

# USS Caliente (AO-53) Association



# PIPELINE

June 2020

---

## Long Beach Reunion Postponed

By Jeff Sturgis

It probably comes as no surprise that the Executive Committee has decided to postpone the September Caliente Reunion in Long Beach. This decision was made after careful reflection and email conversations by your Executive Committee. There were several factors that were considered in our decision.

The first factor is the uncertainty about the progress of the pandemic and of our country's mitigation efforts. There still doesn't seem to be a coherent national strategy with each state left to fend for itself. As we know, California has been one of the hard-hit states. We have no idea whether gatherings of more than 10 people will even be allowed by our September date.

However, the second and most important factor we considered was the health and safety of our members. We are all over 60, which is the demographic at most risk of contracting the virus. In order for our reunion to be successful, we must be confident that traveling and gathering in groups will not be putting our lives and those of our loved ones and shipmates at risk. At this point, we don't think that most of us have that confidence and probably won't be able to restore that confidence anytime soon.

The plan right now is to postpone the reunion for one year to September 2021 and to have it in Long Beach at the same hotel as originally planned. There was some sentiment to reschedule in the



Caliente unrepes USS Hancock (CVS-19) in 1962. (from Hancock cruise book)

spring of 2021, but the majority felt that the outlook for the fall of 2021, including the possibility that a vaccine may be widely available by then, makes the fall date more realistic.

So, It is certainly disappointing that we will not be able to see each other this year. We are racing against “Father Time” as we get older and fewer are able to attend these reunions. It is hard to skip a year when we realize that these reunions will not be able to go on forever.

If you have already booked rooms at the hotel, you can cancel without penalty. If you already sent in your registration fee to Pat Hurton, you have two choices. First, you can leave the registration fee with Pat and it will count as your registration for September 2021. Or you can contact Pat at [patrick.hurton@gmail.com](mailto:patrick.hurton@gmail.com) or (530) 343-4060 and he will either refund your money or not deposit your check.

As always, we welcome your input on this decision and you can send your questions and comments to me at [jeffreysturgis54@gmail.com](mailto:jeffreysturgis54@gmail.com). These are unprecedented times and our main goal is that everyone be safe and secure. Please take care of yourselves and hold out hope that this pandemic will be contained and that we can safely gather again in September 2021.

Safe harbors!

## **Service deserves recognition**

By Pat Hurton

I was recently reviewing some past Pipelines and noticed that a key person in our Association has not been appropriately recognized - Karl Seitz. He is the editor, publisher, reporter, copy boy and all things necessary for the publication of our Pipeline.

Karl joined the Navy after graduating from high school in Troy, Alabama. After boot camp he was assigned to the Cal and served on her from 1961 to 1964, moving from Second Division to Ops yeoman to Personnelman, achieving the rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> class. After discharge, Karl went on to college and began his journalistic career at the Birmingham Post-Herald while still in college. At the Post-Herald, Karl rose through the ranks and retired after a 38-year career, most of them as editorial page editor.

In 2007, Karl joined the Caliente Association. When Bob Howard resigned as president he held both the president and Pipeline editor positions. I succeeded Bob in 2008 and inherited both positions as well as maintaining my role as treasurer. Well, it quickly occurred to me that I was over my head and sought help. Our vice president at the time, Norm Street, mentioned he had found a ~~sueker~~ an eager to perform volunteer to take over the Pipeline. After putting out one more issue of the Pipeline I quickly realized how dumb I was and asked Karl up to take on the Pipeline. Now, after some 11 or 12 years, it should be readily apparent to all how fortunate we are to have Karl on board.

I do not know if most of you realize how involved the effort is to publish a Pipeline:

- Inputs are received from many sources in many formats. All inputs must be converted to a standardized format prior to publication.
- Research is done to enhance articles with additional facts making the articles more complete.
- The obituaries you see aren't “just lifted” from a local paper. Guess who does a significant amount of research after receiving “just a shipmates name” – Karl. I do not think Karl subscribes to all the papers in all our shipmate's towns so the research is not always easy.
- Many of the Pipelines are still distributed by snail mail. Who gets them printed?

- After compiling each Pipeline. Karl then becomes the “circulation manager.”
- Emailed copies must be distributed.
- The position of “copy boy” then comes into play. Snail mail copies must be made and distributed. Each issue is an optimum length and an appropriate weight paper is used to minimize postage coast. Returned Pipelines are reviewed for a possible new address. Similar efforts are undertaken for bounced emails. If you have received your Pipeline after changing addresses or emails – thank Karl.

