



PIPELINE

March 2016

Boston Reunion

By Jeff Sturgis

I hope the holiday season was a joyous time for everyone and that the winter weather has not been too severe in your area. It's 47 degrees outside here in central Maine as I write this. We have alternated between several periods of record warmth (50 degrees or better) and bitter cold (-10 degrees). As a result, the snow cover which should average between 2 and 3 feet in a normal winter is just 1 to 4 inches. Due to recent rains, we now have a lot of bare ground.

Only 30 miles away in most of the White Mountains of New Hampshire where I go hiking weekly, there is just an average of 6 inches of snow. The frost, which should be 3 to 4 feet deep in the ground is only about 6 inches deep in most spots. As I'm sure you know, the last few big East Coast snowstorms have hit from Virginia through to Massachusetts and missed Maine.

If you read the December Pipeline, you are aware that we are well on our way to finalizing the plans for our Boston Reunion to be held from Sept. 8 through Sept. 11, 2016. We have contracted with the Boston Marriott Quincy for our reunion. My wife and I visited the hotel last fall and met with the event manager followed by lunch. The hotel is beautiful and we will be well served. It is minutes away from downtown Boston by subway or by car with shuttle service to and from the airport and the subway station.

Logan Express is the shuttle service that services Quincy from Logan Airport. For \$12 one way or \$22 round trip, the Logan Express will provide transportation to and from the Logan Express Quincy terminal where the hotel shuttle will pick you up and take you to the hotel.

Quincy itself has several attractions including the USS Salem (CA-39), the National Shipbuilding Museum and the Adams Historical Park which contains the homes of two presidents, John Adams and his son John Quincy Adams.

Of course, Boston itself has many attractions on the Freedom Trail connected with our birth as a nation; too many to list here. Boston (actually Charleston Navy Yard) is also home to the USS Constitution, the eldest commissioned warship afloat. I am in the process of arranging a tour for the Friday of the reunion that will take us to many of those attractions. More information concerning the



Boston's Charles River photographed by Sol Lin of Boston.

tour route and the cost will follow as those plans are firmed up. If there are any “must sees” on your bucket list, don’t hesitate to let me know and I’ll try to accommodate the majority.

We have a very favorable room rate for the Boston area, and I am confident that you will all be pleased with the quality of the hotel. Don’t hesitate to “Google” the Boston Marriott Quincy or go to www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/bosqu-boston-marriott-quincy/ on your computer and scan the hotel’s website. Many thanks go to Pat Hurton as he has been an invaluable advisor as we set up this venue.

So, mark the date on your calendar and make your reservations and get your registration forms in early. You might want to stay a few extra days and bring other family members with you to experience all the rich history the the Boston area has to offer. From the Freedom Trail in the downtown area, to the Lexington and Concord battlefields, to Plimouth Plantation there is enough history within a 30-mile radius to fill up your time. In addition, we will all have plenty of opportunity for fellowship and the telling of sea stories with our shipmates.

Sue and I are excited to have the opportunity to welcome you to our native New England. We both graduated from Stoneham High School, just 13 miles north of Boston, so even though we are now Mainers, we both worked in Boston during our college years and spent most of our youth in the area. If you have any questions, please contact me (207-782-8232 or jandssturgis@roadrunner.com) and I will attempt to answer any questions you may have.

Taps

Capt. Robert Warren Jackson, commanding officer of the USS Caliente from 7 Dec. 1966 to 4 Apr. 1968, died 17 Feb 2016 in San Diego at age 95. Born in Los Angeles in 1920, He married Ethel Mary Signs of Philadelphia in 1944. She survives him as do his sons Ronald of San Diego and Wayne (Nancy) of Fredericksburg, Va.; six grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

Captain Jack began his naval career during World War II as a fighter pilot. He participated in the invasion of Africa and was later based on Guadalcanal. He had a variety of land- and sea-based assignments during the war, including fighter pilot flight instructor. During the Korean War, he served two deployments aboard the USS Boxer (CV-21). Beginning in 1957, he began a series of staff and command assignments, before taking command of the Cal in 1966. His final assignment before retiring to La Jolla, CA, was commanding officer of the Naval Air Facility at Sigonella, Sicily. For his service, Jackson received a Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross, three Air Medals and a Presidential Unit Citation.



A personal memory of Capt. Jackson

By Pat Hurton, SK2 1962-1966

I first met Capt. Robert W. Jackson and his wife Ethel at the USS Caliente's 6 June 1997 reunion in Washington D.C. With more than 90 attendees to host and shepherd around Washington, Bob, as captain of the Association, and Ethel provided all attendees with an example of what caring and gracious hosts should be. Bob's leadership skills, and Ethel's support, made the reunion very successful.

