

USS Caliente (AO-53) Association



PIPELINE

Sept. 2019

Savannah and beyond

By Jeff Sturgis

As you read this it will be approximately three weeks before the Savannah Reunion. This promises to be one of our bigger recent reunions with about 70 people expected to attend. This large number is due to the fact that 30 members of the John Creedon family will be joining us to help John celebrate his 95th birthday. With their help, we'll be honoring John at our banquet on the Wednesday night of the reunion. It will be quite a party. We look forward to seeing all of you who will be attending.

As we make the final Savannah preparations, we're also beginning to think about the possible locations for future reunions. We'll be making the decision on the 2020 location at our business meeting during the reunion. However, once we make that decision, we might talk generally about the next few years.

We try to pick cities that have various attractions and that are reasonably priced. Next year, our rotation sends us back to the west. Some cities that have been mentioned are Denver, Salt Lake City and Long Beach. Long Beach is intriguing because it was the Caliente's home port. The Navy base no longer exists, but the Queen Mary is there as is the USS Iowa (BB-61).

The middle of the country will be the 2021 location, and Indianapolis is one of the suggestions. In 2022 we'll be returning East and it might be nice to go to Baltimore. We cancelled in Baltimore five years ago, but we could give it another shot as it is the port where the Caliente was built.

Please give this some thought and bring your ideas to the reunion business meeting if you will be in Savannah. If you won't be in Savannah, send me your suggestions and I will be sure to mention them at the business meeting. We have a dedicated group of shipmates who come every year regardless of where the reunion is located. However, we try to rotate our reunion locations around the country so that those shipmates who can't travel far have an opportunity to attend when it comes to their region. Regardless of where you live, we hope that the reunion will be close enough to you so that you can attend at least once in the next three years.

You may contact me with your thoughts at jeffreysturgis54@gmail.com.



Savannah

Photo of River Street on front is by Aude. Photo of carriage is by Billy Hathorn. Both are used under Creative Commons Attribution license. Both have been cropped



Tuesday tour directions

By Pat Hurton

For your comfort there will be two trolleys available for the Tuesday tour. They will be available for boarding in front of the hotel between 9:00 AM and 9:15 AM. We will leave as soon as everyone is on board. Please disburse yourselves between the two trolleys to alleviate crowding on one.

We're covered by Agent Orange law, but wait will continue

By Karl Seitz

Pipeline Editor

Since the last newsletter, the courts and Congress have completed their work to return the legal presumption that Blue Water Navy sailors were exposed to Agent Orange if they were in a defined zone off the Vietnamese coast between 9 March 1962 and 7 May 1973. That presumption had been taken away by administration action of the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2002. If you were on the Cal when it was in the zone between 1962 and 1973 and now suffer from one of the diseases presumed caused by exposure to Agent Orange, you are entitled to disability compensation.

Unfortunately, getting that compensation is going to take some time.

On 1 July, VA Secretary Wilkie took advantage of a provision in the new law to place a stay on all applications involving Blue Water exposure to Agent Orange. The stay is scheduled to expire 1 Jan 2020 when the law goes into effect for claims. The stay is being challenged in court but realistically probably won't be shortened enough to speed application decisions. The reason given for the stay is to give the VA time to get prepared for the expected flood of applications and to create procedures.

As part of these preparations, the VA and the National Archives agreed on 9 Aug. 2019 to let the VA digitize Vietnam-era deck logs that have not already been digitized. The VA began digitizing these logs on 22 Aug. 2019 and expects to complete the job by 1 Feb. 2020. This is a two-edged sword.

On the positive side, it will break the digitization log jam at the Archives and make it easier for the VA to verify that applicants were in the designated zone. It will also save money for claims applicants.

On the negative side, sailors who have not already obtained the logs they need to prove their presence in the zone will not be able to get that proof until the VA finishes the digitization and returns the logs to Archives control. The digitized copies will be posted to the Archives website after being screened for privacy concerns. It is unknown whether the VA will release the logs as they are completed or wait until all are done.