Over the 11 or 12 years I have worked with Karl and have watched his dedication to compiling the best Pipeline an association could possibly publish. His background and work ethic make him an asset for the Association. Karl’s always has a positive attitude and always rises to the challenges of publishing a quality product. His service to the Association deserves recognition by all of us. Thank you Karl.

### Missing shipmates

By Karl Seitz

Pipeline Editor

I thank Pat Hurton for his kind remarks above. What follows in my request for help in doing one of my responsibilities: maintaining the Pipeline mailing lists (USPS and e-mail). Somebody is always moving, often without notifying the Pipeline of changes. Also, it is the rare for a three-



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](mailto: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 [jeffreysturgis54@gmail.com](mailto:jeffreysturgis54@gmail.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.

month period to go by without at least one death among our shipmates and spouses. It is not unusual for the first notice of these changes to come when a copy of the Pipeline is returned or an e-mail bounces.

Usually my Internet searches or the Postal Service's return label yield a new address or an obituary. However, I currently have six shipmates and a widow who are missing. I would appreciate any information readers might have on the following people.

Michael L. Allison, SM3, 1956-60, last good address in Florida.

William A Hammond, LCDR, 1959-61, last good address in New Mexico.

Christopher Hendricks, MM3, 1970-73, last good address in Michigan.

Iris Longster, widow of James, YN1, 1951-54, last good address in Indiana

Robert L Reinhard, PCSN, 1959-62, last good address in Florida.

Frank Solchaga, BM3, 1952-56 , last good address in Minnesota.

J.C. Van Deusen, SFC, 1961-65, last good address in Oregon.

## Taps

Kenneth Parks Gober Sr passed away 16 April 2020 at age 89. Ken was born on 16 June 1930 to Lena Lois Gober and James Walter Gober in Holt, Texas. Ken joined the Navy at age 17, where he received honors during his service.

Ken met his lifelong love, Jennie Louise Parker, in San Francisco in 1952. He won his first big gamble when he agreed to a blind date that paid off with them getting married in 1953 in Reno, Nev.

Ken enlisted in the Navy in 1948 and retired with 20 years of service as an MMC. He remained a member of the fleet reserve until his death.

He was a generous business owner who would hire anyone and give them a chance with a clean slate. He knew no stranger and welcomed anyone to his home. He was a devoted husband, a caring father, a loving grandfather and rambunctious great-grandfather.

Ken was preceded in death by wife Jennie and son Kevin Wayne Gober. He is survived by five children: daughter Donna (Howard) White of Coleman Texas, son James (Denise) Gober of Farmington MO, son Kenneth (Diane) Gober Jr. of Terrell Texas, son Brian Gober of Early, Texas, daughter Tina (Randall) Sims of Mullin Texas, along with 22 grandchildren and 42 great-grandchildren.



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.

We have belatedly learned of the death of Edward Ralph Hughes at age 66 on 7 Jan 2019 in Duluth, MN. Edward served on the Cal from 1970 to 1972 as an SN. He was born 8 Feb 1952 in Sacramento, CA, to Fredrick and Bonnie (Morrison) Hughes. Edward entered the Navy after graduating from Highlands High School in Sacramento, For several years, he was a civil service employee at McClellan Air Force Base. He enjoyed riding his Harley and being outdoors. Edward was predeceased by his parents. He is survived by brothers Curtis and Donald (Denise) Hughes; sister Brenda (Pete) Andrade; aunts and uncles John and Harriet Yachinich, Barbara and Art Bjork, Janice Morrison and Ann Krouse and numerous nieces and nephews. Edward was a resident of Ashland, WI at the time of his death, He is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery in Ashland.

