



Now Hear This!

Association Address:

c/o John K. Schwarz, Executive Director
2500 Clarendon Blvd., Apt. 121
Arlington, VA 22201

Association Phone Number:

703-867-0142

Address for Tax Deductible Contributions:

U.S.S. Houston Survivors' Association
c/o Pam Foster, Treasurer
370 Lilac Lane,
Lincoln, CA 95648

(Please specify which fund – General or Scholarship)

Association Email Contact:

Contact@USSHouston.org

Association Founded 1946:

by Otto and Trudy Schwarz

U.S.S. Houston (CA-30) and H.M.A.S. Perth Honored at "Day of Remembrance"



March 5, 2016 (L to R): Trudy Schwarz, Eunell Weissinger, Donna Mae Flynn, and Teresa Reilly present a wreath during the annual U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Service in Houston, Texas. (Photo by Tim Joseph).

In This Issue...

- Day of Remembrance 2016 / 1, 2, 3, 4
- Desk of Executive Director / 5
- SSN-713 Crewmen Honor CA-30 / 6
- 74th Anniversary Observances / 7, 8
- You Shop, Amazon Gives / 8
- 2016 Scholarship Recipients / 9
- Lost Battalion Assoc. Reunion / 9
- CL-81 Reunion / 9
- Scholarship Committee / 10
- Mailbag / 11, 12
- Geert Visser's Farewell Message / 12
- Death Railway Maintenance / 13
- NGs Visit the Burma-Thailand RR / 13

In This Issue...cont.

- P. T. Gans Remembered / 14, 15
- Howard Brooks' Interviews / 16
- Notes From Down-under / 17, 18
- Sales Items / 19
- Membership / 20
- Association Websites / 20
- In Memoriam / 21
- Financial Report / 22
- Thanks to Donors / 22
- Masthead / 22

Approximately 150 people, including 4 survivors' widows, gathered under sunny skies for the 21st annual Memorial Service at the U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Monument in Houston, Texas on Saturday, March 5, 2016 to remember the crews of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) and H.M.A.S. *Perth* (D-29), which were lost 74 years ago during the March 1, 1942 Battle of Sunda Strait.

Speakers at the Service included: City of Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner; RADM Samuel Cox, USN, Director, the Naval History and Heritage Command, and Curator of the U.S. Navy; Marine
(Continued on the next page)



(Continued from Page 1)

MSGT Steve Cutrer, USMC (Ret.), grandson of the late U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivor William Weissinger; Carlo B.J.E. van den Berg, COL Royal Netherlands Marine Corps, and Naval Attaché and Assistant Defense Attaché to the USA and Mexico; Jos Wellink, Honorary Consul of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; and Chuck Hewell, P.E., CAPT, USN (Ret.). “The Invincible Eagle Band,” led by



March 5, 2016: Executive Director John K. Schwarz served as MC during the annual Memorial Service.

PNC Charles E. Grabein, USN (Ret.), provided excellent music. Gil Raynor gave the Invocation, and Ken Espinosa provided the Benediction. CMDR Andrew Schroder, RAN led the recitation of “The Ode.” Matt Rejmaniak led the singing of the “National Anthem,” “America the Beautiful,” and “God Bless America.” Marines of the Marine Corps League, McLamore Detachment provided a rifle salute. The U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, Houston Division ably provided the “Parade of the Colors,” the “Pledge of Allegiance,” assistance at the annual wreath-laying ceremony, and more. Carter Conlin, past Commander General, NOUS, recited the “Navy Hymn.” Roy and Darlene Gideon again provided cookies, coffee, and water. For the first-time ever, a representative from Indonesia, Consul General Saroinsong, attended the Service and participated in the wreath-laying ceremony. The 2016 annual Memorial Service was the featured highlight of a successful “Day of Remembrance”—a newly revamped one-day format, which was adopted this year by the Association’s Board of Managers in response to the realities of our Association’s aging membership. In making the changes in 2016 the Board noted that not only were no survivors able to attend last year’s traditionally 2-day-long reunion, but also that many “Next

Generationers,” some who are now retired or semi-retired, found the cost of attending a 2-day-long reunion burdensome. So, in order to both reduce costs, and to redefine the weekend event—which is no longer a “survivors’ reunion,” with time set aside for the survivors to visit and share their common wartime experiences—the Board eliminated one day of hotel expenses for most attendees, and renamed the event “Day of Remembrance.” The Doubletree-Houston Galleria was selected this year as the main location—where each attendee enjoyed a suite-sized room, and the lobby and its adjacent bar and small restaurant served as our place to gather socially!

Included in this year’s schedule were excellent speakers on Friday night and Saturday morning who did a tremendous job of updating us on Scholarship Winners (including two this year); the ongoing activities of the Association; the U.S. Navy’s work with Indonesian and Australian officials to find ways to protect the remains of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) and H.M.A.S. *Perth* (D-29) from salvaging; and the continuing efforts of the University of Houston Library’s “Cruiser *Houston* Collection” and the Houston Maritime Museum to feature the story of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) and her gallant crew. In addition, SGT Steve Waldner, USMC (Ret.) presented the Association with two WWII-era scrapbooks which he acquired at a local yard sale! (Thanks, Steve!) Tim Joseph was again on hand to photograph the event. Be sure to take a look at his excellent photos! (Thank you, Tim!)

