

USS Caliente (AO-53) Association



PIPELINE

Dec 2015

The Ties That Bind

By Jeff Sturgis

This has been a difficult year for my family. My mother and four of my aunts and uncles have died since last Christmas. Of my 15 aunts and uncles all born between 1915 and 1931, there are only three remaining. They were all members of what Tom Brokaw called “the Greatest Generation.” They all grew up during the Great Depression, and just when high school or college was behind them, World War II broke out.

My Dad and all of my uncles, except one who was too young, joined the military. One was the XO on an LST at D Day and remembers how red with blood the ocean was off Omaha beach. Another survived the cold and snow during the Battle of the Bulge. My Dad served in the 71st Construction Battalion (Sea Bees) and followed the Marines from Guadalcanal to Bougainville to the Admiralties and finally to Okinawa building airfields and other infrastructure for the war effort.

As I cleaned out Mom and Dad’s house after her passing, I came across some artifacts from my Dad’s WW II service. I found his combat boots, his sea bag and mess kit. I also found some south sea native artifacts and even a grass skirt! His Bluejacket Manual which was his “bible” during and after basic training was still in great shape even though well-worn.

There were also mementoes from his Sea Bee reunions during his later years which he greatly enjoyed. He still kept in touch with some of his wartime buddies right up until his death. I can remember visiting with some of them in various parts of the country as we traveled when I was young. He and his fellow sailors formed a bond out there in the South Pacific that lasted a lifetime for many of them.

Most civilians don’t understand the relationships that veterans develop while on active duty.



Old Ironsides

USS Constitution fires 17-gun salute toward U.S. Coast Guard Station in Boston Harbor in 2011. In May of this year, the U.S. Navy's oldest ship entered dry dock for a two-year-plus restoration. However, the ship remains open for tours. It is one of many historic places and things that can be seen during the 2016 USS Caliente Reunion in Boston.

U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kathryn E. Macdonald

Even those of us who weren't in the same place at the same time and never served together understand each other. The Caliente was in service from 1943 to 1973. Some of us served together, but many of us were aboard her at different times. However, we all worked in the same spaces, ate in the same messes, slept in the same quarters and faced the same dangers that challenge a ship at sea. We all did our part in countless unreps from WW II, to Korea, to the Cold War and eventually to Vietnam. This shared experience is what brings us together yearly to reminisce about our time aboard the Cal, to meet new shipmates and to remember those shipmates who have passed on.

Someday when my daughters are going through my Navy stuff, and they come across old issues of the Pipeline, they may begin to understand the camaraderie and fellowship that binds us together as Caliente veterans.

May peace be with you all during this holiday season, and I look forward to seeing you in Boston next September.

Reunion Update

Save the date: September 8-11, 2016. We have contracted with the Quincy/Boston Marriott to host our next reunion. Just minutes away from downtown Boston by subway or car, Quincy is the home of the Adams Historical Park (home of John Adams and John Quincy Adams), the National Shipbuilding Museum, and the USS Salem, CA -39. Plimoth Plantation is just 30 minutes to the south. We'll also be looking into a possible tour of the freedom trail in Boston and a visit to the USS Constitution.

We have a good room rate and guarantee, and as soon as the details can be worked out, we'll be sending out registration forms with the next issue of the Pipeline. My wife and I have visited the hotel and had lunch there. It is a first class facility, and we will be treated well. Please go to the hotel's website www.marriott.com/Quincy and check it out. This will be a great opportunity for those of you who aren't New Englanders to visit the birthplace of liberty!

Correcting an oversight about association history

By Pat Hurton, past president

This article is written with apologies to Mrs. Nancy Greenberg. The Pipeline has previously contained articles about members of the Association who were instrumental in its founding. The articles were prompted by the passing of two shipmates who were instrumental in the formation of the USS Caliente Association and included another living WWII shipmate John Creedon. In focusing on the recent passing of two key members and John, I overlooked another shipmate whose efforts were instrumental in the formation of the Association. Those efforts led to the first reunion in New York City and two subsequent reunions held in New Orleans and Baltimore. That person is LTJG Benjamin S. Greenberg. Ben was the communications officer on the Cal 1943-1945.

After hearing about the proposed reunion in New York, Ben jumped in and put together a list of shipmates who had served on the Cal. After work, he was on his computer trying to locate these shipmates and ever expand the list. Ben worked on accumulating shipmate names and contacting them until the Caliente was decommissioned. In addition to accumulating the list of shipmates Ben was a key player in organizing the New York reunion and subsequent reunions in New Orleans and Baltimore.