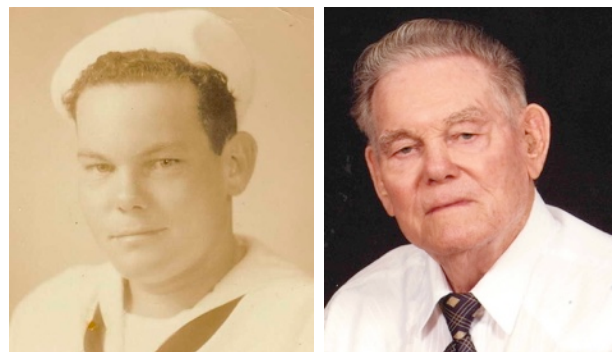
Eldon Jack Lester Sr. died at home in Kewanee, IL surrounded by his family 31 Jan 2020 at age 82. Jack served on the Cal as a MM1 from 1966 to 1967. He was born 29 June 1937 in Rock Island, IL to Clarence Forrest and Ethel Blanch (Belt) Lester. Jack married Mary J. Hegwood 22 July 1995. Jack joined the Navy in 1957 and retired in 1978 as a chief machinist mate. That period included five campaigns in Vietnam. His citations included the Navy Commendation Medal. Jack was a dedicated Harley Davidson fan and loved to ride his Harley with his wife.



Jack was predeceased by his parents, brother Duane Lester, son Ronald Lee Lester, two granddaughters and a great grandson. In addition to his wife, he is survived by sons Jack Lester Jr., Thomas (Nichole) Rusk and Shawn (Stephanie) Rusk; daughters Debi Allen, Dawn Rusk, Paula Land and Sherrie Carley; 13 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren. He was buried in Rock Island National Cemetery with full military rites.

Henry Carney Redmond, 91, of Gulfport, MS, died 18 May 2019. He served on Cal 1951 to 1954 as a CS3. Henry was born 15 Aug 1927 to Henry and Onealura Redmond in Mississippi.

Henry was predeceased by his wife, Bernadine. He is buried in Biloxi National Cemetery, Biloxi, MS.



Edward Ruimerman, 92, died 23 March 2020 at Southeastern Louisiana War Veterans' Home in Reserve, LA. Edward served on the Cal from 1945 to 1946 as an FN. He was born 3 Dec. 1927 to Jacob and Everdina Ruimer in Middletown, CT. His parents, who were both immigrants from Holland, died when Edward was very young. He and four other brothers were raised by their oldest brother and his wife. All of the brothers were World War II veterans.

Edward enlisted in the Navy 7 Dec 1944, four days after his 17th birthday. His duty on the Caliente was oiler in the engine room. In addition to his active duty during World War II, he rejoined the Navy during the Korean War and served on a destroyer. He then stayed in the Naval Reserve and later transferred to the Army Reserve where he served until he was 62. In the Army Reserve, he attained the rank of mess sergeant. In 2012, Edward sat down for an interview with the Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center at The Library of Congress. The 40-minute recording of that interview can be found online. He last attended a Caliente reunion in 2014 in Chicago.



Edward's survivors include sons Thomas Ruimerman and spouse Janet Weidner; Stephen (Shelly) Ruimerman and James (Judi) Ruimerman; four grandsons, one granddaughter and one great grandson.. Edward's body was cremated and sent to the Navy at Pearl Harbor for burial at sea with full military honors.

Carlos R. Vallejo of Pico Rivera, CA died 20 April 2020 with his daughters by his side. Carlos was born 30 Nov. 1932 in Los Angeles. He served on the Cal from 1951 to 1955 as an SN. He married Norma Arce in 1955. In addition to his wife, he is survived by four children and six grandchildren. About five years ago, Carlos was interviewed by his daughter Barbara Vallejo Dolen for the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress. When asked, he said the two things he was most proud of were enlisting in the Navy and marrying Norma. The video of that interview is held by the Library of Congress, but has not yet been digitized for online access.



## **Agent Orange claims moving, but proving exposure dates still hard**

By Karl Seitz  
Pipeline Editor

The Department of Veteran Affairs is making progress on approving Agent Orange compensation claims. Not as fast as one might hope and with the same opaqueness that has long marked its processes, but progress nevertheless. One successful applicant is Robert George Bateman, BT2, 1964-67, who provided information in the March 2019 Pipeline from his research on the Caliente's location during the period in which exposure to Agent Orange is presumed. I'll get back to that shortly.

Unfortunately, one major area in which the VA is lagging is digitizing deck logs. It had originally estimated the job would be finished in early 2020 and the resulting files handed over to the National Archives for free access. No new estimate has been offered, which handicaps applicants seeking to prove they were in the area of presumed exposure. The second key part of an application, proving that an applicant has one of the conditions presumed to be caused by Agent Orange, requires providing personal medical records.

