

Now Hear This!

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General or Scholarship)

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Association Founded 1947

By Otto and Trudy Schwarz

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2026 MEMORIAL DAY COMMEMORATION



At the 2026 Memorial Day Commemoration at Arlington National Cemetery: MUC Kevin Businsky, USN (U.S. Navy Band), representing the U.S.A.; CDR Gordon Clark, RN, Representing Great Britain; Indonesian Ambassador to the United States Indroyono Soesilo; Retired RADM Samuel J. Cox, USN, Director, Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHc), Washington, DC Navy Yard; CAPT Erik Looman, RNN, representing the Kingdom of the Netherlands; LTCDR Thomas Robertson, RAN, representing Australia; CDR Timothy Gore, NZN, representing New Zealand; SCPO Lars Voss, representing Germany; and LTCDR Dale Eng, USN, representing the U.S.A. and the NHHc.

On Monday, May 18, 2026, a Memorial Day commemoration honoring the fallen crewmen of USS *Houston* CA-30 and HMAS *Perth* D-29 took place in Arlington National Cemetery. The ceremony took place at the site of the USS *Houston* CA-30/ HMAS *Perth* D-29 marker on McClellan Drive and was conducted through a partnership between our Association and the Washington, DC-based U.S. Navy Memorial.

The ceremony remembered and honored approximately 1,000 young American and Australian servicemen of USS *Houston* CA-30 and HMAS *Perth* D-29 who perished defending Java from Imperial Japanese invasion during the early days of the Pacific War. The program also remembered and honored the fallen of the other Allied nations of ABDA Command, as well.

Dr. Matt Fash, the U.S. Navy Memorial's National Coordinator for the 'Stories of Service' and 'Student Interview' programs and the Association's Executive Director, John K. Schwarz organized and produced the program. The program included remarks delivered by representatives of the U.S. Navy Memorial, the USS *Houston* CA-30 Survivor's Association and Next Generations, the U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command, the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, DC and selected students from Doylestown, PA. The program at the marker also included a wreath presentation by Student Interview Program members; a Veterans honoring salute; and the playing of Taps.



Dr. Matt Fash speaks at the ceremony on May 18, 2026.

Retired Rear Admiral Samuel Cox, Director, U.S. Naval History & Heritage Command, and H. E. Indroyono Soesilo, Indonesian Ambassador to the United States provided remarks. Also participating in the ceremony were naval attaches representing each of the four Allied nations whose warships formed the American-British-Dutch-Australian Command (ABDA-Float) during WWII.

Accompanying and assisting with management of the student trip were a Vietnam War veteran, Sergeant Jack Thomas, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry, United States Army, and the Honorable Judge Gary Gambardella. This ceremony was produced in coordination with the administration of Arlington National Cemetery. The Doylestown, PA Public School System provided chairs and a podium. 2nd Lieutenant Ristha Rachmawati from the Indonesian Embassy, Washington, DC and Survivors' Association members Blane Amphor and Marta Bota served as photographers.



A wonderful part of what has become an expanded annual Memorial Day program is the participation of 21 students from three Doylestown, PA schools: Central Bucks High School East, West, and Tohickon Middle School. Two of the students, Marjorie Yaschur and Meenakshi Divi applied for and were granted the opportunity to present remarks at the ceremony, and both did so with poise, confidence and understanding. Marjorie's remarks appear below.

A heart-felt thank you to Dr. Matt Fash for his willingness to partner in this commemoration. He and I plan to conduct a similar Memorial Day ceremony in 2027, and we invite all Association members and friends to attend. —John K. Schwarz.

**Remarks of Marjorie Yaschur,
A junior at Central Bucks East High School in Doylestown, Pennsylvania.**

"Today we honor the sacrifices of those aboard the USS *Houston* CA-30 and HMAS *Perth* D-29 and the survivors of the Battle of Sunda Strait. While many Americans take their freedoms and liberties for granted, I believe it is necessary that we recognize the selflessness of our veterans and honor the sacrifices that they have made for our country.

