

# USS Caliente (AO-53) Association



# PIPELINE

June 2010

## President's message

By Pat Hurton

Hello shipmates,

In this issue I've included the sign-up sheet and agenda for the September reunion in San Diego, Calif. Those of you who voted to go to San Diego at the Minneapolis reunion know, and as mentioned in prior Pipelines, San Diego is not the least expensive place to go. Although we were able to obtain a fantastic rate at a four-star hotel the down-side is the cost of the balance of items normally associated with one of our reunions.

While we normally have an organized tour(s) for members, I mentioned in the March Pipeline that I was looking into possibilities but was leaning toward allowing members to select their own agendas. San Diego is a fantastic place to visit and September is a perfect month. Without fear of inclement weather, you can take a harbor cruise, tour the entire area, just go to old town or the zoo, go to the beaches or Coronado, or visit the USS Midway. After investigating the many alternatives I have decided that allowing each of you to select your own agenda is the best alternative. The cost of organized tours is very expensive and they provide no flexibility in a city that has so many alternatives. There is also Sea World, the San Diego State Historic Park, The San Diego Maritime Museum and Museum of Art and San Diego Archaeological Center. Herb Dorsey has mentioned the Agua Caliente area and would be happy to take persons interested in the area's Native American heritage on a tour.

I tried (with the help of some of our members) to get a tour of the Naval facilities in the area but was told that was not possible. The only alternative, for those desiring another short tour aboard, is to visit the USS Midway. The Midway is located within walking distance (less than 3/4 of a mile) from the hotel as is the pier from which the harbor cruises leave. Organizing a special tour of the Midway for just our group was also not possible. The hop-on, hop-off bus tour of San Diego stops in front of the hotel. The hotel location is (as mentioned) only a few blocks from the waterfront and two blocks from the Gaslamp Quarter. The location of the hotel makes a car virtually unnecessary as parking costs in the area are also not inexpensive (the hotel included).



CONVENTION &  
VISITORS BUREAU

Join your shipmates in San Diego  
Sept. 16-19 for the annual reunion  
of the USS Caliente Association.  
Information and registration form  
are on pages 9, 10 and 11

Anyway, with regard to the reunion itself, I have selected an agenda similar to the reunion we held in Las Vegas. As we have at most of our reunions, we will have a dedicated Hospitality Room at the Westin. We will have a reception and a banquet for you. We will provide hors d'oeuvres at the reception and coffee, tea, juice and rolls will be available Saturday and Sunday morning. The balance of the time you will be able to either visit the areas many, many great attractions or just visit with your shipmates in the hospitality suite.

As always, we will be electing officers at the reunion business meeting. ANYONE who wants to serve your shipmates is welcome to step forward. We especially need someone to take over the website.

I will be out of the country for almost a month starting in late July so please try and get your sign up sheets in early. We do expect a large turnout for this reunion so it is extremely important to make you hotel reservations as soon as possible. The hotel rate is good for three days before and after the reunion, but the hotel is booking up fast so it may not be available. We had to guarantee a certain amount of rooms, but the hotel has told me that if we are short and I can firm up the numbers very shortly, I can expand our block of rooms. Your early response to this would greatly diminish the possibility of upsetting yourself later. It is a great hotel and I have found them to be accommodating. But they are a business and can deal with what I can firm up, not promises.

I hope everybody is having a great year so far and Charleen and I hope to see you at the reunion.

**A belated welcome aboard to Bill and Sam Schmidtke.** Bill attended the Minneapolis reunion and paid for membership for him and his brother. I inadvertently failed to add their names to the roster. My apologies to Bill and Sam and hope they enjoyed the back issues of the Pipeline I sent them and this new one.

Bill Schmidtke, who lives with his wife Marilyn in Grey Eagle, MN, was an MM3 when he served aboard the Cal from 1959 to 1961

Sam Schmidtke, who lives with his wife Barbara in Phoenix, AZ, was an MM2 when he served aboard the Cal from 1957 to 1962

**Welcome aboard to our new members:**

Edwin Birdsall, who lives with his wife Jeanne in Hemet, CA, was a GMSN when he served aboard the Cal from 1955 to 1957

Jim Bower, who lives with his wife Danna in Nampa, ID, was an SN when he served aboard the Cal from 1968 to 1970

Joseph Carriere, who lives in Oglesby, IL, was an SN when he served aboard the Cal in 1961

John McGonigle, who lives with his wife Linda in Long Beach, CA, was a BTC when he served aboard the Cal from 1964 to 1966

Chris Mueller, who lives with his wife Barbara in Redondo Beach, CA, was a BM2 when he served aboard the Cal from 1968 to 1972

Larry Prater, who lives with his wife Lynda in Modesto, CA, was a an SN when he served

aboard the Cal from 1956 to 1958

Ed Seibel, who lives with his wife Rosita in McMinnville, OR, was a SA when he served on the Cal from 1969 to 1971

Gerald Stokes, who lives with his wife Nadin in Orange Park, FL, was a GM3 when he served aboard the Cal from 1945 to 1946

Faust (Frosty) Wardy Jr., who lives in El Paso, TX, was a GM3 when he served aboard the Cal from 1967 to 1969

**In memoriam:**

We are sad to note the passing of four former shipmates.

