

Now Hear This!

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Association Founded 1947

By Otto and Trudy Schwarz

Honoring USS Houston & HMAS Perth at Arlington National Cemetery



On May 22, 2024, representatives of the WWII allied naval force known as "ABDA" and a representative of NHHHC participated in a Memorial Day gathering at the USS *Houston* (CA-30)/HMAS *Perth* (D-29) marker at Arlington National Cemetery to remember the fallen. (L to R): Blair Atcheson (NHHHC); LTCOL Eli Bressler, U.S. Marine Corps; CDR Derek Powles, Royal Navy; CDR Stefan Luteijn, EMSD, Royal Netherlands Navy; and LTCDR Thomas Robertson, Royal Australian Navy.

2024 MEMORIAL DAY REMEMBRANCE

By John Schwarz

On May 22, 2024, our Association sponsored a Memorial Day gathering of representatives of the WWII nations of American-British-Dutch-Australian naval forces (ABDA) at the U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) and H.M.A.S. *Perth* (D-29) marker in Arlington National Cemetery to honor the crewmen of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) and H.M.A.S. *Perth* (D-29) who perished during the Pacific War (See photo above). In addition, all servicemen from the ABDA strike force who lost their lives during the 1942 defense of Java were remembered and honored. *(Continued on next page)*

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During this solemn gathering, the ABDA representatives placed small flags from all four nations at the marker's base and the military representatives saluted the flags.

The ABDA representatives included: Representing the United States: **Lieutenant Colonel Eli Bressler, U.S. Marine Corps**; Representing Great Britain: **Commander Derek Powles, Royal Navy**; Representing the Kingdom of the Netherlands: **Commander Stefan Luteijn, EMSD, Royal Netherlands Navy**; and representing Australia: **Lieutenant Commander Thomas Robertson, Royal Australian Navy**. **Blair Atcheson**, represented the U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command. LTCOL Bressler's great uncle was USS *Houston* CA-30 crewman **Roy Wenholtz**, who was killed in action during the battle of Sunda Strait on March 1, 1942.

Our thanks to **Jill Drupa** and Association member **Blane Amphor** for their support for this event.

“Team Houston” at the 2024 National Memorial Day, 4th of July Concerts



During “Media Day” at the 2024 National Memorial Day Concert in Washington, DC: (L to R): M.J. Boice, the National Military Family Association and “Paris Island Spouse of the Year” (2015); Concert Co-host Gary Sinise, Actor/musician who in 2011 established the “Gary Sinise Foundation” whose mission is to serve our country by honoring our veterans, first responders, their families and those in need; Kimberly Gold, 2024 “Army Spouse of the Year;” Concert Co-host Joe Mantegna, actor, National Spokesperson for the fund-raising campaign to build the U.S. Army Museum and ambassador for the Gary Sinise Foundation. Mr. Mantegna has hosted the National Memorial Day Concert since 2006; John K. Schwarz, Executive Director, USS Houston (CA-30) Survivors’ Association & Next Generations®.

Capital Concerts is one of the nation's leading producers of live patriotic television shows, including PBS's performance specials: “The National Memorial Day Concert” and “A Capital Fourth.” These are premier celebrations of America's most important holidays, broadcast on PBS from the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC. They have become national traditions and have been conducted for over 40 years, bringing us together as one American family to celebrate our freedom and to honor those veterans who serve to protect it.

“The 2024 National Memorial Day” anniversary broadcast was a deeply moving experience, which included a special segment, “A World War II Tribute,” narrated by Tony and Olivier Award winner Bryan Cranston. That tribute was a salute to the millions of Americans who served the nation in WWII. It commemorated the battles in the Pacific and European theaters that secured the Allied path to victory! Mr. Cranston also presented the story of U.S. Army veteran John T. “Jack” Moran, a soldier in the battle of the Bulge who was in attendance at the concert. It was followed by an emotional hug between Mr. Cranston and Mr. Moran.



(L to R): Actor Bryan Cranston, perhaps best known for his work in “Breaking Bad” and “Your Honor,” with John K. Schwarz.

The “Capital Fourth” concert offered a similar opportunity as we were permitted to speak to several participants in that star-packed concert, which aired on July 4th. Like the “National Memorial Day” concert, the July 4th event featured the honoring of the 80th anniversary of World War II. This really brought the experience close to home for us, along with the shedding of some tears over the wonderful tributes paid at both concerts. The July Fourth concert paid tribute to WWII through the presence and honoring of an original “Rosie the Riveter,” Mae Krier, and a WWII D-Day veteran, Mr. James Behrend, who spoke on behalf of his fellow veterans and the “Greatest Generation.”

Our experience with Capital Concerts was genuinely inspiring and touching. We are deeply grateful to the wonderful staff at Capital Concerts for their hard work and dedication in making these events possible. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.
— John K. Schwarz

An excellent opportunity came to our Association through Association member Mrs. Marta Bota, who had a previous relationship with folks at Capital Concerts. She and I represented a local “Team Houston,” joining other veteran groups that gained access to participating facilitators and stars of these two concerts on Media Day. This allowed us to represent our ship, USS *Houston* (CA-30), and the Survivors’ Association and to speak about them. That was preceded by a Zoom call with Bryan Cranston before the concert, where Marta and I discussed the issue of returning veterans' willingness to talk about their war experiences with Mr. Cranston as he, too, had parents who served in WWII. When I mentioned the movie “The Bridge on the River Kwai”—before the film's name was even finished—Bryan exclaimed, “My favorite war movie!”



On July 3, 2024, at “A Capital 4th” concert’s “Media Day” (Back Row, L to R): John K Schwarz, Marta Bota, and multi-platinum selling Singer/Songwriter and recording artist Loren Allred. (Front Row in red): M.J. Boice, the National Military Family Association.

The Dai Mogi Maru Story

By Quentin C. Madson

INTRODUCTION: One of the most terrifying experiences of POW captivity endured by the USS *Houston* (CA-30) survivors and Lost Battalion soldiers of “Group 5” occurred at sea in January 1943 when American bombers targeted the hellship *Dai Mogi Maru*, in whose hold the American POWs were being transported. This voyage of *Dai Mogi Maru* was not their first hellship voyage. Back in October 1942, the Japanese had transported hundreds of Allied POWs, including these 450 American POWs from Batavia, Java to Singapore in the steamy hold of another filthy, antique freighter. The Japanese had held them at Changi prison in Singapore until January 8, 1943, when guards forced most of the American POWs and approximately 1,100 other Allied prisoners of war into cramped, steel boxcars, which headed north from Singapore to Penang, Malaya. After five sweltering days, the boxcars reached Penang. The prisoners were disembarked and marched to the docks, where barges ferried them to two awaiting rusting Japanese hellships. The Japanese forced the American POWs into the aft hold and the Australian POWs into the forward hold of the first freighter—*Dai Mogi Maru*. Dutch prisoners were forced into the forward hold of a second freighter, *Nitta Mei Maru*, while some 700 Japanese guards were loaded into that ship’s aft hold. The two freighters and an 80-foot armed trawler formed a convoy that left Penang’s harbor in the afternoon of January 13, 1943.