As for expenses for the 2016 “Day of Remembrance,” I am happy to report: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED. For the first time in recent memory, our receipts exceeded our expenses! So, the 2016 “Day of Remembrance” was self-supporting! As for other cost savings, the gracious staff at the Houston Maritime Museum recently helped us eliminate our monthly storage facility expense by providing us with space to store our Association’s Memorial Service paraphernalia. (Many thanks to the staff at the Museum!)

The Board is already looking ahead to next year—a very special anniversary: It will be 75 years since that fateful night in Sunda Strait. Please join us of the 2017 Memorial Service! – Sue Kreutzer, Association president.

Day of Remembrance 2016



The Mayor of the City of Houston Sylvester Turner presented John Schwarz with a Proclamation marking 5 March 2016 as "U.S.S. Houston CA-30 Day."



Consul-General Saroinsong of Indonesia (Right) lays a wreath at the CA-30 Monument, accompanied by two Sea Cadets.



Guests at the Memorial Service included: COL Carlo B.J.E. Van den Berg, RNMC; CDR Andrew Schroder, RAN; Consul General Alastair Walton of Australia; Consul-General Saroinsong of Indonesia; Jos Wellink, Honorary Consul of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; RADM Samuel Cox, USN (Ret.). (Photo: Tim Joseph)



(L to R) Marlene McCain, Michael Reilly and Jo Klenk presented the Next Generations' wreath on 5 March.



CAPT Chuck Hewell, P.E., USN (Ret.) presented John Schwarz with a U.S. flag from U.S.S. *Houston* SSN-713.

To view more photos taken by Tim Joseph at the 2016 "Day of Remembrance" click on these links:

<https://timjoseph.smugmug.com/Events/USS-Houston-2016-Memorial/n-TvbgzX/i-ZMkWNDv>

<https://timjoseph.smugmug.com/Events/USS-Houston-2016-Dinner/n-gcfMRN/i-FjrnSHZ>

SNAPSHOTS:



From the desk of the Executive Director

John K. Schwarz

Those attending the “Day of Remembrance” on 4 - 5 March 2016 may have noticed that the Board has made several changes to our annual gathering in Houston, Texas. The Board has carefully considered making such changes to the annual reunion since taking over in 2010. Several factors have influenced our thinking, including the following:

- The inevitable passage of time has now made attendance by actual survivors virtually impossible. Since annual reunions had been designed so that those gents could be able to commiserate—like only they could—the absence of our survivors has made the whole notion of a “reunion” moot these days.
- Looking more closely than ever at Association finances, the Board noticed that recent 2-day-long reunions had been run at a financial loss; they simply could not cover their own expenses. Ignoring this would be irresponsible and could lead ultimately to a dis-integration of funds, which is contrary to the goal of continuing to carry out the mission of this Association. Also, there was a real concern for individual members’ financial challenges.
- We are in a much different time than even, say, ten years ago. There are so many other ways to communicate, short of physical meetings, that utilizing these less expensive communication means is not only cost effective and efficient, but they also offer anyone more opportunities to communicate in real time than ever before. After closely scrutinizing past Membership Meeting minutes it was clear that there was nothing that could not be covered through the other communication means, as listed in the 'From the Executive Director's Desk' article appearing in the December 2015 Blue Bonnet. Additionally, since there has been such a small representation of the over-all membership that has actually attended a Membership meeting in Houston, TX, it was felt that anything really crucial, such as an important vote on something, should be handled as to enable **all** members to be able to weigh in whether they could travel or not.

Given these factors, the Board cancelled the 2016 Membership meeting, and streamlined the 2016 gathering in Houston, reducing hotel costs (nights) for everyone in the process. The Board has also begun to make some additional changes that we feel are for the betterment of our Association, including amendments to the by-laws. Over the next year we will be examining the 'membership' concept to try to better align our efforts with those who are, at this point, truly interested in making a contribution as we move our Association forward.

Our 2016 gathering was an outstanding success. We will, however, further assess it to determine what needs to be improved upon or changed for next year. We would appreciate your feedback.

We thank all who contributed to the gathering, and thank those who took valuable time from their lives to honor the *Houston* with us.

We appreciate your support, and again, our communication lines are always open—in more ways than one.

John

Son of Otto and Trudy Schwarz



SSN-713 Crewmen Honor CA-30 Crewmen at the CA-30 Monument

By Chuck Hewell, P.E. CAPT, USN (Ret.)

A detachment of the U.S.S. *Houston* (SSN-713), led by the boat's Commanding Officer, CDR Scott McGinnis, USN visited the U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial in Sam Houston Park in Houston, Texas on 23 February 2016. They laid a wreath at the base of the memorial in honor of the CA-30 crew—those who gave their lives that fateful night in 1942 in defense of their country, and those crewmen who survived that tragedy.