Cornelio Rodriquez Torres Jr. of Tucson, Ariz., died May 3, 2010, at age 63. Cornelio served on the Cal from 1965 to 1967 as an FN. He was retired from the VA Hospital in Tucson. He is survived by his wife of 42 years, Mary Alice, sons Charles D. and Christopher A. (Mica Cruz), daughters Kassandra M. Torres (Martin Montiel) and Tina K. Howell, and three grandchildren.

Louis Diaz died Dec. 23, 2009, in Santa Barbara, Calif., at age 76. Louis served on the Cal from 1951 to 1953 as an SN, along with his brother Sam. During that time, 18 sets of brothers were on the Cal, according to Sam. Louis is survived by his wife of 51 years, Clare, daughter Kathy Richmond, son Michael, sister Isabel Minotto, brothers Lawrence and Sam and five



USS Caliente Association  
President: Pat Hurton  
Vice President: Norm Street  
Secretary: Red Ward  
Pipeline Editor: Karl Seitz



The Pipeline is the official quarterly newsletter of the USS Caliente Association. It is a place to share your memories. Please send them via e-mail to [seitzao53@gmail.com](mailto:seitzao53@gmail.com) or by regular mail to Karl Seitz, 1212 30th St. South, Birmingham, AL 35205-1910.

Masthead picture of USS Caliente (AO-53) used with permission of Dan Davis.

Association dues are \$10 per year due Jan. 1, payable by Jan. 15. Checks should be made out to The USS Caliente Association and mailed to Pat Hurton, 14075 Kelsey Drive, Chico, CA 95973-9262.

grandchildren.

Joseph Walter Walker of Bellingham, Mass., died Nov. 23, 2009, at age 89. Joseph served on the Cal from 1943 to 1944 as an SM3. Joseph is survived by his wife, June, daughter Sharon L. (James) Wyman, son Wayne G. Walker and two grandchildren.

Jim Weatherbee died May 1, 2010, in Saginaw, Mich. at age 78. Jim served on the Cal during the Korean War from 1951 to 1953 as an FT2. Jim was surrounded by his family when he passed away. Jim is survived by his wife Pat whom he married in 1981. Jim and Pat attended many reunions and their great personalities made knowing them a pleasure. I talked to Jim just prior to the Minneapolis reunion but unfortunately they could not attend. Jim is also survived by five adult children, 10 grandchildren and three great grandchildren. He will be missed by all.

## Happy Birthday

We would like to extend hearty congratulations to Capt. Robert W. Jackson (Ret). Bob served as captain of the Caliente from December 1966 until April 1968. Bob reached his 90th birthday on June 14, 2010. Bob was a former captain of the USS Caliente Association and shepherded a very successful reunion in Washington D.C. in June 1997. Bob then served as chaplain of the Association for many years. Bob and his lovely wife Ethel live in LaJolla, CA, and they recently celebrated the birth of a great great grandson.

Bob, the members of the USS Caliente Association wish you and Ethel continued long and happy life. Your service to our country and the Association is very much appreciated. We hope to see you at the reunion in San Diego so our congratulations may be delivered in person.

## Editor's message

By Karl Seitz

Thanks to those of you who answered my call last time for memories and photos to share in future Pipelines. Some of them appear in this issue. However, I can still use more. For example, I'm still looking for memories of a typhoon that the Caliente sailed into in the early 1950s.

So please write down your stories about your time on the Caliente and send them to my postal or e-mail address, both of which are found on page 3. If you have pictures you want to share, send copies, not the originals. If you want to scan the pictures into digital files for transmission as e-mail attachments, please use a resolution of 300 dpi and jpeg format. If you already have a png format picture, it is not necessary to convert it. However, tiff-format files should be converted to jpeg format because of their size. Also, please include identifications of the people in the picture and information on when and where it was taken. If you don't know some of the people or the place and time, provide what you do know.

For newspaper or magazine clippings, please send only photocopies or scanned digital files.

