

USS Caliente (AO-53) Association



PIPELINE

March 2020

Reunion 2020: Long Beach

By Jeff Sturgis

How many of us thought during our time on the Cal that we'd be having a reunion in our old homeport of Long Beach in the year 2020, 47 years after the Cal was decommissioned? Plans are finally set for our 2020 reunion in Long Beach which will be held from Thursday, Sept. 17, 2020, through Sunday, Sept. 20, 2020, at the Courtyard Marriott Downtown Long Beach. The hotel is located downtown on First Street, only one block from Ocean Boulevard and the waterfront.

We have an attractive rate of \$149 per night during the reunion and that rate is also good for two nights before and after the reunion. Breakfast is not included in the room rates so the Association will provide breakfasts as part of your registration fee. Due to the increased costs associated with the breakfasts for this reunion, we need to raise the registration fee to \$200, a \$20 increase that we hope will cover the costs of those three added breakfasts. The deadline for you to make reservations is August 21, 2020. After that date, the hotel will not guarantee room availability.

Long Beach is a popular city, so it will be important for you, if you plan on attending, to get your reservations in well before the deadline. Reservations may be made by calling the Marriott reservations at 1(800) 321-2211 or (562) 435-8511 and stating that you are with the USS Caliente Reunion at the Courtyard by Marriott Long Beach Downtown at 500 East First Street in Long Beach. You may also process your reservation online by clicking on this [link](#).

The agenda will be similar to that of recent reunions. You can find it at the end of this edition of the Pipeline. You will also find the registration form with all the applicable information.

Long Beach is a much different from the city that we were stationed in during our time on the Cal. The Navy Base is long gone and the waterfront has changed quite a bit from those days of 50 years

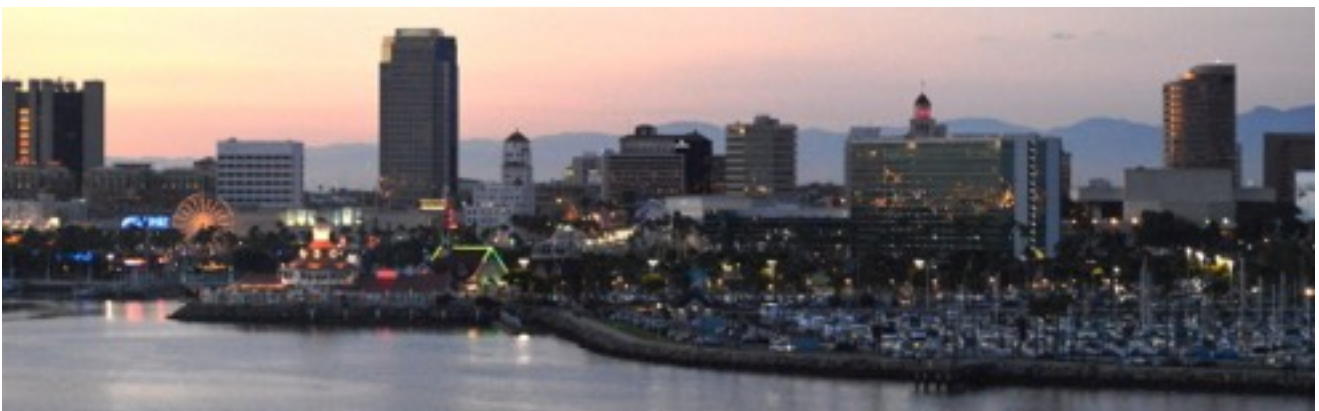


photo by Nandaro, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 3.0. Picture is cropped top and bottom
View of Long Beach from the deck of the Queen Mary.

ago. There are new attractions such as the Aquarium of the Pacific, the Queen Mary and the Battleship Iowa, which is across the river in San Pedro. There are many other attractions which you can find by checking on the internet. A free shuttle enables visitors to get around the city and out to the Queen Mary. Pat Hurton, who attended a ship's reunion in Long Beach recently, tells me that there's also an inexpensive water taxi that cruises around the harbor. (Pat will be working on getting a bus for those of us who want to go out to the USS Iowa on Friday.)