The SSN-713 crewmen who visited the CA-30 Monument with CDR McGinnis included: Senior Chief Sonar Technician Paul R. McCrory, Chief of the Boat; Lieutenant Taylor B. Ebert, U.S.S. *Houston* Junior Officer of the Year, Quality Assurance Officer and Assistant Weapons Officer; Electrician's Mate 1st Class Arthur J. Valliere, U.S.S. *Houston* Sailor of the Year, and

Electrical Division Leading Petty Officer; Electronic Technician 2nd Class Thomas B. Dickson, U.S.S. *Houston* Junior Sailor of the Year, and Navigation Division Leading Petty Officer; and Yeoman 3rd Class Erin D. Sloan.

The wreath, itself, had been carried by the U.S.S. *Houston* (SSN-713) on her recent Western Pacific (WESTPAC) Deployment. The intent of the crew was to lay the wreath in the Sunda Strait where the U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) succumbed to the relentless and unmerciful attack by the then Imperial Japanese Navy. Unfortunately, the requirements of the SSN-713's mission changed and she was not able to lay the wreath as originally planned.

Recognizing the close bond between sailors serving on Naval Vessels of the same name, SSN-713's crew strongly felt they had a duty to recognize and honor the service of their CA-30 shipmates. Thus, they included as part of their visit to Houston, Texas the time to honor their shipmates of an earlier generation.

CDR McGinnis has been directing a series of GMT (General Military Training) for the SSN-713's crew which has covered the history of CA-30 from her commissioning to her sinking. SSN-713's crew is aware that CA-30 was FDR's favorite ship and that she was the pride of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet. One SSN-713 sailor has been so absorbed by CA-30's history that he had a "Galloping Ghost" tattoo drawn on his arm!

CDR McGinnis briefly spoke of the heroism and sacrifices made by the CA-30 crew. He spoke of the strong bond between all U.S. Navy sailors, drawing special focus on the bond between sailors serving on Naval Vessels bearing the same name. He expressed the high honor it is for him and his party to visit the CA-30 memorial.



74th Anniversary Observances: Battles of the Java Sea and Sunda Strait

The American-British-Dutch-and Australian naval forces of ABDA, which fought 74 years ago during the defense of Java against Japanese invasion, were remembered on February 27, 2016 – March 1, 2016 in various places around the world. These remembrances included:



A Commemoration Ceremony in the Java Sea

On February 27, 2016 in the Java Sea, itself, which was the site of the clash between a Japanese fleet and an allied fleet on February 27, 1942, a group calling itself the “Union of Survivors and Relatives from the Battle of the Java Sea” (Vereniging

Overlevenden & Nabestaanden van De Slag in de Java Zee – 1942 c.a.) hired a ferry boat Ms. *Natuna Express*, which transported them into the Java Sea where they held their 5th annual ceremony over the remains of the two Dutch light cruisers Hr.Ms. *DeRuyter* and Hr.Ms. *Java*, which were lost during the Battle of the Java Sea.

Observance in the Netherlands

In Kloosterkerk at the Hague six survivors of the Java Sea Campaign, and the son of RADM Karel Doorman attended a special commemoration ceremony, according to Jacques Brandt, Chairman of the “Karel Doorman Fonds.” In an email Jacques wrote: “Also in attendance were the Chief Royal Military Household, representing HRH Princess Beatrix, patron of the Karel Doorman Fonds and the Commander, Royal Netherlands Navy. The ship’s bell is from HNLMS *de Ruyter*, flagship of rear-admiral Karel Doorman, Commander Combined Striking Force.”



Remembrances in Australia:



Melbourne (Photo on the left)

At the Shrine of Remembrance Gardens in **Melbourne, Australia** on March 1st, (L-R) LT Richardo Elizalde, USN; Peter Johnston, Treasurer of the H.M.A.S. *Perth* Association, Melbourne; CDR Terry Makings, RAN (Ret.); and author Pattie Wright gathered under the H.M.A.S. *Perth* Tree to remember U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) and H.M.A.S. *Perth* (D-29).

Freemantle, Western Australia (no photo)

At the Church of St John the Evangelist on February 28, 2016 the Commanding Officer of H.M.A.S. *Perth* III, CAPT I.M. Ingham, AOM, RAN delivered an address “to honor the survivors, and those lost and those that served in H.M.A.S. *Perth* I and to acknowledge the *Perth* I Widows and Families attending.” Those in attendance included

H.M.A.S. *Perth* I survivor Norm Fuller, and his daughters Kay and Jan.

Canberra (no photo)

The Last Post Ceremony was held at the Australian War Memorial on February 28, 2016 to mark the 74th anniversary of the loss of H.M.A.S. *Perth* (D-29) and U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30). For more information, go to: www.hmasperth.asn.au and www.perthone.com.au.

