

USS Caliente (AO-53) Association



PIPELINE

Mar 2019

Savannah reunion

By Jeff Sturgis

Final planning has been completed for our next reunion scheduled for Monday, Sept. 23 through Thursday, Sept. 26, 2019, in Savannah, GA. This reunion will differ from previous reunions as it will be held during the mid-week rather than over a weekend. The change in format was necessitated by the high weekend prices in Savannah. By moving to a mid-week format we were able to get reasonable prices that are comparable to those we had in previous reunions and also to book a hotel in the historic district where many attractions and restaurants are within walking distance. The format will be the same as in previous reunions; it will just go from Monday-Thursday rather than the Thursday-Sunday format that we are used to.

There are many points of interest located in historic Savannah, too many to enumerate here. Thanks to the internet, it is now easy for you to browse online to find those attractions that may interest you. Pat Hurton worked hard to find us a suitable tour for our Tuesday activity that will take us to some of those attractions. He ran into the same financial issues as I did in that full-day tours were quite expensive. However, he was able to find a half-day tour that met our budget. You can find



The Propeller Club of the Port of Savannah erected this fountain next to 117 W. River Street Parking to honor ships named Savannah. Flanking the Propeller Club plaque are plaques for USS Savannah (AOR-4) a multipurpose replenishment oiler, the steamship Savannah, first steamship to cross the Atlantic, NS Savannah, first atomic powered passenger-cargo ship and USS Savannah (CL-42), light cruiser that saw extensive service in World War II.

his description of the tour and the attractions we will visit elsewhere in this Pipeline. Pat continues to do a great job as our treasurer and tour arranger.

Arrangements are also complete for the Wednesday night entertainment at our banquet. We have engaged The Standards Jazz, a four-piece band from Mt. Pleasant, SC. I have listened to samples of their music online and talked to their leader. I expect that they'll be as popular as the bands we have had at our recent reunions.

The Fairfield Inn and Suites by Marriott Savannah Downtown will be hosting our reunion. You can get information about the hotel by going to their website. We have received a very favorable rate of \$134 a night for a double queen or single king room. Reunion rates are good for one night before (Sunday) and one night after (Thursday) the three nights of the reunion. The cutoff for reservations at the reunion rate is August 23, 2019. Included in this issue of the Pipeline is an agenda and the registration form that should be sent to Pat with your registration fee. We have tried to keep our room costs and registration fee as low as possible, cognizant of the fact that most of us are retired and on fixed incomes.

We encourage you to make your reservations with the hotel and register with Pat as early as possible. In the past, there have been some problems with room availability when shipmates tried to reserve rooms close to, or after the reservation deadline. It is easier for me to get the hotel to add extra rooms to our room block well before the deadline than to beg to squeeze someone in at or after the deadline. The hotel has a very nice custom reservation page just for the Caliente reunion. Use this link to [Book your group rate for USS Caliente Reunion 2019](#) . The link lists nights Sunday through Friday. Be sure to indicate the nights you intend to stay. For those who prefer to use the phone, the number is 1-888-2427. In addition, you may email me at jeffreysturgis54@gmail.com and I will send you the link. So get your reservations in early.

We are excited that we continue to have a critical mass of shipmates that enables us to continue these reunions. Feedback from past reunions tells us that those who attended have universally appreciated the program and the time spent swapping sea stories with other shipmates. We have also enjoyed the company of spouses and other family members. You are encouraged to bring family members so that they can learn about your life aboard the Caliente. One of the highlights of the St. Louis reunion was the presence of WWII veteran Fred Griffith, his son, daughter and their spouses all in T-shirts with Fred's WWII picture on them. In addition, another WWII vet, John Creedon, is always in attendance with his beautiful wife, Diane, and one or two family members. John and Fred were aboard the Caliente during the last years of the war, and they held many of us spellbound with their stories of the wartime operations of the Caliente. We cherish the times we have with our WWII veterans and their families.

So, we encourage you to seriously consider joining your shipmates at our next reunion in Savannah. As always, you may contact me with any questions or concerns.

