

Now Hear This!

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USS Houston Survivors'
Association

c/o Pam Foster, Treasurer
2065 Sutter View Lane,
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(Please specify which fund:
General or Scholarship)

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Association Founded 1947

By Otto and Trudy Schwarz

**USS Houston (CA-30) & HMAS Perth (D-29)
Remembered at Arlington**



23 May 2019: Naval officers representing the WWII allied naval force known as "ABDA" pay their respects at the USS Houston (CA-30)/HMAS Perth (D-29) marker at Arlington National Cemetery. (L to R): CAPT Hugo L.J. Ammerlaan, RNLN; Commodore Mat Hudson, CSC, RAN; Commander Craig Schoene, USN; Commodore Andrew Betton, OBE, RN.

**HOUSTON & PERTH
REMEMBERED AT ARLINGTON**

By John K. Schwarz



Naval officers of four allied nations—the U.S., Britain, the Netherlands, and Australia—which fought together in the WWII combined force "ABDA," gathered on May 23rd, 2019 at the USS Houston CA-30/HMAS Perth (D-29) marker in Arlington National Cemetery
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to remember the loss of the two warships and over 1,000 brave American and Australian crewmen of these two ships who perished during the battle of Sunda Strait, February 28-March 1, 1942.

The four naval officers also honored all servicemen from their respective countries who perished in the early months of the Pacific War while ABDA forces defended Java against Japanese invasion. Small flags from all four nations were placed at the marker and moments of silence and appropriate saluting by all representatives took place during this solemn gathering.

The four officers included: Commander Craig Schoene, USN; Commodore Andrew Betton, OBE, RN; Captain (N) Hugo L.J. Ammerlaan, RNLN; and Commodore Mat Hudson, CSC, RAN. Rear Admiral Sam Cox, USN (retired) of the U.S. Navy's History and Heritage Command also provided U.S. Navy photographer Dan Garas.

The naval officers then respectfully visited the graves of Otto and Trudy Schwarz—the founders of the USS *Houston* CA-30 Survivors' Association & Next Generations®—located some 25 yards from the USS *Houston*/HMAS *Perth* marker.

Afterward, John Schwarz placed flowers on the grave markers of several other USS *Houston* (CA-30) crewmen buried at Arlington, including: Joe and Isabelle Gans; John and Irma Stefanek; William Batchelor; David Flynn; and Ellis Hostick.

In a follow-up email to John Schwarz, Commodore Hudson wrote: "I am always amazed how life reveals how we might all be linked in some loose way to events...Two facts struck me that I wish I had remembered earlier. The first was that my very first ship as a young sub-lieutenant was the HMAS *Perth II*, proudly bearing the name of the *Perth I* sunk at Sunda Strait. She was my favorite ship tour and we were well inducted into the history of the battle of Sunda Strait. The second trivial fact was that my father Michael Hudson joined the navy with [the late] John Waller, son of *Perth I*'s Commanding Officer, Captain "Hec" Waller. John went on to become a scientist and eventually immigrated to the USA, with he and my father keeping in touch over the years."





From the desk of the Executive Director
John K. Schwarz

Hope this finds everyone fine, prosperous and enjoying the summer months. Normally, this would be considered the 'slower' time of the year for the Association in terms of work-load but that has changed over the years and it is, yes, a little slower—but not by much. Here are some updates:

- The dates of the 2020 Day of Remembrance (DOR) have been scheduled: **March 6—7, 2020**. Sam Houston Park is reserved for the 2020 USS *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Service on March 7th. We are working toward scheduling a worthy event for everyone on March 6th. For example, it would be great for all to see our USS *Houston* CA-30 ship model on display in the Legacy Room of Houston's City Hall. You are encouraged to watch for good deals on airline tickets!
- Sue and Pam continue to nail down all necessary arrangements at the Doubletree located at the Galleria in Houston, TX, which has become "our hotel," since everyone in our group seems to like it. Sue and Pam will announce registration details in the December 2019 edition of the Blue Bonnet.
- We have yet another wonderful opportunity to place on display a permanent remembrance of USS *Houston* CA-30—the clapper from the ship's bell, which is mounted on the monument. The clapper—in storage for many years—has been graciously offered to us by the Naval Order of the United States-Texas Commandery. We are working with both NOUS and the U.S. Navy on an appropriate disposition of this historic artifact. We'll provide an update as more details are confirmed.
- We will be announcing at the forthcoming DOR gathering the newest USS *Houston* CA-30 Memorial Scholarship designee from the U.S. Naval Academy Foundation. This will mark the eighth designee since we purchased this lifetime scholarship award back in 2008—an award that has already helped to produce **five** U.S. Naval Officers!
- Meanwhile, the application window of our Internal Scholarship Program is currently open and it extends until **November 1st**. This year's award will again be **\$3,000.00**. Those of you who are in position to 'coach' prospective candidates, be reminded that our website (www.usshouston.org) provides a complete listing of appropriate resources necessary to prepare for the important essay composition, including books, videos, etc. The website also has a link to application materials and instructions. For any additional clarification on any aspect of this process do not hesitate to inquire at our contact@usshouston.org email address.
- All of our association merchandise continues on sale, and in particular, we have a terrific "mother-daughter" CA-30 jacket combination available. If the sizes work, this combination can be obtained at a terrific price. We thank all of you who contributed to the latest merchandise special order and hope that you wear the clothing with the logo of the beloved ship proudly.