Observance in Indonesia

CAPT R. Mark Stacpoole, USN, Naval Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, hosted a U.S.S. *Houston* CA-30 memorial dinner on March 1st at his home. According to an email from CAPT Stacpoole, his guests included:

Indonesian Navy Admiral Arie Sembiring (center), as well as: "Indonesian Admiral Choky Hutabarat; MC1 Christopher Perez; Captain Nick Hart (Australian Naval Attaché); Commodore Plath (Australian Defense Attaché); Colonel Campbell-Black (British DA); Maj Lynskey (British Assistant DA); Colonel Cliffe (New Zealand DA); Colonel Pals, (Dutch DA); and Colonel Knackstedt (the Canadian DA)."



You Shop, Amazon Gives

By Pam Crispi Foster, Treasurer

Many of us already shop online at Amazon.com. Did you know that Amazon has a program where they will donate a portion of your purchase price to the U.S.S. 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 **U.S.S. 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 **U.S.S. Houston CA-30 Survivors' Association and Next Generations™** by starting your shopping at <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/74-2814051>.

Meet our 2016 Scholarship Recipients

U.S.S. Houston (CA-30) Annual Scholarship Recipient



Emily L. Kovacs

Our 13th internal scholarship award winner, Emily L. Kovacs, is the grand-niece of CA-30 shipmate John Stefanek. Emily is currently attending the University of West Florida in Pensacola where she studies, works part-time, and is active in several activities and charitable/environmental initiatives.

"John Stefanek was my father's uncle and I have fond memories of him from my early childhood," Emily wrote. "He passed away when I was only eleven but I recall for instance how he would always bring sweets with him during visits and family gatherings to give us kids. There are so many questions I would want to ask him now that I am older and can begin grasping what his life was like prior, during and after his experiences in Thailand," she said.

U.S. Naval Academy Foundation Scholarship Recipient



Anthony R. Powers, Jr.

The U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Scholar, recipient of a scholarship established by the U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivors' Association and Next Generations™ in memory of the ship and her men is Tony R. Powers, Jr., a graduate of Prince of Peace Christian School in Frisco, TX. Tony was a two-time state Soccer Champion and received all-state and all-District honors while anchoring the varsity soccer team. He was a U.S. Soccer Federation Development Academy player for Solar Chelsea Soccer Team and a member of the Young Men's Service League. This year under Foundation sponsorship, Tony attended Mercersburg Academy in Mercersburg, PA. He was captain of the varsity soccer team, which broke the school's record and won the IPSL and the Mid-Atlantic Prep League Championships. He was also named First Team All-MAPL and ran varsity track.

72nd Reunion: Lost Battalion Association (2nd BN, 131st Field Artillery and U.S.S. Houston CA-30) July 21-24, 2016

Omni Hotel Park West, Dallas, Texas

Contact information:

Terry Shields 940-841-0494; Becke Freitas 817-291-6817

U.S.S. Houston (CL-81) Association's Annual Reunion August 18 – 23, 2016

Sun N Sand Resort, Myrtle Beach, NC

Contact: Barbara Hillebrand 608-424-6095;

Bhillebrand@charter.net Shipmates, families and friends are welcome!

...NOW HEAR THIS...!

INTERNAL ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM UPDATE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To-date and after approximately 15 years of program implementation, we have awarded **13** scholarships totaling **\$28,250.00**. This is an extremely successful program outcome by any measure.

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



Past Internal Annual Scholarship Winners

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

Past U.S. Naval Academy Foundation Scholarship Winners

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



U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Due to the generosity of our Association members and others, and since its inception in 2008, this permanent scholarship—the U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Scholarship—has been awarded six times. This scholarship award enables a year of preparatory military school education, which helps these candidates enter the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), and helps produce proud Naval Officers. We are pleased to report that so far 100-percent of our scholarship recipients have been graduating from the USNA and are serving, or will serve, as officers in the U.S. Navy. What a lasting tribute to the legacy of the men of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30)!