As for the September issue of the Pipeline, three founders of the USS Caliente Association have written a history of the association for those of us who came in later. That article will be the centerpiece of the newsletter. If all goes as planned, you will receive the September Pipeline well before the reunion in San Diego.

## Memories



Joe Stratton, retired SK2 from Irving, Texas, sent along these pictures of two Caliente customers. Joe served on the Cal from 1953 to 1954.

## North To Alaska

By Miguel F. Ronquillo, RD2  
1957-1961

After reading the March issue of the Pipeline, I leaned back on my chair and thought about my days on the old rust bucket. The stereo was on and was playing a song that all of a sudden brought back one memory of the Caliente.

It was my fifth cruise to Westpac. We had one more assignment before returning stateside. Early in the morning mooring lines were pulled in, and the ship pulled away from the fuel pier at Yokuska, Japan. Once we began to gain headway, out of the narrow channel, the song "North To Alaska" started playing on the PA system. It was loud and I am sure that everyone within a half mile of the ship could hear it and could surmise where we were headed. I presume that our captain disregarded the common expression taught to us in boot camp, "Loose lips sink ships."

Once in the open sea, the Caliente turned north, through the Bering Sea and Strait, into the Arctic Ocean, dropping anchor a mile off shore from Point Hope, Alaska. We fueled several ships that came alongside. We never did see Alaska, for we did not go ashore and the entire time there we were shrouded in a very thick fog bank.

One incident marred the return trip back south. While bring in the captain's gig, prior to lifting anchor, a First Division seaman was caught between the gig and liberty boats as it was being set down on the boat cradles, squashing his head. There being no medical facilities at Point Hope, the Caliente immediately headed south, anchoring at St. Paul Island in the Pribilof group, where a Coast Guard helicopter airlifted the sailor to the mainland.

After that we headed south, through the Aleutian Islands into the open sea, mucking tanks until we arrived in Bremerton, Wash., for a few days of liberty. Once our tanks were empty of all fuel we headed south, mucking more tanks along the way, to our home port of Long Beach, Calif.

## **An old lady and her little tavern**

By Ed Fordyce, PN3

1960-62

This Caliente memory involves San Pedro and Todd Shipyard, where the Caliente was in for some repair work. I think this was in 1961 and that I was in First Division. Perhaps some of you will recall the lady and have a better idea of the time frame.

Just outside the shipyard, not much more than across the street, there was an elderly lady who had a little tavern operation set up in her yellowish, kind of run-down house. She had a small counter in the living room, which was just inside the front door. It was a very modest operation. Her inventory was cold beer and hamburger. She was friendly and nice. I recall some cats in the house. Seldom was anyone in there but two or three Caliente shipmates.

Going in and out of the shipyard was pretty informal. No gate or review by any Navy personnel on watch. If we had a little free time, we could walk to her place in our dungarees and get a beer and hamburger. Also, on liberty, on the way to the San Pedro business district up the hill, or to the ferry to Long Beach, we would stop by for a beer or burger on the way.

Some years later, I think perhaps around 1970, there was an article in the Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Gazette about an elderly lady who was found dead in her very run down house in a declining area of San Pedro. The article went on to say there were numerous cats in the house and the house was later torn down. When it was demolished, the article said a large amount of money was found hidden in the walls. Although I have no way of knowing for sure, my assumption is that the article referred to the lady who served up our refreshments at the little bar in her old house.