Among the American POWs of “Group 5” was USS *Houston* (CA-30) survivor Quentin C. Madson, who had been a coxswain aboard *Houston*. In June 1990, Madson wrote an article about the harrowing allied air attack which was launched against *Dai Mogi Maru* a few days after leaving Penang harbor. Below is an excerpt from his eyewitness account. — Dana Charles, Editor.

Quentin C. Madson: I estimated that convoy speed was quite slow, about seven knots, as these two prison ships were refugees from the scrap pile. The Japanese bought these and many other old freighters in the years before the war in the expectation of fighting a war. Many had been laid up in various islands of Japan until they were needed for Japan’s wartime moving of troops and goods. The sleeping platforms in the holds indicated that these two prison ships had been intended for troop transport.

The *Dai Mogi Maru*, built many years ago in Scotland, had a black hull, white superstructure, and a two-hole outhouse hanging over the rail on the port side of the ship for the use of those of us in the forward hold, and another was located aft for the use of the Aussies. These were wooden structures and looked very flimsy.

As might be expected, the seasickness of some led to seasickness in others, and being packed in so tightly with very little ventilation or circulation of air, the hold soon smelled quite bad. Those men who had been selected to sleep in areas near the three-foot-square opening had better air quality than those sleeping in the far corners.

The Japanese guards gave orders that no one was to go up on deck except for the purpose of going to the toilet (or benjo) and that only three men would be permitted up at one time, so every little while, I would make the trip up there on the excuse that I had dysentery. I would sit in the outhouse with the door closed for a while as the quality of air was much better there than down in the hold.

We were fed two meals a day, and of course, the major part of the meal was rice. The morning meal was a rice gruel called “pap.” It had the consistency of oatmeal. Not too much nourishment, perhaps, but at least it was something in our stomachs to last us until the evening meal.

We were also given a cup of something that looked like coffee but was actually made from the burnt rice from the bottom of the rice pot. The second meal of the day was boiled rice with a seaweed stew, which I detested but ate anyway, as the seaweed is supposed to be rich in iodine. We also had a piece of fish and, again, the coffee substitute.

Several of the Aussies volunteered to assist in the kitchen area, so they were involved in preparing and distributing our food. For this, they were given extra rations in addition to receiving a couple of packs of cigarettes each per day. Other Aussies, these from the Aussie cruiser HMAS *Perth*, had volunteered to shovel coal into the ship's boilers for this trip and were likewise given extra rations, as well as cigarettes.

At the top of the hatch was the ever-present Japanese guard put there not only for security reasons but also to regulate the number of POWS going to the benjo. None of the guards seemed to have a sense of humor or the ability to smile or laugh except in the case of another's misfortune, such as some men coming on deck covered in vomit or someone who had dirtied his trousers due to the still present and prevalent dysentery.

On the foredeck of the old *Dai Mogi Maru* was an ancient-looking gun estimated to be about a three-inch piece. A similar gun was located on the afterdeck, and these were the sole defensive armament on this floating antique.

The Japanese crew of the *Dai Mogi Maru* and the guard detail were quartered in the superstructure or deckhouse located midship, below the bridge, and between the forward and after cargo holds. The guard detail consisted of an estimated twenty men and the ship's crew numbered about thirty.

On the second day out of Penang, enemy (Allied) planes were sighted, and the word was quickly passed throughout the ship. At the time, Huffman, Yarbrow, and I were taking our turn at the benjo, which is how it happened that we were the only ones on deck at the time. The gun crews of the two *Dai Mogi* guns ran to and manned their guns, and the guards who had been stationed at the top of the cargo hold left for parts unknown. So, we three POWS hid behind the steel hatch coamings, not wanting to be stuck in the cargo hold if a bomb hit the old *Dai Mogi Maru*.

Soon, the three ships comprising our small convoy were subjected to an air attack by three American Army planes, of which two were B-17s and one a B-24, identified as such by Yarbrow. The planes made a bombing run from the port side of the convoy, their first target being the other freighter, the *Nitta Mei Maru*, carrying the Japanese guard detail and the Indonesian (Dutch) POWS.

One or more of the bombs on this run landed in the after-cargo hold, killing about 500 of the 700 or so members of the Imperial Japanese Army who had been quartered there. The ship was damaged to such an extent that it started to sink. Luckily, she did not go down quickly, and as the stern sank deeper and deeper into the water, the Indonesians from the forward hold were able to get up on deck and then jump overboard. In the process, about thirty-two of the Indonesians were lost.

Meanwhile, the planes continued on their course in the direction of the *Dai Mogi Maru*, and we knew that we, too, would be under attack in a few moments. The Japanese gun crews on the *Dai Mogi* commenced firing at the planes. At the same time, those of our guard detail had started to swing out the starboard lifeboat, which was hung on a pair of davits alongside the superstructure and which was located one deck above the main deck and aft of where we (Yarbrow, Huffman, and I) were crouching.

Some of the Japanese were in the lifeboat, and whether they were preparing to rescue those Japanese in the water from the sinking ship or if they were concerned only with their own safety, we didn't know.

As the planes came closer with their bomb bays open, we could see the bombs begin their descent. Each of them appeared to be a certain hit on us; the forward gun of the *Dai Mogi* fired another shell, which hit either the radio antenna or the wire stays of the forward cargo boom, resulting in the shell's detonation. The fragments of the exploded shell pierced the front of the superstructure and the pilot house in a hundred places, shattering all the windows, killing the helmsman and another crewman on the bridge, and wounding the captain.

We three prisoners watched the spectacle unfold before us from our vantage point on the main deck. For sure, we would have been shot had not the Japanese been so involved with the attacking planes and their clumsy attempts to lower the lifeboat. We were just as sure that we did not want to die in that stinking, lousy cargo hold should the *Dai Mogi Maru* sustain major damage from a bomb hit. It would have been a madhouse with about two-hundred-fifty men all trying to claw their way topside simultaneously through a three-foot-square hole.

The planes passed overhead from Port to Starboard, and as they did, the bombs began landing in the water. The first bomb landed ten or twelve feet out from the starboard side of the ship, and each successive bomb landed further away from us. Each exploded with a loud boom, resulting in a black, oily plume of smoke and much seawater thrown high in the air, some of which landed on us lying on the deck. We were sure the ship would not last much longer.

