



FLAMIN' CAIMAN TALES

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MAY 2019

COMMANDER'S SCUTTLEBUTT

Time sure flies. Here it is April and Smitty and Dings are headed to Albuquerque, New Mexico to set up our 9th reunion in 2020. New Mexico is a beautiful state and there are plenty of attractions for all of us to enjoy. I know for a fact that Doug and Bob will have a great reunion planned for next year. So, I expect everyone on the sailing list who still can breathe to be there!!! Here is a little tad-bit on how a man's mind functions.

DNA Trouble

After 10 years of marriage, the wife starts to think their child looks kind of different, so she decides to do a DNA test. She finds out that the child is from completely different parents. Wife: Honey, I have something very serious to tell you. Husband: What is that? Wife: According to DNA test results, this is not our kid. Husband: Well you don't remember, do you??? When we were leaving the hospital, you noticed that our baby had pooped and then you said: "please go change the baby, I'll wait for you here." So, I went inside, got a clean one and left the dirty one there. Moral: Never give a man a job for which he is not QUALIFIED.

John "Yeo" Fagereng, Commander

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Just completed reading the last newsletter - very enjoyable. The article "Locations" caught my eye with the statement that California is the most populated with CAIMAN sailors at 92. Now if you went by size of state rather than just the numbers living in a state, RI would have more CAIMAN sailors per square mile than California if RI only had one and CA had one hundred. I submit that the location in the U.S. with the heaviest population of CAIMAN sailors is the capital itself, Washington D.C. With two CAIMAN sailors living just down the street from the White House, there are more CAIMAN sailors per square mile in D.C. than any state in the union.

Jim "Buckets" Hunnicutt

FY 2020 BUDGET ROLL OUT

The administration released its FY2020 budget request. The proposed budget includes \$750 billion for the Department of Defense for FY2020, which is \$34 billion more than the current year spending level. It provides a 3.1 percent active duty pay increase-the largest increase in a decade and provides additional funding for childcare centers on bases. The budget provides funding for 46 more Navy ships in five years.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) budget request provides for a 9.6 percent increase (\$19.3 billion) above the current budget in overall spending for the agency.

The proposed budget includes a 9.5 percent increase in medical care that includes a surge in mental health, women's health and homelessness funding. The budget increases money for modernization of the disability claims process and appeals reform.

2019 USSVI CONVENTION

The 2019 USSVI Convention will be in Austin, Texas on August 14 – 20, 2019. Sam Amato lives in Austin and will plan a small CAIMAN function for all the CAIMAN sailors and adult supervisors who attend the convention. If you plan to attend, please let me know and I will keep Sam informed of the number of CAIMANITES that will attend. Five CAIMAN sailors have indicated they will attend, and we would like to have more. Nine CAIMAN sailors attended the convention last year.

WEATHER

I am sure that everyone is aware the weather has been weird this year though out the U.S. If any CAIMAN sailor needs assistance, do not hesitate to inform me. Submariners always help each other, and any CAIMAN sailor would come first for us. The good news is California's drought is over. Goat can take a shower.

NEWSLETTERS

If you would like to save CAIMAN money and me some work, let us send you the newsletter via email versus snail mail. Send me your email address and include your name as email address do not always indicate a person's name. My email #dbfrider@comcast.net (delete the first character). If you would prefer to not receive our newsletter, you can inform me at the same email address or 360-731-5233.

CONCURRENT RECEIPT REFORM

Congressman Sanford Bishop (GA) has introduced the "Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act" (H.R. 333) which is comprehensive concurrent receipt reform providing concurrent receipt to those who do not currently have it, including those with less than 20 years of service.

Rep. Gus Bilirakis, (FL) has introduced legislation (H.R. 303) that extends Concurrent Retirement and Disability Payments (CRDP) eligibility to retirees rated less than 50 percent disabled. Additionally, Senator Jon Tester (MT) has introduced legislation (S. 208) that is similar to H.R. 303 and achieves the same result of extending Concurrent Retirement and Disability Payments (CRDP) eligibility to retirees rated less than 50 percent disabled.