Deck logs are the best, if not only proof of a ship's location. Unless an applicant acquired the right logs from the archives before they were transferred to VA control or finds another source, he may not be able to prove he is eligible for compensation until the logs are again available. I know of one applicant (not a Caliente sailor) who was successful in asking the VA to check the logs itself, but that could be an anomaly.

While there are many qualifying dates for the Cal that remain to be proved, there are some that can be identified with certainty. First, the VA itself has long said that Caliente crew members qualified under the previous "boots on the ground" standard if they were on the Cal when it docked for in-port replenishment at An Thoi and Vung Tau during June 1970.

Proof of additional dates under the new standard comes from deck logs that are already available. Some of these deck logs are for ships other than the Caliente. Returning to Bateman's award of benefits, the VA does not provide sufficient information in its decision to know what dates it considers proven for his presumed herbicide exposure, only that he was on the Caliente when it was in the blue waters of Vietnam.

However, cross-checking dates contained in the information Bateman provided the Pipeline last year, with deck logs from the work of Ed Ball of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Association, there is one date that stands out. On 6 Feb 1966, the Caliente unrepped the USS Topeka (CLG-8). The Topeka's logs show it coming alongside the Cal when they were in the zone of presumed AO exposure.

In addition to the Topeka, Ball has charted six more dates in which ships unrepped with the Cal in the presumptive zone. On 25 Nov 1965, the USS Bon Homme Richard (CVA-31) came alongside. On 4 Jul 1968 the USS Borie (DD-704) came alongside. On 21 May 1969, the USS Ponchaule (AO-148) was alongside. On 21 Jun 1970, the USS Frank Knox (DD-742) was served. On 7 Sep 1970, the USS White Plains (AFS-4) was served. On 2 June 1972, the USS Mars (AFS-1) participated in a vertrep.

My own application for benefits includes three deck logs from the Caliente showing the Cal's presence in the presumptive exposure zone: 21 March 1962, 9 May 1962 and 10 May 1962.

If you are a member of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Association, you can download any or all of the mentioned logs from the facebook group Navy Deck Ship Logs. Use the search the group function on the left side of page. If you are not a member and don't want to join, I have copies that can be sent, although I cannot promise a speedy response.

Another tool to use with deck logs is found on the website of Hill & Ponton Disability Attorneys. Using Ball's work, the law firm has created an interactive map showing the zone of presumptive exposure. Select a ship's name and you see all of the locations that have been found so far for that ship in the zone. Clicking on a location will give you the month and year and exact location. You can also plot positions you have found in your own research to see if they are in the zone. The one weakness is the failure to identify the exact day.

Eventually, the VA may have sufficient information to determine quickly whether an applicant for Agent Orange benefits was in the presumptive exposure zone, although there is no indication that it intends to share that information with the public. There are also some indications that the screening process it is currently developing may have some flaws.

Regardless, the weight of proving an applicant was in the right place is likely to remain with the applicant for the foreseeable future.

### In search of a cruise book

Greetings to all,

We received the March issue, which I read to Clyde since he can no longer see. Receiving the newsletter gives him something to remember back in the day, so brings happy memories.

I am in search to find a copy of the Caliente Cruise Book for 1952-1956 (if they were made) and am wondering if any of the older members can help me locate one. I am hoping to find a copy for Clyde's 89th birthday in August even though he cannot see well he would enjoy it with his special low vision glasses. Wishing he could attend the reunion in Long Beach since that is where he took basic but health just won't let that happen.

I happened on e-bay to find some Caliente historical documents for sale. I sure hope they get in the right hands so they can be shared with your newsletter in the future. In the meantime keep up the good work, and know we keep all our veterans and their families in our prayers.

Happy Spring!

Clyde and Lori Goodhue

[lgoodhue23@gmail.com](mailto:lgoodhue23@gmail.com)

*Editor's note: Clyde was very active with Norm Street and others in reaching out to Caliente sailors to join the Association in the early 2000s.*



Do you know any of these three Caliente sailors? All served between 1952 and 1956. Please let the editor know at one of his addresses on page 3 if you are or know any of these men. The pictures were provided by Linda Scott, daughter of the late Charles Heckadon, SN , 1952-56.

### Contributions needed

The necessary decision to postpone the Association reunion for a year has consequences beyond individual travel plans. It also affects the contents of the Pipeline. While we always need contributions, those contributions are needed more than ever this year to fill the gap left by the lack of a reunion on which to report. Please send your memories and pictures to the editor at one of his addresses on page 3.