



**USS HOUSTON CA-30 BLUE BONNET
"The Galloping Ghost of the Java Coast"**

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**USS HOUSTON CA-30 SURVIVORS ASSOCIATION
AND NEXT GENERATIONS REUNION**

March 5-7, 2009 – Thurs - Sat

Doubletree- Allan Center 400 Dallas St, Houston, TX 77002

713 759-0202

Advise you are with the USS Houston group for the \$89 per night rate

Have your credit card ready to provide billing information

Contact: Val Poss 512 989-0000

Email: CA30NG@aol.com

Please register early – you can always cancel later to avoid no rooms available if you wait too late!

FINANCIAL STATUS – The March & June quarters hit us pretty hard. I emailed our NG's & friends that we had \$994 in donations & bills totaling \$2574.32 from March to June. At that rate, we'd be just about done by summer's end. Although I advised I can no longer accept names from the membership to send complimentary newsletters, the NG's & friends responded & we're back in business. A HUGE thank you to one and all!! Our overhead isn't JUST the newsletter & without donations & we've cut the dead weight at every corner. Otto told me that whenever the funds got thin, all he had to do was send out the word – just as he predicted, the NG's stepped up to the plate. I'm SO proud of this organization! Please note that all monies donated to the scholarship fund are used entirely towards scholarship & **not** mingled with the kitty that pays the bills.

THE NATIONAL PURPLE HEART HALL OF HONOR – Please remember to submit information about your recipient to PO Box 207, Vails Gate, NY 12584 (877 28HONOR) to have their name entered in the Hall of Honor. Provide proof of receipt of the Purple Heart, a short story how it was earned and a 8x10 picture.

STATUS OF DVD'S – Matt & Jane Matthews have sent DVD's (converted from our video archives) to: University of Houston, Naval Historical Center in DC, US Navy Memorial in DC, USS Lexington in Corpus Christi, TX, National POW Museum in Andersonville, GA, Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg, TX, National WWII Museum in New Orleans, LA, Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland, GA & George Washington University.

WHO SHINES THE SHIP'S BELL? – An old Navy tradition has it that the ship's cook shines the ship's bell & the ship's bugler shines the ship's whistle. This tradition may still be observed in some of the ship's modern Navy. However, in normal practice, the ship's bell is maintained by a man of the ship's division charged with the upkeep of that part of the ship where the bell is located.

REMINDER: **Last Stand of USS Houston** and **Battle of The Java Sea** will soon be available on www.amazon.com and on wwwcreatespace.com for inexpensive download to own (on your computer) and download to rent (cheaper still). Soon, Vic Campbell have the links. Soon you can just search amazon and they will be there beside the same titles as DVDs (or on createspace.com which is owned by amazon anyway). With amazon "UNBOX" you can download to TIVO to watch on your TV.

FROM DOWN UNDER – The new walkway (194 steps/12 stories) has been completed at Hellfire Pass. It was designed to provide safe access & minimal intrusion on environment. Planting to regenerate the area around the walkway started in July. The new walkway provides spectacular views during the descent into the pass. The Dept. of Veteran's Affairs, Office of Australian War Graves is working with the Thai government to determine the removal of the now unsafe access. We are very sad to learn of HMAS Perth survivor Chilla Goodchap's death on July 2nd. Chilla overcame two previous bouts of cancer over the years; however this 3rd time took him. We send our condolences to the family. I gathered the addresses of the HMAS PERTH survivors & sent advance information about the Veteran's Day service in Hawaii. Unfortunately, November 11th is their Remembrance Day & have sent letters explaining they have other obligations. We thank them for wishing us a successful function.

CAMP MABRY – The Texas Military Forces Museum is redesigning the area. I have been assured the Lost Battalion room & displays will remain. However, most of the items on display have not been formally gifted or loaned. I went to Camp Mabry and took inventory of the items that needed to be gifted, loaned or retrieved. I've mailed the forms to our USS Houston survivors, widows and next of kin with exception to Irving Felix, George Hendrick, Fred Howard, Maurice Hurd & Walter Schneck. If anyone knows of the whereabouts of the NOK please contact me so I can send the proper paperwork. If not, the museum will "inherit" it. I've emailed the information of Lost Battalion items to Gail Bialas (LB NG/newsletter editor) to take care of their items on display since I don't have an updated roster & we don't have the finances in the Houston kitty for the additional postage & stationery expenses.

