

Now Hear This!

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Association Founded 1947

By Otto and Trudy Schwarz

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The 2025 U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) "Day of Remembrance"



March 8, 2025: City of Houston Councilman Willie Davis presents a city proclamation to widows of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) survivors: Donna Mae Flynn, Teresa Reilly, and Eunell Weissinger at the 2025 Annual U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Service. (Photo by Dennis Flynn).

The 2025 Day of Remembrance

By Dana Charles

Association members, families, friends, and participants were among the 2025 "Day of Remembrance" (DOR) weekend attendees who enjoyed Houston's unpredictable spring weather on March 7-8. The weekend marked the 83rd anniversary of the loss of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) and H.M.A.S. *Perth* (D-29) at the February 28-March 1, 1942, Battle of Sunda Strait.

(continued on the next page)

The DOR weekend officially began under partly cloudy skies on Friday afternoon, March 7, 2025, as a bus, generously provided by the Harris County Precinct Four Transportation Department, brought most DOR attendees from the DOR 2025 Headquarters at the Hilton Garden Inn—Houston Galleria to the MD Anderson Library on the campus of the University of Houston where **Christian Kelleher**, Director of the Cruiser *Houston* Collection and his staff warmly welcomed us.



Among the attendees at the Cruiser *Houston* Collection on March 7, 2025: (L to R:) Dana Charles, Pam Moura, Sue Kreutzer, Bernice Harapat, John K. Schwarz, Dennis Flynn, Sandy Flynn, Erin Johnson, Donna Mae Flynn, Shawn Flynn, and Teresa Reilly. On behalf of the Association, the Association's Executive Director, John K. Schwarz, presented Sandy Flynn with a U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) T-Shirt in memory of her late husband, Cletus Flynn, son of Donna Mae Flynn and CA-30 survivor David C. Flynn.



On March 7, 2025, Christian Kelleher, head of the Cruiser *Houston* Collection at the University of Houston's MD Anderson Library and our Association's Historian, Donald M. Kehn, Jr., posed before Don's recent donation of a U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) line drawing.

Among the new U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30)-related items on display at the Cruiser *Houston* Collection is a special illustration of the *Houston* signed by approximately 40 survivors—a recent donation by our Association's Historian **Donald M. Kehn, Jr.**, who had collected the signatures over many years. The participating survivors signed the picture where their battle stations had been located on the ship.



The U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) line drawing donated by Donald M. Kehn, Jr.



Photo by Dana Charles



Photo by Dennis Flynn

(Above): At the Cruiser *Houston* Collection on March 7, 2025 were: Linda Swick, daughter of Teresa Reilly and U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) survivor John Reilly; Michael Reilly, son of Teresa Reilly and U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) survivor John Reilly; and University of Houston Libraries interim dean Christina Gola, the head administrator of all of UH Libraries.

(At left): Enjoying the Cruiser *Houston* Collection on March 7, 2025 were: Teresa Reilly, widow of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) survivor John Reilly and Donna Mae Flynn, widow of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) survivor David C. Flynn.

The Association's Executive Director **John K. Schwarz** (see photo below) started the Friday night banquet program with our Association's positive Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2024. A moment of silence was then observed for the USS *Houston* (CA-30) survivors, family members and friends whom we lost over the past year, including: **Silvia Brooks**, Widow of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivor **Howard Brooks**; the last U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivor **Robert L. Hanley**; **Billie Reese**, Widow of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivor **Seldon Reese**; and **Evelyn Valderine (Val) Poss**, our Association's Executive Director, 1997 – 2010, daughter of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivor **Valdon S. Roberts, F2/c, USN** (see: In Memoriam on page 20).

John also announced that there were no applicants this past year for our Association's U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Scholarship Award. Also, the U.S. Naval Academy, which announces a recipient of the U.S. Naval Academy Scholarship—the U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Scholarship—every other year, did not have a recipient this past year. **RADM Samuel J. Cox**, Director of U.S. Naval History & Heritage Command (NHHC), Washington, DC, who was scheduled to speak, was, in the end, unable to attend. He expressed his regrets and he hopes that he will join us at next year's DOR.



