

# USS Caliente (AO-53) Association



# PIPELINE

Sep 2020

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## The New Normal

By Jeff Sturgis

We live in unprecedented times. Not since 1918-20 has the world experienced a worldwide pandemic of the magnitude of Covid 19. Looking back at the 1918 Pandemic, according to an article on the CDC website, 50 million people died worldwide and 675,000 died in the United States. The CDC article further states that in 1918:

“With no vaccine to protect against influenza infection and no antibiotics to treat secondary bacterial infections that can be associated with influenza infections, control efforts worldwide were limited to non-pharmaceutical interventions such as isolation, quarantine, good personal hygiene, use of disinfectants, and limitations of public gatherings, which were applied unevenly.”

Does that sound familiar? Today, even though, due to progress in the medical field, we have more treatment options for the flu symptoms, until we develop a vaccine, “non-pharmaceutical interventions such as isolation, quarantine, good personal hygiene, use of disinfectants and limitations on public gatherings” are still the main way that we can protect ourselves and slow down the virus. But, like in 1918, we haven’t learned our lesson as even today, these efforts have been “applied unevenly.”



5 Feb. 1944: King Neptune is busy converting Caliente polywogs into shellbacks. See pages 6, 7, 8

We members of the USS Caliente Association are in the demographic that is most at risk from this disease, so it is our fervent hope that all our members are doing what is necessary to keep themselves and their loved ones safe.

Of course for us, the most glaring consequence of this pandemic has been the postponement of our reunion in Long Beach. Normally, we would be preparing for our travel to our old homeport and we would be planning the final touches to the program for the reunion which would be only two weeks away. For now, those plans have been postponed until September of 2021. We hope that by then that an effective vaccine will have been developed and distributed, that “herd immunity” has been achieved in this country and that it will again be safe for us to convene in Long Beach.

We will only be limited in the plans for 2021 by our country’s response to the pandemic. If we can see light at the end of the tunnel by this coming January, we will go ahead with plans for September of 2021. If there is still uncertainty, we may have to look at another postponement to the spring of 2022 or later. The pandemic of 1918 lasted for two years until 1920. Let us hope that we can get Covid 19 under control before two years elapses. In the meantime we on the Executive Committee hope that you will all be safe and well during these difficult times. As always, we will keep you all apprised, through the Pipeline, of our plans for the next reunion.

## **New Caliente website**

By Jeff Sturgis

If you haven’t discovered it already, we have a new and improved USS Caliente Association website. All the credit for this new and exciting website goes to Pat Hurton, who, as you can see, has not been idle during these “stay at home” times. To find the new website you can just google “USS Caliente Association” or go to [www.usscalienteao-53.com](http://www.usscalienteao-53.com). Pat has done a great job of adding colorful graphics, patriotic and other songs of our era and a lot of US Navy history. The website also includes the structure of the association, its history and ship’s roster along with everyone’s contact information and all the back issues of the Pipeline. According to Pat, this is a “work in progress” and he welcomes all comments and suggestions.

Please join me in thanking Pat for his efforts on this project. Pat has been a stalwart of our organization, serving as president for quite a few years, and treasurer for many more. Without his efforts, it would be much more difficult, if not impossible, for us to exist as a group. So a big **BRAVO ZULU** goes out to Pat for his continuing efforts on our behalf.

## **Website is a work in progress**

By Pat Hurton

Treasurer, Web Master

Shipmates,

Last year Jeff and I decided to it was time to upgrade the Cal website. A new host was chosen for the site and since then work has progressed to populate the new site. If you want to visit our new site you will have to delete the old site from your browser history and, using the same url ([www.usscalienteao-53.com](http://www.usscalienteao-53.com)), visit our new site.

The site is still a work in progress as I have not, along with a lot of other ideas I have, added the many, many pictures I have and not finished the narrative for of all the Naval activities since

our Navy's origin. You will notice that the site now contains various video clips that, I hope, enhance your viewing.

Navigation of the site is easy. You will notice the various headers listed along the top of the home page. The Home page comes up automatically when you enter the site, after clicking on the great Pete Seeger's song, you can scroll down to read the content of the home page.

