

USS Caliente (AO-53) Association



PIPELINE

Jun 2018

Reunions

By Jeff Sturgis

I've been thinking a lot about reunions lately. My wife and I were in adjacent classes in the same high school. Several years ago we both attended our 50th high school reunions in successive years. Also, I am presently on the planning committee for my 50th college reunion, which will be held in June of 2019. Every August my extended family celebrates its family reunion at a local summer camp. And, in September, we'll be attending another Caliente reunion in St. Louis.

That got me to thinking. What is it in human nature that leads us to have reunions? Why do some people go to reunions and enjoy them? Why do others avoid reunions? I think the answers to these questions vary as to the type of reunion and the different natures of various people.

Family reunions are based on the strong relationships that are developed in families. Although families may be spread out geographically, at some point they all trace their ancestry back to a common point. My father was one of seven children raised by my Sturgis grandparents in Auburn, Maine. Those seven children all married and had 35 children which formed my generation. Three of my Dad's siblings stayed in Maine. The other four moved to Connecticut and Massachusetts, eventually spreading to Arizona and Florida. My 34 cousins live all over the country.

We started having reunions about 45 years ago and are still going strong. Our familial bonds enable us to have about 70 family members attend from all over the country. Of course, those who live closer make it more frequently than those in California and Texas. But even those distant cousins make it every five years or so to renew family ties.

Although my father's generation of seven had a common experience with the same parents and living in the same location, my generation of thirty-five had seven different sets of parents in seven different locations and we have scattered further from those spots. However, the family bonds we



Meet us in St. Louis

Sept. 6-9, 2018

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Hotel registration info is also on page 9.

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developed are still strong enough to bring many of us together each year in August.

School reunions, however, are very different from family reunions. School reunions focus on a finite group of unrelated students who had a common experience in a building or on a campus over a period of three or four years. As students, we had shared experiences, some in small groups (band, math team, football team, cheerleading squad, etc.), academic classes, maybe even in detention! Many of us formed lifelong friendships at school and some of us even found spouses.

Military reunions have some similarities with school reunions, but are also different. Those of us who served in the military usually didn't have a say in where we were located. Like our school experiences, we were in the same place at the same time, usually on a base, or, in the case of the blue water Navy, on a ship that moved around from port to port. We were all the same gender, similar to those who attended a boy's school or a men's college. In the Navy, we served with a constantly changing cast of characters as shipmates rotated on and off the ship. Rarely did we serve with some of the same people for more than a year or so.

Also, our experiences were very different from those of our school days. We were responsible for millions of dollars of equipment and supplies and a multimillion dollar ship. We often had tasks that were inherently dangerous, and our mission was to protect our country, the fleet and our ship. We usually spent 24 hours a day seven days a week with our shipmates and this experience caused us to form some bonds that have lasted over the years.

There are many people who enjoy all kinds of reunions and go to as many as they can, but there are some who never go to a reunion. Whether it is a family, a school or a military reunion, I think people fall into three categories. First, there are those who had bad experiences and never developed many close ties with others. For the most part, they never attend reunions. The second group consists of those who kind of drifted through their tenure, having few close ties and few negative or positive experiences. Those in this group may or may not attend reunions, and if they do attend, it is often sporadically. The third group consists of those who formed close ties with others and often had significant experiences with those friends. Most of us who attend the Caliente reunions fall into this third group.

The most prominent characteristic about most reunions, is their longevity. Family reunions can go on forever as families, by definition, constantly add new generations. School and military reunions have a shelf life as there is a finite number of members, and as members pass on, attendance starts to dwindle.

How does all of this relate to the Caliente reunions? Well, we all served on the same ship, and even though many of us served at different times, we often had many similar experiences as the ship's mission was basically the same from 1943 to 1973. Many of us come every year to see some of the same shipmates with whom we served 40 or 50 years ago. We still laugh at the same sea stories that we have heard repeatedly at each reunion, and reminiscing about our time on the Cal takes up a significant amount of time.

But more than that, those of us who come frequently have cultivated friendships with those who served in other eras and enjoy seeing them each year. The Caliente becomes our common bond. Spouses and even children have become members of the Caliente family as some have attended religiously with their Navy veteran spouse or father. We enjoy making new friendships

and keeping up with the developments in each other's lives. This is the core group of Caliente veterans who attend every reunion wherever it is held.