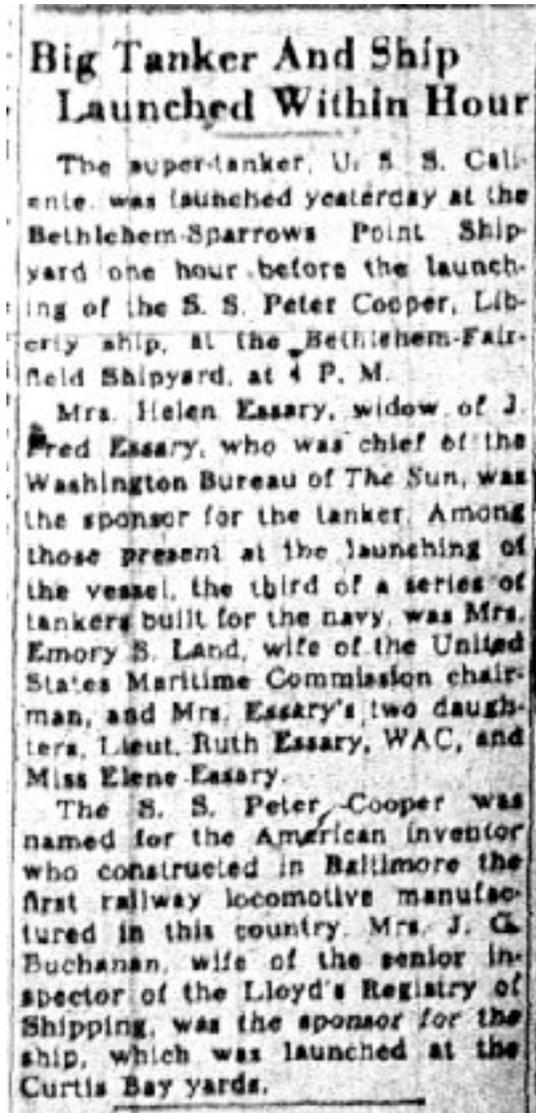
An aside to this story is that a shipmate told me he was coming back from Long Beach late at night on the ferry. He went to sleep on the ferry and was awakened by the ferry operator who informed him the ferry was docked and to get off. After he got off, he discovered he was back on the Long Beach side. I think he also said that the ferry was not going to make any more runs until the next morning — so he had a real problem. When visiting Long Beach years later, we saw a nice bridge across that channel, so the ferry is probably long a thing of the past. Anyhow, I recall numerous trips on that ferry.

## **Unauthorized whistle blast**

Another San Pedro-related incident was when First Division space was painted. There were lockers along the forward bulkhead. They were moved out a little ways, to paint the bulkhead. This exposed a conduit near the starboard hatch going out onto the forward well deck. The conduit was stubbed in from the overhead and stubbed up a little ways from the deck — with an exposed cable running through them. One of my friends surmised it was the whistle cable and we discovered after the lockers were back in place along the forward bulkhead, that you could stretch your arm back behind the lockers and reach the whistle cable.

We didn't have enough nerve to try it out while underway but did do it while docked in San Pedro. That resulted in quite a horn blast and I think about everyone on board ran outside to see what was going on. We did not do that again and I hope the statute of limitations has expired for that prank.

## Caliente takes to water



Herb Dorsey (LTJG, 1963-65) has been researching the early history of the USS Caliente. He found this story from the Baltimore Sun for Thursday morning, Aug. 26, 1943, in the microfilm at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore.

## New Members Write Pilot boat wasn't what it seemed

By Chris Mueller, BM2

1968-1972

My memories include running aground in Auckland, New Zealand; going across the equator three times in four years; being so close to the USS Evens on the tragic morning of the collision

with the aircraft carrier Melbourne; working with wonderful shipmates when rig captain on Station 7.

Then there was the time I was told to “hurry up” and rig the pilot ladder for the pilot boat that was coming for entering Long Beach. Come to find out that it was a crew boat my dad was running displaying a large banner welcoming home the Caliente after a six-month deployment. The interesting part is that I have been working for the Port Pilots for the last 33 years and have had the chance to meet the pilots who piloted Caliente in and out of Long Beach.

## **The Cal was a rocking when he arrived**

By Edwin F. Birdsall, GMSN

1955-1957

The first time I boarded ship I thought (and said) the ship was rocking — was constantly teased about it. I was a pointer-trainer on the 20-millimeter and was told “Don’t shoot at the plane, shoot at the sleeve.”

I have three kids, nine grandkids and two great grandkids. I love to fish. Retired from the dairy business — made ice cream for a living for 28 years. Met my wife while stationed in Long Beach. I’ve been married 52 years.

## **A long trip from boot camp to the Caliente**

By Larry Franklin Prater, SN

late 1956-early 1958

I was in charge of boatswain’s locker, handing out and keeping track of tools given to different divisions. Also was in charge of life rings on top side, checking lights and batteries.

I once got caught on a bouy trying to shackle line onto the bouy ring so anchor could be pulled up. I got my legs tangled up in the line and anchor chain. Lt. Bradford caught it in time and loosened the line with the winch. That was a close call.

Myself and nine others graduated from boot camp in San Diego and were assigned to the same ship, USS Caliente. We went on leave and then were to report to Treasure Island for assignment. We were bused to Travis AFB, then flew to Tokyo, then traveled by train to Osaka, then seaplaned to Sasebo for three weeks. We found out the USS Caliente was in drydock in Long Beach all this time. So ... we had a nice vacation!

We flew back to LA and caught the ship. Six months later, we shipped out to Hong Kong, Kobe, Sasebo, Yokuska, Taiwan, Subic Bay, Okanawa, Guam, Manila, Honolulu and back to the states. Then I was transferred to the USS Guadalupe; on that ship it was the same trip to the same places. Upon returning to the States, I was discharged.