Stay well everyone, and we hope to see you all in **March of 2020**, if not sooner.

John

SILVIA BROOKS' PRESENTATIONS

At a museum in Columbus, New Jersey on March 10, 2019, **Silvia Brooks** presented the wartime story of her late husband, USS *Houston* CA-30 survivor Howard Brooks, to veterans and people interested in history. Altogether, 65 people attended, including Korean Conflict and Vietnam veterans, and one WWII veteran. The presentation raised \$200! Silvia has been busy making these presentations. Back on December 7, 2018, Silvia conducted a presentation at the Historic Society in Burlington. "I also speak two to three times in different high schools with other veterans," Silvia wrote in an email. Thank you, Silvia!



Silvia Brooks (center) presents the wartime story of her late husband, USS *Houston* (CA-30) survivor Howard Brooks, on March 10, 2019.

THANK YOU NOTE

In April, the Board of Managers voted unanimously to donate our Association's aging laptop computer, which the Association no longer uses, to the Sea Cadets in Houston, TX, who for many years have volunteered to serve at our annual Memorial Services. The leader of the Sea Cadets, LCDR Barry Barlow, NSCC, informed us that the laptop was subsequently donated to Amia Gutierrez, Seaman Apprentice, NSCC, who wrote the following "Thank You" note:

"I would like to thank the USS *Houston* Association for the chance to own a laptop. With this laptop many things will be made easier for me. It will allow me to study for school and the Sea Cadets without needing to go to the library, or ask around to borrow a laptop. I am extremely grateful for this laptop and will use it to allow myself to excel in many extraordinary ways. Thank you again for this laptop. Respectfully, SA Gutierrez."

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

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

The USS Houston CA-30 Survivors' Association & Next Generations® sponsors two scholarship programs:

USS HOUSTON (CA-30) ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP

This is an “internal program” in that it is administered by the Association’s Scholarship Committee. It is funded through the generosity of our group’s constituency and other associated donors and is targeted to be awarded annually given sufficient funding and applications from eligible candidates. The program’s window to apply extends from **June 1** through **November 1**. Candidates are then evaluated and a deserving applicant is awarded the scholarship based on a documented grading system. Funding comes through donations to our Association’s Treasurer, Pam Foster, 2065 Sutter View Lane, Lincoln, CA 95648. For any donations please annotate that it is for the scholarship program. You can also remember the USS *Houston* CA-30 scholarship fund in your will, estate planning or beneficiary designations. All donations are tax deductible. Since its inception in the year 2000, **15 scholarships** have been awarded totaling **\$34,250.00** dedicated to the further educational pursuits of winning candidates. For a complete listing of all scholarship winners and an application visit our Association’s website, www.usshouston.org (Scholarship page). Applications can also be obtained by making request to the Association’s Executive Director at the address for the Association listed on page one of this Blue Bonnet newsletter. Award amount for 2020 will be \$3,000.00.

REMINDER: Internal Scholarship application deadline—**November 1, 2019**—is rapidly approaching!

USS HOUSTON CA-30 MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

In 2008, and again due to the generosity of our group’s constituency and other associated donors, the Association made a one-time purchase for a permanent scholarship with the United States Naval Academy Foundation, Inc. This program, targeted for an every-other-year scholarship award, is named the **USS Houston CA-30 Memorial Scholarship**. This scholarship affords the U.S. Naval Academy candidate a year of preparatory school education prior to entering the Academy. This contributes to an improved success rate for awardees. Since it was obtained we have had **seven** awardees which has already produced **four** Naval Officers with the remaining three designees progressing satisfactorily toward graduation. For a full listing of all U.S. Naval Academy scholarship winners please visit our Association’s website, www.usshouston.org (scholarship page). What a tribute to the men of the USS *Houston* CA-30! Our eighth and newest winner will be announced at the 2020 Day of Remembrance.

For both programs: a huge **Thank You** to all who contribute to these important scholarships in honor of USS *Houston* (CA-30) and her crewmen.