Then, there are also others who are only able to attend when the reunion is scheduled in their part of the country. We enjoy connecting with them every three years or so when the reunion rotates to their part of the country. We move the reunion to a different city in a different part of the country each year so that the financial burden of attending is evened out for everyone.

This aspect of our Caliente reunions gives us an opportunity to see our great country. My wife and I have been able to experience different areas of the country that we probably wouldn't have seen otherwise. For example, last year at the Portland, Oregon, reunion, we visited Fort Clatsop, which was the spot where the Lewis and Clark expedition wintered in 1805-06. This year, at the St. Louis reunion, we'll be able to visit Camp Dubois which was the beginning point of their expedition in 1804.

Eventually, there will not be enough of us to continue these reunions. However, we're not at that point yet. It is my hope that the tie that binds us together as Caliente shipmates is strong enough for us to continue for the near future. To that end, I encourage you to seriously think about sending in the registration form for the St. Louis reunion that you will find at the end of this Pipeline. Also you will find the information for the hotel reservations in this issue. My wife and I look forward to seeing those of you who we've come to know over the years, and we look forward to meeting those of you



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.

who decide to come for the first time. As always, you can reach me for questions at 207-782-8323 or jandssturgis@roadrunner.com.

Let's keep these reunions going for as long as we can. We hope to see you in St. Louis!

Taps

Wesley Lee All, 73, died 1 April 2018 at his home in Pendleton, OR. Wes served on the Cal from 1961 to 1965 as a BMSN. After leaving the Cal, Wes joined the Seabees and served from 1965 to 1969. He completed high school while in the Navy and later attended Walla Walla University for two terms. He worked at several jobs before becoming a truck driver for a window manufacturing firm, driving an 18-wheeler to California, Oregon and Washington. He worked for several years as a log truck driver for Harris Pine Mills before beginning his own business in 1989 as a log truck owner-operator. He retired in 1999 due to ill health. In 2000, Wes became a volunteer driver for the Oregon Department of Human Services, taking clients to doctor appointments in Portland, Spokane, Tri-Cities and Bend. Wes retired again in 2011. He was baptized into Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1975 and taught Sabbath School many years ago. Wes was a regular attendee at Caliente reunions. He was predeceased by infant son Patrick Christopher All, his parents John and Olivia All and sister Vera Mokshefski. Wes is survived by wife Nancy Carol Gammon All; children James Lee, Bonnie Elizabeth and John Wesley All; four grandsons; siblings Ralph Leon All and Sandra Denise Lewis and cousins, nephews and nieces.



Donald P. Cantey Jr, 67, died 28 Feb 2018 at his home in Eastover, SC. Don served on the Cal 1971-72 as an SK3. He was born 14 Aug. 1950 in Columbia, SC to Donald P. and Carolyn (Stewart) Cantey. He was a former police chief in Winnsboro, SC. Among Don's survivors are siblings Joyce Chesney, Debra Hudson and Mark D. Cantey. The Patriot Guard Riders of South Carolina provided a flag line at Don's funeral 6 March 2018 at Greenlawn Memorial Park in Columbia, SC.



David Alvin Fleetwood, 78, of Roper, NC, died 5 March 2018 at Vidant Medical Center, Greenville, NC. Dave served on the Cal from 1966 to 1968 as a MM1. He served in the U.S. Navy for 23 years, retiring with the rank of Senior Chief. He was a member of Yeopim Baptist Church and the American Legion. Dean Goodman, who worked for



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

Dave for a year in A gang, recalls Dave as working you hard but being fair. Dave was born 11 Sep. 1939 in Jefferson, Texas, to the late Donnie Allen and Ethel Lorane McKinney Fleetwood. He was also preceded in death by son David Russell Fleetwood and brothers John and Joe Fleetwood. Dave is survived by his wife of nearly 49 years, Linda Brabble Fleetwood, children Debbie Lorenzo, Karen (Steve) Moore, Michael (Peggy) Fleetwood, daughter-in-law Tammy Fleetwood, sisters Patricia Brown, Glenda Noble and Barbara Merigis, ten grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Dave was buried with military honors in Beaver Hill Cemetery.