Some names, I remember are: Grater, Ledbetter, Coltrain, Haggard, Turnbeau, Spenser, Miller, Whiteside, Garwood, Wilson, Gilley, Willis, Sandoval, Gomes, Landrum, Sanchez, Warden, Andreasen and Heatley. If possible, I would appreciate knowing which of them are still alive.

I would do my tour on the USS Caliente all over again.

Lynda and I have been married 46 years. I worked on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe

Railway for almost 35 years, 1962-late 1996. I retired early due to ill health. I've had strokes, a broken left arm and have balance problems. I cannot make the reunion unassisted and the trip would be too much for me, healthwise.

## Reason to remember running aground

By Faust (Frosty) A. Wardy Jr., GM3

October 1967 to September 1969

On Aug. 2, 1968, we ran aground on a sand bar while entering port at Auckland, New Zealand. I was on the helm.

## Registering online for Westin Hotel

The Westin Hotel in San Diego, headquarters for the Caliente Reunion, has set up a webpage for those who wish to register for your hotel stay on line. For those who prefer to use the phone, the number is on the next page. Here is how to book a room on line:

If you received the electronic version of the Pipeline, click on the link below, which should launch your browser and take you to the website. If that doesn't work or you received the print edition, type the link into the url space at the top of your browser window.

<http://www.starwoodmeeting.com/StarGroupsWeb/res?id=1006095424&key=8207F>

Click on the reserve button half way down the page on the right hand side

Under room information, click on the calendar image next to check in date and a calendar should pop up

Select your check in and check out dates and hit the continue button

Under room preferences select the number of rooms, number of adults, and bed type using the drop down arrow, then hit search

The next page will list your rooms options (two double beds or one king)

Select a room type and hit reserve

Scroll down and enter your personal information (name, address, credit card) and select review your reservation (this page also lists the hotel's cancellation and guarantee policy under terms & conditions)

Review your booking, select confirm and your reservation is complete!

To modify a reservation:

Click on the check reservation button at the top right of the page

Enter confirmation number and last name and select check reservation

Reservations can be modified and cancelled here

**USS CALIENTE (AO-53) 16<sup>th</sup> REUNION**  
Thursday September 16<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> 2010  
The Westin, San Diego



Reservations can be made at The Westin, San Diego by calling 888-627-9033 and identifying yourself as part of the USS Caliente (AO-53) National Reunion and to receive the Group rate of \$129.00 per night plus 12.565% state and local taxes. Cancellations must be made seventy-two (72) hours prior to scheduled arrival. Information on booking your room on line is on previous page.

**Agenda for the Reunion**

Thursday September 16<sup>th</sup>:

- a) Hotel check-in
- b) 3:00 PM until ??? – Reunion check in at the Hospitality Room – all hands are invited to join in as we get (re)acquainted and share stories with our shipmates. Hors d'oeuvres will be provided at the reception from 4:00 PM until 6:00 PM

Friday September 17<sup>th</sup>

Free time

Saturday September 18<sup>th</sup>

- a) 9:00 AM - Annual business meeting in the Hospitality room – juice, coffee, tea and rolls will be provided
- b) Free time until the banquet
- c) 6:30 PM – dinner is served followed by music by shipmates (?) and dance to a DJ

Sunday September 19<sup>th</sup>

- a) Farewells in the Hospitality Room – juice, coffee, tea and rolls will be provided
- b) 12:00PM – Hospitality room closes and wishing you smooth sailing until the next reunion in Norfolk/Virginia Beach, Virginia

PLEASE RETURN THIS SIGN-UP SHEET TO:

Pat Hurton  
14075 Kelsey Drive  
Chico, CA 95973-9262

Shipmates Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouses Name : \_\_\_\_\_ or Guest: \_\_\_\_\_

Address (street): \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Yrs. on Cal 19\_\_\_\_ to 19\_\_\_\_ Rate/Rank on Cal \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Fee: No of Attendees \_\_\_\_\_ x \$125.00 per person = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please select from the following entrees:

\_\_\_\_\_ **New York Strip Sirloin**; grilled center cut New York strip with yukon gold potatoes, asparagus and baby carrots

\_\_\_\_\_ **Chicken Piccata**; chicken breast seasoned and seared, lemon beurre blanc, yukon gold potatoes and julienne vegetables

\_\_\_\_\_ **North Atlantic Halibut**; simply grilled filet of atlantic halibut with meyer lemon beurre blanc, yukon gold potatoes, julieen fresh vegetables