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



- 4/6/2019: Received the following email from **NG Mary Chambliss Fort**: “This picture of the *Houston* (above) was painted by Win Conger. She was a long time former resident of Crawfordville, FL. I am trying to find out what her connection to the *Houston* was. I think she was of Dutch descent; her maiden name might have been Hansen. Any one know her? Thank you! Mary Chambliss Fort, Daughter of J. C. Chambliss, *USS Houston* (CA-30) survivor.”
- 4/6/2019: I replied to Mary as follows: “Dear Mary, Thank you for your email. I don’t know anything about Win Conger, but I would certainly like to learn about her. With your permission, I will place your email inquiry about Ms. Conger in the next issue of our Blue Bonnet newsletter to see if any of our Association members may have information about her and her outstanding painting. Meanwhile, best wishes on your search for information about her...!”
- 5/8/2019: Received the following email: “My uncle, **Alvin Metzger**, went down with the *USS Houston*. I'm wondering if there is any additional information about him that you may have. —Thanks **Keith Metzger**.”
- 5/8/2019: I replied to **Keith Metzger** as follows: “Dear Keith, Thank you for contacting us regarding your uncle, *USS Houston* (CA-30) crewman **Alvin W. Metzger, SM2/c, USN**, who was Killed in Action aboard the ship at the Battle of Sunda Strait on 1 March 1942. I am the son of a U.S. Marine Survivor of *USS Houston* (CA-30) and vice president of our Association, and it is my honor to reply to your email... I am very sorry for your loss. As you may know, your uncle was among approximately 700 *USS Houston* (CA-30) crewmen who perished during the ferocious, nighttime Battle of Sunda Strait. I am sorry to report that all records pertaining to the crew of the *Houston* went down with the ship during that final battle, so today, unfortunately, we have no records on the members of the ship’s crew who were lost on 1 March. The only records that we have cover the POW experiences of the survivors of the battle... I am sorry I cannot be of more help in regards to your uncle’s service aboard the *Houston*. For information about *USS Houston* (CA-30), her battles, and her crew, I would highly recommend these books: ***Ship of Ghosts*** by James Hornfischer; ***The Last Battle Station*** by Duane Schultz; ***The Ghost That Died at Sunda Strait*** by *USS Houston* (CA-30) survivor Walter Winslow. FYI: Our Association exists to perpetuate the history of *USS Houston* (CA-30). Each year, as close to the date of *Houston*’s last battle as possible, we hold a “Day of Remembrance” in Houston, Texas to honor and remember the ship. This past March we held our 25th annual Memorial Service at the *USS Houston* (CA-30) Monument. Please review the attached

Blue Bonnet newsletter which covers the 2019 “Day of Remembrance.” If you would like more information just let me know. We would be honored if you would join us at next year’s gathering. Thank you for your interest in your uncle’s service to our country.”

- 5/23/2019: Received the following email: “Hello, my name is **Alex Howard**, I've been extremely interested in world war 2 naval history, thanks to my grandfather who also served in the navy. The story of the USS *Houston*, and its survivors, and the ordeal they went thru has had my interest since I was around 10 (I'm now 34), anyways, I've finished reading *Ship of Ghosts* for I don't know how many times, and i was just curious, are there any *Houston*, or HMAS *Perth* survivors left among us? I'd sure like to talk to them, or their families if they are willing to share their stories with me. I assure you I'm not a scam, or faker, I am genuinely interested in the stories these men or their families have to say. There aren't many around anymore. Thank you so much in advance.”
- 5/23/2019: Replied to Mr. Howard as follows: “Dear Alex, Thank you for contacting us regarding your interest in USS *Houston* (CA-30) and her survivors. I am the son of a U.S. Marine survivor of the *Houston* and vice president of our Association, and it is my honor to reply to your email. Today there are only two survivors of USS *Houston* (CA-30) and one survivor of HMAS *Perth* still living. All are in their late 90's. The *Perth* survivor is 99. My suggestion would be to attend one of our Association's annual gatherings in Houston, Texas. Called “A Day of Remembrance (DOR),” it includes our annual USS *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Service where we honor the crew of the ship at the site of the USS *Houston* (CA-30) Monument located in downtown Houston. I am attaching a copy of our Association's Blue Bonnet newsletter (April, 2019) that covered the 2019 DOR which took place in March, 2019 so that you can read about our most recent event. I believe approximately 150 – 200 people, including sons and daughters of survivors, attended our 2019 DOR. We would be pleased to share stories of our fathers' wartime experiences with you at the next (March, 2020) “Day of Remembrance.” See the News section of our website for: updates on plans for the 2020 DOR; for the US Navy's efforts to preserve and protect the remains of USS *Houston* (CA-30); past issues of our Blue Bonnet newsletter; and much more. Meanwhile, you might also be interested in reading some additional good books on USS *Houston* (CA-30) and her crewmen, including *The Last Battle Station* by Duane Schultz; *The Ghost That Died at Sunda Strait* by survivor Walter Winslow; and my father's WWII POW account called *Last Man Out* (available on Kindle) by H. Robert Charles. I'm sure you would get a lot out of them. Again, thank you for your interest in USS *Houston* (CA-30). If you have any questions regarding the 2020 DOR, let me know.”
- 5/27/2019: Received the following email: “This is the only photo (right) our family has of **Lester W Bailey**, who died aboard the USS *Houston*. Lester was my mother's brother. I have his Purple Heart. **David P Himes.**”
- 5/27/2019: I replied to Mr. Himes as follows: “Dear David, Thank you for emailing the photo of your uncle, USS *Houston* (CA-30) crewman **Lester W. Bailey, SM2/c, USN** who perished during the Battle of Sunda Strait on 1 March 1942. I am very sorry for your loss... It is especially fitting that you remember your uncle and his fallen shipmates on this day—Memorial Day, 2019. Thank you for remembering... For your information, we will be hosting our annual USS *Houston* (CA-30) “Day of Remembrance—2020” in Houston, Texas in March, 2020. This weekend-long event will include our annual USS *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Service at the site of the USS *Houston* (CA-30) Monument located in downtown Houston, TX. I hope you will be available to attend and join us in remembering and honoring the crew of USS *Houston* (CA-30). Please check our website at www.usshouston.org for details as we get closer to the March 2020 event. If you have any questions, please let me know. We will never forget the crewmen of USS *Houston* (CA-30). Thank you again for contacting us.”