The next header is "About Us: By clicking on it you will see the subjects contained under this heading. The summary data contained on the "About Us" page is intended to give the reader an overview of the information contained on the total website. Just click on its sub heading to see the detailed contents.

The other headings and details are viewed by following the procedure outlined above.

Remembering that this is not the Jeff Sturgis or Pat Hurton site but the USS Caliente site, I hope you all take the time to go over the site and its contents and provide feedback to me or Jeff. All comments, suggestions questions, new videos etc. are welcome. It is our intent to make this the best ship's website in the US Navy. All videos must come from You Tube. If you have a video to add please tell me where it is on You Tube and I'll upload it. If you have a video, upload it to You Tube and send me the info and I'll upload that.

Jeff and I hope you enjoy our new website and hope to continue, through your participation, to upgrade its content over time.



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.

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## Taps

We have belatedly learned of the death of Larry Dean Hatterman, 78, on 28 Oct 2019 in Tucson, AZ. Larry served on the Cal from 1958 to 1962 as an EM3. Larry was married to Marilyn Hatterman, who died 17 April 2020 in Tucson. After leaving the Navy, Larry worked for Nebraska Public Power until he retired in 1998 due to a disability.



Larry was predeceased by his son Daniel, parents Cyril and Mildred Hatterman and several aunts and uncles. He is survived by brother Robert Hatterman, sister Deborah Wirth, aunt Donna Fox and numerous nieces and nephews.

Graveside services for Larry and Marilyn were held 18 May 2020 at Prospect Hill Cemetery in Norfolk, NE, with military honors conducted by the Nebraska National Guard Honor Guard, American Legion Post 16 and VFW Post 1644.

Larry Randolph Surratt of Madison Heights, MI, 86, died 13 April 2020. He served on the Cal from 1953 to 1954 as a BT3. Larry married Elaine Ann Bloedel 30 May 1959. She predeceased him in 2013 after 54 years of marriage.

Larry was a member of St. Vincent Ferrer in Madison Heights. He enjoyed fishing with family and friends.

Survivors include children Lawrence (the late Deborah), Raymond, Glen (Debra), Carl (Martha), Renee (Chad) Edwards and Marie and four grandchildren. Larry was buried in Great Lakes National Cemetery in Holly, MI, next to his wife.

Albert Edward Vandegrift died 15 July 2020 in Santa Maria, CA. Van served on the Cal from 1968 to 1972 as a SM3. He was born 19 April 1949 to Gladys and Harry Vandegrift in Beatrice, NE. The family moved to Salem, OR in 1955, where Van graduated from South Salem High School in 1967.

After leaving the Navy, Van worked 23 years in computer operations at USCB University in Santa Barbara, CA, retiring in 2010. He loved to venture with his wife Astrid in their motorhome to different places. Van loved to cook for the Fraternal Order of Eagles



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.

and the Moose Family Center. In his spare time, he worked on airplane models and did some woodwork.

Van is survived by his wife of 45 years, Astrid, sister Judy (Tommy) Mask and numerous nieces and nephews.

## Many Caliente deck logs now available for AO claims

By Karl Seitz  
Pipeline Editor

The major development in the quest for Agent Orange disability compensation since the last Pipeline is that the Department of Veterans Affairs sent many digitized deck logs to the National Archives. In typical VA fashion, there was no public announcement. They simply appeared.

The project is not complete. At this writing, Caliente logs after November 1970 are not yet available. This handicaps those whose presumed exposure took place after that date. They will not be able to include deck logs with their applications for benefits.

How much difference this will make is unclear since the VA says it has its own computer program to determine whether a ship was in the zone of presumed exposure when an applicant was on it. The results of that program are not shared outside the VA. If you send the rest of your documentation and say the logs are not currently available, you might find the VA can make its own location decision.

Another possibility if you have not yet filed a claim is to file a notification of your intent to file a claim. That will give you a year to file the actual claim, by which time the logs should be available.

If you were on the Cal between September 1961 (Agent Orange eligibility starts March 1962) and November 1970, you can obtain logs for free by downloading them from the National Archives. If you don't have Internet access, ask somebody who does to download the logs and print out the ones you need.