Today we stand in one of the busiest cities in the United States, yet we find this marker in the peaceful solitude of Arlington National Cemetery. We are surrounded by the dignified resting places of some of our nation's greatest leaders, patriots, and heroes, whom we are honored to have known as fathers, brothers, colleagues, and friends. This plaque reads "In memory of the crews of the USS *Houston* CA-30 and HMAS *Perth* D-29, 'still standing watch in Sunda Straits.'" We will never fully comprehend the contributions made by those aboard these ships, but this marker commemorates how grateful we are for their honorable service and, for many, their ultimate sacrifice for our country. With this marker, our nation remembers these remarkable sailors and their sacrifices.

When celebrating 250 years of liberty, independence, and freedom, it is necessary that we remember the brave men and women who have ensured that these ideals have been protected to this day. During the Second World War, we came close to losing these freedoms and we must remember the sacrifices that these troops made to ensure an allied victory. The stories of the USS *Houston* CA-30, HMAS *Perth* D-29 and the subsequent officers, sailors, and marines aboard must not be forgotten or overlooked. This marker will ensure that their sacrifice is not forgotten. I am grateful for the freedoms protected by these selfless veterans - we are part of the free, and today, we honor the brave. Thank you for helping me recognize these service members and Happy 250th Birthday, America!"





From the desk of the Executive Director
John K. Schwarz

August 2026

Greetings everyone! Happy 250 U.S.A! In this August 2026 issue of the *Blue Bonnet*, we're announcing the dates for our next USS *Houston* CA-30 "Day of Remembrance" (DOR) gathering in Houston--March 5-6, 2027. The 2027 annual USS *Houston* CA-30 Memorial Service will be held at Sam Houston Park on Saturday, March 6, 2027. We hope to see as many of you in attendance as possible! One of our annual challenges is to populate the DOR program. If you have any suggestions on what to include in the weekend's agenda, including speaker suggestions, please submit any ideas to us as soon as possible at (contact@usshouston.org).

Scholarship reminder: Since June 1, the application period of our USS *Houston* CA-30 Scholarship has been open. The deadline for receiving applications is November 1, 2026. If you are advising and/or mentoring potential applicants, the Scholarship Committee advises that you not wait until the last moment to apply. Application directions and instructions are available at our association's website (www.usshouston.org).

We encourage everyone to join our USS *Houston* CA-30 Facebook site. We have decided to utilize that site more to post information, as we receive it, from association members on items of potential interest to the group. Meanwhile, information which is directly related to the USS *Houston* CA-30 and our Association will continue to be emailed to our Association members. We encourage you to make sure we have your current email address.

Association member Blane Ampthor and I have been added to the "Speaker Series" list of available presenters as sponsored by the U.S. Navy Memorial, Washington, DC (<https://www.navy memorial.org/sea-service-speaker-series>). Association member Dr. Matt Fash, who serves the U.S. Navy Memorial as their National Coordinator for the 'Stories of Service' and 'Student Interview' programs, has provided us with this prestigious distinction. We deeply appreciate this designation, for it provides potential opportunities to tell both the story of the 'USS *Houston* CA-30/POW Experience,' as well as several of Blane's very important Pacific War-related presentations. Many thanks, Dr. Fash, for this support to the Survivors' Association and the pursuance of our mission.

Please be well as the year 2026 moves on to its conclusion. We hope to see as many of you as possible in Houston, Texas, at our 2027 DOR and its 32nd consecutive Memorial Service.

John K. Schwarz

Association Executive Director
and proud son of Otto & Trudy Schwarz

“Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Java Sea”

By Don M. Kehn, Jr.

An Asiatic Fleet vet’s story...from a time before PTSD was recognized, and when therapists or counselors were rarely available.

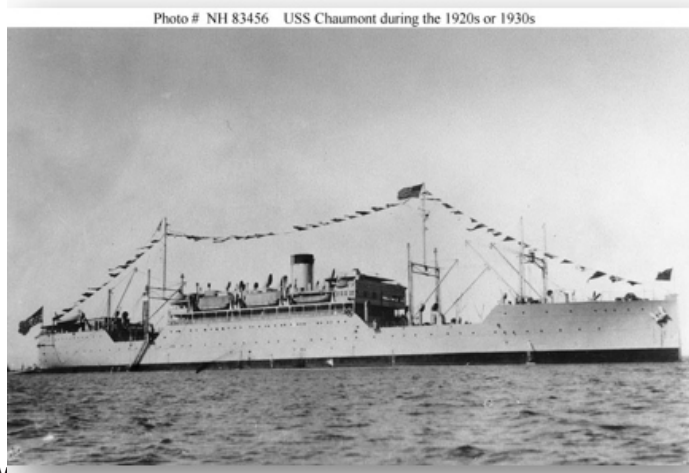
Some surviving POWs came home from WWII more deeply troubled and damaged than others. This is one such story...with a peculiar twist. It was inspired by the realization that one of the most clearly ‘bedeviled’ vets from *Houston* lived in an area where the Devil himself and his demons) were believed to exist literally...