In addition, the Long Beach Airport is located just on the other side of Signal Hill, making it easier for air travelers to get to Long Beach versus traveling from the Los Angeles International Airport. Pat reports that Southwest, Jet Blue, American and Delta all fly into Long Beach Airport. From there, the ride to our hotel would be a 15-20 minute ride with little traffic versus battling afternoon rush hour congestion that could take a couple hours from LAX. So you might want to consider flying in to Long Beach Airport instead of Los Angeles International Airport. I hope you are as excited as I am about returning to Long Beach. This will probably be our last opportunity to have a reunion in the city that many of us called home during our Navy days.

Navy Reunions

By Jeff Sturgis

I belong to a hiking club that goes out on weekly hikes in the western Maine and New Hampshire White Mountains. There are several other veterans from the Army and Air Force in the group. On long hikes we sometimes get to talking about our active duty service and on being veterans. While I know there are many military reunions involving all the branches of service, I am the only one in the group who goes to a military reunion. I don't know whether more Navy veterans attend reunions than those in other branches of service, but I did get to thinking about how reunions for the different branches may differ, and, in fact, how reunions in the Navy differ between those of us who did sea duty and Navy veterans who never trod the deck of a ship.

The main feature of Navy reunions for those of us who had sea duty is that we had a physical structure, the Caliente, that is common to our experience. In addition, we served on the Caliente all over the Pacific Ocean. In other words, our workplace wasn't in one spot as an Army or Air Force base is. Also, our workplace was essentially the same in 1970 as it was in 1943. John Creedon and Frederick Griffith worked, slept and ate in the same compartments during World War II as I did during Vietnam. And, we were on the same ship whether it was at the invasion of Okinawa, in Hong Kong, off the coast of Vietnam or tied up to the pier in Long Beach. We all have the Caliente as a common reference point during our time on board.

Other than members of the Coast Guard, veterans from the other branches don't have that common thread that runs through their service. They may have served with a group of fellow service members that remained relatively stable, but their physical surroundings varied and changed, whether they were stationed at a base or they were deployed. For the duration of our time assigned to the Caliente, whether she was overseas or in the states, we always reported to the Caliente for our workday, and except for times in Long Beach or on liberty in other ports, we always slept and ate on the Caliente.

When it comes to unit cohesion and camaraderie, I would submit that our experiences were also different from our fellow veterans who served in other branches. Regardless of the branch, unit cohesion and dependence on each other for the success of the unit is essential. But to me,

there is something fundamentally different about serving on a ship steaming independently at sea with 250 other sailors from being stationed at a post on land with many other units around. At sea, we depended on each shipmate to do his job correctly. Ships run aground, collide with other ships, have fires and sometimes sink. A serious mistake by anyone, from the captain on down to a seaman can put everyone else in jeopardy. It seems to me that land-based units, except for those in combat, don't have the same margins for error.

I'm sure there are members of the other services who would take issue with my observations. And, I'm sure that in frontline combat units, there is a very strong dynamic that no other military units experience. Nevertheless, I feel that the shipboard experience that we all had is a significant factor for us who gather each year for our reunions.

It also is so similar that those of us from later years on the Cal can talk with John and Frederick and realize that many of our experiences were the same even though we were separated by 10, 20 or 30 years.

My veteran hiking buddies often comment on my loyalty to the Caliente and to those shipmates who I get to see yearly at our reunions. They think I'm lucky to have these yearly opportunities to relive my service years amongst a like-minded group of friends in a different city each year. I consider myself fortunate to have this opportunity, and I look forward to seeing many of you in September in Long Beach and continuing our experience as shipmates.



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.

Support the Pipeline

Jeff Sturgis

In my opinion, we have one of the finest newsletters that a small veterans group can have. We are fortunate to have a former newspaperman, Karl Seitz, as our editor. He does an outstanding job getting out four editions each year in a professional format that is readable and well organized. Our newsletter, the Pipeline, is the main vehicle that binds us together in this association. Without it, it would be very difficult to share our experiences on the Cal with each other and to organize our yearly reunions.

