

USS Caliente (AO-53) Association



PIPELINE

March 2018

St. Louis in September

By Jeff Sturgis

Plans have been completed for our next reunion to be held in St. Louis, Missouri Sept. 6-9, 2018. We'll be staying at the Embassy Suites Downtown about four blocks from the waterfront near all kinds of restaurants and shopping. Nearby attractions include the Gateway Arch, which is in the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial on the waterfront; Busch Gardens, the home of the St. Louis Cardinals; and the Museum of Westward Expansion. Other attractions in Forest Park, a short taxi ride away include the St. Louis Zoo and the Science Center. There are many museums and historical sites in the area, too many to mention here. The best way to check out the sights is to Google "St. Louis attractions" on your computer to get an idea of those that might interest you.

Pat Hurton has planned a Friday tour that will hit many of the high spots. Before lunch we'll visit the Eugene Field House Museum, the Anheuser Busch Brewery, Lafayette Park, Forest Park, the Civil War Museum, and St. Charles which was the first capital of Missouri and the site of the start of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. This will be an interesting stop as many of you who were at the Portland reunion last year will remember visiting Fort Clatsop in Oregon, which was the western terminus of the expedition. After lunch on our own, a tour of the New Cathedral will round out the day as we pass by the Fox Theater and Powell Symphony Hall on the way back to our hotel.

The format for the reunion will be similar to past reunions. Thursday will feature a welcome reception at the hotel from 2:00-6:00 PM. Breakfast will be hosted in our own "Caliente Room" on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 7:00-9:00 AM. There'll be a business meeting Saturday morning immediately following breakfast. After a day on your own, the banquet will begin with a reception at 6:30 PM followed by dinner at 7:00. After we eat, we'll honor our deceased comrades with the beautiful Two Bell Ceremony. We've arranged a jazz trio from the McCallie Orchestra to entertain



St. Louis skyline photographed by the Missouri Air National Guard in 2008

us and the JGs have promised to return to sing a few songs. Sunday will be reserved for breakfast and farewells for those departing.

The Embassy Suites by Hilton St. Louis Downtown will be our host hotel. Instructions for making reservations can be found on the agenda page at the back of this issue. We got great rate of \$139 for a king bed suite and \$149 for a double queen bed suite. These rates are good for two days before and two days after the reunion dates so you can come early or stay late to enjoy more of the attractions St. Louis has to offer.

For you baseball fans, we did look into scheduling the reunion on a date when the Cardinals were in town. However, rooms are really scarce and expensive on baseball weekends. The Cardinals are playing the Pittsburg Pirates at home on Monday, Sept. 10, so those of you who would like to see a game can stay in the hotel for two extra days at the reunion rate.

We had great attendance at our Portland reunion with more than 50 people at the Saturday banquet. In addition to spouses, some shipmates brought sons or daughters and even grandchildren. It's a great opportunity for us to bring family members so that they can get a sense of what serving on the Caliente was all about.

So, we encourage those planning to attend to get your reservations in early to the hotel and to send Pat your registration form. It makes our planning much easier when we have a good idea of how many are planning to attend. These dates are firm, and the reunion will not be cancelled, so find the form at the end of this issue of the Pipeline and send it in with your check.

As always, if you have any questions, you can contact me at 207-782-8323 or jandssturgis@roadrunner.com. See you in St. Louis!

Sea Stories and Pictures

One of the most enjoyable activities during our annual reunions is the sharing of pictures and sea stories from our days on the Cal. Whether we're hearing them for the first time or the tenth time, they are the glue that holds us together and they provide us a deeper understanding of our shared experiences. However, those who are unable to attend the reunions do not get the opportunity to share their own stories and pictures or to hear those from their other shipmates. It can also be important of us to record our sea stories for posterity.

Most of us don't share our stories of our Navy service with our children and grandchildren. This is where the Pipeline comes in. It is the vehicle that binds all of us together. By sending Karl Seitz your stories and pictures, you are sharing them with all those who served on the Cal in her 30 years afloat. In addition, you will be able to share your stories and pictures in the Pipeline with your family to help them better understand your time serving the country.

Please don't worry about your writing skills. Get your stories to Karl and he will edit them for publication as he does all the articles. Most of us are 65 or older and we won't be around forever to document our time in the Navy. So please, get your pictures and stories in to Karl at seitzao53@gmail.com or 1212 30th St South, Birmingham, AL 35205-1910 so that your story won't get lost in time.