Part 1

His name was Theodore (“Ted”) Schram, nicknamed “Itch,” and he came from rural Iowa. Born October 1911, Ted had joined the navy (at Des Moines) in 1935, then served on the aircraft carrier *USS Ranger* (CV-4), thence to *USS Augusta* (CA-31) via the Navy transport *USS Chaumont* (AP-5), and went to *USS Houston* (CA-30) in 1940 via *USS Henderson* (AP-1) when the *Augusta* and *Houston* exchanged Asiatic Fleet flagship roles.

Until June 1939, Ted had also served on the old light cruiser, *USS Detroit* (CL-8) AKA “The Dirty D” ...A ship so nicknamed because she was, as Schram later recalled, impossible to keep clean...It was not without a kind of bitter humor that he also remembered that the ‘best billet’ on the transport *Henderson* was the head.



USS *Chaumont*. It was joked that her name stood for “Christ Help All Us Monkeys On Navy Transports”....



USS *Detroit* (CL-8)

He had married a young White Russian woman. They had one child together, a daughter born in 1938. His wife, Galena Alexandrovna Donchenko, had been born in Harbin in 1920 at a time when forces of Chinese nationalism and longstanding Russian influence were at loggerheads.

During his Asiatic Fleet duty, Schram’s wife & child were living in Shanghai. Whether they were among those families who followed the Asiatic Fleet ships in their China coast tours is unknown. Due to internal troubles and Japanese aggression, *Augusta* (flagship of the Asiatic Fleet) spent much of her

time between 1933 and 1940 at Shanghai—which had a large White Russian immigrant community—and Mrs. Schram may have remained there. When or how they followed Schram to Manila in late 1940 and eventually escaped to America is not known either.

Although officially frowned upon, U.S. military men did marry White Russian women. In 1932 it is recorded the 62.1% of the servicemen in China married to Russians were Americans...



Ted regarded *Augusta* (on which he served from 1936 to 1938) as a 'happier' ship than *Houston*, and no less spit & polish. Schram was a Baker Second Class (Bkr 2/c). His superior ('Head Baker') on *Houston* was Wm. V. Tisdale, SC1/c. Tisdale's assistant was Raymond Klymazweski, SC2/c. Both sailors lost their lives at Sunda Strait.

Among a number of painful recollections Schram noted that during the February 4, 1942 engagement in the Bali Sea, he'd had a physical altercation of some type with Tisdale. Schram said he had been sucker-punched and received stitches from LT Clement D. Burroughs (MC). Schram was already friends with Burroughs—known as "Butch" by friends, and "Butcher" by others. In one more unhappy memory Ted recalled that he had once baked a birthday cake for LT Burroughs (*Houston's* junior medical officer), only to be curtly informed that writing the nickname 'Butch' atop the cake was not allowed.

Schram also remembered that the Chinese steward known as "Buda" (in reality, OC3/c Chi Fah Tai) had been CAPT Jesse B. Oldendorf's 'No. 1 Boy' as well on *Augusta*.

Schram's Action Station on CA-30 was often in the 5" ammo detail on the Mess Deck. That is where he was on Feb. 4, 1942 when the ship was severely bombed. In that capacity Schram became an eyewitness to some exceedingly gruesome effects of that bomb hit, and those appear to have affected him for the rest of his life. In late February he was actually attempting to bake bread for the crew during the lengthy Battle of the Java Sea. At Sunda Strait he was asleep on a cot outside the Galley when the battle began. The cruiser's blue battle lights inside the ship were knocked out early from the concussion of gunfire, he remembered.