Speaking on behalf of the Executive Committee; Mike Copeland, Dave Ludemann, Greg Perret, Tom Rawlinson, Steve Selzer; Treasurer Pat Hurton and Pipeline Editor Karl Seitz, we look forward to seeing you in Savannah!

Different kind of tour this year

By Pat Hurton

Shipmates, we are going to do something different for our reunion in Savannah. We are going to have a tour that will finish by noon and we have lowered the cost to \$20.00 per person. For

the afternoon, Savannah has a service called "Connect on the dot" Express Shuttle. There is a stop within a block of our hotel. It connects with all the major tourist sites in and around Savannah and will allow you to see sights that are not covered in the morning tour at your leisure. I will include more details of sites, location etc. in the June Pipeline.

For the morning tour, our guides will arrive to board everyone at the Fairfield Inn & Suites by 9:15am. We will then depart, at 9:30 AM in air conditioned trolleys for a fact filled 90-minute tour of this beautiful city! The adventure starts from our historic hotel and tells the colorful uninterrupted story of the city's past. The route examines the city squares and shares stories of the colorful characters that have made the city so inviting to visitors from all over the world. James Oglethorpe, Johnny Mercer, Juliette Low, Tomochichi, and many others have left their footprints around the squares of Savannah. Mansions and churches, parks and monuments, City Market and River Street will all be viewed comfortably from our air conditioned, cushioned seated trolley. You will also have the opportunity to go inside the magnificent Cathedral of St. John the Baptist and view the beautiful stained glass and architecture. After our tour, we will arrive back at the Fairfield Inn and bid the group farewell by 11:00 am.

Pipeline Submissions

by Jeff Sturgis

Karl Seitz does a wonderful job publishing the Pipeline four times a year. There are very few military reunion newsletters that have the quality of the Pipeline. In addition to being informative,



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 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.

it is the instrument that binds us together. However, Karl can't do this alone. He needs information, articles and pictures. Have you ever thought of writing a short story of your time in the Navy for your family and friends? When was the last time you went through the pictures taken during your time on the Cal and shared them with loved ones? If you haven't, now is the time. And while you're doing that, send them to Karl so that we all can share in your experience.

We want to hear about your experiences and compare them to ours. Reunions are wonderful because we get to share those stories in person, but there are many shipmates out there who can't make the reunions. Their only link to other shipmates is through the Pipeline. So, please take the opportunity to write down your stories, sort through your pictures and send them to Karl so that he can share them with the rest of us. His email address is: seitzao53@gmail.com. Or mail them to 1212 30th St. South, Birmingham, AL 35205-1910.

Blue Water Navy vets get some promising news

By Karl Seitz

The quest to get Agent Orange benefits for Blue Water Navy sailors has taken some interesting and promising turns since the last Pipeline. First, HR 299 in the last Congress was derailed in the Senate in the final days of the session when two senators objected to approving it by unanimous consent. The bill is back in the new Congress. The sponsor even managed to get the same bill number. At present, it is virtually identical to last session's bill except for some date changes. That will change to take into account the latest developments.

On Jan 29, 2019, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit ruled that the Department of Veterans Affairs was wrong to limit Agent Orange benefits to veterans who had "boots on the ground" or served on the inland streams of South Vietnam. Instead, the court majority ruled, Congress meant to include the territorial waters of South Vietnam in the area where exposure to Agent Orange is presumed. The court appears to have adopted the definition of territorial waters found in both versions of HR 299, which is based on international law.

So far, the VA has instructed regional offices and centers to put decisions on claims involving Blue Water Navy issues on hold, although some parts of the claims process have been modified to allow some initial work. The VA has 90 days to appeal to the Supreme Court, which does not have to hear the case. The lawyers who brought the case think it is unlikely that the high court will take it. At least one lawyer not associated with the case makes the same assessment. If the Supreme Court does decide to hear the case, it would keep matters on hold until that court rules.