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

- 12/30/15: Received an email from **John Schwarz**: “**Trudy (Schwarz)** received a terribly nice note from the daughter (**Diane**) of the late **Arthur Bancroft** (Otto's counterpart from the survivors group in Australia). Diane is the sister of **Colin Bancroft**, who was featured in the December, 2015 BB as per his visit in September, 2015 to Trudy before departing for a cruise. She spoke fondly of the hospitality shown for that visit and caught Trudy up on other updates from down under. The bond carries on...”
- 1/20/16: Received the following email: “**Julie Grob** and I wanted to share with you all a new blog post about a very interesting Cruiser Houston Collection item we recently added—an original, hand-drawn [Cocos Island Sailfish Club decorative map](#). The history of the U.S.S. *Houston* is significant and moving in so many ways, and this map adds even more complexity and interest to the collection. Best regards in the New Year, **Christian Kelleher**, Head of Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries.”
- 2/21/16: Received the following email: “I just, through a fluke, found the U. S. S. *Houston* website. My brother, **James Albert Northcutt** was a crew member. He was reported Missing in Action and we never heard anything further. I see that his final location was listed as on the ship and it says Enemy Action. I would really like to know if there is any further information about **Bert** (our name for him). It has been so many years ago, but I still remember him. We never heard that he had actually been killed on the ship and perhaps you could give me a little further information about him. Thank you so much for any help you can give me. **Nancy (Northcutt) Stookey**.”
- 2/22/16: I replied to Ms. Stookey as follows: “Dear Ms. Stookey, Thank you for your email. I am the son of a U.S. Marine Survivor of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) and vice president of our Association, and it is my honor to reply to your email. I am very sorry for the loss of your brother, U.S.S. *Houston* crewman **James Albert Northcutt, SM1/c, USN**. On behalf of our entire Association, I offer our deepest condolences. The original records of the crew went down with the ship at the Battle of Sunda Strait on 1 March 1942, so I am unable to provide you with much information on your brother. However, I will post your email message in the next issue of our Association newsletter in the hope that one of our 7 still-living survivors may remember something about him. I hesitate to raise hopes, since all our still-living survivors are in their 90's, and some are in poor health. But, we will try and see what they may remember. It is well-known in U.S. naval history that U.S.S. *Houston's* final battle was fought courageously by all hands. Our Association is determined to perpetuate the memory of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) and her gallant crew. Your brother will never be forgotten.” *[Editor's note to survivors: If any of you can remember James Albert Northcutt, please let me know. Thank you, Dana.]*
- 3/1/16: Received the following email: I am the nephew of **Elmer E. (Happy) Johnson, SM1C**, who according to the crew list, died March 1st, 1942 when the ship was lost. I would be interested to learn any information related to Uncle Hap. Thank you. Best regards, **Jeffrey V. Johnson**, Allentown, PA”
- 3/1/16: I replied to Jeffrey Johnson as follows: Dear Jeffrey, Thank you for contacting us regarding your uncle, U.S.S. *Houston* CA-30 crewman **Elmer E. (Happy) Johnson, SM1C**. Our deepest sympathy on the loss of your uncle... Unfortunately, the *Houston's* crew records were lost when the ship was sunk at the Battle of Sunda Strait on 1 March 1942, so we have no information on your uncle. Having said that, I will place your inquiry in the upcoming issue of our Association's newsletter, the [Blue Bonnet](#) (April 2016) in the hope that one of the seven still-living survivors may remember him. I don't want to get your hopes up too high, however, since all of our survivors are in their 90's and some are in poor health. But, we will try and see what they might recall...” *[Editor's note to Survivors: If any of you can remember Elmer E. (Happy) Johnson, please let me know. Thank you, Dana.]*
- 3/2/16: **Johan VanLeer** emailed the following: “Dear Dana Charles, Thank you for letting me know about that reunion off Bawean Island - the organizer, **Joop Nahyusen's father** was on the *Hr.Ms.de Ruyter* and did not survive. Best wishes, JOHAN VANLEER.

- 3/2/16: **Johan VanLeer** emailed the following link to a Dutch article on the “Battle of the Java Sea” as follows: <https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=nl&u=http://verenoflood.nu/27-februari-1942-slag-in-de-javazee/&prev=search> Translated (poorly) from Dutch! JOHAN VANLEER
- 3/2/16: Received the following email from **Paul Taylor, NHH**: “Wanted to share with you a blog we posted last night featuring our interview with **Howard Brooks**. It's fascinating to hear a first-hand account of the battle and life as a POW. <http://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/interview-with-uss-houston-survivor-howard-brooks/> Hope you find it enjoyable.”
- 3/8/16: Received the following email from **NG Brian Kunka**: I am inquiring about the memorial. My father's uncle was on the USS *Houston* and was captured. He apparently died in a prison camp. We would like to come to the reunion to learn more information. Can you please advise me on how we learn more and attend the memorial? I believe it has passed already for this year but would be interested in finding out more and visiting to meet other families who lost loved ones. Also, if there is a way to obtain information about dad's uncle I would appreciate your guidance. His name was **Czeslaus Kunka** (although I believe the Navy had his name spelled Kunke). Thank you in advance for your assistance. Respectfully, **Brian Kunka**.”
- 3/8/16: I replied to Brian Kunka as follows: “Dear Mr. Kunka, Thank you for contacting us regarding your father's uncle: U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) crewman **Czeslaus J. Kunke, GM2/c, USN**. I am the son of a U.S. Marine survivor of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) and vice president of our Association, and it is my honor to reply to your email... I have located Mr. Kunke's POW record, which was maintained by his surviving shipmates while they were all prisoners of war (see below). A scanned copy of Mr. Kunke's original POW record is attached. These POW records have been passed down to us “Next Generations” by the survivors, themselves. They track the locations of each survivor from the date of capture (1 March 1942). Sadly, Mr. Kunke died as a POW in August, 1943 in Burma while being forced to work on the Burma-Thailand Railway. My deepest sympathy on the loss of Mr. Kunke... *[Editor's note to Survivors: If any of you can remember Czeslaus J. Kunke, please let me know. Thank you, Dana.]*



Farewell Message from Geert Visser,
Former Consul of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Dear Friends of the USS *Houston* (CA-30),

After 15 years addressing you at this solemn day it is time to say goodbye to you. With great honor and pride I have stood before you to address you on the occasion of the Remembrance for this great sacrifice of the crew of the USS *Houston*. Over the years I have made great friends with all of you. I remember Mr. and Mrs. Schilperoort as the day of yesterday. Unfortunately, they are both no longer with us.