Among the first-time DOR attendees at the Friday evening dinner were (at left): Mr. Alamsyah, Staff of Information, Social and Cultural Affairs, Consulate of the Republic of Indonesia, Houston; and Dwiyatna Widinugraha, Consul for Information, Social and Cultural Affairs, Consulate of the Republic of Indonesia, Houston; (at right): Commander S.A.M. (Simon) Gunneweg, Royal Netherlands Navy, Deputy Defense Cooperation Attaché, Assistant Naval Attaché, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Washington, D.C.; and Commander Lyndsey Netherwood, Royal Navy, Assistant Naval Attaché, British Embassy, Washington, D.C. (Photos by Dennis Flynn)

John K. Schwarz (at right) then delivered his keynote PowerPoint presentation, "U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30)/ POW Experience," which featured the story of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) and the POW experiences of her survivors, including his late father **Otto C. Schwarz**.



Photo by Dana Charles



On Saturday morning, March 8, our Association's Historian, author **Donald M. Kehn, Jr.**, (See photo at left by Dennis Flynn) delivered an engaging PowerPoint presentation entitled "Black Sunday." Don's meticulous research was clearly evident as he discussed the WWII story of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet's destroyer U.S.S. *Edsall* (DD—219) and the recent discovery of her wreckage in the Indian Ocean.

Two Australian guests, **Katie Denny** and her mother, **Robyn Denny**, then ceremoniously turned over to our Association seven U.S. coins to be added to the Cruiser *Houston* Collection at the University of Houston's MD Anderson Library on Sunday, March 9.

The story of the U.S. coins began in Thailand during WWII. The coins had been the possessions of U.S.S. *Houston* Survivor **Lyle T. Roszell, SEA2/c, USN**, who died as a POW in a Burma-Thailand Railway POW camp in Thailand in 1943. Upon Roszell's death, the coins came into the possession of an Australian soldier and fellow POW **John Slater**. When Slater returned with the coins to Australia after WWII, he always wanted to turn over the coins to an American POW survivor organization, but he passed away before he could, and the coins were passed down to Katie Denny, Slater's niece. Katie initially contacted our Association's Vice President Dana Charles about the coins in 2013, and made plans this year to visit America and bring the coins to the 2025 DOR in Houston. After tracking down then trying unsuccessfully to connect with Lyle Roszell's sister, Katie and Robyn decided to donate the coins to the Cruiser *Houston* Collection at the University of Houston's MD Anderson Library. [Dana, Katie and Robyn turned the coins over to **Christian Kelleher**, Director of the Cruiser *Houston* Collection, on Sunday, March 9, 2025—Editor].



Photo by Dana Charles

At the March 8, 2025 breakfast, Robyn Denny (at left) and Katie Denny (at right) told the story of the seven U.S. coins once possessed by U.S.S. *Houston* Survivor Lyle T. Roszell, SEA2/c, USN, who died as a POW on the Burma-Thailand Railway in 1943.



Photo by Dennis Flynn

On behalf of the Association, Dana Charles presented Katie and Robyn Denny with U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Challenge Coins during the Saturday, March 8, 2025 breakfast.

At 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 8, 2025, a bus departed the hotel under cloudy skies for the annual U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Service at the U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Monument site in Sam Houston Park in downtown Houston. For several days the weather forecast had called for rain. Happily, the rain did not materialize, and 80-degree clear sky weather greeted everyone at the Monument site.



Photo by Dennis Flynn

The Association's Executive Director John K. Schwarz, serving as Master of Ceremonies, speaking at the podium during the 2025 Annual U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Service.