Taps

Arthur John Manzy Sr., 87, died 1 April 1918 in Tinley Park, IL. Art served on the Caliente from 1951 to 1955 as a SM1. Born 17 Aug 1930, Art was a two-time Chicago area CYO boxing champion, the second title coming in 1951 when he was stationed at Great Lakes Naval Station. He was predeceased by his wife, Arlene, and sister Lorraine Gutenkauf. He is survived by children Arthur J. Manzy Jr. and April, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Art is buried at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, Elwood, IL.

Cosmas A. Raimondi, 71, died 19 May 2019 in Indianapolis, Known as Tiny by his shipmates and as Big Coz back in Indiana, he served on the Cal from 1965 to 1968 as a BM3. Coz was born



USS Caliente Association
 Chairman: Jeff Sturgis
 Executive Committee: Mike Copeland, Dave Ludemann, Greg Perett, Tom Rawlinson and Steve Selzer
 Treasurer: Pat Hurton
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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.

5 Aug. 1947 in Indianapolis to Frank and Elsie (McKibben) Raimondi. When he was discharged from the Navy in 1968, Cos joined the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Dept., from which he retired in 1988. He married Dianna K. Arnold on 9 May 1970, who was his partner in owning and operating The Coin Index in Greenwood, IN, following his retirement from the police force. Coz was past president of the Indiana Numismatic Association. In addition to his wife, Coz is survived by daughters Anna Marie (Kevin) Mundy and Lisa Anne (Walter “Chuck”) Brown; special family members Shannon Dugan and Michelle (Andrew) Wenzel; cousin Michael A. Raimondi and seven grandchildren. He was predeceased by his parents, infant daughter Katherine Anna and brothers James F. Raimondi and Gerald Kidwell.



World War II veteran John L. Ruckman, 98, died 26 Feb 2019 in Ipswich, SD. John served on the Cal from 1943 to 1945 as a MM1. He was born 25 Jan 1921 in Aberdeen, SD, to John Ruckman and Dorothy (Hanson) Dixon. His mother died when he was 13 and his father died one year later. With the help of his siblings, John continued his childhood and graduated from high school in 1938. He enlisted in the Navy at age 17. During his 22-year career, John served in the China Conflict, WWII and the Korean War. In 1946, he married Cecile Rittal. They had four children, John (Linda) Ruckman Jr., Susan Mollenhoff, Lisa (David) Hinz and James Ruckman. In 1971, John married Sheryl Jahnig and they had one son, Charlie Ruckman. At age 51, John entered Northern State College in Aberdeen and graduated with a bachelor of science degree in 1977. In 1980, he began an 18-year career as the Civil Defense and Brown County Emergency Disaster director. John enjoyed all types of sports as a participant and official. A life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, he was an All-American District Commander and Outstanding Post Commander. John is survived by his wife, two sons, one daughter, three grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.



The Last of the Battleships

By Jeff Sturgis, LTJG, 1970

Summers at our lakeside cottage (in Maine we call them camps) are relaxing and quiet. Our camp is off the grid so there are no electronic distractions and there is ample time for reading.



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.

This year, I finally got to read two coffee table books featuring the battleships USS Missouri (BB-63) and USS New Jersey (BB-62). I picked up these books when my wife and I toured the Missouri on a recent trip to Hawaii and when I toured the New Jersey at the Caliente reunion in Philadelphia (the New Jersey is in Camden right across the river) about 10 years ago. I also had the opportunity to tour the USS Wisconsin (BB-64) when we had a Caliente reunion in Norfolk about seven or eight years ago. My reading spurred me to do a little research on the last of the battleships.

Nothing captures the imagination like battleships. The last surviving members of that now obsolete ship type belong to the Iowa Class, the first of which, the USS Iowa (BB-61), was commissioned in February of 1943. It is now in Los Angeles. It was followed by the New Jersey (May 1942), the Wisconsin (April 1944), and the Missouri (June 1944). Collectively, these four ships served (with some interruptions) over a span of six decades, with the last, the Missouri, decommissioned in March 1992. Two other battleships, the Illinois (BB-65) and the Kentucky (BB-66), were under construction, but never completed due to the ending of WWII.

All four ships were ordered in the late 1930s, so it took more than six years for them to be built and activated. However, by the time they joined the fleet, they were already functionally obsolete. Due to the emergence of aircraft carriers, the battleship's primary mission of ship-to-ship combat was basically nonexistent. After the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942, the first naval battle carried out entirely by planes where the surface ships never saw each other, the battleship's rarely, if ever, came within range of enemy ships and shore bombardment and providing air cover for carrier task forces became their main focus.