The Story of the Broome Seagull

Curtiss SOC-3, BuNO. 1065

BY JOSEPH L. AND MARLENE MCCAIN

When war came, the *USS Houston* was anchored at Iloilo harbor in the Philippines, having spent the previous month at Cavite Naval Base, Manila. A refit at California's Mare Island in September 1940 had added four 5-inch anti-aircraft guns as well as two sets of quad-mounted 1.1-inch anti-aircraft guns. While at Manila, the quad-mount guns were increased by two additional sets. What the ship did *not* receive was a relatively new invention called "radar". A radar set for *Houston* was to be sent from Pearl Harbor, but it had not arrived and there was no time to wait for it. *Houston* had been ordered out of Cavite to head south for Iloilo. To locate enemy ships the cruiser would have to continue to rely on its four scout (float) planes that could be launched from onboard catapults.

The *Houston's* scout planes were Curtiss SOC "Seagulls". With their biplane design and canvas covering, they were more suited to the First World War than the approaching conflict. Their speed and maneuverability were hampered by a huge central float extending beneath the plane's fuselage. This reduced each machine to a capability of no more than 165 mph. Protective armament consisted of two 30-caliber machine guns - one each for the pilot and his rear seat observer. The carrier-based Japanese "Zero" fighter planes in the area could reach 350 mph and were armed with very lethal 20 mm cannon in addition to machine guns. Any confrontation between these two vastly different aircraft would have been disastrous for the "Seagull."

Perched high on the catapults above the *Houston's* quarterdeck, the Seagulls - loaded with aviation fuel and ammunition - represented a danger to crew members below if set alight by shellfire. During the Flores Sea battle, concussion from one of the *Houston's* 5-inch anti-aircraft guns had ripped away the fabric from the tail of a scout plane ready for launch on the catapult. This plane was quickly stripped and, being considered a fire hazard, jettisoned over the side. The *Houston* was now reduced to three scout planes.

On the night of February 15, 1942, *Houston* received an ominous radio broadcast telling of the Japanese conquest of Singapore, Malaya. The following day, *Houston* was providing escort for a convoy near Timor Island when she came under attack by some forty Japanese twin engine bombers. At this point, the story of the "Broome Seagull" really begins.

Originally the plan was to send two scout planes from *Houston* to fly to the northwest coast of Australia on February 16th. The authors of this article believe part of that mission was to deliver ship's documents to American Forces headquartered at Darwin, Australia. A few of *Houston's* officers were able to include very brief notes to their families in the hope of eventual delivery. The two seaplanes were made ready for takeoff but this time concussion from the 5-inch guns ripped the fabric from Ensign Walter Winslow's aircraft. Ship's papers were hastily transferred to the remaining Seagull, and Lt. Jack Lamade was launched with nothing more to guide him than a map torn from the pages of *National Geographic* magazine, previously tacked to a bulletin board in the wardroom. Winslow's shredded airplane was deemed salvageable and lowered to the repair hanger. *Houston* now had only two airplanes left aboard and one of those was inoperable.