"Meet Me in St. Louis, Louis"



Your chance to get Caliente shirt and cap

Thanks to the work of Herb Dorsey, shipmates have an opportunity to purchase shirts and caps with the Caliente patch. Herb is taking orders for delivery either at the St. Louis reunion or by mail for \$25 each.

Shirts and caps are available in all colors. Shirts come in sizes small to 5XL, although some sizes and colors may take additional time. Caps are one size fits all.

To get your shirts and/or caps, send a check for \$25 per item to Herb Dorsey, 9125 Kirkdale Rd, Bethesda, MD 20817-3301. Herb can also be reached at 301-530-0378 or dorsey@jhu.edu

Please specify colors and sizes for each item. In addition to your address (even if you specify Reunion delivery), please include your phone number and email address in the event Herb needs to contact you. Please allow three weeks from Herb's receipt of your check for postal delivery.



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.

USS Caliente memories 1971 - 1973

By James T. Rawlinson, CS3, 1971-73

I first saw the ship coming into port in Long Beach in October 1971. Mike Copeland and I were sent from Treasure Island in San Francisco with our seabags and orders to meet a ship called the USS Caliente (AO-53). We went to the pier and no ship was there, but we waited and in she came. What a sight, left over from WWII and with rigs on the sides and guns in the front and back.

Mike and Tom, two boys from Muncie IN, who joined the Navy Reserve in Anderson IN because we would have been drafted and did not want to be in the Army and end up in Vietnam. We are still friends today and saw and did things that helped us grow up and be thankful for this great country we live in today.

We did go to the combat zone in Vietnam many times in the next two years and all over Southeast Asia. Little did we know we would be on the last voyage of the Cal and come home with a very good friend from Indiana, Steve Selzer, who shared many crazy times with us on and off the ship.

First REFTRAY: Oct. 1971 all of us were in deck 2nd Division so that meant I would be assigned to the three-inch fifty gun on the back part of the ship starboard side. (Philip) Newbold was the 1st class in charge of the gun. He said “put these asbestos gloves on. You are going to catch the hot shells as they come out of this gun.” I thought what in the hell did I get myself into. No ear plugs and three or four other sailors I don’t remember, trying to load and shoot this gun and, of course, catch the hot shells. We lived through this and many days of scraping off rust, red leading and haze graying the Cal, over and over again.

Departed for the WestPac tour 22 Oct. 1971. This meant working all day and standing watch at all hours of the night. As I look back, the night watches were the best. The night sky in the Pacific is a wonderful sight. Spending time at the helm was amazing.

First UNREP: 9 Nov. 1971 DesRon meet up with many ships and I was on a rig operating a steam driven winch that had one of the main lines attached to it. My job was to keep the line tight and follow orders for many hours. As all Cal sailors know that was the job — get fuel to the fleet.

First Liberty: Yokosuka, Japan, 12 Nov. 1971. Sailing in was interesting, many small islands that had pill boxes left in them that would have had Japanese military inside if we tried to invade during WWII. It was a good place for liberty and we went in and had fun. I remember good fried rice and beer along with fun cab rides and touring the area. When the ship headed out, I noticed a few sailors did not go on liberty and stood watches for other sailors. I asked why; they said I did not understand because they were saving liberty time for PI. I did not understand what they were talking about and had to ask what PI meant.



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.

The Cal left Japan and unrepped ships in the Sea of Japan on the way to Subic Bay. 2 Dec. 1971. Liberty in Subic was a totally different kind of experience. All sailors who visited the town know why you should stay with your friends to be safe in the crazy world of Olongapo City. A long street with country music on one side and rock and roll bars on the other. At the end of the street was Jolows bar and entertainment place. Any sailors who visited this street know what I am talking about. The Navy base was great and would be a place where we played all kinds of sports. Caliente baseball team would play other ships teams. We formed basketball teams on the ship and played golf on a course where your balls could be lost to a real wild monkey. The base had good food, 25 cent beer, movie theater and church, all safe places to get away from the ship.

6 Dec. YANKEE STATION back to work long hours many UNREPs with ships.

10 Dec. to 13 Dec. line swing along the coast of Vietnam and time to understand the war was next to us and our job was important. Even though the war was unpopular at home, we did the best we could.

17 Dec. the ship was ordered to the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean because of a war between India and Pakistan to meet up with Task Force 74 16 Dec to 23 Dec. Many long days and we would be spending Christmas at sea. We did get some mail and I got some stale cookies and a poem from home. We had a Christmas tree in our sleeping area so we did the best we could without family.