That being said, the mystique of an 800-foot ship with nine 16-inch guns, a speed of more than 30 knots and a crew of 3,000 men was powerful. These ships did provide support for most of the significant invasions of various Japanese islands leading up to Japan's surrender in August 1945. As we all know, the actual surrender took place in Tokyo Bay on the Missouri, which has a plaque on its deck at the spot where the surrender papers were signed.

After the war, the Iowa was decommissioned in March 1949, the New Jersey in June 1948 and the Wisconsin in July 1948. The Missouri stayed commissioned and took part in the Korean war as a platform for shore bombardment. The Korean War also brought the other three battleships out of mothballs; the New Jersey in November 1950, the Wisconsin in March 1951, and the Iowa in August 1951. However, once the Korean conflict ended all four battleships returned to mothballs. The New Jersey was brought back briefly during Vietnam in April 1968, but her service was brief, being decommissioned again in December 1969.

The last hurrah for the Iowa Class came as a result of President Reagan's 600-ship Navy plan. All four were reactivated between 1982 and 1988. Their configurations were altered to update their weaponry to reflect the changing needs of naval warfare. Many of their 5-inch turrets were removed along with smaller caliber ship-to-ship and anti-aircraft guns. Added were new weapons such as Harpoon anti-ship missiles and Tomahawk long range missiles along with the electronics to support these modern weapon systems. Due to the removal of so many WWII era guns and the automation of the new weaponry and electronics, the ship's complements were cut from their WWII highs of about 3,000 men to about 1,500 men. This phase lasted until the early '90s. The Iowa was decommissioned for the final time in October 1990 and the New Jersey in February 1991. The Missouri and the Wisconsin lasted long enough to participate in Operation Desert

Storm in January and February 1991, but soon were decommissioned: the Wisconsin in September 1991 and the Missouri in March 1992.

While their missions during the 1980s were somewhat ambiguous and, in some opinions, superfluous to the national defense, their refitting did serve one purpose; it kept the ships seaworthy and fit. This became important to their next lives as floating museums. Having been active, although intermittently, over a span of six decades meant that they didn't spend all that time rotting next to a pier. Their several periods of service meant they were modernized, reconditioned and kept seaworthy over those 60 years. Thus, when they were decommissioned for the final time, they were all in excellent condition that belied their 60 years of existence. This made them attractive to avid supporters who wanted to bring them to their cities as floating museums. Therefore, all four battleships have new lives in four different cities as living history ships that educate and thrill those who visit them.

As a Navy veteran, it was a thrill for me to tour those ships to see how they operated and to see some of the similarities they have with other ships including the Cal. It also gives me a link to the "Greatest Generation" and to my Dad, who served in the Navy during WWII. I know some of you have been on the New Jersey and the Wisconsin with me. I hope to get to Long Beach some time so I can get on the Iowa, the only one that I haven't visited. I highly recommend that if you ever get to Hawaii that you go over to Pearl Harbor and, after you go to the Arizona Memorial, visit the Missouri which is berthed right behind the Arizona on Battleship Row. I spent two days on the Missouri and still didn't see everything I wanted to see.

These ships are a reminder of an era that has gone by when it took a lot of manpower to fight the ship and airpower was not the predominant method of warfare at sea. The Caliente during its service in WWII was a part of the transition between these eras. The Navy of today has some similarities to the Navy we knew, but it is vastly different in many ways. Manning and sailing ships is essentially the same, but the mission, the weaponry, the tactics and the strategy are quite different. It's interesting and educational to visit these old battleships and remember the end of an era.

Caliente plaques

Over the years, captains of the Caliente had plaques made for presentation on special occasions to crew members or to distinguished visitors and local dignitaries in ports of call. The wall plaque on the left was presented to Chris Schuler when he left the Cal in 1970 after serving



as Second Division leading petty officer and master at arms. The desk plaque is from Shirley McGuinness, wife of the late Capt. Don McGuinness. In the early 1960s, the Ships's Office had a supply of wall plaques with a larger version of the Caliente shield seen on the McGuinness plaque. The Pipeline would welcome pictures of it or any other plaques.