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As the Japanese bombers made their approach, Lt. Lamade and his observer, RM2C Robert L. Tubbs, headed for the west coast of Australia some 500 nautical miles away. At that time Western Australia was mostly an uninhabited expanse of barren desert. After a six and a half hour flight, the little Seagull landed on Broome's Roebuck Bay completely out of fuel and had to be towed to shore. Broome was a small village/military installation consisting of "one makeshift air strip and about four tin sheds". Acting upon his orders, Lt. Lamade telegraphed a message to the U.S. Naval Authority in Darwin announcing his arrival. He was told to remain at Broome and, as instructed by Captain Rooks, maintain a listening watch on his plane's radio. He would be contacted later as to when and where to return to the *Houston*. A telegraph message was sent from Darwin to Broome by the *Houston* when it eventually arrived there for refueling, but this message did not reach the remote outpost of Broome until two days later. By that time, any rendezvous with the ship was clearly impossible. Less than ten days later, *Houston* was lost in the Sunda Strait battle off the coast of Java. Her remaining two SOC Seagulls went down with her.



LT Lamade and his observer, RM2c Tubbs, in Broome

Unable to reunite with the *Houston*, Lt. Lamade was ordered to leave Broome on March 3rd and join up with Patrol Wing 10. By this time, tiny Broome had become a reception point for Dutch refugees fleeing the Japanese occupation of Java. Primarily women and children, they arrived in Dutch "flying boat" aircraft.



In fact, fifteen such planes were sitting on the water in Roebuck Bay as Lt. Lamade and his observer started to taxi across the water for takeoff to join the patrol wing. Without warning, Broome was suddenly attacked by a number of Japanese "Zero" fighter planes. Eighty-eight people were killed, mostly civilian refugees. Lamade's little Seagull was able to get airborne and, by staying low to the water, escape. The Dutch "flying boats" were shot to pieces and remain in the waters of Roebuck Bay. They are still visible at low tide.

VP-101 was a squadron of PBY Catalina "flying boat" aircraft that was stationed on Australia's Swan River at Crawley Bay. It consisted of "homeless" planes that were collected together to perform a vital service in submarine patrol. Rescue of civilians fleeing the advancing Japanese and, sometimes, downed Allied aircrew, were other duties. Lamade joined this squadron as he literally had nowhere else to go. Engaged mostly in anti-submarine patrols over Australian waters, he and his Seagull stayed on duty until May 1942. At that time, it was sitting in the bay on Swan River when the wake of a Catalina coming in too fast toppled it upside down in the water.

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All that was visible was the little SOC's center float just above the water line. It was listed as "damaged beyond repair by salt water immersion" and stricken from VP-101's records in June 1942.

Lt. Jack Lamade returned to the United States and was reassigned to other flying duties. He was able to bring with him, and deliver, those last few lines penned by some of his fellow *USS Houston* officers.

But what became of *Houston's* last scout plane, the "Broome Seagull"? Was it recovered from the river, or is it still there? Was it salvaged and scrapped, or is it quietly moldering away in a forgotten Australian shed? Nobody seems to really know . . .

Informational sources for this article:

U.S.S. Houston by Commander John D. Lamade, USN. 1942(43) Booklet.

Personal correspondence from Mrs. Rebekah Rentz. May 12, 1942. Authors' collection.

Personal correspondence from Mr. Dion Marinis, Deepdale, Western Australia. 2018.

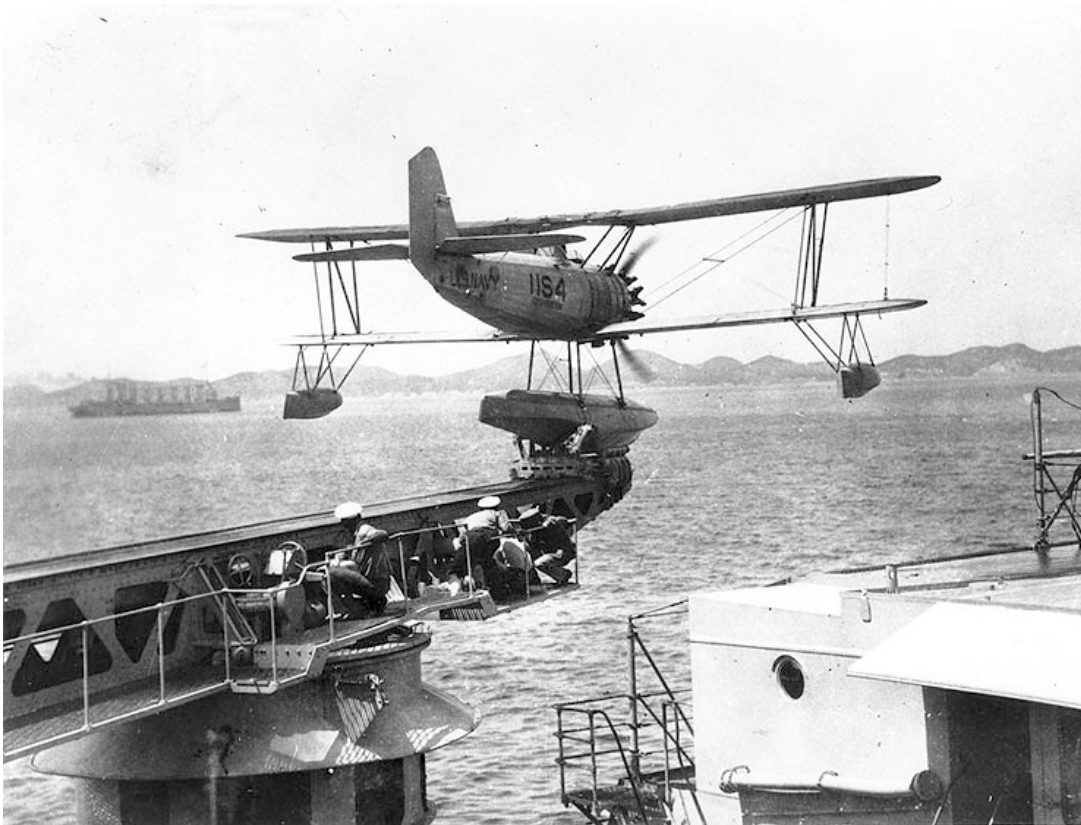
The Naked Island by Russell Braddon. Published 1953. (description of Broome c. early 1940s).