However, Karl cannot do it alone; he needs material. Here is where you come in. We all have pictures and memories of our service on the Cal. It would help tremendously if you could write down some of your experiences and send them, along with your pictures to Karl.

Please don't worry about your English skills. Karl can correct your mistakes, just as he corrects mine, and make your submission presentable. I hear so many great sea stories at reunions. If we could just get half of those written down, Karl would have enough material for years of issues. In addition, pictures are also valuable. They can often convey images that words cannot describe. We all experienced time on the Caliente and pictures, even from different eras, are easily recognized and bring back memories.

We are also initiating a "Letters to the Chairman" section. If you wish to react, question or add your input to anything in the Pipeline, we encourage you to do so. Just submit your "letter" to me at jeffreysturgis54@gmail.com and I will print your letter and a response in the next issue. This will be a great way to get feedback and to encourage a dialogue between our members.

Now for a reality check. Even in this era of computers, there still is an expense to publishing the newsletter. While most of our shipmates get the Pipeline online, there are still many who receive it by mail, With that comes the added expense of printing and postage. Also, while we try to budget well for the annual reunions, sometimes there are unexpected costs that must be covered and a healthy treasury helps us when those reunion cost overruns occur.

The Association has long had an expectation that member's dues are \$10.00 per year. While we don't really enforce that expectation by discontinuing the Pipeline for those who don't pay them, the payment of dues helps us continue these services. So, if you enjoy receiving the Pipeline, please consider sending your stories and pictures to Karl at [<seitzao53@gmail.com>](mailto:seitzao53@gmail.com) and send your \$10.00 to our treasurer, Pat Hurton at 156 Greenfield Drive, Chico, CA 95973-0185. Please help us keep our association viable for the foreseeable future

Agent Orange update

By Karl Seitz

The Department of Veterans Affairs began processing and granting disability claims by Blue Water sailors for Agent Orange diseases on Jan. 1. While no numbers are available from the VA,



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.

a significant number of members on the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Association Facebook pages report either receipt of compensation or action by the VA indicating progress toward winning their disability claims.

To be sure, the process still imposes apparently unnecessary delays. Applicants are reporting requests from the VA for documents and information that have already been submitted. For example, I have had three requests for information that was supplied when I applied last July. Only one of those requests could be partially classified as trying to obtain additional information.

The biggest obstacle new applicants for disability compensation face is proving the Caliente was in the territorial waters of Vietnam when they were aboard. The deck logs that could prove this are currently being digitized by the VA as part of a massive project to digitize the logs of all Navy ships in the area. When the project is done, the logs and digitized copies will be returned to the custody of the National Archives where they will be available for individuals to download. When it was announced, the project was supposed to be completed by February 2020. The estimated date is now sometime in early 2020. It may be later.

Unless you already have the logs you need, can obtain copies from somebody who has them, or were on the Cal on a date that the VA already recognizes as eligible, it may do little good to apply for disability at the present time. However, you can and should file a notification of intention to apply. This gives you a year to put together your application and receive compensation dating back to when the notification was filed.

Taps

Death of an Association founder

By Pat Hurton

I was saddened to hear of the passing of the last of the founding duo of the USS Caliente Association. As many of you know, Nancy LeGacy's husband Bob had the original idea to have a USS Caliente reunion. That reunion caused the USS Caliente Association to come into existence. What most of you don't know is that his wife Nancy was the force behind Bob. After hearing Bob mutter on and on about a reunion, Nancy finally became so exasperated that she sat him down and made him act (she was tired of all talk and no action). With that assistance (pushing?), together they made the first reunion happen. After the reunion the Association was formed, and Nancy became the secretary. She originated a roster, kept records on dues payments, sent out correspondence and sent out membership cards when she received a shipmate's dues. Nancy and Bob were fixtures at many, many reunions and remained active in the Association until his health forced them into to the background. Nancy retained her duties until 2002 when she turned them over to me. Nancy and Bob were a pleasure to be around and her personality sparkled at all the reunions.