US NAVY MEMORIAL – In our previous Bluebonnet, I advised we were working with these folks to acknowledge the 13 Navy battles between Pearl Harbor & the Battle of the Coral Sea left out of their memorial...as if the **Houston** & Asiatic Fleet never existed. I've been learning a lot about how they function. I'll give a FULL report in the next Bluebonnet & don't expect great news....

NOW HEAR THIS!

Scholarship Program - Applications are accepted beginning June 1 with the deadline for submission extending to November 1. Applications and specific information about applying may be obtained anytime by visiting our website or writing a request to: John Keith Schwarz, 2500 Clarendon Blvd Apt 121, Arlington, VA 22201 The '08 -'09 scholarship will be in the amount of \$ 2,500.00

**** Please remember that donations are appreciated - You can remember the USS Houston Scholarship Fund in your will, estate planning, or beneficiary designations. All donations are tax deductible.** Donations should be made out to: USS Houston CA-30 Survivors Association & Next Generations. Mail Donations to: Mrs. Pam Foster, 370 Lilac Ln., Lincoln, CA 95648

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM UPDATE TO THE 'HOUSTON FAMILY':

Your Scholarship Committee has re-affirmed its commitment to continue both external and internal fund raising to accumulate a benchmark level of \$50,000.00. This is of the utmost importance; it would ensure that someone can receive an annual scholarship in the name of, because of and in memory of the men of the USS Houston CA-30 literally, forever. It makes the scholarship one additional element that forever can contribute to the perpetuation of the memory of men and ship. The \$50,000.00 base line level insures that capital funds can be 'frozen' and will never go below that amount as the scholarship award can be offered off interest earned. From that point on- additional capital obtained beyond the \$50,000.00 means a larger scholarship award (more capital- more interest earned meaning a larger scholarship award). To achieve this goal, your Committee will continue targeted external fund raising. We continue to do this, but it is a very difficult proposition as we have to compete with thousands upon thousands of others making plea's for donations themselves.

*To achieve this goal, we have asked all of our 'Houston Family' to consider making a \$100.00 donation during this year, but preferably by Sept. 01. By so doing, we would make our goal ourselves even if we receive not a penny from external sources.

*We thank the 17 folks whom have already made the \$100.00 donation.

*Please consider acting on this internal plea. One hundred dollars, a great way to defer a piece of the U.S. economic recovery plan check.

*Remember- all donations are completely tax deductible.

*You may also supply leads of any prospective donors to the Committee fund raising Team (Jane Mathews, John Kreutzer, Pam Foster, Jo Klenk, John K. Schwarz, Scotty Ingram) who will follow through to make a formal plea to that external person/business/organization (unless you prefer to do it yourself).

Scholarship fund balance as of June 23, 2008, is \$40,546.75. Less than \$10,000.00 to go!

SCHOLARSHIP AUCTION AT NEXT REUNION – The well has run dry here & we will need people to bring something for the Scholarship Auction. Be creative – think WW III!

PLEASE REMEMBER – If you want to view the archives at U of H, like all museums, you **MUST** submit a request well in advance (preferably 2 weeks or more). The folks at U of H will kindly help you thru the process of a written request for whatever specific items you wish to view. Their web site provides a catalogue of donated items to choose from. In your request, you will need to list the items you are interested in viewing so they can go down into the area where our items are preserved according to high standards & have them available to you when you arrive at our appointment time.

DONATIONS - Again, many thanks for your generosity! Nancy Morrow, John Waller, Marilyn Vandever, Linda Eakes, BASIL BUNYARD (twice), Pam & Richie Foster, Audrey & HARRY KELLEY, John Grobey, Bruce Dewald, John & Susan Kreutzer, Lee Robinson, Susan & Larry Krug, Donia Burroughs, Sharron Long, Allen Crispi, Nancy Adams, Steve Barrett, Jay Hannah in memory of EARL HUMPHREY, Trudy Schwarz, Howard Zabler, Audie Lynch, Terry Jones, Col. Tom Sledge, Joseph Lochner, Carol Pullen, Betty Miles, Mary Fort, Ron & Chrisy Larivee, Donna Chestnut in memory of her uncle OC MCMANUS, Donna McManus in memory of her father OC MCMANUS, Marilyn Messier, Dan Stoddard, Don Cherry, Ray Massey, Jean Lansing, Bridget McMaster, Dr. Joseph Connolly, Robert Moga. Tax ID# 74-2814051 for your tax deductions.