My wife Cunera and I bid you farewell and our thoughts are with the fallen Crewmembers, Survivors, Surviving Spouses and the Next Generation today. We remember them with pride. Lest we forget. God bless the Crewmembers of USS *Houston*. God bless the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Geert Visser
Honorary Consul of the Republic of Belarus



The "Bridge on the River Kwai," Burma-Thailand Railway, Kanchaniburi, Thailand. (Photo by Dana Charles)

Death Railway Maintenance nearly complete

The Bangkok Post reported on March 21, 2016 that the 126-kilometre-long section of the Burma-Thailand Railway in Western Thailand is now being refurbished. According to the article, the State Railway of Thailand (SRT) will complete the maintenance of the seven-decade-old Death Railway from Ratchaburi to Kanchanaburi this June. To read the full article, go to:

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/transport/905400/death-railway-revival-nearly-complete>



Next Generations Visit the Burma-Thailand Railway

At Right: Linda Swick (daughter of CA-30 Survivor John Reilly) and her husband Chuck visited the "Bridge on the River Kwai" near Kanchanaburi, Thailand in early February, 2016. They also visited "Hellfire Pass."



At Left: Kevin Swick (son of Chuck and Linda Swick and Grandson of John Reilly) visited "Hellfire Pass" and the "Bridge on the River Kwai" in January, 2016. Kevin was the winner of the CA-30 Internal Scholarship in 2010.

U.S.S. Houston Crewman Remembered...

P. T. GANS: INSPIRATION IN TIMES OF TROUBLE-- ALL MY LIFE

By Don Street



Phil "P.T." Gans

In December 1950 the North Koreans had kicked the hell out of the South Korean and US Armies who were holed up in the Pusan perimeter. The US services were expanding; the draft was blowing hard on my neck.

I was in the university, but deferment only went to those at the top of the class. I and many others decided to join the navy on the basis that if you did get killed you at least had been enjoying a clean bunk and good food, rather than a wet foxhole and K rations.

I was activated [at] the end of January and ended up in Newport boot camp that was overflowing with inductees. A combination of too many inductees at one time and the urgent need for men on the ships that were rapidly being pulled out of mothballs resulted in the normal 12-week boot course being shortened to nine weeks.

We ended up in barracks, each building holding about 60 to 80 men. Memory does not permit quoting [the] exact number. Our Chief Petty Officer was PT Gans, who proved to be an excellent chief; much better than most of the other chiefs. Within a couple of days he picked one boot to be his acting chief when he was not there. How he did it, no one knew, but it was a good choice. No one gave the acting chief a hard time. A few times, one or two individuals tried but they were immediately put in their place by the vast majority of the company.

Boot camp being expanded so rapidly, the schedules were often a little bit confused to the point that there would suddenly be a break with no assignment for the company. When this happened most of the chiefs would have the company out marching in circles or square-bashing like apprentice Marines.

PT would march us to our barracks, explain what "rope yarn Sunday" was. He would tell us to repack our sea bags, and to those of us that knew how to tie knots to teach others to tie knots. He told us to make ourselves look busy so if any officer stuck his nose in the barracks he would not discover that we really had no assignment.

We were not the best company, but we were a good one—as everyone tried hard to make our chief look good.

Whenever companies were marching, often they would have someone in the ranks that could make up, off the cuff, marching songs, some quite ribald. We had an excellent songster who made up a dozen or more songs to march to, but his best was:

"We know a man with lots of fans, and his name is PT Gans! SOUND OFF!"

PT Gans was the only chief who had a company that made a marching song in his praise.

The last day of boot camp, we had our orders, we had done the graduation march pass, and were in the barracks getting ready to leave when PT showed up. We all had noted he walked with a rolling gait. I said that I felt it was from a lifetime at sea, on rolling ships.

When everyone was learning to tie knots it was discovered that I was the only one in the company that had any boating experience. I had sailed practically every day all summer, starting at age 12. I was the oracle on all to do with the sea, so my observation was taken as the true story until PT told us his story.

He related how he was on the U.S.S. *Houston* in all the early naval actions of the war, how she was sunk, most of the crew lost. [He] made it ashore; then into prison camps, and finally to the horrors of the Burma railway.

He ended with the story of being tossed into an open latrine, so deep that when he stood up only his neck was above the shit. The japs left, figuring he would die. Some of his buddies pulled him out, cleaned him up, and he survived.

He told us we were off to sea, and hopefully would not experience what he and the *Houston* survivors experienced. He pointed out he survived the horrors of the Burma railway, so if things got tough, just hunker on down and push through as did your boot camp chief. He wished us all a happy and successful naval career, gave us a wave, and left.