The Ghost That Died at Sunda Strait by Walter G. Winslow. Published 1984.

The Last Battle Station by Duane Schultz. Published 1985.

Ship of Ghosts by James D. Hornfischer. Published 2006.

Photo # NH 94188 Vought O2U catapulted from USS Houston, in the Far East, circa 1931-1932



Now Hear This...

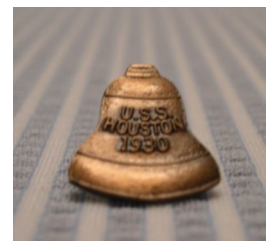
'SHIP'S STORE' SALE

All USS *Houston* (CA-30) Merchandise Still On Sale!

Below is a list of what is left and available.

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

- Monument pins – 5 (\$2.50 ea.)
- Bell pins – 6 (\$2.50 ea.)
- Silver and gold trimmed blue ship pins – (2 for \$5.00, or \$3.00 ea.)
- Challenge coins – (\$9.00 ea.)
- 1 note card set left – (\$8.00 ea. pack of 10)
- USS *Houston* (CA-30) Galloping Ghost stickers (equivalent to a bumper sticker, 2 for \$1.00)
- Graphic ship drawings (\$1.00 ea.)
- 3 ship photos left of the USS *Houston* (CA-30) underway off San Diego (\$3.00 ea.)
- 12 Hats left – (\$13.00 ea.)
- Women's Polos – 4 small; 2 medium; 2 XL left: (\$20.00 ea.)
- Men's Polos – 5 large; 1 X-Large; 1- 2XL; 1-XXL left: (\$22.00 ea.)
- T-Shirts – 4- 2XL left: (\$9.00 ea.)
- One Navy Blue woman's XS embroidered jacket- special: on sale for \$25.00 (plus shipping)
- One Navy Blue woman's LG embroidered jacket- \$40.00 (plus shipping)



Visit our website's 'Ship's Store' at www.uss-houston.org/shipsstore.html and see all of the USS *Houston* CA-30 items at their discounted prices!

Order Now while these supplies are still available!

THE SHIP WE CAN'T FORGET

There's a spot within my heart
And I alone control the key;
To bring to life the things I know,
Just where, or when, the need might be;
The past I know from memories,
in my mind so deeply set,
A legend in our History:
The Ship We Can't Forget.

How clean her prow would cleave the sea,
to leave it churning white,
A pathway for our S.O.C.'s
returning from a flight;
Our crew so happy to see them back,
safe for yet another day,
Tired from ceaseless searching,
for any enemy in our way;
Houston's deck remained our battleground,
awaiting General Quarter's call,
Ships, or planes, if Japanese,
we fought them one and all.

Our task formidable,
against the power of Japan,
Echoing our Captain's words:
"We'll do everything we can!"
Houston sank in Sunda Strait,
shattered, but not alone,
Enemy ships had suffered badly
when she made her presence known;
Though our *Houston* is now gone,
I see her clearly yet
Defiance roaring from her guns,
the Ship We Can't Forget.

Years will never dim the memory of USS *Houston* and
her crew.

Written by
Lloyd V. Willey,
U.S. Marine Corps Detachment
USS *Houston* (CA-30)
February 16, 1988

On behalf of our Association, RADM Samuel Cox, USN (retired) presented USS Houston (CA-30) challenge coins to seven USS Indianapolis (CA-35) Survivors attending their 74th Reunion (July 18 – 21) in Indianapolis, IN. RADM Cox presented the coins during his outstanding address to reunion attendees, which he shared with us in an email...