Only an excellent leader can gain the support of others to make an endeavor a success and Bob demonstrated those skills throughout his life. From the first day of the Washington reunion, Charleen and I immediately knew we wanted to be part of the USS Caliente Association. Bob continued to be an officer in the Association through the May 1999 reunion in New York City. He attended his last reunion in San Diego in 2010.

Charleen and I owe a debt of gratitude to Bob and Ethel for providing us such a great first introduction to the Association. Bob will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Editor's message

By Karl Seitz

I'll keep it short. The Pipeline depends on you to provide the stories, photographs and memorabilia that fill these pages. Our current supply is very low. We need you to write



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.

something. It doesn't have to be polished, that's my job. Share your pictures, either from your time on the Caliente or of a souvenir you have at home. We want anything Caliente related. Send it to one of my addresses on the previous page.

Memories

An unrep while planes are launched

By Sam Birchill, SN, 1967-68

Like all time past, dates sometime get confused, but this must have been in early 1967, during my first Westpac cruise. It was a night unrep with the USS Enterprise. I was working forward on the Avgas rig and the ship was at 14 knots. We were doing the extra 3 knots because the Enterprise was doing combat air ops while we were refueling her. It was a very long unrep but I remember sitting by my rig after we finished and seeing F-4s connected up to the starboard catapult. I remember how huge those planes looked and all of the ordinance that was hanging on them. The noise was completely overwhelming and then they put up the blast fence; kicked in the afterburners and the noise level tripled. I might have gotten some of my hearing loss that night. They launched what seemed to be a lot of airplanes. After about 90 minutes they started coming back and landing. At some point during the unrep we had to adjust our course because the wind evidently changed some. They then loaded up some more planes and sent them off into the night.

Being a peon at the bottom of the food chain, I never knew exactly where we were and I never found out exactly who and what those planes were sent to attack.

Somebody must have needed help in a big way, really quickly. I can't imagine what rules were broken that night but there must have been a lot.

Return from Westpac - 1970

By Jeff Sturgis, LTJG, 1970-1972

I joined the Cal in Subic in the middle of her 1970 Westpac cruise, flying in from the states after graduating from Supply Corps School in Athens, Georgia. I quickly acclimated myself to the jobs of Disbursing, Ship's Service and Assistant Supply Department Officer. Greg Perett was the Supply Department Officer and we soon were working well together along with the great crew in the Supply Department. Capt. Owen Oberg was the CO. He was a Naval aviator and was sent to the Cal as CO to learn how to pilot a big slow ship with a large turning radius. Oilers were often the training ships for COs who would later go on to command carriers because they behaved in a similar fashion while underway. In fact, Captain Oberg went from the Caliente to the Kitty Hawk (CV-63) as CO and shortly thereafter made rear admiral.



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.

There are many stories of that deployment, but I want to focus on the events that happened on our return voyage to the States. We found out in September that we would be returning to the States at the end of the month. Shipmates from the Vietnam era will remember that there were several perks that accrued to those who served in the combat zone. The first was \$65 a month combat pay. Next was exemption from paying income taxes for each month spent in the combat zone. The last was free mail sent from the combat zone.

As I remember, to qualify one of two things had to happen. First, a service member had to be in the combat zone for 6 consecutive days or second, he had to have taken part in a tactical operation in the combat zone. Tactical operations were usually defined as taking any part in a hostile action. However, there were other non-combat categories. For us in the blue water navy, an unrep was defined as a tactical operation and the combat zone was defined as being within three miles of the Vietnam coast.

Once we found out we were returning to the States, Captain Oberg called me and the navigator up to his cabin for a meeting. Since it was the end of September, he wanted to know the minimum conditions that would have to occur for the Caliente to qualify for combat pay in the month of October. After a short examination of the disbursing regs, we determined that we could start an unrep in the evening hours of Sept. 30 within the three-mile limit and continue until just past 2400 hours into Oct. 1.

That's exactly what we did. We scheduled an unrep with a couple of tin cans on the 30th, and the last one broke away around 0030 hours on Oct. 1. We then headed straight to Subic to load enough fuel to ballast down for our trip back to Long Beach having met the requirements for combat zone benefits for the month of October.