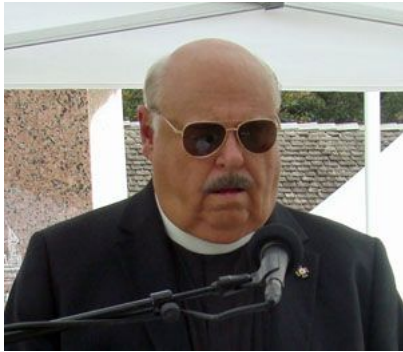
The 2025 Annual U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Service

Approximately 150 people attended this year's U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Annual Memorial Service held at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 8, 2025, at the U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Monument site. The Association's executive director, **John K. Schwarz**, again served as MC this year. **The Reverend Dr. James T. Payne** of the Reformed Episcopal Church presented the Invocation and Benediction. **Saakshi Kumar**, Petty Officer 3rd Class, U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, Houston Division, led us in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, and **Matt Rejmaniak**, Cousin of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) crewman **Edwin Dombrowski**, led us in singing the National Anthem. Association Vice President **Dana Charles** welcomed and recognized various special guests.

Robert Dembo III, U.S. Navy veteran and Director of Veterans Affairs, Mayor's Office, the City of Houston, and **Willie Davis**, U.S. Army veteran and City Council Member At-large, District 2, provided a welcome by the City of Houston. Mr. Davis presented the Association with a special City Proclamation, which the widows of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivors in attendance—**Donna Mae Flynn**, **Teresa Reilly**, and **Eunell Weissinger**—gratefully accepted.

Participants representing the WWII nations of the American-British-Dutch-Australian Command (ABDA) included: **Drew Danier**, Deputy Consul-General of Australia, Houston, Texas; **Commander Rachel Atherford, RAN (05)**, Assistant Naval Attaché, Embassy of Australia, Washington, D.C.; **Commander Lyndsey Netherwood, Royal Navy**, Assistant Naval Attaché, British Embassy, Washington, D.C.; **Aura Cuellar**, Honorary Consul of the Netherlands in Houston and **Commander S.A.M. (Simon) Gunneweg, Royal Netherlands Navy**, Deputy Defense Cooperation Attaché, Assistant Naval Attaché, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Washington, D.C.; **Captain Teresa Ferry, USNR**; and **Steve Cutrer, Master Gunnery Sergeant, U.S. Marine Corps (retired)**. We were also pleased to welcome the new Consul General of the Republic of Indonesia in Houston, Texas, the Honorable **Orina Ritonga** and the new Vice Consul of Information of the Republic of Indonesia in Houston, **Ms. Niken Larasati**.

2025 USS Houston (CA-30) Annual Memorial Service Participants



Reverend Dr. James T. Payne
Reformed Episcopal Church



Robert Dembo, III
USN veteran and Director of Veterans
Affairs, Mayor's Office, Houston, TX



Willie Davis
U.S. Army veteran and City Council
Member-At-Large, District 2, Houston, TX



Drew Dainer
Deputy Consul General of Australia,
Houston, TX



Steve Cutrer
Master Gunnery Sergeant
U.S. Marine Corps (Retired),
Grandson of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivor
William Weissinger



(L to R): Captain Teresa Ferry, USNR; Commander S.A.M. (Simon) Gunneweg, Royal Netherlands Navy, Deputy Defense Cooperation Attaché, Assistant Naval Attaché, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Washington, D.C.; Commander Lyndsey Netherwood, Royal Navy, Assistant Naval Attaché, British Embassy, Washington, D.C.; Commander Rachel Atherfold, Royal Australian Navy (05), Assistant Naval Attaché, Embassy of Australia, Washington, D.C. (Photo by Dennis Flynn).

After the speeches were delivered by ABDA representatives, Association vice president, **Dana Charles**, recited “The Navy Hymn” lyrics as **The Community Band of Southeast Texas** performed the music. **The McLemore Detachment**, Marine Corps League, provided the Rifle Salute. **Maggie Chauvin**, Petty Officer 1st class, U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, Houston Division, rang Eight Bells. **The Community Band of Southeast Texas** beautifully provided Taps. **Matt Rejmaniak** led us in singing “God Bless America,” accompanied by **The Community Band of Southeast Texas**.



Photo by Dennis Flynn

Matt Rejmaniak



Photo by Dennis Flynn

The Community Band of Southeast Texas, directed by Jacob McWherter

We deeply appreciate all participants who laid wreaths at the base of the Monument during our wreath-laying ceremony, and we thank the **Sea Cadets** who helped tremendously throughout the memorial service. We thank the wonderful **Gideon family**, who again provided refreshments at the annual Memorial Service site this year. We also thank the City of Houston and The Heritage Society for graciously supporting the annual U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Service.