The bombing run was completed, and having missed the *Dai Mogi Maru*, the planes turned around, ignoring the armed trawler on our starboard side. They started over us again, this time approaching from the starboard side. As the planes got closer, we could see the bombs tumble out of the bomb bays once more and continue their descent towards us. The first of the bombs landed about thirty feet out from the starboard side of the ship, and then each successive bomb landed closer. In all, eight bombs were dropped on this run, and again, as each bomb exploded, it resulted in a large plume of oily, black smoke and much seawater being hurled skyward. Again, we on deck got soaked, but that was unimportant.



The last bomb of this run landed in the middle of the still-swung-out, still-unlaunched lifeboat and killed or seriously wounded all the Japanese in and around it, leaving only the two ends of the lifeboat swinging crazily from the davits. The bombs that landed on the water just before the one that landed in the lifeboat were only seven or eight feet from the ship's side. The shrapnel from these last two bombs pierced the ship's side in numerous places, causing some flooding in the engine room spaces until the holes were stopped by means of driving wooden plugs into the holes. Miraculously, not a single POW was killed or wounded in these attacks, except for Yarbrow, who received a minor shrapnel wound in his back because of the shell hitting the rigging of the ship.

As the planes passed over us and were proceeding away from us, the guns of the *Dai Mogi* were still firing, and the aft gun exploded, killing most of the men of the crew. Almost simultaneously, there was a hang-fire on the forward gun [a hang-fire occurs when an attempt is made to fire the shell, and due to a defective primer (igniting charge) in the base of the shell, it does not fire when struck by the firing pin]. The breechman opened the breech of the gun to eject the faulty shell, which was caught by one of the gun crew, and the shell exploded in his arms, killing most and seriously wounding the rest of the gun crew.

After the bombing run, the planes left the area, and we assumed their bomb load was expended, for which we were understandably happy. Twenty-six minutes after being hit, the *Nitta Mei Maru* finally sank.

The captain of the *Dai Mogi Maru* returned to the area of the sinking in order to rescue survivors, and rope ladders were hung over the port side of the ship to enable survivors to climb aboard our ship. By a stroke of good fortune, only about 32 of the Indonesian prisoners were lost due to the sinking, the Japanese losses being much heavier due to one or more bombs going off in the cargo hold in which they were quartered. Only about 200 Japanese survived the sinking and were picked up by the *Dai Mogi Maru*, and many of these were wounded.

One of the Indonesians came aboard clutching a fish about two feet long in his arms, the fish having been killed by the concussion of the exploding bombs, while another came aboard with his cat, which was perched atop his head. Needless to say, the cat's name was changed from whatever it had been to "Shipwreck."

After rescuing all the survivors, the wounded captain continued on toward his destination. In the evening, we could see two or three ships burning on the horizon, another sign that the Japanese were no longer having everything their way in this part of the world. We were all looking forward to it being a short war. Ever optimistic!

The preceding account of the attack on the convoy differs in many ways from other reports of the attack made by others involved in this episode. In defense of my account, which I believe to be the most accurate, I can only state that I was one of only three POWS who were on deck during the entire attack and was in a position to see everything that went on, except for the explosion of the gun on the stern of the *Dai Mogi Maru*. That part of the story was told to me by some Aussies who were in that part of the ship then.

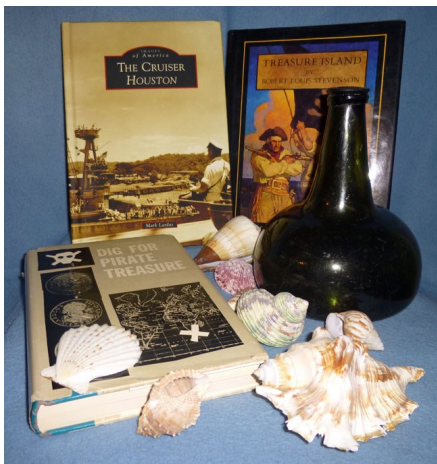
In the report submitted to the Navy Department by Ensign Smith, after our return to the United States, there appears [to be] many differences between his account and mine. This can best be explained by the fact that he was in the cargo hold at the time, unable to see events as they transpired, while I was one of the few eyewitnesses and wrote notes on what I had seen a short time after the event.

Other accounts I have read are also mistaken as to the convoy's composition, with no naval vessels with us as escorts on this voyage. Another error noted in a different account of the attack on the convoy was that all POWS were permitted topside for fresh air and sunshine. Not so! Only three men from the forward cargo hold were permitted on deck at any one time and then only for the purpose of going to the benjo. That is why the Japanese guard was at the exit of the cargo hold, to restrict the number of POWS on deck at any time. This explains why only the three of us were on deck during the attack.

After the survivors of the other ship were brought aboard there were many more topside as there was absolutely no room for any more down in the cargo hold. The Indonesians finished the trip in the fresh air. The day following the attack, there were three air raid alerts, which proved to be false alarms.

On the first of these, three Indonesians rescued the previous day, jumped overboard. Whether in an escape attempt or out of fear, I don't know. In any case, the ship turned around and stopped to pick up the three men. We were still in sight of land, but it would have been a hell of a long swim to reach it. As punishment for jumping overboard and causing the ship to be delayed, the three men were given a severe beating by the guard detail, who were in a nasty mood anyway due to the events of the previous day.

Continuing our journey without further incident, we arrived at Moulmein, Burma on January 17, 1943, four days after leaving Penang, and the prisoners disembarked from the *Dai Mogi Maru* and were relieved to do so. We were marched through the city so the native population could see the ragged remnants of the white man's army and the might of the invincible Nippon, and a short while after, we arrived at the Moulmein civil prison where the sturdy steel gates clanged shut behind us.



THE 1934 PRESIDENTIAL CRUISE AND TREASURE HUNT by Joseph & Marlene McCain

President Franklin D. Roosevelt made four multi-week cruises aboard his favorite warship, USS *Houston* (CA-30). His first cruise, in 1934, was also the longest, lasting more than four weeks. At sea with the *Houston*, President Roosevelt could enjoy being part of the ship's company and indulge his love of saltwater fishing. On this 1934 voyage, his enthusiasm for treasure-seeking was revealed to *Houston's* crew.

In 1909, Franklin Roosevelt, then a young lawyer, managed to raise \$5,000 to join with a few friends in a summer's search for buried treasure on Oak Island. They were unsuccessful, but Roosevelt never lost his interest in treasure hunting. Thus, in 1934, when President Roosevelt and the *Houston* put in at Cocos Island, he granted the crew a day's shore leave with a cheery wave and a command to "... go ahead, boys and find the treasure!" The President probably spent the day fishing and the ship's crew found no buried chests of gold. But it was an enjoyable day for all concerned.