REMARKS BY REAR ADMIRAL SAM COX, USN (RETIRED)
Director, Naval History and Heritage Command
at the USS INDIANAPOLIS (CA-35) Memorial Service,
Saturday, 20 July 2019 in Indianapolis, Indiana



Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I am Sam Cox, the Director of the Naval History and Heritage Command. It is an extreme honor for me to be here today, to have an increasingly rare opportunity to offer my gratitude in person to members of the “greatest generation,” who gave us the freedom we have today by ending the most deadly and destructive war in the history of mankind, and in particular, to thank those surviving members of the crew of the INDIANAPOLIS, who played such an important role in bringing about an early end to that terrible war.

I am also aware that I am standing in the shoes of Captain Bill Toti, USN (retired), who has given the keynote remarks at this memorial service for many years. There is no one in the U.S. Navy who has done more, and worked so tirelessly, to set the record straight of the INDIANAPOLIS and Captain McVay. Bill did not tell me much about why he could not be here today, but I would offer that it would never hurt to say a prayer for his continued good health.

As the Director of Naval History, I am an official representative of the United States Navy. The mission of my command is to preserve and present an accurate history of the U.S. Navy – the good, the bad, and the ugly. And, as you all well know, there is plenty of all of those in the INDIANAPOLIS story. I am not the Minister of Propaganda. I am under no requirement to present only “good news” stories, nor am I bound by “legal precedent.” In the case of the court martial of Captain McVay, to this day the legal side of the Navy will say that those who convened the court martial had the authority to do so; Captain McVay was charged with failing to zigzag. He wasn’t zigzagging. Case Closed. However, as a historian, I can provide a long list of reasons to bolster what Bill Toti has so eloquently explained over the years: “Because something is legally correct does not necessarily mean it is just.” And in this case, it was not. In my view, Captain McVay displayed extraordinary leadership and loyalty to the Navy before, during, and after the sinking. We all mourn his tragic loss.

Before I get too deeply into this. I do have a mission I was asked to complete, and there is somewhat of a clock ticking on this. Just after midnight on the First of March 1942, the heavy cruiser USS HOUSTON, with a similar capability and crew as the INDIANAPOLIS, was lost in a valiant battle against overwhelming odds. 648 crewmen were lost with the ship. The survivors were pulled from the water and sent to hellish Japanese prison camps for over three years, where 77 died, leaving only 291 survivors at the end of the war. Now, there are only two survivors left; but they would like it known that were it not for the actions of the INDIANAPOLIS in transporting the key components of the atom bomb and bringing about the end of the war, many more of the HOUSTON sailors would have died in captivity, and neither they nor their families would be here today. On behalf of the survivors of the HOUSTON, I have been asked to present a USS HOUSTON coin to each of the INDIANAPOLIS survivors as a gesture of thanks and comradeship with brothers in arms. (This received a really big round of applause.)



Photos: Andrew Fritzinger

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Over the last couple of days we have talked about how heroes such as Chuck Gwinn, Adrian Marks and Graham Claytor took great risk to save the 316 survivors of INDIANAPOLIS, and of how thousands would not be alive today were it not for their heroic actions. Today, however, we take time to remember those survivors who have passed on, and especially those men of the INDIANAPOLIS who were lost at sea, and remain there today. I think it's also appropriate to take a moment to remember those who were killed aboard INDIANAPOLIS in her previous ten battles, and those who transferred from INDIANAPOLIS during the war and were lost aboard other ships along with the 36,500 other American sailors lost in that war. Although the Japanese were the enemy then, we should remember that over 300,000 Japanese sailors died in the war; none of them had any say or vote about why they were at war, and the great majority of them, like Commander Hashimoto, were just doing their duty.

Nevertheless, historians have called the war with Japan, the "War without Mercy." It was kill or be killed on both sides. Seventy-five years ago last month, a U.S. submarine sank a Japanese troop transport; 5,400 Japanese soldiers and sailors went down with that ship. During 1944, over ten Japanese transports with over 1,500 men were sunk by U.S. submarines. Seventy-five years ago this month, on the island of Saipan, the Japanese launched the largest banzai suicide charge of the war, including the walking wounded and soldiers without weapons. We killed several thousand, almost to the last man, but lost over 600 U.S. soldiers. When it was over, thousands of Japanese civilians on Saipan committed suicide, whole families jumping off the cliffs because they believed their government's propaganda about the terrible things we would do to women and children.