At 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, 2025 DOR attendees gathered for dinner at our hotel. After dinner, **Dana Charles** presented videos made during the 1990s and his PowerPoint show featuring over 70 photos in which U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) survivors appeared. Among the U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivors appearing in the videos and pictures were: **Otto Schwarz, Joe Gans, Howard Brooks, David C. Flynn, Leonard “Dutch” Kooper, Gene Crispi, Gene Wilkinson, Charley Pryor, Bert Page, James “Packrat” McCone, Bob Charles, Marvin Robinson, Paul Papish, Art DuHaime, George Stoddard, Lawrence Battles, Gus Forsman**, and many more. We greatly appreciate Association Historian **Don Kehn, Jr.**, who helped identify survivors in some of the photos, and **Dennis Flynn** for editing some of the footage presented on Saturday evening.



U.S. Naval Sea Cadets, Houston Division, accompany Gunnery Sergeant Gene Zilske, USMC (Retired) during the Wreath-laying Ceremony at the 2025 annual U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Memorial Service. (Photo by Dennis Flynn).

Many thanks to all who attended and participated in DOR 2025! We have already begun planning next year’s “Day of Remembrance” gathering, which will be held in Houston in early March 2026. See you there!



From the desk of the Executive Director
John K. Schwarz

April 2025

Thanks to all who joined us in Houston this March 7-8 for a wonderful gathering to honor the crew of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30). Special thanks to the Flynn, Reilly, Swick, and Cutrer families and their next generations who, with dedication and thoughtfulness, accompany our beloved spouses, Teresa Reilly, Donna Mae Flynn, and Eunell Weissinger, to the gathering and memorial service. Seeing these cherished spouses is such a delight for everyone in attendance as they represent the spirit of their husbands, their shipmates, and the “greatest generation” that we honor and to whom we owe so much.

For those who could not make it, our editor, Dana Charles, (son of the late U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Marine survivor Bob Charles) and Dennis Flynn, our “staff photographer,” (son of the late U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Navy survivor David C. Flynn), have provided terrific Day of Remembrance (DOR) coverage in this [Blue Bonnet](#) edition. Thanks, Dana and Dennis! We also thank all the dedicated folks who participated in our Association’s Annual Memorial Service, representing the highest honor we can provide for such deserving heroes who gave so much to our country.

A huge takeaway from this year’s DOR gathering was the reality that, as all our U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) survivors are now gone, following Mr. Hanley’s passing in 2024, the mantle of carrying on our Association’s mission lies solely with the Next Generations, emphasis on the “s” in generations (our “next generation” is also moving on in age). We are therefore calling upon everyone to help encourage and mentor those of the next, next generation. That would include grands of the survivors, past scholarship winners, and any others who have a keen interest in perpetuating the elements of our Association’s functions: scholarship program administration, website maintenance, communications, treasury, administration of artifacts, and DOR coordination. Your Board of Managers stands ready, as well, to mentor our next generation of Association leaders/contributors.

Reminders:

- The next internal scholarship program application window opens June 1, 2025.
- See the merchandise page for availability of the newly designed U.S.S. *Houston* CA-30 T-shirts.

Please be well as the year 2025 moves on! We hope to see as many of you as possible at our next DOR in 2026, including our 31st consecutive Memorial Service!