For the New York reunion, Ben prepared "A Caliente Scrapbook." It included articles from the period and some of the first Pipelines. The scrapbook also included other memorable data; a memo from CMDR George L. Eastman (commanding officer 6/45 – 5/46) that details the "Victory Services" held aboard the Cal at 1330 Tokyo Time, 15 August 1945 while the Cal was enroute from Honshu, Japan to Ulithi, Western Carolines. Press release No. 126-51 from the Public information Office, U.S. Naval Base Los Angeles, Long Beach 2, California dated 20 December 1951. The release publicizes the Caliente's return home in time for Christmas of 1951. This Pipeline includes the above memos and a copy of the original invitation to attend the Commissioning Ceremonies of the USS Caliente (AO-53). Mrs. Greenberg has also previously sent me a lot more data the Ben had collected over the years. As time permits this info will be put on line and included (as appropriate) in the Pipeline.

The hardest part about starting an Association like the Caliente's is the initial work it takes to identify and find people. Ben, at the first notice of a potential reunion, started the tedious and often frustrating task of identifying, locating and trying to convince former USS Caliente crew members to come to the first reunion at which the seeds of the Association were sown.

Ben loved the Caliente and had ships pictures all over his home. He loved wearing his Caliente cap. His service to our country and his efforts for the Association will not be forgotten. Ben passed away in 2000.



USS Caliente Association
Chairman: Jeff Sturgis
Executive Committee: Mike Copeland, Dave Ludemann, Greg Perett, Tom Rawlinson and Steve Selzer
Treasurer: Pat Hurton
Pipeline Editor: Karl Seitz



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

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 treasurer Pat Hurton, 156 Greenfield Drive, Chico, CA 95973-0185.

Chairman Jeff Sturgis can be reached via email at jandssturgis@roadrunner.com or by mail at 84 Old Woodman Hill Rd, Minot, ME 04258

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

My apologies, again, to Mrs. Nancy Greenberg for not including this in prior Pipelines. It is important to appropriately recognize all our shipmates and especially those responsible for starting the Association. My oversight was not intentional and I appreciate Nancy's bringing it to my attention.

Below is the Christmas press release mentioned by Pat Hurton

PRESS RELEASE NO. 126-51
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
U. S. NAVAL BASE LOS ANGELES
LONG BEACH 2, CALIFORNIA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

20 DECEMBER 1951

The Navy's "Home for Christmas" operation was furthered today with the arrival of still another veteran of Korean duty, the fleet oiler, U. S. S. CALIENTE (AO53).

The big tanker put over her lines at 11:00 A.M. this morning at Berth 88 in San Pedro, completing 8 months of overseas duty.

Since last May 6, when the CALIENTE left the United States, she has served the forces, operating off Korea, and spent 2 months in southern Asiatic waters. During this time she transferred over one-half million barrels of various types of fuel to ships of the UN fleet, and, as additional cargo, handled mail, passengers and freight for other ships.

During her tour overseas the CALIENTE was commanded by Captain F. W. McCANN, who was relieved on the trip home by Commander R. A. DAWES, Jr.

Both the Executive Officer and the Navigator of the CALIENTE are from the Los Angeles area, they are: LCDR J. R. Stephens, 1015 South Burnside, Los Angeles, California and LT C. E. Schmuck, 3515 Ocean View, Mar Vista, California.

Other men from the Los Angeles area are: LT W. J. Butler, 3684 Hiland avenue, San Diego, Calif., CMACH M. McQueen, 1125 East Second street, Long Beach; CHBOSN D. L. Walsworth, 184 Elder avenue, Imperial Beach, Calif., C. E. Trout, Santa Paula, Calif., R. D. Felts, 519 West Magnolia street, Inglewood; M. D. Close, 700 Southwest Westmoreland street, Los Angeles; F. P. Poe, 645 Cedar avenue, Long Beach; S. D. Parker, 1156 Winchester avenue, Glendale; C. Vallejo, 254 S. Arizona street, Los Angeles; B. L. Thornton, 414 ~~South~~ Lincoln Boulevard, Buena Park; L. Diaz, 318 Carriolo street, Santa Barbara; and C. E. Chester, 5002 Locust avenue, Long Beach.