Today, we tend to think of how sad it was that INDIANAPOLIS was lost in the last days of the war. Well, no one knew that then. When INDIANAPOLIS was lost, she was on her way to participate in the invasion of Japan, expected to be by far the bloodiest and most costly campaign of the war. There are those who claim that the estimates of casualties from an invasion were exaggerated, and that the atom bomb should never have been used. I disagree. The battles of Saipan, Peleliu, Iwo Jima and Okinawa gave only a hint of the horror of what an invasion of Japan would be like. Senior Navy leaders at the time, such as Admirals Nimitz and Spruance, wanted to avoid an invasion of Japan, preferring to use bombers and submarines to strangle and starve the Japanese homeland. This would have resulted in fewer U.S. casualties, although I am not sure it is more humane to starve 100 million people slowly than to drop two atom bombs and kill 150,000, and end it quickly.

There are those who say the atom bomb is a terrible and immoral weapon. It is; just like all weapons, which are designed to violate the Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." The difference is to what use those weapons are put, whether in conquest, defense, or in putting an end to a brutal war of aggression and reestablishing a peace. I would argue that because the crew of INDIANAPOLIS – those who survived and those who were lost – accomplished their mission of transporting the atom bomb components safely across the ocean, that there are millions of people alive today because that war was ended without need for an invasion or starvation. Millions of people owe their lives, in part, to the crew of the INDIANAPOLIS.

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To bring this to a close: The U.S. Navy never gives up title to a sunken warship, and all of them fall under the jurisdiction of the Naval History and Heritage Command. So, in a very real sense, I am responsible for the INDIANAPOLIS today. She is a hallowed site, a sacred war grave. She is the last resting place for 300 sailors and a marker for 600 more who have none. It is the Navy's intent that the wreck of INDIANAPOLIS remain undisturbed so that the crew that are still with her can rest in peace.

Some have asked, "Why do we care about wrecks? Don't they represent defeat?" I would argue that in the case of the U.S. Navy, most of our wrecks were lost in the course of victory, and victory has a price. Those who paid that price for victory, and their ship, should never be forgotten. INDIANAPOLIS certainly fits that category. Some of our other wrecks were lost in brave action against hopeless odds, like the HOUSTON. By the fortune of war, the INDIANAPOLIS encountered a submarine with a skilled commander, a well-trained crew, and torpedoes that were better than ours, and never had a chance. But, even in the worst defeats, there are examples of courage and valor that should be remembered and can serve as an inspiration to future generations of sailors. And, there are, of course, always lessons that should never be forgotten. In the case of the INDIANAPOLIS, I would say the biggest lesson is, "Never, ever, give up."

And for those of us blessed with freedom today, I would say the moral is: to do our best to live our lives so as to be worthy of those who did not come back. Thank you.

You Shop, Amazon Gives

By Pam Crispi Foster, Treasurer

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

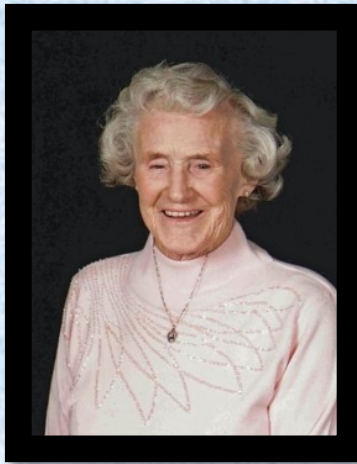
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In Memoriam

Eileen May (Foster) Hanley



AUGUST 22, 1921 ~ APRIL 9, 2019 (AGE 97)

Wife of USS *Houston* (CA-30) Survivor Robert Hanley

To read Eileen's obituary, go to:

<https://www.mattsonfuneralhome.com/notices/Eileen-Hanley>

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Membership

Our "USS *Houston* family" continues to grow weekly as more and more folks want to know about the gallant crew of USS *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!

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



Association Website:
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USS Houston CA-30

Thank you!

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

Donations

March 28 – July 15, 2019

In Memory of David Flynn
Donna Mae Flynn

In Memory of Eugene Crispi
Donna Mae Flynn

In Memory of John Reilly
Donna Mae Flynn

In Memory of John Stefanek
Henry & Jane Matthews

Other Donations

Bernice Harapat
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Amazon Smile Donations Received - \$78.36 YTD

Financial Report

by Pam Foster, Treasurer

January 1 – July 15, 2019

General Fund

Beginning Balance:	\$20,159.27
Receipts:	+11,227.04
Expenses:	<u>-8,030.45</u>
Ending Balance:	\$23,355.86



Scholarship Fund

Beginning Balance:	\$20,038.19
Receipts:	+2,601.05
Expenses:	<u>-0.00</u>
Ending Balance:	\$22,639.24



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On Memorial Day 2019 this beautiful wreath was found at the base of the USS *Houston* (CA-30) Monument in Houston, Texas. The person who placed the wreath at the monument is unknown, but his/her remembrance of USS *Houston* (CA-30) on Memorial Day is deeply appreciated.