STORY OF THE CROSS – (by survivor WILLIAM STEWART) While POW (Japan) winter of 1944 our group received some Red Cross Aid packages. Both food and clothing were included. In the clothing part was an Army turtle neck wool sweater. The man who got it found a small card in the sleeve. The card held a small cross about ½ inch long and gold enameled. The card had a brief Bible Verse. Jerry Bunch our RM1/c was shown the item.

A month later Jerry came to me (in the storage battery department) and had a piece of cardboard in his hand. On it were two replicas of the little cross that was packed in the sleeve of the sweater. He told me he had six of them out of a Dutch half guilder coin (about the size of our quarter). He said if I was interested, take my choice and give the other one to Sgt. (Can) Laidlaw. I took them, thanked him for them, took my choice and gave the other to Sgt. Laidlaw.

Sgt. Laidlaw and I agreed to wear them and not use any foul language while we were wearing them. Took a while but it worked real well. We assumed that eventually we would return home and we wanted to be able to speak respectable language when we got there. I didn't wear it much after I got home – didn't really need it.

A bunch of years later Mary and I went to Virginia Beach to visit with Jerry and Mary Lou. There we got acquainted with their daughters Judy and Susie. A month later Jerry died in an auto accident.

A few years later I decided that little cross needed a better home than mine. At one of our reunions I gave it to Judy Bunch (Jerry's oldest). She was at the next table down from where we were. Before I could get back to my chair she came to where I was and gave me a real big hug. After she left one of the men at our table asked me what did I give her or tell her that brought that on. I told them the story.

I tried to find one the other five to see if they would like to give it to Suzie. Sgt. Laidlaw didn't remember getting his. I never found one.

I had one other item that Jerry made – a CPO pin. He gave it to me and told me to wear it when I made chief. I did just that. Long after I retired I wasn't wearing it so I sent it to Susie.

I thank our Lord I had two items that Jerry made to give to his two daughters.

BOOKS – "Hell under the Rising Sun" (Texan POWs and the Building of the Burma-Thailand Death Railway by Kelley E. Crager tells of the Lost Battalion's ordeal. Information can be found at <http://www.tamu.edu/upress/BOOKS/2008/crager.htm>

VA BENEFITS FOR EX-POWS (by Dana Charles) -

Today, qualifying former American Prisoners of War and their spouses are entitled to receive special veterans' benefits from the US Government, including a full 100% Disability rating payment of \$2,287.00 (tax-free) per month.

Widows of Ex-POWS who qualify can also receive special benefits as well.

The American Ex-Prisoners of War Association (AXPOW) can help Ex-POWS and family members apply for benefits or get an Ex-POW'S rating increased to the full 100%.

AXPOW has a group of Ex-POW volunteers called National Service Officers (NSOs), located throughout the country, who have been trained to help Ex-POWS present claims to the VA. There is no charge. Membership in AXPOW is not required to receive this assistance.

AXPOW is urging former POWs or widows of former POWs, who are not currently receiving benefits or are not at the 100% rating, to seek help from NSOs.

See AXPOW website for more information. www.axpow.org.

WHEN TO SALUTE.... By NOUS Commander General Ken Johnson CAPT,USN (Ret) - Title 4, United States Code section 9 has been amended by the latest National Defense Authorization Act (NADAA FY 2008), *so that all active and retired members of the armed forces may render the military salute while out of their respective service uniform.* All other persons should face the flag & stand at attention with the right hand over the heart, or if applicable, remove any headdress with the right hand & hold it at the left shoulder, with hand over the heart.