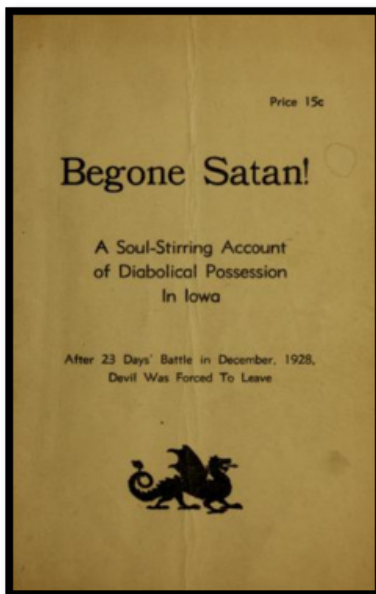
A shell hit in the galley destroyed much equipment. Schram was stationed above the area of the damaging After Engine Room shell (or torpedo) hit. He thought he could smell meat cooking (human beings), but as it turned out this was a separate hit in (or next to) the galley. That explosion splattered throughout the compartment the rare roast beef being used to make sandwiches for the crew.

According to the U.S. military historian Sam Milner, who interviewed many CA-30 survivors—including Ted at considerable length in July 1960—Schram appeared to have been prematurely aged by his experiences. Milner noted that Ted was a heavy cigarette smoker and had “...two stiff shots of whisky as his breakfast.” Yet Ted was said to have remained very friendly, and unselfconsciously informed Sam that he came from a ‘poor Iowa background’. To Milner it indeed seemed quite evident that Schram had been deeply affected by his wartime experiences. In that protracted interview (almost two dozen handwritten pages), Sam recorded that Schram’s conversation was peppered with recurring expressions, such as, “Let’s face it,” “So what would you do?” “I had no choice.” “I couldn’t do anything else...” All of which suggested an uneasy conscience, or perhaps the long-term effects of Survivor’s Guilt, although these were not mentioned at the time by Milner. However, my own research in the Work Records of our men in one of the Japanese POW camps revealed that Schram was assigned to the ‘Hospital’, and that could only have been a duty fraught daily with grisly experiences as well as life & death decisions...Eerily, the demons of his POW experiences were not the only ones which appeared in the life of Theodore Schram...or, rather, in his background.



Sam Milner

Part Two



Schram gave his birthplace & hometown as Earling, Iowa, in 1947, according to draft registration records. Earling was, and still is, a small farming community with only a few hundred souls living there. It lies slightly more than 100 miles almost due west of Des Moines. However, its name will forever be associated with something else—events not connected to the Asiatic Fleet or WWII naval vets...

For in 1928, it was the site of several extended Catholic rituals of exorcism conducted by Father Theophilus Riesinger, a 60-yr. old Capuchin priest. He was aided by Reverend Joseph Steiger, whose housekeeper, Theresa Wegerer, was also witness to the infernal battles between the possessed woman, the priests and Satan himself. These rites lasted through three excruciating sessions in August, September, and December of that year.

Those contests produced an account (originally written in German by Reverend Carl Vogt and translated into English in 1935 by a Benedictine named Celestine Kapsner) entitled “Begone Satan!” This rare work was the chief factual source behind Ray Russell’s 1962 novel, “The Case Against Satan.” And that book in turn became the basis for William Peter Blatty’s occult thriller of 1971, “The Exorcist,” arguably the most successful & influential horror novel of the 20th century.

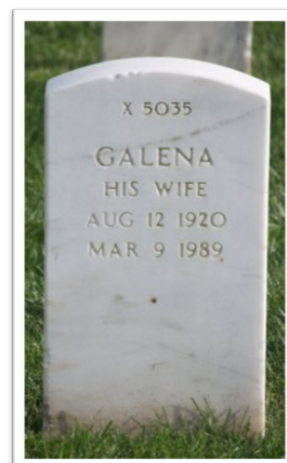
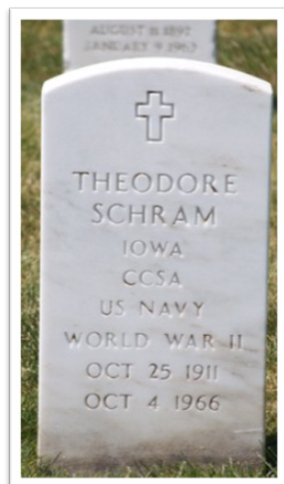
There is no indication at all that 'Itch' Schram had any knowledge of the strange events at Earling in 1928 or the Capuchin Father's dedication to battling the Adversary for the unfortunate woman's soul...Perhaps he did—in such a tiny community that would seem possible—but the fact is we simply don't know. And to be sure, the actual victim was neither the vampish young teenage female described in Ray Russell's 1962 novel nor the pubescent Regan of Blatty's terrifying work a decade later. The possessed woman at Earling was in her mid-forties by 1928 and had a lengthy background of mental instability brought on (in no uncertain terms) by sexual & emotional abuse at the hands of family members. One such nefarious player was an aunt, well known locally and thought by many to be a witch, who—it was said—had placed charmed herbs in the woman's food. Indeed, the same Capuchin priest, Father Theophilus, had already labored to exorcise demons and free this poor woman from their possession years earlier, in the summer of 1912.