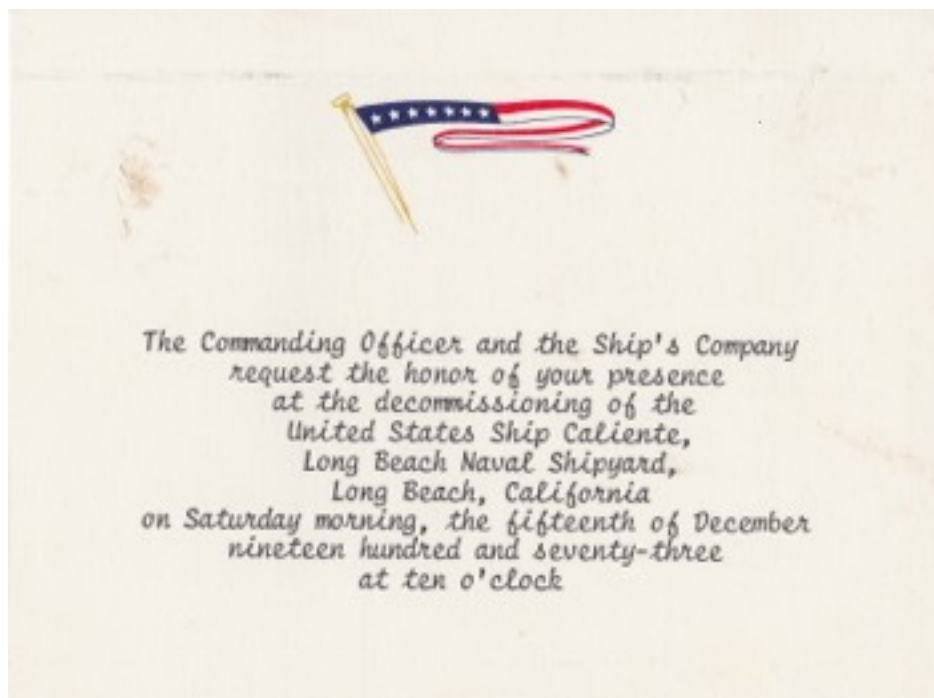
Nancy M. LeGacy, 76, died in Nashua, NH 12 Aug. 2019. The first secretary of the USS Caliente Association, she was the widow of Robert L. LeGacy who served on the Caliente from 1943 to 1945 as a BM2. Nancy was born in Kingston, N.Y., to the late F. Norton and June Curtis. In her early years, she was a kindergarten teacher at the American School in Okinawa, Japan, and St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Westford, MA. She is survived by sisters Barbara Wheeler and Susan Thompson (husband Albert DeSalvo); step-sons Robert (Jai), Wayne (Debra), Gary and James (Wendi) LeGacy; step-daughters Jane, Robin and Allyson LeGacy; aunt Ruth Salter; 14 step-grandchildren and 12 step-great grandchildren. *For more on Nancy LeGacy, see Pat Hurton's remembrance on the previous page.*

We have belatedly learned of the death of Marshall M. Stark on 18 Apr. 2012. Marshall served on the Cal from 1968 to 1970 as a LCDR and engineering officer. Born 16 Nov. 1939 to Marshall L. Stark and Frances McCune Stark. Marshall joined the Naval ROTC program while a freshman at the University of Missouri and received a three-year scholarship. He was commissioned ensign upon graduation in 1961. After his Navy career, Marshall spent about 30 years in the St. Louis County, MO, Highways and Traffic Department. He is survived by daughter Brandy Stark.



“Lost” shipmate finds Association

We would like to welcome Terry Story, QM, 1966-1969, to our crew. Unfortunately he has been listed on our website as deceased. When his wife Suzanne found his name on the website, she had to check around the house to check on who she had been married to for the past 48 years. It was The real Terry Story who lives in Burton, British Columbia, Canada. The website has been corrected and Terry has now joined our crew's list and will be receiving the Pipeline. If any of you wish to contact Terry please let Pat Hurton know and he will forward your name to Terry.



End of the voyage

Gene Fujimoto, LTJG, 1971-73, provided this invitation to the ceremony marking the end of the USS Caliente's place in the fleet.

Making a honeymoon visit to the Caliente

By Ida Marshall

Kenneth Marshall and I were married at the chapel on the Navy Base. It was a very white little church in 1953. Now all cement for big box companies.