Cocos Island was designated a Costa Rican National Park in 1978 and is inhabited only by the country's park rangers today. It is thickly overgrown with jungle vegetation and is now preserved as a wildlife sanctuary. The park rangers determine the very limited public access to the island.

Cocos Island has been the past site for hundreds of treasure-hunting expeditions. There may be good reason to believe pirates had hidden gold, silver, and other valuables there (Edward Davis and Benito Bonito, to name just two). No significant treasure recoveries have ever been reported, however. A German adventurer, August Gissler, lived on the island from 1889 to 1908 but found only a few gold coins. Still, the stories persist to this day. The novel Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson was probably inspired by the Cocos Island legends.

Sources:

The Cruiser Houston Collection (Images of America) by Mark Lardas, 2017.

Dig for Pirate Treasure by Robert I. Nesmith, 1958.

Photograph by the authors, from their personal library & collection.



From the desk of the Executive Director

John K. Schwarz

You may have noticed that March 1, 2025, falls on a Saturday. What an excellent opportunity to conduct our Memorial Service on that day, which motivated us to request the USS *Houston* CA-30 monument site for March 1, 2025. Unfortunately, the City of Houston had to move our service to **Saturday, March 8, 2025**, due to activities related to the rodeo occurring in and around the streets and park area where we convene. At least now, we can provide you with this March 8th date as it affects any advanced travel scheduling. We are still pursuing hotel arrangements, which will be offered in advance to everyone, as will registration procedures necessary for booking at the group rate.

Meanwhile, we are diligently working on the overall agenda for the upcoming events, including designated speakers and a Friday visitation trip. The comprehensive plan will be announced in the December 2024 edition of the Blue Bonnet. We are always open to any suggestions you may have.

This is the last Blue Bonnet edition before the next internal scholarship application deadline of November 1, 2024. Coaches of possible candidates, please take note. The application information is readily available on our website (usshouston.org) and can also be obtained through me (johnk.schwarz@yahoo.com), the committee chairperson. We wish the best of luck to all prospective candidates, and we want to remind you that the process involved is as important as any outcome. It's an opportunity to delve into the ship's story, which is fundamental to our mission.

Please note that we have been re-supplied with men's navy blue and black USS *Houston* (CA-30) embroidered polo shirts, which make an excellent, meaningful item of ongoing honor to the ship.

Reminder: Open, ongoing lines of communication remain most important for our Association. Accordingly, please update us if/when your email and/or physical address change.

John K. Schwarz

Interviews with Veterans

By John K. Schwarz

Dr. Matt Fash, the National Coordinator of the United States Navy Memorial Stories of Service Program, has provided Association member Blane Amphor and me the opportunity to join his excellent interviewer team. This has allowed us to meet and interview veterans who visit the Navy Memorial on Pennsylvania Ave. in Washington, DC, as part of incoming Honor Flights and to attend veteran group reunion gatherings in places within the geographical reach of our nation's capital.

The latest opportunity came on Monday, June 10th, in Annapolis, MD. At a Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, *USS Hugh Purvis* (DD-709) veterans gathered for their latest reunion. Stepping into this gathering, I was immediately struck by an

emotional resonance. It was a poignant 'throwback' to the gatherings of *USS Houston* (CA-30) survivors, where they would share stories and memories of their service to our country.

USS Hugh Purvis (DD-709) proved to be a very interesting warship. Its lifespan went from launching in 1944 to de-commission in 1972, for the most part serving during the "Cold War." The eldest crewmember of the group and current President of their Association, **Eugene Sampieri**, was on board from 1961 through 1963. That meant he was on board as the *Purvis* participated in the Cuban Missile Crisis, or 'thirteen days in October,' from October 16 through October 28, 1962. The *Hugh Purvis* became part of the blockade around Cuba and later made runs in and out of Guantanamo Bay. Since this crisis was a significant event in our country's

national security history, it was important to record the compelling experiences of these men.

The group's coordinator, Eugene Sampieri, initially signed up seven crew members for interviews. Even in this setting and time with this

group of veterans, some reluctance remains to go on record with one's in-service account. However, after conducting a few interviews, feedback from the men we interviewed inspired more men to step up, and eventually, we got 13 significant interviews from this group. A successful trip to Annapolis, indeed.

We thank the men of *USS Hugh Purvis* (DD-709) for their service and willingness to be interviewed, and we thank Dr. Fash for allowing Blane and me to participate in the "Stories of Service" program.



(L to R): Eugene Sampieri and John K. Schwarz



(L to R): Michael Spinelli and John K. Schwarz



(L to R): Mike Yeager and Blane Amphor



(L to R): Blane Amphor and Doug Ottenlips

The Fall of Java as Seen by a Kid

As told to Bernice Harapat



Ida's Family before the war (L to R): Seated: Pop, Frida, Ida, Mom; Standing: Albert, Ben, Loet (who died shortly before the war started), and Dolf.

Her name is Ida, Da to her friends, and Da Queen to her kids. She's an "Indo," a person of mixed ancestry from the old Netherlands East Indies, petite with big, dark eyes. Quite the little heartbreaker, according to her many admirers (she's going to kill me), until she met her true love, Willem. Her ancestry covers Germany, Portugal, India, and Indonesia, to name a few. She grew up on Java, the baby sister of a large, happy household that included three big brothers, big sis Frida, and their many friends, and was 11 years old when the Indies fell. She is soft-spoken and gracious and the toughest person I know.

There, as Dad used to say, and you see it. The war. It's there. Those survivors are such a happy, fun-loving group, but it's still there. They've seen stuff, and they have suffered.

Until Dec. 8 (their side of the dateline) 1941, daily life in the Netherlands East Indies was mainly unaffected by the war. The news from Europe was bad and affected many families, but Hitler's Germany was far away. Still, a Japanese attack was not unexpected when it happened at Pearl Harbor.

Bernice: When did you hear that the war had started?

Ida: On Sunday, Dec. 8, my mother called us in and told us about Pearl Harbor. We were now at war with Japan. By Thursday, all boys over 17 had been mobilized, and my brothers were gone. The 3 of them were fortunate to be in the same unit. They were sent into the mountains outside of Bandoeng, where the last-ditch defense of West Java was being put into place.

Bernice: Did you get to see them after that?

Ida: Yes, my mother was missing them, they had to leave so suddenly, so Pop would send her on the train to visit, and she would bring me along with her. By February, things started looking grim. Allied troops from the UK, British India, and Australia arrived to help defend the islands. Most American forces were sent to the Philippines, though there were US ships in the ABDA fleet, as well as some pilots and ground troops. Those Americans made quite an impression on us girls. Sadly, we didn't get to meet them, but we hoped they would come back to liberate us! People held drills and dug bomb shelters, or they bought a special table for the house. These heavy tables were made to double as air raid shelters. Everyone carried a rubber mouthguard. We were supposed to bite on that to protect from blast concussions. However, Batavia was declared an open city and never bombed.