John K. Schwarz

2025 DOR Snapshots

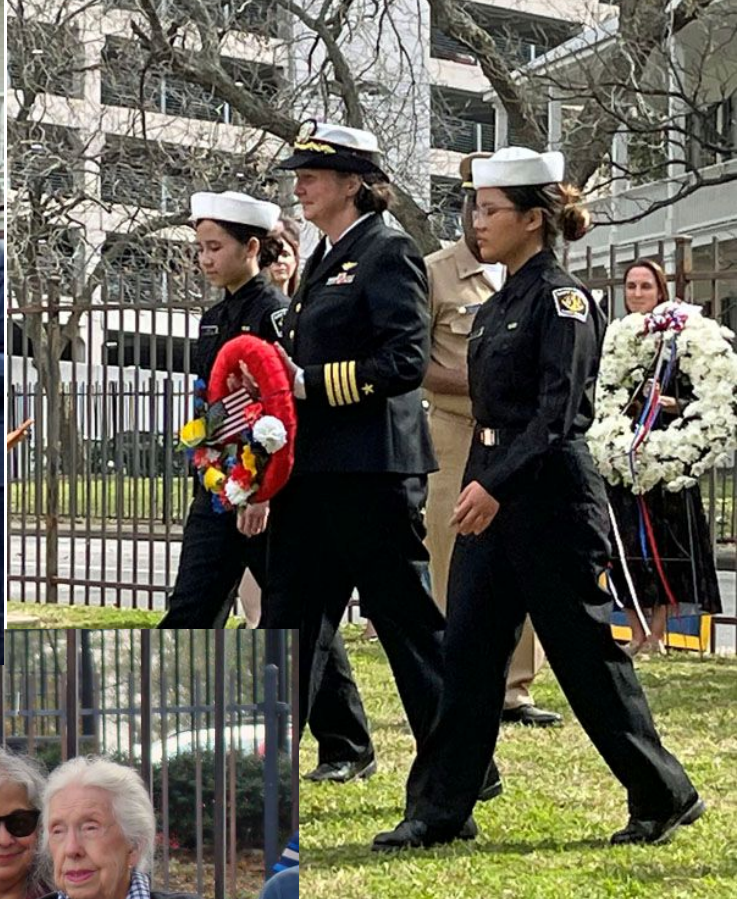




Photos by Dennis Flynn



Photos by Dennis Flynn



Photos by Dennis Flynn



CDR Patrick Panjeti, USN, Reports

83rd Anniversary of the Battle of Sunda Strait Commemorated in Indonesia

On February 28, 2025, the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, alongside the Australian Embassy and the Indonesian Navy, held a solemn ceremony to mark the 83rd anniversary of the Battle of Sunda Strait. The event took place aboard the Indonesian Navy ship, KRI *Bung Tomo*, specifically for the occasion, overlooking the waters where USS *Houston* (CA-30) and HMAS *Perth* (D-29) met their fateful end during a fierce night battle against the Imperial Japanese Navy in the early hours of March 1, 1942.

Chargé d’Affaires (CDA) Heather Merritt led the U.S. delegation, joined by senior officials from the Australian and Indonesian governments and military. The Australian Deputy Head of Mission, Gita Kamath, Australian Defense Attaché, Brigadier General Micah Batt, and Navy Attache, Captain Mark Daly, underscored the deep historical ties and enduring strategic partnership between the United States, Australia, and Indonesia. The Indonesian Navy’s provision of a ship to host the ceremony was a powerful gesture of solidarity and respect for the shared history of sacrifice and courage.

The ceremony for USS *Houston* began with remarks from CDR Patrick Panjeti, the U.S. Naval Attaché, who reflected on the legacy of the sailors and marines who fought valiantly despite overwhelming odds. He shared a firsthand account from Ensign Walter Winslow, one of the survivors of USS *Houston*, who recounted the harrowing final moments of the ship as it was pounded by enemy fire and eventually sank beneath the Java Sea. The story underscored the extraordinary bravery and sacrifice of the crew, many of whom fought to the last shell before the order was given to abandon ship.

Representatives from the Australian Embassy highlighted the parallel sacrifices made by the crew of HMAS *Perth*, which fought shoulder-to-shoulder with USS *Houston* until it too succumbed to enemy torpedoes. Of the 681 crew members aboard *Perth* that night, 353 were lost, marking the greatest loss of life in combat for the Royal Australian Navy. Survivors endured brutal captivity, with many forced to work on the Burma-Thailand Railway. The Australian Defense Attaché noted that their sacrifice remains a cornerstone of the enduring alliance between Australia and the United States.