We then realized what caused the rolling gait: mashed up legs on the Burma Railway.

At various times in my life I have had some tough problems, and a few complete disasters that people wonder how I survived. Each time things got really tough, I thought of PT, what he went through, and survived. In every case I have fought myself through the problems and disasters. PT has been an inspiration to me all my life.

My hat is off to PT and all the members of the *Houston's* crew.



U.S.S. *Houston* Survivors: (L to R) Robert O'Brien, Phil Gans, Ned Gallagher, Ross Glover.

Two New Interviews of Howard Brooks



Howard Brooks

The Armed Forces Heritage Museum in association with Reel Original Productions has produced a new interview of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivor Howard Brooks, which is available for viewing on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDYII7raKcE&feature=youtu.be>

The interview was made in September, 2015. New Jersey Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno introduces Howard on the video. The film was written and hosted by COL Robert von Bargen, USAF (Ret.), and Nino De Pasquale directed and produced.



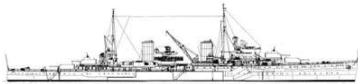
The Naval History and Heritage Command Interview of Howard Brooks



The Naval History and Heritage Command, Communication and Outreach Division posted its recent interview of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivor Howard Brooks on its blog called "The Sextant." To view the program, go to:

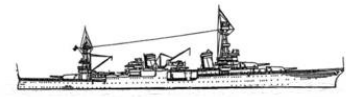
<http://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/interview-with-uss-houston-survivor-howard-brooks/>

Congratulations, Howard, on making these two fantastic interviews!



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

UPDATE ON THE SALVAGING SITUATION



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

An article by Natalia Pearson, “Finders, not Keepers,” which currently appears in **Inside Indonesia** (124: April-June 2016), prompted Executive Director John K. Schwarz to send emails to Ms. Pearson and Mr. Kevin Sumption, Director and CEO of the Australian National Maritime Museum. Mr. Sumption’s 1 April 2016 email reply (below) provides some important information regarding Australia’s efforts to preserve and protect the remains of H.M.A.S. Perth and U.S.S. Houston (CA-30).

“Dear Mr. Schwarz,

Thank you for your email of Thursday 31 March 2016 expressing your Association’s concerns about certain statements made in the article “Finders not Keepers” that was written by Ms. Natali Pearson and recently published in **Inside Indonesia** (124: April-June 2016).

I’m writing to you to provide some background on the role currently being played by the Australian National Maritime Museum in Indonesia and to hopefully alleviate any concerns your Association may have about the proposed archaeological site survey of HMAS *Perth* and USS *Houston*.

As stated in Ms. Pearson’s article in late 2013 recreational divers, who had recently visited the wreck site of HMAS *Perth*, reported back to the Australian Federal Government that HMAS *Perth* was being salvaged by unknown divers operating off self- propelled barges equipped with crane-operated grabs.

As the wreck site of HMAS *Perth* has great emotional and historical significance for many Australians, including the remaining survivors and their decedents, the Australian National Maritime Museum was approached by the Royal Australian Navy – at a time when relationships between Australia and Indonesia were quite strained – to explore the possibility of the Museum leading a joint archaeological expedition to the site of HMAS *Perth* to assess the damage.

Since then the Australian National Maritime Museum has been working closely with the Department of the Environment (Canberra); recreational divers, members of the HMAS *Perth* Association, US Naval History and Heritage Command, TNIAL (Indonesian) and Royal Australian Navies, The Indonesian, Australian and USA Embassies, The Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries and The Indonesian National Centre for Archaeology (ARKENAS) in an effort to protect the sites of both HMAS *Perth* and the USS *Houston*.

This protection was considered necessary from both the Australian, U.S. and Indonesian perspectives because, as evident from both historic and recent salvage activities, although the wrecks are considered ‘war graves’ by the survivors and their descendants, they have no ‘official’ protection under Indonesian legislation and without that official protection – under *Indonesian Law No: 11 of 2010 concerning Cultural Conservation* – the TNIAL and the Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia (The Indonesian National Police) cannot prosecute the salvors or prevent further looting.

Due to Indonesian legislative requirements, national security concerns and interdepartmental areas of influence the protection of underwater cultural heritage in Indonesia is a complex matter but the Museum, working with its Australian, American and Indonesia partners, has made some progress to date.

- The Museum has signed a formal MoU with ARKENAS regarding maritime archaeological survey work on both sites (a necessary step for Australian citizens to work in Indonesian waters),
- has met with representatives of all interested parties including members of the HMAS *Perth* Association,
- has attended and presented the case for protection for World War II shipwrecks at a workshop on the protection of World War Two underwater cultural heritage held in Jakarta last year (jointly hosted by the Australian and USA Embassies),
- has been granted access to information obtained by surveys conducted on HMAS *Perth* and USS *Houston* by the United States Navy, TNIAL, ARKENAS and The Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries and
- is now currently working through a somewhat convoluted and complex permit system which will hopefully allow us access to the sites in mid-2016.