The brothers in uniform with two buddies. Albert is seated at left, Ben behind him and Dolf on the right.

With the fall of Singapore and the tragic losses of ABDA, the way was clear for the Japanese invasion. The Indies surrendered on March 8, and all troops were ordered to lay down their arms. They'd hardly had a chance to fight, most of them, and now they were prisoners of war.

Bernice: *What was your first impression of the Japanese?*

Ida: The Japanese landed at Tandjong Priok and marched into Batavia. I will never forget when I saw them. After all, we'd heard about the mighty Japanese army. I don't know what we expected, but it wasn't these small guys on bicycles covered in jungle camouflage (i.e., branches attached to their backs and helmets). We all thought the same thing: "*What?! We lost to these little guys?*". Seeing the crowds, the Japanese thought they were getting a hero's welcome! The Indonesians were, of course, happy to see them; Japan had made the usual big promises to them. Poor folks, they soon found out differently.

The Japanese set up their headquarters at the 10th Battalion barracks, Bicycle Camp to English speakers—the base for a Dutch bicycle battalion. The KNIL soldiers based there now got used to work details, and prisoners from all over Java began to be sent to this camp, too.

Bernice: *How did life change after they arrived?*

Ida: We all had to register and were given ID papers. My father, Adolf, was German, and my mother, Ida, was of mixed ancestry. This got us classified as "German," considered friendly nationals. We also had to bring our radios in and have a seal put on them. [This was a] stupid idea—you can open up the back of the radio and use it, and the seal stays good as new!

Indonesian and Chinese-owned businesses remained open, while Japanese-owned ones abruptly closed. Now we know those barbers, photographers, and merchants were actually Japanese intelligence people—pretty clever, I must admit. My father was in charge of the PTT (Postal, Telephone, and Telegraph) office of Batavia and was told to remain at his job. Our Indonesian servants (not like we were wealthy— even small households employed help back then) were no longer allowed to work for us. We missed them very much because we loved them like family. Only our *Baboe* (nanny) bravely refused to leave us. It became my job to take care of the animals. Frida did the cooking. Laundry, we both had to do that one, yuck! It was done with a washboard; my knuckles would get all scraped up from that thing.

All Dutch nationals were interned. Their camps were neighborhoods that the Japanese took over, kicking the people out of their homes. Our neighborhood, Tjideng West, was one of those; it became Tjideng Women's Camp. Our house, across the canal from the camp, was taken for guard quarters, so we had to rent another one from a Chinese family in the Goenoeng Sari neighborhood. We could see the Dutch internees through the fence and even chat, from a distance, but we were not allowed to visit or give them anything. The Dutch word for our status is "Buitenkampers" (those outside the camps).

My parents, devout Christians, opened our home to displaced families, and we eventually had 20+ people living in our single-family house! The schools were closed, but we had a teacher in the group who tutored my cousin and me (Frida opted out) and was such a good teacher that I was able to skip two grades after the war and be in the same class with Frida, who was four years older!

Bernice: *How were the non-Dutch people treated?*

Ida: In the beginning, it was not so bad for us. We could go to Bicycle Camp to look for our husbands and brothers and even bring food and other things. Once, when a transport of prisoners came in, things got crowded, and a young guard waved his bayonet at us. My mother waved her finger back at him and said, "Don't you dare!"- and he backed off! If you didn't see the person you were seeking, lists of the captured were posted daily at the camp. We found my brothers Albert and Dolf, but Ben's name didn't show for a while, and we were very worried, but finally, there he was. The three brothers and many of their friends -our adopted brothers- stuck together through all the years that followed.

The Japanese were not cruel to us Indos. In fact, when I had an appendicitis attack one night, the doctor asked them to send an ambulance for me, and they did, which saved my life. However, shortly after my appendectomy surgery, that hospital was emptied and taken for Japanese use. We had to bow whenever we passed a sentry, but otherwise, they behaved with honor toward us and were kind to children. A different kind of people from those the guys endured in the POW camps!

Christmas, 1942

Christmas 1942, we were at home, and someone knocked on the door. When Pop opened it, there was a Japanese officer in uniform. Well, Frida and I were told to make ourselves scarce! The officer told my parents that he was a Christian and had no one to celebrate Christmas with him. He asked if he might spend some time with fellow Christians.

My father invited him in, and he stayed for the evening. Frida and I had to stay put, but we heard them singing hymns and Christmas songs. Then he thanked my parents and went back to his barracks. I always hoped that man made it back home to his family.

Trouble:

As I told you, my Pop was kept in his job at the PTT, and like all in charge of essential resources, he had orders to destroy anything that could fall into enemy hands. He had carried out his duty to destroy the communications system and was not caught—so we thought:

Among the people my parents took in was another German, a very weird guy who wanted to make points with the Japanese. He was observed digging holes in the garden and pulling up the paper lining the bottom of the bird cages, looking for something. In March 1943, this man betrayed our dear Pop, and the Kempeitai pulled up to the house at night and took him away from us. We had to bring his things to the police station the next day. He was horribly tortured—he would not tell us girls the details, but our brothers told us later—and sentenced to 7 years for the sabotage. They sent him to the Kempeitai prison in Bandoeng, and we did not see him again until the war was over, nor did we hear anything.

Bernice: *How did you live without an income?*

Ida: There was rationing by this time. We had to pick up our rice rations at the zoo of all places. To make money, we sold our bedding—textiles were scarce by then—and little cottage industries sprang up. Ours was making candy. We made peanut brittle and *borstplaat*, a kind of fondant candy, to sell. My future sister-in-law, Mien, lived with us; she and I would go all over town to find salt and other necessities. I'm amazed now to think of us two girls going everywhere, including into the native *kampong*, without supervision, but we were never threatened.

We could still buy vegetables and fruit at the market, and we had chickens for eggs and a little meat. One of those was a rooster named Johannes Stephanus van Puffelen (by my brothers, of course!), a scrawny bird with a fondness for dirty diapers and the contents thereof. Johannes finally had to go in the pot, but hungry as we were, that one was a tough sell!

Everyone thought the war would be short. People made up superstitions, like when a certain fruit ripened or a flower bloomed, peace would come. Some psychic or other said that—if only! Fortune tellers did big business. We knew where my brothers were because a couple of the yellow POW postcards got through to us. Thailand, we thought, that's crazy! But at least we knew they were alive.