We have belatedly learned of the death of Martin Ulric Pellerin 1 July 2014 at age 91 in Bakersfield, CA. Martin served on the Cal from 1970 to 1972 as a CWO4. Born 7 Jan 1923 in Southern California, he contracted polio as a child but never let that slow him down. Immediately after graduating from high school, Martin joined the Navy. In 30 years, he served all over the Pacific and in World War II, Korean and Vietnam wars. When he retired from the Navy and the Caliente in 1972, Martin reconnected with and married his high school sweetheart and settled in Bakersfield where he worked for about 15 years at Memorial Hospital. He was predeceased by his siblings, Donald, Ione and Shirley and by sons Marty and Steven. Martin is survived by his wife, Kathleen "June" Pellerin; son Bruce Pellerin; step children Sheri (Gary) McCombs, Tisa McCombs, Rob (Diana) McCombs and Matthew McCombs. He was buried in Bakersfield National Cemetery.



We have belatedly learned of the death of George Donald Riley Jr. 92, in Sykesville, MD, 18 Dec. 2016. Donald served on the Cal during the Korean war as a LTJG. Born 9 Aug 1924 to George Donald Riley and Virginia Maddox Riley, Don graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1946 and entered the supply corps. His varied naval career ended with his retirement in 1972 as captain and head of petroleum logistics in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. For the next 17 years he was director of research at the Association of Oil Pipelines in Washington. In his second retirement, Donald was active in genealogy, historic preservation, tennis and model railroading and served on several boards of directors, primarily in Maryland. He was the author of five books. He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Helen Brodgen Shriver Riley; daughters Helen R. Hecht, Virginia R. Fahrney and Rebecca R. Silver; sons Samuel M. Riley and Benjamin S. Riley; 13 grandchildren and one great-grandson.



Robert K. Sheehan, executive officer of the Cal from September 1967 to March 1969 died 26 Nov. 2017 at age 85. Born and raised in Alliance, Ohio, Bob was appointed to the Naval Academy where he graduated and was commissioned in 1954. Early in his career, he qualified

for both the Surface Warfare Officer and Submarine Officer designations. His assignments included both sea and ground postings. After serving as executive and later commanding officer of the naval station in Annapolis, Bob finished his Navy career as a CDR on the staff of the Naval Academy superintendent. He went on to serve in higher education as an administrator and as a manager and consultant in private industry. Continuing an interest that began before his Navy career, Bob was active in church choirs, musical and variety shows. A volunteer reader for the Library of Congress "Books for the Blind" program, he was also a professional voiceover talent. He co-authored a family history with two siblings in 2006. A member of several organizations and boards, Bob was chairman of the State of Maryland Transportation Professional Services Selection Board at the time of his death. Bob was predeceased by his wife, Sue Davis Sheehan. He is survived by three children, Katherine Sonntag, Robert K. (Pam) Sheehan Jr. and Karen (Robert) Walleck; six grandchildren, three great-grandsons; and brothers E. Charles and Dr. Richard K. Sheehan.



Wes All was proud member of Caliente Association

By Pat Hurton

I was shocked to hear from Nancy All about Wes' passing. Wes was proud of his Navy service and a proud member of the USS Caliente Association. He attended many Cal reunions, the last being our 2017 reunion in Portland, Oregon, accompanied by his good friend Tom Crouch.



Wes All and Tom Crouch at Portland Reunion.

Over the years I came to know Wes and enjoyed our talks about his time with the Seabees. They were quite different than Deck Division on the Cal. I never really thought about the origin of the word Seabees. Wes clued me in that the nickname "Seabees" is a heterograph of the first initials "C.B." from the words Construction Battalion.

I'll miss his quiet demeanor and talking with Wes at our reunions. I know he intended to attend this year's in St. Louis.

My condolences to his wife Nancy, his children, his grandchildren and his brother and sister.

Agent Orange legislation moving through Congress

by Karl Seitz
Pipeline Editor

It appears that this year Congress may actually overturn the Department of Veterans Affairs regulations that deny Agent Orange disability benefits to most blue water Navy personnel who served off the coast of Vietnam between 9 Jan 1962 and 7 May 1975. There is still some

uncertainty as to which Blue Water sailors will become eligible. Much depends on the actual legislation that is adopted by Congress and subsequent regulations adopted by the VA.

However, for the first time since the denials began, a House committee has approved a bill that would restore eligibility for many sailors. As of this writing, the staff of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, with involvement by John Wells, a lawyer-lobbyist for the Blue Water Navy Association and others, is working out the exact area of a zone off the coast of the former South Vietnam in which a ship must have been for its crew to be eligible. It could happen by the time you read this or shortly thereafter. After that is done, the bill will be voted on by the full House and, if approved, sent to the Senate for action. If enacted, the legislation will become effective 1 Jan. 2019. Wells is optimistic that the bill will be adopted.

