will take 6 months to be 80% well. It seems my body rejected being in the hospital and responded by having several complications. I was in the operating room 3 times in 5 days. There were a few times the pain seemed overwhelming (I'm allergic to narcotics) but I'd think of you men being

DID YOU KNOW? On October 30, 1945 the U.S. government announced the end of shoe rationing... .

STORY OF THE SOC'S – Many of our Next Generation are not aware that the USS *Houston* had aircraft aboard. I am taking excerpts out of an article from the U.S. Navy Cruiser Sailors Assn magazine written by AOC Harry Keneman, USN, Ret titled "The Famous Cruiser Aviator's and their SOC's".

"... ..These noble vessels were commissioned into naval service between 1923 and 1925. They were fast little ships, 555 feet long and 55 feet wide, with a gross weight of over 7,000 tons and a maximum speed of 30 knots. They were armed with a main battery of 10 to 12 6"53 rifles and four dual purpose 3"50 guns, two triple 21" torpedo tubes and two 60-foot compressed air aircraft catapults mounted just off the #4 stack.

By the middle to late 30's the cats mounted a pair of SOC-2/3 Seagulls or their equivalent navy manufactured SON-1's. The Seagull was a single float biplane with fabric-covered wings and tail surfaces. It was powered with a 660hp radial engine that gave a cruising speed of approximately 130 knots. Under full power, and slightly down hill, it squeezed out about 165 knots. Its armament consisted of two .30 caliber Browning M-2 machine guns. One fixed mounted under the right cowl just forward of the pilots seat synchronized to fire through the propeller arc. The other, a free scarf-ring mount in the aft seat. The aircraft was also capable carrying a bomb load of two wing mounted 325 pound bombs.

... .. To be continued next issue

LAST MINUTE NEWS – Vic Campbell, our webmaster has people helping him with the design of the side (www.usshouston.org). The person in charge of the Crew Roster has gone off line without warning taking the roster down with her. That means it needs to be rebuilt... .. AND I NEED HELP!!! I have the roster but do not have the stamina to sit at the computer to re-enter this information. I need a volunteer to do it for us.

FINANCIAL REPORT -

DEBITS		CREDITS	
Newsletter Printing	312.75	Previous Balance	\$3915.98
Newsletter Postage	137.05	Donations/sales	2463.30
Phone	394.80		
Postage	174.92		
Supplies	154.19		
Computer service/repair	300.00		
Books	62.50		
Total	\$1536.21	CURRENT BALANCE	\$4842.35

2004 Reunion Information

Doubletree Hotel at Allen Center 400 Dallas St, Houston, TX

Phone 713 759-0202 or 800 245-4378

*remember to advise you're with the USS Houston Survivors Association to receive your discount

Thursday 26 Feb 2004 – Saturday 28 Feb 2004

\$79 room rate – reservation cut off February 13, 2004 @ 5PM

Coffee pot, iron and board, small fridge for Rx upon request

Complimentary chocolate chip cookies at check in

Parkside rooms over look monument – remember to ask for the view!

2 smoking floors

Doubles, kings and handicap accessible – if you need a room near the elevator or a handicapped room please advise the staff

Please be aware that you must cancel your own reservation (or part of your reservation), if you have to cancel - or have to leave early. Please cancel at least 24 hours in advance, or you will be responsible for your original reservation.

Menus

Friday night:

Marsala Chicken - breast of chicken sautéed in a marsala mushroom wine sauce OR

Catch of the Day – Chef's selection of fresh fish topped with a lemon dill sauce

Each meal served with salad, roasted potatoes, steamed vegetables, rolls, butter and double chocolate cake for dessert.

Beverage choices of coffee, decaffeinated coffee, hot or iced tea and water

Saturday Breakfast:

Scrambled eggs, bacon & sausage, potatoes, biscuits & gravy, fresh fruit, warm bakery goods with butter and preserves.

Beverage choices of orange juice, apple juice, coffee, decaffeinated coffee and herbal teas

Saturday night:

Chicken Basil – Grilled chicken topped with a basil cream sauce

London Broil – Marinated steak sliced and topped with a mushroom wine sauce

Each meal served with tomato bisque soup, green beans, scalloped potatoes, warm rolls and butter and strawberry cream cake for dessert.