Bernice: *How did you get the news that the war was over?*



The photo sent to the boys after the liberation. (L-R): Ida (age 15), Mom, Pop, and Frida (Age 19).

Ida: There was no big announcement or anything; we heard about it on the radio, and one day, the camp gates were standing open. Allied planes flew over, not bombing but dropping supplies for us. There was chocolate, Spam, Velveeta Cheese...and cigarettes! We'd never had a cigarette, so we decided to try them. They made us cough so bad we never smoked again!

The Dutch people were free, but there were no Allied troops yet on the island, so they were urged to stay in the camps for their safety, and their

Japanese former guards were ordered to protect them. They did so, infuriating the Indonesians, who had expected a different outcome. They wanted their promised independence but felt betrayed. This was the beginning of the *Bersiap*, a time much, much worse for us civilians than the war with Japan ever was. Mobs of young radicals known as *pelopors* went crazy, massacring Dutch people and anyone they suspected of being friendly to the Dutch. They thought nothing of murdering entire families. No one was safe, and we came close several times to losing our lives. Once, we were saved by our heroic *Baboe*, who faced down a mob outside our house, forbidding them to hurt us. They listened to her, thank God! Poor Mien's widowed brother-in-law and his children were found at the bottom of a well, cut into pieces, and we often saw bodies float by in the canal, their hands tied and eyes gouged out.

Mien and I were out one day doing the shopping when a man urgently beckoned us to come inside. It was not safe, he said; a mob was raising hell. They had spotted a Japanese officer out by himself. We did so, but we saw that poor officer get chased down by the *pelopors* and chopped to pieces with his own sword. The sound of that blade hitting the pavement; I still hear it.

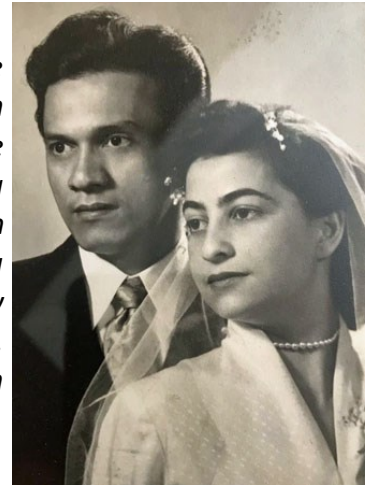
My brothers and their friends survived the Railway, sticking together and caring for each other. They were now safe in Thailand, and we could write to each other. We would not see them anytime soon, though: Once they recovered their health, they were re-trained at a British base and sent to Bali, where they fought the forces of General Suharto. They'd made sure not to send them back to Java so they wouldn't desert and go for revenge. It would be two more years before we were reunited.

Our liberators were British, British Indians, and the famous Gurkhas of Nepal. Some of the Indian troops got out of control, and there were rapes, but we felt very safe when the Gurkhas were around; not only were they gentlemen, but anyone who messed with them tended not to survive!

When we got to the hospital, we looked around the ward and didn't see Pop, so Mom asked a doctor. "But Madame," he said, "he's right here- you are standing next to his bed." We didn't recognize him, that skeleton in the bed! He looked like the victims of Auschwitz or the Railway, and he was so weak. He'd survived (barely) with the help of a cousin who was also in that prison and shared his food with him. Poor Pop. We got him home—he endured that long train ride on hard wooden benches without complaining—and he ate and ate, even things he didn't like before! When he returned to looking like himself, we took a photograph to send to the boys. He never fully recovered his health, though, and passed away a few years later. I wish you could have met him.

So ends the wartime for Mom and her family. The boys finally got home, and the celebrating began. The Indies became the Republic of Indonesia, and all Dutch citizens had to choose their citizenship, most opting to evacuate to the Netherlands. The family settled in the Hague, like many Indos, forming a community there. Frida and Ida had lots of parties, and the brothers' friends from the POW camps were frequent visitors, including a boy named Willem Terluin. Ida and Willem got married in 1952 and had 57 years together. Adolf Dede, my grandfather, died the year before I was born, and my grandmother Ida, in 1959. They were only in their fifties. By coincidence, Olly, the teacher who lived with them during the war, is buried next to them in the Hague.

Willem and Ida at their 50th anniversary Mass, August 2002.



Willem and Ida on their wedding day, August 29, 1952



The siblings loved to hang out together! (L-R): Ida, Albert, Frida, Dolf

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

- 5/8/2024: I received the following email from **NG Earl Hooper**: "USS Houston Association, I came across this article about my uncle's death in my family records and thought you might want a copy." (See clipping at right).
- 5/9/2024: Replied to **Earl Hooper** as follows: "Earl, Thank you for sharing this newspaper clipping with our Association. I'm sorry for the loss of your uncle aboard USS *Houston* (CA-30)... At the moment, some of your uncle's photos appear on this website: home.pon.net/shawnf/stor/HooperLloydR/HooperLloyd.htm. Again, thank you for sharing this newspaper article."
- 5/22/2024: Received the following email from **Terry Manttan (TBRC)** in Thailand: "Dear All, I am delighted to advise that the unique framed "Nakhon Pathom Document" dedicated to fellow American PoWs, as presented by the Allied Doctors in the camp 6 days after the end of the war, is now on display in our Museum on the second floor. Please find attached some photos including me gladly accepting the donation on arrival and the display in situ...Once again many thanks to all involved in having this memorable piece now on display in our Museum alongside the many other stories and tributes to our forebears who endured this tragic WWII event... Special thanks to **Jeff Smith** and family for deciding to send this on its journey to where its significance can be shared by many in the years to come...With our sincere gratitude and very best wishes from all of the Team at TBRC in Kanchanaburi, Thailand. Terry." (See document on next page).
- 5/23/2024: Received the following email from **Jeff Smith**



regarding the TBRC's acquisition of the framed document: "Fantastic news! Thank you so much for arranging this and sending the pictures. So happy that the document has found the perfect home and the description added at the bottom of the frame is really nice.... I hope to make it to the museum someday. Best regards, Jeff Smith, Arlington, VA, USA."

At Left: Terry Manttan, General Manager, Thailand-Burma Railway Center (TBRC), holds the framed "Nakhon Pathom document," which is now on display at the TBRC, Kanchanaburi, Thailand.

REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION IN FAR EAST

LLOYD HOOPER GIVES HIS LIFE IN WOLRD WAR TWO

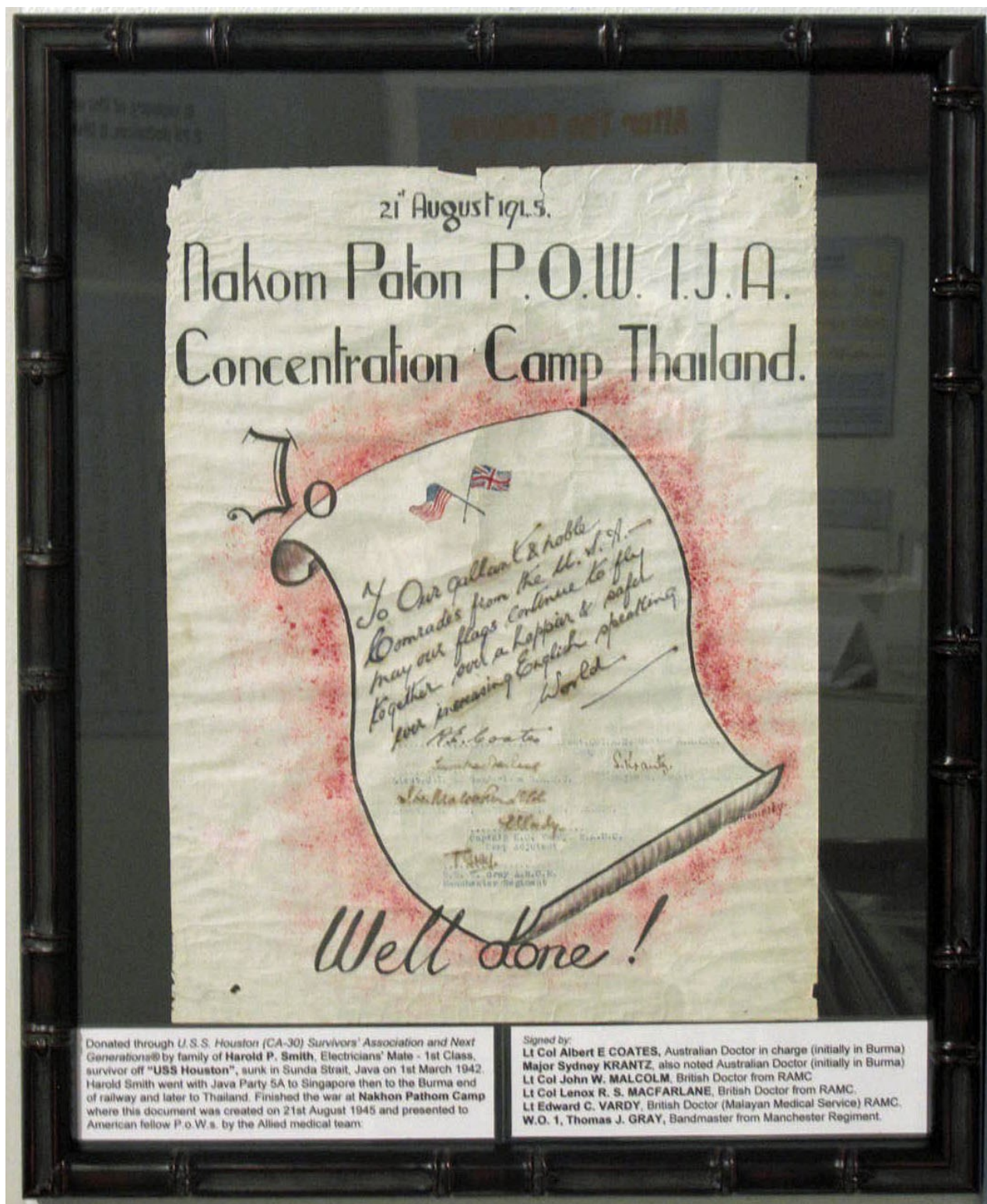
Sen of Mr. and Mrs. Brad Hooper of This City; Enlisted in Navy Six Years Ago

The first native born boy from Ellsworth and the third in the county to lose his life in World War II was Lloyd Raymond Hooper; his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Brad Hooper of this city, received a telegram early last Saturday evening from the war department and signed by Rear Admiral Randall Jacobs, chief of the bureau of navigation, stating that Lloyd was missing in action in the Pacific February 26.

Lloyd was born in Ellsworth township August 1, 1917, and was 25 years old at the time of his death. Lloyd an aviation machinist, second class, with the United States navy, enlisted some six years ago. He was 19 years old at that time. Lloyd is survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Brad Hooper, and the following brothers and sisters: Harry Hooper, of Melvin; Harold Hooper, of Salina; Mrs. Neita Stewart, of Plainville; Clarence Hooper, of Wichita; Gerald Hooper, stationed with the army at San Diego, California; William Hooper and Mrs. Marjorie Cease, of Wichita; and Janice of the home.

LOST ABOARD THE HOUSTON

Lloyd Hooper is missing in the Java sea action, according to official word from the navy department to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Brad Hooper, of this city. Hooper was serving his second enlistment with the navy, having joined six years ago when nineteen years of age, and recently was transferred from the Augusta to the U.S.S. Houston. The parents received two cards from their son since the first of the year, and only last week had received a letter, dated in February. So far as is known Hooper is the only casualty in the Java battle from Ellsworth county.



- 6/22/2024: We received the following email from **British Naval Attaché Derek Powles**: "John, and all the USS HOUSTON Association Board Members, It has been my honour to be associated with such fine people during my 3 years here in the British Embassy and my engagements with you all in Houston for the commemoration ceremonies that are so fantastically organised, not only as a commemoration of the past, but also your engagement with the 'next' generation through either education or scholarships. I was never able to meet any of your parents or relatives who served so bravely onboard the USS HOUSTON but I am sure they are immensely proud of you all and I have been honoured to have had the opportunity to play my small part in continuing the USS HOUSTON legacy. I wish you all the best for the future... It has been a pleasure working with you."

U.S. Navy Memorial Sea Service Student Internship

By John K. Schwarz

The United States Navy Memorial Sea Service Student Internship is dedicated to preserving American History. A key objective is archiving veterans' stories and creating a dialogue emphasizing United States military history. Dr. Matthew Fash created and directs the annual program. This year, he guided his third group through it, designated Squadron III.

John K. Schwarz and Blane Amphor from the USS Houston (CA-30) Survivors' Association & Next Generations were honored to be part of Squadron III's development on July 17-24, 2024, at the U.S. Navy Memorial in Washington, DC. Our involvement included advising and mentoring, and both Blane and I made presentations while the program interns worked with residents at Vinson Hall Retirement Community in McLean, VA. That residence facility is heavily populated with retired veteran Officers and other military personnel. Blane presented on the military service of his late dad, Francis J. Amphor, who was aboard USS *Missouri* (BB63) during the Japanese signing of surrender, which ended WWII. John presented the story of the "USS *Houston* (CA-30)/POW Experience." To culminate the interns' week, they presented to the Library of Congress the results of the many veteran interviews they successfully conducted during their week in Washington.