Because of the uncertainty about the area to be covered, I cannot tell you that everybody who served on the Caliente off Vietnam between 1962 and 1973 will be covered. It will depend on the exact area defined in the legislation and where the Cal actually sailed. But the era of automatic rejection should end under this legislation.

The actual application process may require you to prove that you and the Cal were in the designated area in addition to your medical claims. We will have more information as the bill moves through Congress.

Still going strong

By Pat Hurton

From some recent correspondence:

Don Travis was on the Cal fin 1951 as an RD2. He was in the Navy at the end of WWII and served on two mine sweeps and the minelayer USS Terror (CM-5). After the war, he stayed in the Naval Reserve. During the Korean War he was reactivated and served on the Caliente for a few months before being transferred to the USS Tolovana (AO-64).

Don and his wife Donna attended several Caliente reunions, but since Donna passed away 34 years ago he has become a little "stay at homeish."

He is now 90 and is still going strong. He works in a coin store 56 hours a day on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and greatly enjoys it. He believes doing something you like will help you live longer.

Don gives his regards to all his shipmates from the Cal and wishes everyone well.

Merle Dion Clodé pictures from the 1950s

The pictures on the following page came to us from Lynn Clodé Denning, daughter of Merle Dion Clodé. Merle served on the Cal from Feb 1950 to Mar 1953 when he was transferred pending discharge in San Diego as an EM3.

Following his discharge, Merle began a 32-year career with Southern California Edison, using skills learned in the Navy. He retired in 1985 at age 55 and died in December 1986 at age 56. The pictures taken during Merle's time in the Navy remained in his wife's possession undisturbed until they were rediscovered in 2012 during her move to a retirement community.

This led Lynn to contact Norm Street to see if the association was interested in the pictures. As happens, life interfered and it was not until last year that Lynn was able to scan the pictures and send digital copies to the current association leadership.

While Merle is identifiable by his frequent appearance in these pictures, the other people and the places photographed are currently unknown. If anybody knows either, let the editor know at one of the addresses on page 3 and we will share it with everybody.





**USS CALIENTE
(AO-53)
St. Louis Reunion
Sept. 6-9, 2018**



**EMBASSY SUITES by HILTON ST. LOUIS DOWNTOWN
610 North 7th Street, St. Louis, MO 63101**

Reservations may be made by calling 1-800-362-2779 and identifying yourself as a part of the USS Caliente reunion or online at http://embassysuites.hilton.com/en/es/groups/personalized/S/STLWAES-CAL-20180906/index.jhtml?WT.mc_id=POG.

(editor's note: my software does not properly convert long urls into clickable links. Computer users will have to type it in.)

The room rates are good for 2 days prior and 2 days after the reunion dates. The group rate is \$139.00 for a king bed suite and \$149.00 for a double queen bed suite room. The cutoff date for reservations is Thursday, August 16, 2018. Valet parking is available for \$24.00 per night or you may park in one of the nearby municipal facilities.

Reunion Agenda

Thursday, 6 Sept.

- a) Hotel check-in
- b) 2:00-6:00 PM— Reception

Friday, 7 Sept.

- a) 7:00-9:00 AM— Breakfast
- b) 9:00 AM-4:30 PM— Tour

Saturday, 8 Sept.

- a) 7:00-9:00 AM— Breakfast
- b) 9:00 AM— Business Meeting
- c) 6:30 PM— Reception
- d) 7:00 PM— Banquet

Sunday, 9 Sept.

- a) 7:00-9:00 AM— Breakfast
- b) 9:00-Noon— Farewells

St. Louis Reunion Registration Form

Shipmate's Name _____

Spouse or Guest Name _____

Additional Guests: _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Years on Cal 19__ to 19__ Rate/Rank while aboard _____

Registration Fee: \$180.00 per person X _____ persons = \$ _____

Registration fee includes Thursday reception, Saturday reception and the banquet buffet and entertainment. Daily breakfasts are included in your room fees.

Friday Guided Tour \$40.00 per person x _____ persons = \$ _____

Registrations \$ _____ plus tour \$ _____ = Grand Total \$ _____

Please return with check to: USS Caliente Association, c/o Pat Hurton,
156 Greenfield Drive, Chico, CA 95973-0185