The more likely scenario is that the VA will have to develop procedures to deal with Blue Water claims. It may try to limit the impact of the expansion by limiting the definition of territorial waters. However, the group that brought the lawsuit, which is the same group that developed HR 299 is prepared to fight such action.



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.

What does this mean for Caliente sailors who have diseases presumed to be caused by exposure to Agent Orange. If you have already lost a claim and still have time to appeal, do so. At least one of our shipmates has done so using the case, Procopio v Wilkie, as new evidence. If your time to appeal an earlier denial has expired, you may have to wait for Congress to tell the VA to reopen earlier Blue Water claims, which is part of HR 299, or file a new claim. If you have not previously filed a claim, you could do so, although it will be put on hold. Another choice, which the editor made, is file a notice of intent to file a claim. You have one year from the date of that notice to complete the claim, but the effective date will be the date you filed the notice. Or you could wait until the VA issues new rules.

If you want to read the appeals court ruling, I posted it to the Caliente facebook page on Jan. 29. Procopio v Wilkie is also found elsewhere on line.

George Bateman provides help for Agent Orange claims

George Bateman, BT2, 1964-67, has provided the following information about USS Caliente locations from his records that may help others who need to provide evidence they were in the territorial waters of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). Be aware that not all of these dates and locations will qualify you for Agent Orange benefits, assuming you have one or more of the presumptive diseases. They should be used only for guidance for your own research when the Department of Veteran Affairs and/or Congress clarify the exact standards that will be used in the wake of the U.S. Court of Appeals ruling that removed the VA's boots on the ground rule.

Note that Vietnam defines its eastern and southern boundaries by a baseline that connects a series of geographical points, most located on islands off the coast. The territorial sea extends 12 nautical miles seaward from the baseline. Waters inside the baseline are considered internal.

Dates for which Bateman received Hostile Fire Pay

3 through 6 July 1965; 29 Aug 1965; 1, 2 Sep 1965; 13 through 22 Sep 1965; 5, 10, 15 Oct 1965; 6 Nov 1965; 12, 14, 20 Dec 1965; 8 through 11 and 13, 14 Jan 1966; 6 through 11 Feb 1966

Caliente locations near Vietnamese islands and light houses

Vietnamese words for light house: hai dang or den bien

Vietnamese words for islands: Dao or hon (mui is cape)

Island Poulo Cecir De Mer

3 Jul 1965 (sighted) 22 miles, (passed) 3.5 miles; 11 Oct 1965 (sighted) about 15 miles, (passed) 7 miles, (passed from sight) 25 miles.

Culao Re Island (cu-lao-r- Dao-ly-son)

6 Nov 1965 (sighted) about 18 miles, (lost sight) about 21 miles; 20 Dec 1965 (sighted) about 13 miles, (lost sight) 10 miles, (sighted) 8 miles, (lost sight) 14 miles; 6 Feb 1966 (sighted) about 20 miles, (passed) 9 miles, (passed from sight) about 20 miles.

Island of Great Catwick

3 Jul 1965 (sighted) 20 miles, (passed) 17 miles; 11 Oct 1965 (sighted) about 13 miles, (passed) 10 miles.

Hon Bai Canh Light

4 Jul 1965 (sighted) 28 miles; 6 Jul 1965 (sighted) 16 miles, (passed) 7 miles, (lost sight) 27 miles; 15 Sep 1965 (sighted) 15 miles, (passed) 13 miles, (lost sight) 26 miles; 19 Sep 1965

(abeam) 11 miles; 14 Jan 1966 (sighted) about 16 miles, (abeam) about 9 miles, (passed from view) 17 miles.