Due to the efforts of all concerned, illegal salvage work on the two sites has now been stopped and late last year the TNIAL carried out a seizure of a diving vessel suspected of being engaged in salvage work and confiscated a significant quantity of live ammunition, armoured hull plating and machinery.

The Australian National Maritime Museum is very concerned about the preservation of these highly significant shipwrecks, is very much aware of the supreme sacrifice payed by members of the ship's companies, and will continue to work jointly with all interested parties, including the survivors associations, to ensure that these sites receive the protection and recognition that they deserve.

Please don't hesitate to contact me should you wish to know anything further of our efforts and hopefully later this year when I am in the US I would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss the Museum's progress and our future plans.

All the very best

Kevin Sumption
Director & CEO
Australian National Maritime Museum"

Ms. Pearson's article can be viewed at:
http://www.insideindonesia.org/finders-not-keepers?utm_source=All+Subscribers&utm_campaign=c01b4c8068-28March16_UrbanChristianApplications&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_32cd77f926-c01b4c8068-295526921

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

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



Polo Shirts - Short Sleeve, Navy Blue
 with Gold Embroidery of the USS Houston:
 Men's - sizes M-2XL \$25.00
 Women's - sizes S-XL \$25.00
 (Shipping Weight-10 oz.)



T-Shirts (size Medium) (9 oz.) \$10.00
 T-Shirts (size Small, large, and X-Large) (9 oz.) \$20.00
 T-Shirts (size 2XL or 3 XL) (9 oz.) \$25.00

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

Shipping Costs:

1 oz. – 6 oz. = \$4.00
 7 oz. – 12 oz. = \$7.50
 13 oz. – 5 lb. = \$10.50

Make checks payable to:

USS Houston CA-30 Survivors' Association

Mail checks to:

Sue Kreutzer
 43156 Meadowbrook Cir.
 Parker, CO 80138

Questions? Email: Sue@USSHouston.org

Blue Ball Cap ("USS Houston CA-30", 10 oz.) \$15.00
 Brown Ball Cap ("USS Houston CA-30", 10 oz.) \$5.00
 Brown & Black Ball Cap
 ("U.S.S. Houston CA-30 2nd Generation", 10 oz.) \$5.00



Blue Ball Cap



Brown & Black Ball Cap



Women's Polo Shirt



Men's Polo Shirt



T-Shirt

Include the following information
 (please print clearly):

Name
 Address
 City, State and Zip Code
 Phone Number
 Items Ordered, Size and Quantity

Meet your...

Board of Managers

...here to serve

Exec. Director/Secretary: John Schwarz
Son of USN survivor Otto Schwarz
Association strategy/outreach, Special Projects,
Scholarship Committee, Membership liaison
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 Foster
Daughter of USN survivor Eugene Crispi
Financial and IRS records,
Scholarship Committee
Email: Pam@usshouston.org



Membership

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

Welcome Aboard!

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



Matthew Chambliss-grandson of Julius C. Chambliss, USN

Association Website:
www.usshouston.org

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

In Memoriam

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

They too will never be forgotten.



In Memoriam



John Clarke Waller



(1933 – 2015)

Son of H.M.A.S. *Perth* (D-29) Skipper
CAPT Hector "Hec" M. L. Waller, RAN
and author of Two Ships.



Thank you

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

Donations

November 30, 2015 – March 20, 2016

In Memory of David Flynn

Teresa Reilly

Other Donations

Pete & Nancy Adams

Australian American Chamber of Commerce

Carter Conlin

Melissa Ellsworth

Rich & Pam Foster

Bernice Harapat

Fred & Peggy Hekking

Tim & Jo Klenk

Joe Kollmyer

Michael & Jo Marie Reilly

Matthew Rejmaniak

Trudy Schwarz

Eunell Weissinger

Sue Kreutzer

2015 Amazon Smile Donations Earned: \$33.51

Financial Report

by Pam Foster, Treasurer

Fiscal Year: 2015

January 1 - December 31, 2015

General Fund

Beginning Balance:	\$15,706.27
Receipts:	+7,936.87
Expenses:	<u>-6,706.09</u>
Ending Balance:	\$16,937.05

Scholarship Fund

Beginning Balance:	\$13,245.84
Receipts:	+5,086.50
Expenses:	<u>-6,000.00</u>
Ending Balance:	\$12,332.34



Fiscal Year: 2016

January 1 - March 20, 2016

General Fund

Beginning Balance:	\$16,937.05
Receipts:	+4,989.96
Expenses:	<u>-3,322.39</u>
Ending Balance:	\$18,604.62

Scholarship Fund

Beginning Balance:	\$12,332.34
Receipts:	+2,421.85
Expenses:	<u>- 0.00</u>
Ending Balance:	\$14,754.19



Published by:

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

Editor: Dana Charles

Proofreaders: Pam Foster, John Schwarz, Sue Kreutzer

Distribution: Dana Charles, Pam Foster

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.

© **Copyright 2016**

All rights reserved. All articles and photographs used in this newsletter are copyrighted unless otherwise stated. They may not be sold or used in any other publication without express written permission from the Board of this Association.

