



FLAMIN' CAIMAN TALES

www.flamincaiman.org

JANUARY 2015

COMMANDER'S SCUTTLEBUTT

New Year's Greetings to all. I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and a joyous New Year!! I am sure Santa was good to all CAIMAN sailors as I know none of us were on his naughty list. Next year is our seventh reunion in Tucson, Arizona. I expect all Caiman Sailors, their significant other, family, and friends to attend this reunion. The weather should be fantastic and an enjoyable (heat wise) time for everyone. Stay healthy and God Bless. See you in Tucson next year!!!!!!!
John "Yeo" Fagereng, Commander

GOOD NEWS

John Troutman's heart condition is under control. He will be at the next reunion. To help everyone's memory, John designed and furnished the special tee shirts for the last reunion, but could not attend because of his heart condition. We will get to thank him in person at the reunion in Tucson.

BINNACLE LIST

Richard "RC" Thompson's daughter, Debra, recently informed us that he was moved to a nursing home due to Alzheimer's. This is a terrible illness as it changes a person and destroys their memories. Debra needs our good wishes and prayers to assist her in care of her father.

SUBMARINE MEMORABILIA

Richard "RC" Thompson's daughter donated two boxes of submarine memorabilia to CAIMAN. I met her when I went to Southern California for Christmas. The items that we don't add to the drawing at the reunion in Tucson will be donated to the submarine museum in St. Marys, Georgia. Once again we will be loading up Jim "Buckets" Hunnicutt's back seat with items to take to the museum. If you talk to Buckets, remind him to come to the reunion because I have lots of stuff for him to take to the museum.

GIFTS AND PRIZES

In January of the non-reunion year, Greg "Hawkeye" Baer and I go to a Presentation Products show in Las Vegas. We look for reunion gifts for all attendees and prizes for our drawings. This January is that time. We leave the wife and girlfriend home and go to Vegas. The only problem is after two days of walking around the show looking at the many items and interviewing the different company representatives, we are too tired to play. Getting old has its disadvantages but it does beat the alternative. The good news is twofold; one, the trip doesn't cost CAIMAN, and two, we find some neat ideas for gifts and prizes.

MICROFILM READER

We are still looking for a microfilm reader. If you have a library in your area that is removing old equipment they might have one. If you hear of any available, please contact me.

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS WITH MILITARY EXPERIENCE

The number of Representatives with military experience in the upcoming 114th Congress, which starts in January, 2015, will decline from 84 to 81. The number of Senators with military experience will actually increase from 19 to 20. This will be the first Congress in a very long time that does not have any World War II veterans.

PAY RAISES

Federal COLA to retirees (Social Security, Military Retirement, and VA Benefits) is only 1.7% this year. Prices seem to have increased more, but it is better than the two years we did not receive a COLA. I hope it is enough to get all our shipmates to the reunion in Tucson.

HVAC HAS OVERSIGHT HEARING ON VETERAN'S CHOICE CARD

The House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) held a hearing to evaluate the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) implementation of the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act (VACAA) that was recently signed into law (P.L. 113-146). The new law provides a \$10 billion fund to pay for non-VA care for veterans who live 40 or more miles from a VA facility or have had to wait more than 30 days to receive care. VA began mailing "Choice Cards" in August to veterans who were enrolled in the VA health care system and recently-discharged combat veterans who enroll within the five-year window of eligibility.

VA Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson told committee members that Choice cards have been distributed to all "40 milers" and those waiting 30 days or more are scheduled to receive theirs by the first week of December. All other enrollees will receive Choice cards by the end of January. To learn more about the Choice Program, go to: <http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact>. The new law also makes it easier to terminate VA employees for inferior performance on the job. During the hearing, Gibson answered questions regarding the 1,000 VA employees, including 42 senior executives, who are currently pending termination for poor job performance. Several committee members, including Chairman Jeff Miller (Fla.) and Ranking Member Michael Michaud (Maine), expressed frustration with the slow speed with which VA is acting to complete those removals.

EMAIL ADDRESSES

We still have emails come back because shipmates have spam blockers and need to enter the two email addresses CAIMAN uses. The addresses to get through your spam blockers are: #flamincaiman@comcast.net and #dbfrider@comcast.net (remember delete the first character). If you don't want to receive emails informing you about your shipmates, please send me an email at one of the email addresses.

CAIMAN WEB SITE

Several shipmates and significant others take pictures at our reunions. Greg "Hawkeye" Baer, our webmaster, posts them on CAIMAN'S web site www.flamincaiman.org. Since Alice, Hawkeye's adult supervisor, has granted us his time to post all the pictures, check out his work. I am sure you will enjoy the tour. Hawkeye has received awards and praise in emails for his work on our web site. Other boats have contacted us about reunion locations because of Hawkeye's skill and presentation on the web site. He does a fabulous job and he does it for the same salary as the Commander.

PLANK OWNERS

We have located all 82 Plank Owners. Only five are still with us. We were lucky and one attended the first reunion at Colorado Springs in 2004 and two attended the second reunion at Flagstaff in 2006. I keep trying to get any of them to our reunions, but they do have some trouble traveling to the reunions. If, or when I reach their age I hope I can just get out of my recliner.