BACK PAY FOR PROMOTION – This is **NOT** to be confused with bills SR 3107 and HR 6497. I contacted my Congressman, Dept. of the Navy, Marine Headquarters, Department of Defense or Pentagon asking if those checks will or will not be taxed. These checks were back pay for promotion according to rank, length of time as a POW, etc. for Navy/Marine personnel. The Dept. of Defense FINALLY replied & I sent a special mail out to our survivors & widows in regards to taxation on the Back Pay for Promotion. I'm still shocked this wasn't considered combat pay (tax free). However, it's considered "interest" since the check calculations were based on "changes on the Consumer Price Index).

S 3107 & HR 6497 – These bills are to provide \$20K across the board, tax free) to survivors & widows both civilian & military held as POW's who were forced to perform slave labor by the Imperial Government of Japan or by corporations of Japan during World War II like other Allied countries have done. PLEASE – write your senators. If you need further information, contact me!

QUARTERLY REPORT – First and foremost, I'm forever grateful for the hard work our volunteers have done. Without their help, this organization would essentially be a "club" OR non existent. As soon as this letter goes out, I'll be balancing the books in preparation to turn in our report to the IRS. John Schwarz has kept me in the loop about some exciting new options for our scholarship's future & funding for generations to come --- not until the last man is gone but FOREVER. Susan Krug has helped tremendously arranging for an informal wreath laying at our monument on the Overlook at the Punchbowl National Cemetery where many of our boys that died in the POW camps are now interred. I've been taking care of some details for the Hawaii trip – a breakfast Veteran's Day morning at the Hale Koa, transportation to attend the wreath laying & service aboard the USS MISSOURI & a special tour for our survivors, spouses, widows & their escorts. Unfortunately the USS HOUSTON SSN 713 is undergoing repairs & a tour of a like submarine fell thru. I've tried to keep you in the loop about the new bills our politicians are looking at (S 3107 & HR 6497), beating down doors trying to get information about the taxation on the Back Pay for Promotion – or not, trying to rustle up donations from the NG's since the kitty was going flat (a huge THANK YOU to our NG's for solving that problem), special mail outs to our survivors and widows keeping them informed about the BFPF & those 2 bills, plus updating our membership names, addresses, etc. By the time you read this, I will be leaving for DC to be the voice of our survivors & widows in this last effort to pass S3107. I will not use our kitty money – this is out of my pocket. However, I've received 3 checks from survivors that will allow me to sleep in a hotel room most of the nights I'm there & I send my heartfelt thanks! Trudy & I will be roomies so we'll only have to sleep under a bridge! (just joking – I think....) Trudy & John Schwarz along with Silvia & HOWARD BROOKS will also be there.

UNITED STATES NAVAL ORDER OF THE UNITED STATES - Good news about the Pearl Harbor Memorial Fund. The fund has reached its goal of raising \$50 million to rebuild the Pearl Harbor Visitor's Center and Museum. Ground breaking is expected later this year. Approximately \$30 million was raised from individuals and corporations who have graciously and unselfishly supported this effort. \$20 million came from the US Navy thanks to the efforts of Captain George Sullivan, USN Ret. (a submariner) who has passionately lead the Pearl Harbor Committee for the last five years, working with Senator Daniel Inouye to get legislation passed that allowed the Navy to commit \$20 million of allocated but unused funds to the Pearl Harbor project. Interestingly \$14 million of the \$20 million came from funds that were allocated but not needed in the rebuilding of the USS Cole.

Line from Lin

Hello - from **HOT** Houston - actually June was much hotter - and we have now finally received some rain!

2009 Reunion - Every year, Val and I try to find something new and special. Last week I received a phone call from a Survivor's son with an idea - I cannot tell you his idea at this time because it has not been approved by my event coordinator with the City of Houston. Nor have any of the details been worked out - but it is exciting!

2008 Lost Battalion Reunion - I extracted this report from a report sent to me by Val; it was written by Pat Cadenhead, Next Generation, 131st.

The 64th Annual Lost Battalion Reunion was held at the Omni Hotel in Farmers Branch August 14-17, 2008. Attendance was good, although there were only 17 Survivors present: Dan Buzzo, Bob Charles-Marine, Rufus Choate, Carl Clements, Jack Feliz-Navy, Frank Ficklin, David Flynn-Navy, Eddie Fung, Quaty Gordon, Robert Hanley-Navy, J. W. Hoover, Hook Matthews, Luther Prunty, George Ray, Eldridge Rayburn, Warren Robertson, and J. L. Summers. The men not marked as Navy or Marine are all 131st Survivors.