While it is possible to download just the dates you need, I find it easier to download the entire month and separate out the dates you need on your home computer.

Go to <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/594258?q=594258> Search for USS Caliente AO53. You will get the first page of a list of files containing the name USS Caliente AO53. Click on "available online." Your multipage list will now begin with Caliente logs. The logs are not in exact order so you may have to search for the ones you need. Click on the one you want. The first page will appear. Scroll down the screen (on right side) until you see a red icon toward left that says PDF. Click on it. Scroll back up so you can see the top of the window that shows a line moving across to indicate the loading of the PDF. This may take a while to appear so be patient. When the line has finished, you can click on the download icon and the file will download to your computer. Go back to list and repeat for the next month you need.

But how do you know which months you need? I have some partial answers.

First, before the changes to make blue water sailors eligible for compensation, the VA said sailor who were on the Cal in June 1970 were covered because the Cal replenished in the Vietnamese ports of Anhoi and Vung Tau during the month. That accounts for four dates in June, but my rough examination of the logs for that month found at least six additional dates when the Cal was in the zone of presumed exposure while involved in Operation Market Time.

In my own application, which was approved just as the June Pipeline was being prepared for the printer, I included three dates in 1962, 24 March and 9 and 10 May. You only need one date so either 24 March or 9 May should do. 10 May is a little more complicated and depends on 9 May to calculate the Cal's position in the zone.

The following dates come from the Blue Water Navy Association: 25 Nov 1965, 6 Feb 1966; 4 Jul 1968, 21 May 1969; 21 June 1970, 7 Sep 1970 and 2 Jun 1972. This list is a work in progress. It also appears to be mostly derived from the deck logs of ships other than the Caliente acquired by BWNA members before the VA took control of the logs for digitation.

Another bit of information from the Blue Water Navy Association. Almost 18,000 Blue Water Navy veterans have been approved for benefits, along with 2,700 survivors. However there remain about 35,000 claims pending review. This is based on 31 July data from the VA.

## From the editor

By Karl Seitz

Marvin Boozer, SN, 1952-56, has identified one of the mystery pictures in the June Pipeline. It is the late Freddie Degott, GMSN, 1952-55. Marvin says Freddie was from 1st Division, but his rating suggests he transferred to 3rd Division at some point.

Thanks, Marvin. Now we only have two mystery pictures for which we need identifications.

In a normal year, the next edition of the Pipeline would be filled with pictures and words about the events at our annual reunion. However, this is not a normal year. Covid-19 has forced the cancellation of this year's reunion, leaving me with a lot of space to fill in the December Pipeline. Far more space than I have material to use.

So please, dig out those old photographs you've been planning to share. Write about those memories. And send both to me at one of the addresses on page 3. The sooner the better so you don't forget and I have more time to plan.



## A son remembers the father who took pictures on next two pages

By Allen Pierce

My father was Ralph I. Pierce, born 1922 and died 1986. I knew he was on the USS Caliente from his Shellback Certificate, which was framed and mounted in his home office. He was a watertender on the Caliente from 1943 to 1945. The certificate is dated Feb. 5, 1944 and the location is Longitude 000, Latitude 176 15' enroute to Funafuti, Elice Islands.

My father very rarely talked about his time in the service. I do remember him talking about his time in Hawaii in 1944 after I gave him and my mother tickets to go to Hawaii in 1984. He was looking forward to going to the USS Arizona memorial and Pearl Harbor.

Another time he was mad at my brothers and me and told us were lucky to be alive. Another ship was berthed where his ship was to be berthed and it was hit by a torpedo and sunk. I later found out this was the USS Mississineaw (AO-59) after seeing a news article about the Navy recovering oil from an oiler sunk at Ulithi Atoll in November 1944.

The only other time, he was saying how he made his way back home from San Francisco after being discharged.

After his discharge, my father worked as a draftsman for Yorkshire Worsted Mill. Later he started Ormsby and Pierce Plumbing and Heating with his cousin. He was a volunteer firefighter with the Lenni Heights Fire Company in Media, PA.