A reminder about dues

Pat Hurton sent along this note that was included with a dues payment:

Dear Sirs,

The Caliente was commissioned on October 22, 1943 the day of my birthday. I was aboard and proud to be there.



A reminder if you are on Facebook, Jack Hughes has created a Facebook group for former crew members of the USS Caliente (AO-53) and their families.

On October 22, 2015, I was 90 years old.
I was on the Caliente as we pulled into Tokyo Bay, Japan.
Spent some months after the war in Japan. Came home as GM2 not many of us shopmates left.

Enclosed my check for dues \$10.00.

Walter J. Bigos

If Walter can remember to send in his dues faithfully every year and now in his 91st year, so can all of you. Please remit your dues to USS Caliente Association, c/o Pat Hurton, 156 Greenfield Drive, Chico, CA 95973-0185.

P.S. Walter, as a WWII vet does not even have to submit dues. All our WWII vets are lifetime members. *Pat Hurton*

Taps

John Maltese, 95, died Oct. 1915 at his home in Athens, GA. John served on the Caliente from 1943 to 1945. He was a QM3. Survivors include his wife, Anna, and son John A. Maltese.

Born 19 Feb 1920 in Trapani, Sicily, John came to the United States with his parents when he was 1-year-old. The family settled in Brooklyn for about 10 years before moving to New Jersey. Hearing a recording of violinist Jascha Heifetz, John set out to become violinist himself. After high school, he studied at Juilliard School of Music in New York City.

World War II interrupted his musical career (although John Creedon says Maltese did once entertain their division on the Cal with a concert and Maltese told Pipeline readers in 2009 that the Cal's captain once had him leave the ship to perform elsewhere). John had his violin with him because an officer in boot training had contacted his parents and had the instrument shipped to John. John did play with other professional musicians who were in boot camp at the same time as he was.

After he left the Navy, John earned a master's degree from the Manhattan School of Music. He then played with a special string group for a few years before entering a college teaching career that ended with his retirement from Jacksonville (Ala) State University in the late 1980s. He also performed at various times.

After retirement, John dedicating himself to informing the world about Heifetz. In 1995, John and his son completed a 64-CD set of Heifetz recordings. They each won a Grammy in 1996 for Best Historical Album. The two men also set a Guinness World Record for their 103-CD set of violin records.



In 2008, John and his son discovered a trove of wax cylinders containing rare recordings of several late 19th and early 20th century musicians, including Heifetz. The cylinders had been thought lost during World War II, but instead had been preserved in a small archive in St. Petersburg, Russia. The story of that discovery and the three CDs of excerpts that had been released at that time was in the June 2009 Pipeline.

Daniel Dennis Morrison , 81, died 31 July 2015 in San Antonio, TX. He served on the Caliente from 1969 to 1971 as a MMC. Daniel was born 1 Sep. 1933 in St. Mary's, MO.

Chief Morrison spent 22 years in the Navy, retiring in 1980 after serving on various ships.

Survivors include his wife, Miriam, whom he married in San Diego, CA., in 1964, children Daniel and Peggy and three grandchildren.

Daniel's interests included family, gardening, reading and tinkering with light engine repair.. Funeral services were held Aug. 15 at Amazing Grace Lutheran Church in San Antonio.



Memories

Raising the flag over the USS Arizona

By Ed Fordyce, PN3, 1960-62

Dec. 7, Pearl Harbor Day, the day I am writing this, triggered a Caliente memory from my first Westpac cruise on the Cal. We were in Pearl Harbor, anchored out in the quarantine anchorage. Either late 1960 or early 1961.

The Bos'n sent four of us to the Arizona memorial in a motor whale boat early one morning. We were a boat crew of a cox'n, engineman, bow hook and stern hook. Our task was to tie up at the Arizona memorial (which at that time did not have the elaborate visitor's platform it does now) and raise the flag that morning. I was told this duty was rotated daily among the ships in the harbor and this day it was the Caliente's turn.

There was a first class petty officer there when we arrived. Probably from the Pearl Harbor base and probably there to be sure we did it correctly.

My memory is blank on whether the Caliente sent another crew to take down the flag later that day, or if some other ship had that duty. Also can't recall who the other crewmen were, or if we were both first and second division personnel (except for the engineman), or all from first division. Maybe second division sent the evening crew.

Other shipmates may have more complete memories of this, and it would be very interesting to hear their recollections.

Wouldn't it have been great if we had the cell phone/camera technology then, which we have today, to record our events in those early days!