CLOSURE OF VA FACILITIES

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Robert Wilkie announced at a House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing in late February that the VA is considering closing some underutilized facilities. Currently about 63 percent of VA medical beds are in use. The Secretary also noted that veterans are moving south and west and the VA should shift facilities to reflect that change.

The VA Mission Act, signed into law last year, requires the VA to make an assessment of medical facility shortages, surpluses and other challenges. The idea of closing VA facilities has been controversial for legislators who have major hospitals in their district.

USS THRESHER MEMORIAL

The deaths of 129 men that essentially catalyzed modern submarine safety will finally be commemorated at Arlington National Cemetery, following memorial approval by the Secretary of the Army. Kevin Galeaz, president of the USS Thresher ANC Memorial Foundation, announced the long-awaited recognition on February 4th. The foundation received nearly \$60,000 in donations from USS Thresher families, former crew, submarine veterans and current and former employees of Naval Sea Systems and Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. The donations will cover the cost of the memorial and ensure that funding will be in place to replace the monument in perpetuity. The Arlington National Cemetery commemorative monuments process requires six levels of approvals. Galeaz said they began in 2012.

The memorial is dedicated to the 129 men lost aboard USS Thresher (SSN-593) on April 10, 1963, during deep dive exercises 220 miles off the coast of Cape Cod. The Thresher tragedy was the largest submarine disaster ever experienced by the United States and led to the inception of the SUBSAFE program which continues to protect men and women who serve on U.S. submarines. In the 55 years since the inception of SUBSAFE, only one submarine has been lost, the USS Scorpion, in what is believed to be due to a battery explosion. In the 46 years prior, the country saw a non-combat average loss rate of one submarine every three years. Thresher was built at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and commissioned in 1961.

At the 50th anniversary, Galeaz said family members were "very concerned this would never happen," and that the tragedy would simply remain a local event recognized in small memorials around the country. "They now are literally so thankful that their loved ones are going to be remembered," he said. "I served on submarines. Every time I dove, I surfaced because of Thresher. I had the opportunity of coming home to my family because of the men lost on Thresher."

"At long last, the 129 brave men who perished aboard the USS Thresher more than five decades ago will receive a memorial at Arlington National Cemetery to honor their legacy," Sen. Jeanne Shaheen said, "This monument is so important for the families who lost loved ones on that fateful day and is incredibly meaningful to the Seacoast community. I applaud the advocacy of the USS Thresher Arlington National Cemetery Memorial Foundation, who helped spearhead this effort, and I look forward to an official announcement on the Army's plan to make this project a reality."

OUR 9TH REUNION

Dings and I have selected the Crowne Plaza Hotel for the Albuquerque (ALB) reunion. The dates are April 20 – 24, 2020, so the weather should cooperate. We have a room rate of \$99.00 a night including breakfast. We have a choice of rooms with a king bed or two queen beds. ALB has a 13.5% hotel tax so that brings it up to \$112.37. The hotel is an open design with a southwest motif. We also have a choice between rooms around the pool or in the tower. All rooms are the same design. The hospitality room is on the top of the tower, so we have a view across ALB. We have separate hospitality rooms and dining rooms this time. There is NOT an airport shuttle so if you fly in, use Uber.

HOTEL AMENITIES

The hotel is located near the junction of highways 40 and 25 with easy access from any direction. Parking is complimentary including empty RV parking. The hotel has two pools, one indoor and one outdoor, and an exercise room which I know many of us will use. WiFi is free throughout the hotel. Each room has Keurig coffee makers so bring your favorite pods. The rooms do not have refrigerators, but the hospitality room will have a large refrigerator. The bar and lounge have indoor and outdoor seating, so GT and Ned can enjoy the sunshine with their libations. The hotel has three restaurants. One is a fine dining steak house, so no greasy smelly shirts and dungarees allowed.