The following wives were in attendance: Hazel Anderson, Wanda Clark, Marie Feliz-Navy, Leeta Ficklin, Donna Flynn-Navy, Judy Yung, Frankie Gordon, Rosalie Gregg, Eileen Hanley-Navy, Rita Hoover, Marcella Hurd-Navy, Dottie Johnson, Sycily Lattimore, Hazel Leatherwood, Pauline Long, Marie Matlock, Gladys Matthews, Hortense Offerle, Nita Ogle, Dorothy Prunty, Jimmie Pryor-Marine, June Rayburn, Lee Robinson-Marine, Ozella Solomon, Rene Spencer, and Mariel Summers. Numerous others and Next Generation rounded out the group having a great time. Also in attendance as always was our own Tom and Imogene Sledge. Tom was presented with a model of his B24 that he flew and is infamous for being a "lousy" shot in the war gifted by Max & Val Poss although they couldn't attend. Then there are Fred and Bette Haring, who are our every year attendants also. This year Fred was the guest speaker at the Memorial Service and what a great job he did.

Everyone said the highlight of the weekend was when they were "kidnapped" right after breakfast Saturday morning and taken to the 12th floor. There they were held by two Army "guards" til 10:00 when we used all the elevators and began bringing everyone to the main floor. It took three elevators two trips, but then when they were "released" to exit and begin walking to the front door of the hotel---they were escorted by a bagpiper through an honor line of Patriot Guard Riders, flanking both sides of the hall to the driveway of the hotel. The Omni had graciously set up chairs and blocked off both driveways for us, provided staff to assist our *Heroes* to their seats where they were further honored by more Patriot Guard Riders and a 40 foot trailer holding a Liberty Bell flanked by The Ten Commandments. Bill Crow (one of the PGR) opened the ceremony and welcomed everyone. Then David Hall explained the bell, and then tolled it one time for each of our 9 survivors we lost this year. Then each Survivor was introduced and presented with a PGR challenge coin by a PGR. At that time Bill and David helped each Survivor come forward and ring the Liberty Bell, salute and touch the bell. Then the bagpiper led everyone to the Memorial Service through the lines of Flags, which followed us to the Service and flanked the walls of the room for the entire service. At the end of the Service, the Bagpiper played, came forward and bowed to the arch containing the flags of our departed Heroes. It was quite a morning. Many thanks to Pat for such an excellent report. **Also in attendance were the following:**

Judy Bunch, daughter of Jerry Bunch-Navy; Dana Charles and his sister Susan and her husband, son and daughter of Bob Charles-Marine; Walter Rommell Grice and his friend, Gwen, son of Walter Grice-Marine; Lank Pryor, JoAnn Wychopen and her husband, Bobby, and David Pryor and his wife, Anessa, daughter, 2 sons, and many grandchildren and spouses, plus one great-grandchild of Charley Pryor-Marine, plus Bea and Jack Ridings, sister and brother-in-law of Jimmie Pryor; Judy Robinson, daughter of Marvin Robinson-Marine, Sonny Smith, son of Walter O. Smith-Navy; Ben Stefanek, brother of John Stefanek-Navy, plus several friends of Ben.

Jimmie Pryor again wins the prize for the largest number of family members in attendance!

(this list was put together with a list sent from JoAnn Wychopen, Next Generation - please forgive me if I missed anyone)

Please remember to call the Doubletree in Houston to reserve your room for the 2009 Reunion / Memorial Service week-end, March 5, 6, and 7 - come early and stay through Sunday, the 8th, in order to be able to enjoy the closing Saturday night dinner and events. We have a full schedule planned. See Val's notes as to the telephone number of the hotel.

Feel free to call or write or email - Lin Drees, 14219 Wickersham, Houston, TX 77077, 281.493.5171, <lindrees.ca30@sbcglobal.net>. Your suggestions are always welcome.

Ron and I both wish you a wonderful autumn season.

THE "OTHER RAILWAY" – Information provided by survivor of this project: George Duffy

Subject was on Sumatra. Pakan Baroe to Moearo. 137.5 miles.