Beverage choices of coffee decaffeinated coffee, hot or iced tea and water

AGENDA IN A NUTSHELL –

Friday – meet Mr. Bashar Altabba (the American Engineer) from the PBS special SECRETS OF THE DEAD: BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI

Saturday – Meet Miss Rachel Watkins, the young lady that has been scanning our archives at breakfast, Memorial Service at 11 am, reception at the hotel hosted by the University of Houston, Saturday evening announce the first *USS Houston* scholarship recipient and auction for the scholarship fund.

HOTEL REMINDERS FROM LIN

To make your reservations, please call the downtown DoubleTree Allen Center at 1-800-245-4378 (local number is 713-759-0202), and ask for the USS HOUSTON Survivor's Association discount. The room rate is \$79 per night. Please request any special needs, e.g., non-smoking, handicapped, near an elevator, whatever your needs are. This rate will be available for pre- and post-reunion dates. Doubles and kings are available at the rate; other rooms should also be discounted. Please be aware that you must cancel your own reservation (or part of your reservation), if you have to cancel - or have to leave early. Please cancel at least 24 hours in advance, or you will be responsible for your original reservation. Also remember to request the "park" side of the hotel if you wish to view the Monument from your hotel room, BUT please remember that this request will be honored only if the "park" side rooms are available when you check-in. If you wish to arrive on the 26th (Thursday), we usually have an "early bird" reception.

A request, please **DO NOT** make your reservations over internet - or through some other discounted service. We make our contract based on everyone paying the USS HOUSTON discounted rate -- and the hotel promises us complimentary services and perks, e.g., complimentary use of the hospitality suite - use of a piano (yes, the singing can continue). A complimentary shuttle will be available for trips downtown, plus for those unable to make the walk from the hotel to the Monument for the Memorial Service. Last year, the Hilton did roll over the internet rates to make up our needed quota for the complimentary perks -- we might not be as lucky this year. SO PLEASE make all reservations with the hotel.

The DoubleTree is on the shuttle route and is a stopping point for the shuttle; \$19 from Bush/Intercontinental and \$14 from Hobby (one way); these rates are subject to change.

AND REMEMBER, the Monument is right across the street - and within walking distance (a long block) so it will be an excellent opportunity to visit the Monument (but only during business hours as The Heritage Society locks the gates at 3 or 4 each day).

CALL THE HOTEL AND REGISTER TODAY!

REGISTRATION FORM

USS HOUSTON Memorial Service/Reunion February 26-28, 2004

Room Reservations MUST be made by YOU

PLEASE PRINT

Name _____

Home Address: _____

Phone: _____

Office phone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Relationship to the HOUSTON (survivor, spouse, NOK, 131st survivor, friend):

Friday night dinner 6:30PM	#Chicken_____	#Fish_____
Saturday Breakfast 8:00 AM	# _____	
Saturday night dinner 6:30PM	#Chicken_____	#Beef_____

Dinner Friday \$28 x # eating	_____	=\$_____
Saturday Breakfast \$14 x # eating	_____	=\$_____
Saturday Dinner \$28 x # eating	_____	=\$_____
Registration \$20 per person x #	_____	=\$_____
Hotel Van to Memorial Service	_____ no. of seats needed	
TOTAL		\$_____

NOTE: LATE MEAL REGISTRATION – AFTER FEBURARY 7 - \$5 PER MEAL

TOTAL LATE REGISTRATION \$ _____

Please include a check for the total cost (your check is your receipt)

Make payable to: USS Houston – Next Generation
 Send to: Val Poss
 107 Hallie Ct.
 Georgetown, TX 78628

**USS HOUSTON CA-30 SURVIVORS
AND NEXT GENERATION
INVITES YOU**

**The USS Houston Survivors and Next Generation
would be pleased to have you join us
as we honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice
for their country 62 years ago.**

**The survivors of the USS Houston CA-30, friends and loved ones
gather to honor those who perished in battle at Sunda Strait
that fateful pre-dawn night of March 1, 1942.**

**Those to be also remembered will be our staunch allies –
the Australians, British and Dutch
who fought and perished in the sea battles
and in captivity while serving in the short lived ABDA Fleet.**

**Saturday 11am
February 28, 2004
USS Houston CA-30 Monument
Sam Houston Park
Houston, Texas**