Following the remarks, CDA Merritt and the Australian and Indonesian representatives laid wreaths in the water in a poignant tribute to the fallen. The ceremony concluded with a moment of silence and the playing of “Taps,” echoing across the calm waters of the Sunda Strait.

In her closing remarks, CDA Merritt emphasized the importance of remembering the sacrifices made during the Battle of Sunda Strait and the need to preserve the site and its legacy for future generations. “Let us never forget the courage of these brave Sailors and Marines,” she stated. “Through our ongoing partnerships with Indonesia and Australia, we will honor their memory and uphold the peace for which they fought.”

The commemoration served not only as a tribute to those lost but also as a reminder of the importance of trilateral cooperation in maintaining maritime security and stability in the Indo-Pacific. The participation of all three nations underscored a shared commitment to honoring the past while working together to build a peaceful and secure future.

Very respectfully,

Patrick

CDR S. Patrick Panjeti
U.S. Naval Attaché, Jakarta



This local road sign honoring U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) was produced by Association member Rich Gans, son of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Navy survivor Joe Gans, and brother of the late Phillip Gans, who was a Vietnam veteran and an original member of the Association's Scholarship Committee. This sign was placed at Rich's local VFW, where he serves, in the Hamlin, PA, area. — John K. Schwarz



The H.M.A.S. *Perth* 1 Memorial Opening on March 1, 2025

On March 1, 2025, the highly anticipated opening of the beautiful H.M.A.S. *Perth* 1 Memorial took place under clear skies in East Fremantle, Western Australia (WA). WA governor Chris Dawson and current H.M.A.S. *Perth* (III) commander Dylan White, RAN, spoke in front of a large crowd at the Memorial, whose front is shaped like a ship's bow.

We thank the United States Consul General in Perth, Ms. Siriana Nair, for participating in the wreath-laying portion of the event on behalf of the United States and our Association. We also thank Ms. Hayley Roman, Media Affairs Director at the U.S. Consulate in Perth, who provided photo coverage.

To read an article about the opening, use this link: [HMAS Perth memorial opens | Perth Voice Interactive](#)



Ms. Siriana Nair
U.S. Consul General, Perth, WA.



Ms. Siriana Nair, U.S. Consul General, Perth, WA, laid a wreath during the opening ceremony of the H.M.A.S. *Perth* 1 Memorial on March 1, 2025.



(Above): Stone panels dedicated to the gallant crews of H.M.A.S. *Perth* 1 (D-29) and U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) on the grounds of the new H.M.A.S. *Perth* 1 Memorial in East Fremantle, Western Australia.



Honoring H.M.A.S. *Perth* 1 and U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) at the March 1, 2025 event in East Fremantle, WA: (L to R): "James," U.S. Navy sailor (no last name available); Claire Nairn, daughter of a H.M.A.S. *Perth* 1 survivor; and Pete Johnston of the H.M.A.S. *Perth* National Association, Victoria Area.



The H.M.A.S. *Perth* 1 Memorial, East Fremantle, Western Australia

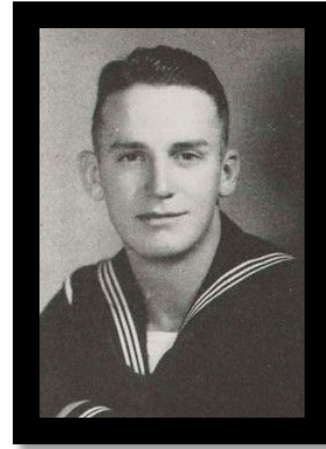
Notes on news received via email at contact@uss-houston.org and via regular mail...