Yet, the coincidence haunts, for there was something haunted about Ted Schram, which resounded throughout his interview with Sam Milner. He was not alone in being an uncomplicated Midwesterner who had suffered through military service and some of the worst associated with that. This included personal strife and loss; violent combat with its blood and terror; a lengthy, brutal captivity steeped in malnutrition, abuse, tropical illnesses and death; returning to a society little given to delicate feelings towards veterans or a medical community prepared for the varied gremlins which afflicted those survivors. Thousands of such men came back to middle America and tried to labor themselves into forgetfulness via farm-work, in business, or by raising their families. Not all were successful either; the cruel demons of memory remaining incredibly tough to expunge.

Ted Schram died of heart failure in Oct. 1966, three weeks before his 55th birthday, and is interred in San Bruno, California, at Golden Gate National Cemetery. Buried with him—strange & touching to find—is his Russian wife Galena, who passed away in 1989. Nor is there any record of their daughter, born in 1938.

One may hope & pray that 'Itch' was able at last—after enduring so much wretchedness—to find some measure of peace, which he surely deserved. And, although one would be hard-pressed to find a figure less overtly Shakespearian than Ted Schram, the following lines from Richard II seem apt enough:

“Where words are scarce, they are seldom spent in vain, /
For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain.”



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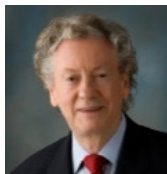


New!
USS Houston CA-30 T-Shirts

Meet your Board of Managers

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Son of USN survivor Otto Schwarz
and Trudy Schwarz
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Daughter of USN survivor Paul Papish
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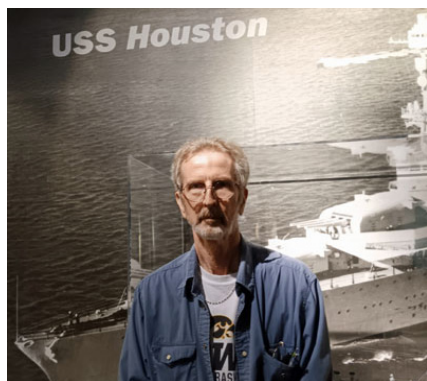
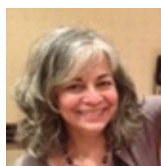
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Our Association's Historian,
Donald M. Kehn, Jr. is the
author of two U.S. Naval
History books: "A Blue Sea of
Blood" and "In the Highest
Degree Tragic."



Blue Bonnet Staff
photographer Dennis Flynn,
Son of USN Survivor
David C. Flynn.

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. There are no fees to join. 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.

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

THANK YOU!

DONATIONS

*In Memory of John Stefanek
Henry and Jane Matthews*

OTHER DONATIONS

Bernice Harapat
John Signorin
Joseph Thomas

FINANCIAL REPORT

JANUARY 1, TO JULY 13, 2026

GENERAL FUND

Beginning Balance	\$37,846.73
Receipts	\$8,673.08
Expenses	-\$6,524.56
Ending Balance	\$39,995.25



SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Beginning Balance	\$29,975.83
Receipts	\$2,343.68
Expenses	\$0.00
Ending Balance	\$32,319.51



Published by:

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

Editor: Dana Charles

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

Distribution: Dana Charles, Pam Moura.

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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.



MUC Kevin Businsky, USN (U.S. Navy Band) plays Taps during the USS Houston CA-30 and HMAS Perth D-29 commemoration at Arlington National Cemetery on May 18, 2026.