Hon Lon Light

5 Jul 1965 (sighted) 25 miles, (lost sight) 30 miles; 17 Sep 1965 (sighted) about 11 miles, (passed) 10.5 miles, (lost sight) about 24 miles; 5 Oct 1965 (sighted) about 18 miles, (abeam) 13 miles, (lost sight) about 19 miles

Hon Con Light

14 Oct 1965 (sighted) 22 miles, (passed) 20 miles, (passed from view) 18 miles

Presquile-De-Tien-Sha Light

1 Sep 1965 (sighted) 30 miles; 7 Feb 1966 (sighted) about 21 miles, (passed) 19 miles; 8 Feb 1966 (passed from view) about 24 miles, (sighted) about 21 miles, (passed) 19 miles, (passed from view) about 23 miles; 9 Feb 1966 (sighted) about 22 miles, (lost sight, reduced visibility) about 21 miles, (sighted) about 21 miles, (passed abeam) 21 miles, (lost sight) about 24 miles; 10 Feb 1966 (sighted) about 30 miles, (passed) 20 miles; 11 Feb 1966 (passed from view) about 31 miles.

Poulo Saptu or Poulo Sabtu Island

13 Sep 1965 (sighted) 17 miles; (passed) 8 miles, (passed from view) 18 miles.

Little Catwick Island

13 Sep 1965 (sighted) 11 miles, (passed) 10 miles, (passed from view) about 14 miles.

Cape Varella Light House

21 Sep 1965 (sighted) 29 miles, (passed) 8 miles.

Cape Jacques or Cape-saint-Jacques (Vung Tau Vietnam)

14 Sep 1965 (sighted) about 25 miles, (passed) 29 miles, (lost sight) 39 miles, 14 Oct 1965 (sighted) about 37 miles, (passed) 23 miles, (passed from sight) about 32 miles; 10 Jan 1966 (sighted) about 34 miles, (passed) about 32 miles.

Poulo Obi Island (Ca Mau Vietnam)

14 Sep 1965 (sighted) 22-18 miles, (lost sight) 17 miles, 19 Sep 1965 (sighted) 42 miles, (passed abeam) 18 miles, 13 Oct 1965 (sighted) about 39 miles, (passed) 13.7 miles; 8 Jan 1966 (sighted) about 22 miles, (lost sight) about 16 miles, (sighted) 14 miles; 9 Jan 1966 00.29 (passed) 12 miles, 02.12 (passed) 12 miles, (lost sight) 14 miles; 13 Jan 1966 20.00 (sighted) about 17 miles, (passed) 13 miles, (passed) 12 miles, (passed from view) about 27 miles.

Point Kega or PTE Kega Light

14 Sep 1965 (sighted) about 15 miles, (lost sight) about 15 miles; 20 Sep 1965 (sighted) 24 miles, (abeam) 15 miles; 11 Jan 1966 (sighted) about 12 miles, (passed) 8.5 miles, (passed from view) about 18 miles, (sighted) about 15 miles, (passed) 12 miles, (passed from view) about 19 miles.

Poulo Condore Island

21 Sep 1965 (sighted) 8 miles, (lost sight) about 21 miles; 22 Sep 1965 (sighted) 27 miles, (passed) no distance stated; 10 Oct 1965 (sighted) about 21 miles, (passed abeam) 5 miles; 15 Oct 1965 (sighted) 27 miles; 6 Nov 1965 (sighted) about 29 miles, (passed) 21 miles



USS Caliente (AO-53)
Savannah Reunion
Sept. 23-26, 2019
Fairfield Inn and Suites
by Marriott
Savannah Downtown
135 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.,
Savannah, GA 31401



Reservations may be made by calling 1-888-236-2427 and identifying yourself as part of the USS Calliente reunion. You may also go online to [book your group rate for USS Caliente Reunion 2019](#).

The group rate is \$134 a night for a double queen or single king room and is good for Sunday, 9/22 through Thursday, 9/27 of reunion. The cutoff for reservations at the reunion rate is 8/23/19. Parking is available at \$25 per day per vehicle.

Reunion Agenda

Monday, September 23

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

Tuesday, September 24

- a) 7:00-9:00 AM—Breakfast
- b) 9:15 AM-11:00 AM—Tour of Historic Savannah

Wednesday, September 25

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

Thursday, September 26

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

Savannah 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 Monday reception, Wednesday reception and the banquet buffet and entertainment. Daily breakfasts are included in your room fees.

Tuesday Guided Tour \$20.00 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