TOUR

On Wednesday we will ride a bus to the Acoma Pueblo, a Native American Pueblo and National Historic Landmark. The Acoma tribe has inhabited the area for over 2,000 years. Many people still live there so we can see how they live and have adapted to the area. Acoma pottery & Native American crafts are for sale and several cultural exhibits are on display. After our tour we will board the buses and travel to a local casino for lunch and other entertainment \$\$.

ELECTIONS

Commander and Secretary/Treasurer are up for election at the 2020 reunion. Yeo and I (Smitty) are running for re-election. Send me any nominations but be sure they want the job before nominating them. Voting will be at the reunion luncheon. You need to be at the reunion to vote. As usual. Yeo and I will buy the beer Monday and Tuesday to help your decision on voting.

ETERNAL PATROL

As much as I dislike having to include this in our newsletter it does show that diesel boats sailors are a fading group.

O'Connell, John F. CAPT (56/58) 13 December 2018
Walling, Lionel C. EMC(SS) (56/60) 8 December 2018
Jones, Charles G. EMCM(SS) (60/61) 11 August 2018
Buehler, Gary E. EM1(SS) (64/65) 28 October 2017
McBride, Hermie EMCS(SS) (66/67) 4 April 2017
Sailor rest your oars.

SAILING LIST

I have not found any of our shipmates on our lost list, but I will continue to look. Our Eternal Patrol list is growing which is a sad item for all of us.

Sailing List:	1353
Hopefully at the next reunion:	470
Eternal Patrol:	883
Lost List:	66

“As British airman are credited with saving Britain in those critical days after Dunkirk, so our gallant submarine personnel filled the breach after Pearl Harbor, and can claim credit, not only for holding the line, but also for carrying the war to the enemy.” Admiral Chester Nimitz

From: Captain A.F. Rawson U.S. Navy Retired
5307 Camberly Ave.
Bethesda, MD 20814-1505

Subj: Saga of the Jeep stolen by the crew of the USS Caiman SS-323 from the Island of Saipan In February 1947.

1. Recently, during the National Convention of WW-11 Submarines Veterans, some of the old timers who stationed at the Pearl Harbor Submarine Base in 1947 were talking about the Submarine crew that stole a Jeep from the Island of Saipan.
2. I was a LCDR and the Executive Officer on board the USS Caiman at the time of the incident. The Chief of the Boat on board the Caiman was your brother George Smith. He told me that you refused to believe that we had stolen a Jeep and transported it to Pearl Harbor. George asked me if I would send you a letter verifying the fact that we had stolen a Jeep from the Island of Saipan. I told George that I would be glad to, as I knew the details.
3. During a training cruise to the Western Pacific during late 1946 and early 1947 we visited many of the Islands formerly occupied by Japanese forces. Our last stop was the Island of Saipan in February 1947.
4. At the head of the pier where we were moored was a vehicle compound consisting of various Types of vehicles, including Jeeps. Some of the crew suggested to Chief Smith that we steal one and take it to Pearl with us to be used to run errands etc. Chief Smith sought my advice. I suggested that we approach the Captain, CDR Norman Gage. He agreed to look the other way and stated don't get caught.
5. We decided to do it the afternoon before departing for Pearl Harbor. Two men went for the Jeep, one to drive and one to watch for any patrols that might be in the area. In the mean time, Other crew members rigged the davit for hoisting the Jeep onboard while others were getting Tools ready to disassemble the Jeep. The Jeep was hoisted on board and placed aft of the conning tower so it could not be seen from the roadway at the head of the pier.
6. The engine was removed and stowed in the torpedo room. Tires were stowed in a line locker, And the wheels were stowed in an unused ammunition magazine. The chassis securely lashed Down aft of the conning tower.
7. Upon arrival in Pearl Harbor, some men from the sheet metal shop noticed the Jeep . They had two pick up trucks, and offered to trade a pick up for the Jeep. We agreed, since a pick up truck was more practical for our use around the Base. I can attest to the fact that the story of Caiman crew stealing a Jeep is true.

A.F. Rawson