Sea Service Squadron III Interns pay their respects to the men of ABDA at the USS *Houston* (CA-30)/HMAS *Perth* I marker in Arlington National Cemetery. (L to R): Team Assistant Jeff Fash, Squadron III chaperon and former Squadron I & II; Intern Matthew Kropelnicki; Teacher Samantha Coale; Interns: Morgan Leung, Gracie Murphy, Nora Kaszuba, Jack Minyard, Carson Landies, Ava McCarthy, Madelyn Rynning, and Dr. Matthew Fash.



In addition to work done through the Library of Congress, another highlight of the week's program was the welcome to visit the Navy Yard in Washington, DC. This included a tour of the U.S. National Navy Museum, enabling the interns to view the original shipbuilder's model of the USS *Houston* (CA-30) and a command briefing delivered by the Director of U.S. Navy History & Heritage Command (NHHC), retired Rear Admiral Sam Cox.

Association Executive Director John k. Schwarz (center) holds the treated, and soon-to-be-on-display USS *Houston* (CA-30) bell clapper flanked by the Squadron III Sea Service Interns and teacher Samantha Coale (far left), and Dr. Fash (far right). Shot taken in front of the original shipbuilder's model of USS *Houston* (CA-30) on display at the National Naval Museum at Navy Yard, Washington, DC.

Admiral Cox offered an excellent, comprehensive overview of NHHC's purpose, mission, and functioning departments. To exemplify that, he offered a viewing of the newly treated USS *Houston* (CA-30) artifacts (the recovered trumpet and clapper). He also personally guided the interns to the location on-site of a Swift Boat.



Rear Admiral (ret.), and Director of U.S. Navy History and Heritage Command (NHHC) Sam Cox (center) flanked by the Sea Service Squadron III Interns in the newly re-designed lobby, NHHC headquarters, Navy Yard, Washington, D.C.

It was a truly remarkable, rewarding week spent with Dr. Fash, the seven outstanding Sea Service interns from northern California, and their dedicated teacher, Ms. Samantha Coale. Thank you, Dr. Fash, for what you do leading such a fantastic program.

NOTES FROM HERE AND THERE...



The Historian of both the USS *Houston* (CA-30) Survivors' Association & Next Generations and the Naval Order of the United States, Texas Commandery, Don Kehn, Jr., in front of the model of USS *Edsall* (DD-219) at the Nimitz Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. Don is the author of *A BLUE SEA OF BLOOD, Deciphering the Mysterious Fate of the USS Edsall* (Zenith Press, 2009). He is currently preparing a new, expanded online history of the ship's final mission, which will include many rare, never-before-published details discovered after the publication of his book.

In Memoriam

Silvia Brooks



1940—2022

Widow of USS *Houston* (CA-30) Survivor Howard Brooks

Silvia Brooks, 82, of [Mount Laurel, NJ](#), passed away peacefully on Monday, December 26, 2022. Silvia was born in Bern, Switzerland, to the late Frederick and Rosa Wasem and had resided in Willingboro, NJ, before her current residence of over 39 years in Mt. Laurel. Silvia had many hobbies and loved being active in her community. She was the past president of The Swiss Club of the Jersey Shore and an active board member of The Armed Forces Heritage Museum in [Wrightstown, NJ](#). At events through the Armed Forces Heritage Museum, she retold the story of Howard, her husband, who proudly served in the US Navy aboard the USS *Houston* (CA-30) during WWII. Imperial Japanese forces then captured Howard and he became a prisoner of war for 3½ years, held in various POW camps, including the work camps of "Branch 5" in Burma along the Burma-Thailand Railway. The Full Story is located at <http://www.usshouston.org/>. Above all else, Silvia loved spending time with her family. She enjoyed traveling with Howard and their family to many different locations. She was a wonderful mother, grandmother, and friend to many and will be very missed by all. Silvia was predeceased by her husband, Howard E. Brooks. She is survived by her sons, Eugene Brooks (Lori—wife) and Jonathan Brooks (Esther—wife); sisters Hilda, Doris, Ruth, and Joann; and grandchildren Alexis, Shelby, Zoe, Kevin, and Devon. Relatives and friends were welcomed to her visitation on Saturday, January 28, 2023, from 2:00 to 3:00 PM and her memorial service immediately following at 3:00 PM. Both were held at Mount Laurel Home for Funerals, 212 Ark Road, [Mt. Laurel, NJ](#) 08054. The interment was private. Instead of flowers, donations in Silvia's memory may be made to The Armed Forces Heritage Museum at the following link: <https://www.afhmus.org/donate-to-armed-forces-heritage-museum/>. The obituary was published on Legacy.com by Mount Laurel Home for Funerals & Cremation Services, Inc. on Jan. 20, 2023.

In Memoriam

Billie M. Reese

July 19, 1933—January 13, 2023

Widow of USS *Houston* (CA-30) Survivor Seldon D. Reese

Billie M. Reese, 89, of Longview, Texas, passed away Thursday, January 13, 2023. She was born July 19, 1933, in Oklahoma. She is survived by her children Kathleen Reese; grandchildren Michael, Jessica Reese, Colt, and Mavis Thinbodaeux; great-grandchildren Cannon, Ava, Emily, and Katie. A graveside service was held on Saturday, January 21, 2023, at White Cemetery in Longview, TX. A visitation was held on Friday, January 20, 2023, from 5:00 - 7:00 PM at Rader Funeral Home of Longview. (Obituary published on Legacy.com by Rader Funeral Home of Longview on Jan. 17, 2023.)

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- USS Houston (CA-30) Hats – (\$25.00 ea.)
- USS Houston (CA-30) Men's Polos – (\$24.00 ea.) (1) Medium available in Navy Blue; and Large, XL, 2XL available in Navy Blue and Black.

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

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Son of USN survivor Otto Schwarz and Trudy Schwarz
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Scholarship Committee, Merchandise
Email: John@usshouston.org



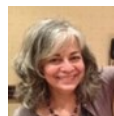
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* The Board of Managers is available to members for questions, concerns, input, or to clarify any matter regarding the Association via email (to contact@usshouston.org), phone, or regular mail.

Membership

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

Association Communication Channels

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



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

Thank you...!

...on behalf of the Association

Donations

April 7 – July 19, 2024

Bernice Harapat

Henry & Jane Matthews

Financial Report

January 1, - July 19, 2024

General Fund

Beginning Balance	\$30,502.19
Receipts	\$9,146.83
Expenses	<u>-\$7,606.17</u>
Ending Balance	\$32,042.85



Scholarship Fund

Beginning Balance	\$22,126.60
Receipts	\$2,431.86
Expenses	<u>\$0.00</u>
Ending Balance	\$24,558.46



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