27 Dec. prepared to cross the Equator for my first time. The day before we had to wear our work uniform inside out and backwards. I am thinking again "what the hell am I getting into." We crossed at 000000 Latitude 107-09.9E Longitude. I become a Shellback with all the top secret stuff that goes along with it. (firehose - crawling on deck - fat baby - barber - King & Queen - cook - over the side) only the shellbacks know what went on.

30 Dec. 1971 back to Subic load out and crazy but fun times in Subic.

Jan. 1972 two line swings in Gulf of Tonkin, then off to Singapore.

25 Jan. 1972 Singapore. Going to fuel pier to get black oil and then hose breaks, black oil all over the place. Interesting liberty and a bunch of us get a hotel room to party and see the city. We had to catch a taxi boat to get back to the ship and it was very dark and we had many drunken sailors on the taxi. I thought we were going to flip the small taxi over. A great adventure in Singapore and off we go to another line swing in the Combat Zone. Tax free and free mail paid cash at sea and sent much of it home.

Next Hong Kong — great liberty port. Anchor out and be painted by local painting crew, all women. Could stay over night and visit the New Territories, next to the border of China. I still have The Little Red Book sold by children to anyone at the border. Chairman Mao wrote the book and everyone in China had to have one.

Twelve more line swings Febuary-March-April-May-June.

July 1972 Sasebo, Japan, wonderful port for liberty (many basketball games, good food at the Fiddlers Green, interesting but strange trip to Nagasaki Atomic bomb site and museum. Six days and ready to head back to the States.

August 1972 back in Long Beach and San Pedro dry dock. August, September, October 1972.

September 1972 During this time found an apartment in the Signal Hill area, had Steve Selzer's car to use and lined up my wedding. Steve comes back and I fly home to be married and drive back all within two weeks.

November, all three, Copeland, Selzer and Rawlinson, are in supply and are 3rd class.

December 1972, the ship is getting ready to go back to Vietnam as the country is turning against the war. We get to have Christmas in the United States with some of our family.

22 Jan. 1973, the 29-year-old USS Caliente is underway for another tour in Vietnam.

This second time I felt much different about seeing more on any liberty visit.

February 1973, crossed the dateline and headed to a line swing, then off to Kaohsiung, Taiwan, where a U.S. sub will tie alongside, go in for liberty, tear up a hotel and blame us and leave before sunup.

March 1973, OPERATION GOLDEN DRAGON training with allies and South Korean Navy watching a military landing with all military forces involved. Off to a third line swing.

April, 16, 1973, ANZUK Navy Base in Singapore for upkeep. We connected with a British ship and had a field day playing sports against the British teams. I played in rugby and American football, Half Rugby Half Gridiron. Fun for all win or lose. We won and got to go to drink with the British after the sports.

May and June 1973, three more line swings during the time I would get off to go back to college. Copeland followed with an early out and Selzer rode the Cal home for the last voyage.

1943-1973 USS Caliente awarded 10 Battle Stars in World War II, 4 Battle Stars in Korean War and 8 Campaign Stars in Vietnam War.

GOD BLESS ALL WHO SERVED ON OUR SHIP

U. S. S. CALIENTE (AO-53)
% Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

24 January 1959

Commendation

for outstanding performance of duty as a crew member in the U.S.S. CALIENTE (AO-53).

In recognition of his sincere efforts and his conscientious and diligent devotion to duty Johnnie L. FREEMAN, SPM2, USN has been recommended for commendation at meritorious mast.

Because of his high standards of leadership and professional knowledge he was instrumental in preventing the sinking of the number two motor launch the night of twenty-one January 1959. FREEMAN's fast action and outstanding supervisory ability in rigging emergency pumps to the boat and in attempting to stop the leak in the boat attests to his ability and resourcefulness. His action was in keeping with the highest traditions of seamanship in the naval service.

The Commanding Officer, U.S.S. CALIENTE, takes pleasure in commending him for his outstanding efforts in carrying out this operation.

Commended at meritorious mast held on board the U.S.S. CALIENTE (AO-53) the twenty-fourth day of January 1959.


O. WILLIAM GOEPNER
Captain, U. S. Navy
Commanding

Johnnie L. Freeman saw Paul Tague's commendation in the September 2017 Pipeline and sent along his commendation for the same incident on 21 Jan 1959.



**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