Purpose - To connect Singapore with port of Padang on the Indian Ocean via existing rail line between Moearo and Padang.

Work commenced May 1944 and final spike was driven on August 15, 1945.

Only use was to carry former prisoners from outlying camps to headquarters camp at Pakan Baroe.

Work force - about 5,000 of which only 15 were Americans, including 1 from *Houston* (a marine named Miller), 1 from the 131st F.A. (a sergeant named Harrelson) and 13 merchant seamen. Of the latter, 3 died from complications arising from malnutrition.

In addition, a ship carrying 4,300 Javanese boys and 2,200 Allied prisoners was torpedoed near the above mentioned Padang. They were destined to work on the railway.

Only about 200 of the Javanese survived, and 723 of the prisoners. Lost were 2 131st men, 1 U.S. Navy officer, and 5 U.S. merchant seamen.

I was in one of the first groups taken out of Java up to Singapore and thence to Pakan Baroe in two different, small ships, thus avoiding the dangerous Indian Ocean. Once there I worked out of 6 different camps along the line. We all suffered from malaria. I kept a calendar and noted on it 7 attacks between January 2 and August 11, 1945.

In all, almost 700 men died in the construction of what turned out to be useless.

A BLUE SEA OF BLOOD, by our USS Houston historian, Don Kehn – about the USS Edsall (DD-219), of the Asiatic & ABDA fleets, and the only ship to directly engage VAM Nagumo's mighty carrier force, *Kido Butai* – the same force that attacked Pearl Harbor. Due out in December 2008.

FINANCIAL REPORT – A breakdown is available upon request. Tax ID # 74-2814051. Send donations to USS Houston CA-30, 2501 Amen Corner, Pflugerville, TX 78660 to receive a receipt for tax deductions purposes. Scholarship Fund: Previous balance \$37,760.35. Please remember we'll be providing a \$2,500 scholarship in March. Organization "kitty" - \$2013.19.

LAST MINUTE NEWS – We were never able to talk to David Faltot (previous diver) in regards to an item removed by his dive team several years ago. After MANY years, Rod Beattie, curator at the Kanchiniburi Museum, Thailand has finally been able to find the name of the American GI in an unidentified grave. The USS Rentz CO has not reported back about their planned remembrance over the USS Houston.

NAVAL BATTLES BETWEEN PEARL HARBOR TO THE BATTLE OF THE CORAL SEA – provided by our USS Historian, Don Kehn (note battles 1, 3,4 & 6-11 involve Asiatic Fleet vessels) Interestingly – none are reported at the US Navy Memorial

- 1.) Battle of Balikpapan January 23, 1942 (4 Asiatic Fleet flushdeckers;
first USN surface action since the Spanish- American War)
- 2.) Raids on the Marshall & Gilbert Islands Feb 1, 1942
- 3.) Battle of the Flores Sea - Feb 4, 1942 (CA-30, MARBLEHEAD, DeRUYTER & others)
- 4.) Battle of Bandoeng Strait (Bali) Feb 20, 1942 (Asiatic Fleet DDs & Dutch ships)
- 5.) Raid on Marcus & Wake Islands Feb 21-March 4, 1942
- 6.) The LANGLEY Operation Feb 27, 1942
- 7.) Battle of the Java Sea Feb 27-28, 1942 (ABDA Striking Force)
- 8.) Battle of Sunda Strait Feb 28/March 1, 1942 (CA-30 & HMAS PERTH)
- 9.) Action Off Cape Puting March 1, 1942 (HMS EXETER, HMS ENCOUNTER, & USS POPE sunk)
- 10.) Loss of the PECOS 1 March, 1942
- 11.) The Sea Battle Off Tjilatjap USS EDSALL (DD-219) vs. *Kido Butai* (the only surface action by a USN vessel against the Japanese carrier force which struck Pearl Harbor)
- 12.) Raids on Lae & Salamaua, New Guinea March 10, 1942
- 13.) The Doolittle Raid on Japan April 18, 1942

QUOTE FROM GEORGE WASHINGTON:

“ Americans will die on their feet before living on their knees”

GOD BLESS AMERICA!!!