On our honeymoon, Ken said he had a surprise for me. We got on a little boat, tied up to the Caliente and Ken said we were going to the top deck where the accompanying pictures were taken.

The USS Caliente was a special gift to me. I was honored to get to know her and it has meant a lot to me over the years. We should have made it to

the San Diego reunion but Ken got sick. So happy we made it to the one in Texas.

Love to all shipmates.

The late Ken Marshall served on the Cal from 1951 to 1955 as a BM3.



More on Caliente plaques

By Miguel F. Ronquillo, RD2, 1958-61

Received the September issue of the Pipeline. As usual it was good reading. What really caught my eye and interest was the article regarding the USS Caliente AO-53 plaques.

Back in 1959-60, Lieutenant Irving Wiltse, Operations Officer, asked me if I would undertake the task of painting 40 USS Caliente plaques, a project which could only be accomplished while in port. The job would relieve me of the tedious job of chipping rust, painting, polishing brass ports and maintaining the starboard side of the Captains Deck and/or standing Quarter Deck Duty.

Combat Information Center was an active place while out at sea and was the only location where I could work. So while in port and working on the chart table in CIC, I undertook the project and worked on the plaques, which entailed varnishing the wooden plaques, drying time, assembling and painting each plaque. It was a process which took several months, for we were never in port more than three or four days. All the materials for the project were stored in the radar transmitter room while out at sea.



The plaque on left is Manuel's work. The middle one was given to Pete Werner when he left the Cal. The porcelain on wood plaque was in the ship's store in late 1970s.

Sadly, I must admit that three plaques disappeared from my work area. But after a while I found out who had taken them. But now after some 60 years, they will have to deal with the man upstairs when they get to the Pearly Gates.

Among the many memories I have of serving on board the Caliente for three and a half years, there are many. The Caliente plaque that has been adorning the wall of my den/office is one of them, a gift for my endeavor of several months.

Among other cherished momentous that I still keep besides the plaque, is the 5th cruise, Cruise Book, the work of Editor Lt. I. M. Wiltse, Layout FTSA Sparkman, and our very own radar gang member Radarman Richard Lords.

Two albums full of photos taken over a period of three years with my 35mm Petri Camera, purchased in Tokyo on my first cruise, remind me of those tedious and long replenishments at sea, of which there many over a period of three years while underway at sea. The many photos not only remind me of duty and work on board, but also the many hours ashore with shipmates in the many ports visited. Best memories will always be at San Pedro, our home port.

Thank you for the many great memories.



Chris Mueller took this picture of USS Iowa being moved to San Pedro in 2012.



USS Caliente AO-53
Long Beach Reunion
Sept. 17-20, 2020
Courtyard by Marriott
Long Beach Downtown
500 East First Street
Long Beach, CA 90802



Reservations may be made by calling Marriott Reservations at 1(800)-321-2211 or (562) 435-8511 and identifying yourself as a part of the USS Caliente reunion being held at the Courtyard Marriott Long Beach Downtown. You may also reserve your room online at this [link](#). (For those working from a printed page the URL is <https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1580239176791&key=GRP>)

The room rates of \$149 are also good for the two days before and the two days after the dates of the reunion. The cutoff date for getting a guaranteed room is Friday, August 21, 2020. Self-parking is available for \$10 a night.

Reunion Agenda

Thursday, September 17

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

Friday, September 18

- a) 7:00-9:00 AM - Breakfast
- b) 10:00 AM - Tour USS Iowa (BB-61)

Saturday, September 19

- a) 7:00-9:00 AM - Breakfast
- b) 9:00 AM - Annual Business Meeting
- c) 6:30 PM - Reception
- d) 7:00-10:30 PM - Banquet and Entertainment

Sunday, September 20

- a) 7:00-10:00 AM - Farewell Breakfast

Long Beach 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:

\$200.00 per person _____ persons = \$ _____

Registration fee includes Thursday reception, Saturday reception and banquet, banquet entertainment, Friday tour bus and three daily breakfasts.

Please return this form by August 21, 2020, with your check to USS Caliente Association, % Pat Hurton, 156 Greenfield Drive, Chico, CA 95973-0185