- 1/28/2025: Received an email from **Bailey Tucker** regarding her great uncle, **William “Billy” Edward Tucker**, whom she recently discovered was a U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) survivor who died as a POW in August 1943. Bailey wrote: “I only learned about him after my father died in 2020 and in his belongings I found a lot of old documents and things that my grandparents had saved, included was the letter that was sent to William’s parents to inform them of his passing. My father’s name is Jim Tucker, who would have been William’s nephew, was the guitarist in the 60’s band called “The Turtles,” famous for the song “Happy Together”. My grandfather’s name is Tom Tucker, who would have been William’s brother; he also served in WW2 and played in a jazz band called “The Bees Knees.” I’m hoping to find more info about William in my documents, but a lot of the writing style from his mother has been difficult to read so far. I have only been able to locate one picture of him. From what I’ve read in articles, it sounds like William and possibly others would perform and play for the group to keep the spirits up during tough times while being held captive; one story I read said he made a Bull fiddle with a broom handle and empty gas drum and string. So, I saw the article about the trumpet that was recovered and thought it was pretty cool and interesting and was interested to know if there is an update with finding the owner... Thank you, Bailey Tucker.”
- 1/28/2025: I emailed this reply to Bailey: “Bailey, Thank you for your email regarding your great uncle, **U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) survivor William Edward Tucker, MUS2/c**. I am vice president of our Association and the son of a U.S. Marine survivor of U.S.S. *Houston*. It is my honor to reply to your email. I am sorry for the loss of your great uncle in 1943 while he was a prisoner of war in Burma.... I am attaching a scan of Mr. Tucker’s POW record, which was maintained by his fellow U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) survivors during their captivity. I am also attaching additional information about U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) and her survivors. For your information, we are running an article about William Edward Tucker in our upcoming Association newsletter, the Blue Bonnet, April 2025 issue. [See article on page 19—Editor]. Two of our Association members recently wrote the article... The trumpet, found next to U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30)’s remains, resides today on display at the U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHHC) after the NHHHC’s extensive restoration process. Its original owner remains a mystery. Thank you again for contacting us. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me.”
- 2/3/2025: Received a photo (below) from **Jane Matthews**, daughter of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) survivor **John B. Stefanek, COX, USN**, about a luncheon meeting with some family members, John K. Schwarz, and Jo and Tim Klenk at the Boathouse on Naples Bay in Naples, Florida on Monday, February 3, 2025.



At a luncheon meeting in Naples, Florida on February 3, 2025: (Seated left to right): Ruth Stefanek, sister-in-law of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) survivor John Stefanek, Henry “Matt” Matthews, Jane Matthews. (Standing left to right): Nancy Allen, niece of John Stefanek; John K. Schwarz; Jo Klenk, daughter of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) survivor Jordan J. Garrett, SEA1/c, USN, and Tim Klenk.

Crewmember Spotlight



William Edward Tucker, Mus2C, USN

By Joseph & Marlene McCain

William E. Tucker was one of four brothers born to Dewey and Jessie Tucker of Santa Monica, California. William, or “Billy”, as his family called him, was born in 1922 and enlisted in the Navy after completing high school in 1940. By September 1941, he had been assigned to U.S.S. *Houston* as a Navy Musician. A few months later, the world was at war.

Although Mus2C Tucker was able to perform with the band ashore in the Philippines before the Pearl Harbor attacks, he no doubt spent most of his time at an assigned battle station afterward. The band did provide music for the funeral services of the 48 men lost to a Japanese February 4th bombing attack. The burial was at the military cemetery in Tjilatjap, Java.

When the *Houston* was lost in the Sunda Strait battle on the night of March 1, 1942, Billy Tucker was able to reach the shores of Java, where he was soon captured by the Japanese. From that point on, his story is a familiar one. Like most survivors, he was first held in the Serang theater building and then sent to Bicycle Camp at Batavia. By October 1942, he was at Changi Prisoner of War Camp near Singapore and, from there, was transported to Moulmein, Burma, to begin forced labor on the Japanese railway project. This occurred in January 1943.

On June 30, 1943, he is listed as being transferred to 80 Kilo Camp. 80 Kilo Camp was designated as a “hospital camp,” but it had no medical facilities. Although the Japanese sent Commander William A. Epstein (the senior medical officer from *Houston*) to go with these men, he had nothing to work with. The Japanese put prisoners in this camp who were too ill to work anymore and not expected to recover. Most were suffering from tropical ulcers and were bedridden as a result.