However, after starting our return to the States on a high note, the voyage went downhill from there. We first stopped in Yokosuka for some minor repairs. Then we steamed for Pearl Harbor where we were scheduled for few days of liberty before the final leg to Long Beach. It would be a nice reward for the crew after a long deployment. But while in transit, we were ordered to be the duty oiler for an ASW exercise, HUKASWEX 4-70, that was being held off the coast of San Diego. That meant our stay in Pearl was reduced from several days to 4 hours! We manned the rail on the way into the harbor as we passed the Arizona Memorial and manned it again 4 hours later as we passed it on the way out. The only people who got ashore were several members of the Supply Department as we loaded fresh vegetables, fruit and milk and a few repair parts. So, not only was our liberty in Pearl nixed, but we also were delayed by several days getting back to Long Beach as we refueled the tin cans and the Ticonderoga (CV-14) during the operation. Of course, this put a serious damper on the morale of the crew and its anticipation of seeing loved ones from whom we had been separated for so long.

As we detached from the exercise and finally headed for Long Beach, a final obstacle arose. As an oiler, we mostly carried black oil and JP-5. However, the Navy at this time still had a few piston-driven aircraft on its carriers. So we were carrying Avgas in two forward tanks in the event that the carriers needed that fuel. Because of that, when returning to the States we had to immediately go to the fuel pier in San Pedro and offload the Avgas.

Due to its volatility, there was no liberty while we were unloading. The smoking lamp was out and any activities that could cause a spark were prohibited. As I remember during the offloading of Avgas the regulations stipulated that the crew stood port and starboard watches and no one

was allowed liberty as everyone was needed should a fire or explosion occur. The offload would have taken about 24 hours and would become the final obstacle to a weary crew wanting to get home!

However, Captain Oberg came through again. A day out of Long Beach he informed the Supply Department, with tongue firmly planted in his cheek and a mischievous grin on his face, that the Avgas tanks had been breeched and were contaminated with sea water. There was nothing left to do but to survey the gas and pump it over the side! While we couldn't find anyone else on the ship who could corroborate his story, there wasn't one crew member who would ever contradict the captain's version of the events.

So, we secured all activities on the ship and a day outside of Long Beach took a few hours to pump thousands of gallons of "contaminated" gasoline over the side while out at sea. We then pulled directly into Long Beach, established a six-section watch, and were happily greeted by our wives and families as most of the crew went on liberty.

A Caliente Christmas

Joe Coia, CS3 1951-52, proudly sports his Christmas present, a new cap and jacket with the outline of the Caliente stitched into both. Information and picture provided by daughter, Connie Coia, who says both of them are looking forward to seeing everybody in Boston.

Enough demand?

Coincidentally with the news of Joe's gift, Pat Hurton reports that there have been quite a few requests for Caliente hats lately. He says the association could order some if there is sufficient demand. Please let Pat Hurton know if you would like one so he can gauge whether to proceed. His e-mail address is gigandpat26@att.net; USPS address is USS Caliente Association c/o Pat Hurton, 156 Greenfield Drive, Chico, CA 95973-0185.

Reunion information pages 7, 8

Readers of print Pipeline may want to use a photocopy of page 8 to register so they can keep schedule found on page 7.



USS CALIENTE (AO-53) BOSTON REUNION



Boston Marriott Quincy



Old State House

BOSTON MARRIOTT QUINCY 1000 Marriott Drive, Quincy, MA 02169 9 Sept. - 12 Sept. 2016

Reservations can be made at the Boston Marriott Quincy by calling 1-800-228-9290 or 617-472-1000 and identifying yourself as a part of the USS Caliente Reunion. The room rates are good for three days prior and three days after the reunion dates. The group rate is \$139.00 per room plus a 11.7% charge for state and local taxes. The cutoff date for reservations is Thursday, August 18, 2016. Parking is available at no charge.

Reunion Agenda

Thursday, 9 September

- a) Hotel check-in
- b) 3:00 PM-6:00 PM-reception with snacks provided

Friday, 10 September

- a) 7:00 AM - 9:00 AM - Continental Breakfast
- b) Free time/Boston Tour

Saturday, 11 September

- a) 7:00 AM - 9:00AM - Continental Breakfast
- b) 9:00 AM - Annual Business Meeting
- c) Free Time
- d) 6:30 PM - Pre-banquet Social Gathering
- e) 7:00 PM - Banquet

Sunday, 12 September

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

2016 Boston Reunion
Registration Form

Shipmate's Name _____

Spouse or Guest Name _____

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 reception, three continental
breakfasts, and the banquet

Additional Guests:

Banquet Meal Choices:

Herb Crusted All Natural Chicken Breast _____

Braised Boneless Short Ribs _____

Seared Atlantic Salmon _____

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