REUNION PLANNING

Bob "Dings" Dengel, his wife Renay, plus my girlfriend Cheryl, and myself will be going to Tucson the first week in May to pick the hotel that will host our reunion. We also will find a tour or excursion that all of us will enjoy. We have narrowed the search from ten hotels to three. This trip will not cost CAIMAN anything as the Tourist Bureau will pay for the plane fares for Dings and me. Dings and I will pay for the ladies as they are our guests. One of the hotels will furnish the rooms. To entice us each hotel normally will feed us a meal to show off their restaurants. This is a tough job but Dings and I will suffer through it because someone has to do it.

REUNIONS

We are receiving emails from cities that want to host one of our reunions. It appears CAIMAN'S reunions are becoming well known. We have requests for information from Washington to Florida and several states in between. I answer all of them. When I email or phone the office in the city that contacted us, I explain our reunion committee and the way all shipmates in attendance have a vote. I request they send me a proposal in April before the reunion which I will give to our reunion committee. They always say they will but many seem to forget. I believe several cities have learned that CAIMAN reunions have a large attendance and we drop a few shekels while we are there.

ELECTIONS

At the reunion in Tucson, we will need to vote for the positions of CAIMAN Association Commander and Secretary/Treasurer. As usual, a person can be nominated between now and the reunion and we will take nominations from the floor. The good or bad news is Yeo is in the running for Commander and I am running for Secretary/Treasurer. Make sure they want the job before you nominate anyone. As an election ploy to help all you voters make your decision, Yeo will be buying the beer the Monday of the reunion and I will buy the beer Tuesday morning. Yeo buys more beer because his position pays more.

AUCTIONEER

As many of you know Jim "Tooley" O'Toole volunteered to be an auctioneer at the last reunion. He auctioned off Gerry "GT" Shafer's tie, a diving alarm, and an American flag. He usually comes to the reunions and I will do my best to get him to Tucson. It will be easier now he has a girlfriend who enjoys our reunions. Now you have all been warned about wearing a tie to the dinner the last night of our reunion. If no ties are present we will find some other piece of clothing to auction off. We will have to be careful. If we auction off pants we might find someone that forgot his skivvies. We all know submarine sailors are very modest. It comes from all the privacy we had aboard the boats.

LADIES

Several of the wives, girlfriends, and significant others, have told me they read our newsletters. I bet some of the men have had to do some translations. Sailor terminology does creep into my writing as well as my speaking

ETERNAL PATROL

Each of us have had shipmates and/or sailors we know that have received eternal patrol orders. It is a sad time for all. Once again I wish I did not need to include this in our newsletter. We recently received an email from the brother of Dave Campbell informing us of his passing. Campbell, David J. (64/69) STS2(SS) 19 August 1995 On CAIMAN Dave was an EN2(SS)
Nilson Charles E. (53/56) QMC(SS) 10 December 2013
Shegrud, Richard A. (47/49) EM3(SS) 31 January 2014
Talbert, Wilber R. (50/56) TM1(SS) 4 October 2014
Whittaker, Robert (70/72) HMC(SS) 11 October 2014
McPhee, Clyde M. (54/54) ET3(SS) 20 October 2014
Einweck, Robert (45/48 50/54) EN1(SS) 25 Nov 2014
Sailor, rest your oars.

SAILING LIST

Thanks to the internet, we have located some more shipmates and Charles Martin (62/63) found us. It was great to get an email from a lost shipmate that lives in New Mexico and will attend the reunion in Tucson. I know many of us will be glad to see Charley. This means some new sea stories, all true of course. California is still the state with the most CAIMAN shipmates. Washington is second with Oregon and Florida tied for third place. There are five states that don't have CAIMAN sailors: Delaware, Massachusetts, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Vermont. Maybe, when I find the 144 missing shipmates we will be able to add some or all the five states that are not lucky enough to have a CAIMAN sailor live within their borders.

Sailing List:	1286
Expected at the next reunion:	515
Eternal Patrol:	771
Lost List:	144



"Silent Service - Earned, not given"

SMOKE

It's hard to believe for some, but there is an aging group of men bound together by smoke. Not smoke people ordinarily draw into their lungs for a buzz, legal or illegal, but stinky old diesel smoke made by burning hydrocarbons. It's burned in great big old noisy diesel engines designed for railroad locomotives and transplanted into a submarine, of all places.

This smoke binds them together with wispy chains stronger than the finest hardened steel. Men that sit around remembering shipmates and times good and bad, their memories brought to them on grey blue clouds. Clouds of it shot out over ports of the seven seas, on lighting off for going to sea. Underway and across those seas the smoke settles to an efficiency haze, but the diesel smoke smell follows them. The smoke and sounds that shut down when reaching home port after many days alone at sea.

Today, these old timers travel many miles to see, hear and once more catch that wonderful reminder of their youth. With tears in the eyes of some, they lean forward to breathe it in. They take photographs of diesel smoke clouds belching from exhaust pipes of museum piece subs. Back home they show them to others and post video clips on the internet. Others sit and wait for these clips to download over slow internet connections, just to see that smoke and hear the sound.

It is said that the sense of smell brings back the strongest memories. If so, then we are the lucky ones because our smoke is strong and memorable. Along with our smoky chains, we have those memories and neither can be removed from our hearts.

Many a submariner says, "One more time, just one more time". For some, that means to go out and make another dive, for others just to hear the roar and to smell that smoke.

Me, I'd like to yank a throttle lever, feel the deck plates shudder under my feet, hear the sounds, smell the smoke and be with those that are bound together by these things.

Just one more time and for a little while.

(Author Unknown)