William “Billy” Tucker lost his life at 80 Kilo Camp to complications from tropical ulcers on August 9, 1943. He was buried in the camp cemetery, grave number 29. After the war ended, his remains were brought home in June 1948 and interred at Golden Gate National Cemetery, San Bruno, California, Plot C-468. He was 21 years old at the time of his passing. Mus2C Tucker was one of two U.S.S. *Houston* band members to die in Japanese captivity. May he rest in peace.

Sources:

Internet “Find a Grave” website.

Prisoner of war records for Mus2C William E. Tucker.

Building the Death Railway by Robert S. LaForte and Ronald E. Marcello, 1993.

The Last Battle Station by Duane Schultz, 1985.

In Memoriam

Evelyn Valderine (Val) Poss



AUGUST 30, 1947—FEBRUARY 24, 2025

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (1997-2010)

**U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivors' Association
And Next Generations®**

Daughter of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivor Valdon S. Roberts, F2/c, USN.

In Memoriam

Helen Catherine Sizemore

FEBRUARY 21, 1925 — FEBRUARY 13, 2025

Widow of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Survivor
Marvin Sizemore SEA2/c, USN.

Helen Catherine Sizemore, age 99, of Hamilton, Ohio, passed away on Thursday, February 13, 2025. She was born in Hamilton, Ohio, on February 21, 1925, to Claude Mallicote and Rosetta Lainhart. Helen graduated from Hanover Township School in 1943 and married Marvin Sizemore in August 1948. Helen loved reading books, playing cards, and going to casinos.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Marvin Sizemore; and her brothers, Ralph, Ray, Kenneth, Dale, and Michael; as well as her granddaughter, Veronica.

Helen leaves behind her daughters, Claudette Garapic, Fredricka Crawford, Catherine Sizemore, and Kimberly Johnson, along with her grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, and nephews, who will miss her dearly.

Services are private.

In lieu of flowers, charitable donations may be made to [Hospice of Cincinnati](https://hospiceofcincinnati.org/donate) (<https://hospiceofcincinnati.org/donate>), your local library of choice, The Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library (<https://supportchpl.org/ways-to-support/donate/>), or the World Literacy Foundation (<https://worldliteracyfoundation.org>).

Fond memories and expressions of sympathy may be shared at www.rosehillfunerals.com for the Sizemore family.

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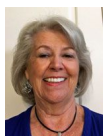
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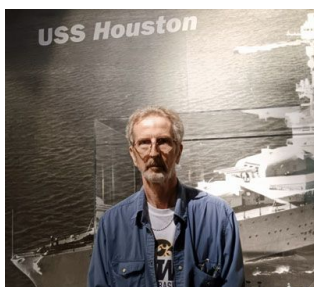
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Our Association's Historian, Donald M. Kehn, Jr. is the author of two U.S. Naval History books: [A Blue Sea of Blood](#) and [In the Highest Degree Tragic](#).

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 U.S.S. Houston (CA-30) Survivors' Association and Next Generations®

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

Thank you!

Donations

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Donna Mae Flynn

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Donna Mae Flynn

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Financial Report

January 1, - March 27, 2025

General Fund

Beginning Balance	\$34,407.71
Receipts	\$6,267.54
Expenses	<u>-\$5,044.45</u>
Ending Balance	\$35,630.80



Scholarship Fund

Beginning Balance	\$26,117.86
Receipts	\$2,245.81
Expenses	<u>\$0.00</u>
Ending Balance	\$28,363.67



Published by:

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

Editor: Dana Charles

Proofreaders: Pam Moura, John Schwarz, Sue Kreutzer,
Bernice Harapat, Marlene McCain.

Distribution: Dana Charles, Pam Moura.

Articles or information may be sent to:

contact@usshouston.org or bluebonnet@usshouston.org.

All submitted articles are subject to editing.

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of this Association, its members, or its Board of Managers.



Eunell Weissinger, widow of U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) survivor William J. Weissinger, Jr., SEA 1/c, USN, is escorted by her grandson, MGSGT Steve Cutrer, USMC (retired) during the U.S.S. *Houston* (CA-30) Wreath-laying Ceremony on March 8, 2025. (Photo by Dennis Flynn).