USS TOPEKA CLG-8
Reunion Association Newsletter
Volume 39, No. 3 November 2026

Officers:
Al Gustafson, Chairman Board of Directors and President;
Arnold Hoel, Vice Chairman and Vice President
Gary Baker, Secretary-Treasurer;
Staff:
Kathy Spatz, Newsletter Editor and Photographer;
Gary Baker, Web Master:
Pat Baker, Ships Store

From Our President

Greetings Shipmates

I hope that everyone is safe and well. Usually when I write the message for the November newsletter we have just returned from another successful September Reunion. It seemed a little strange to me to not have been traveling in September as this has been our routine for many years now (19 for Cathy and I). The good news is that we were able to enjoy New Orleans in excellent weather in the Spring and had a wonderful time. So now it is onward to 2027.

As most of you know our next reunion will be in Colorado Springs from September 13 through 17, 2027. Our hosts Kathy and Ray Spatz have everything well organized for our visit to Colorado. So, make your plans soon to join us. If you have never been to Colorado Springs, it is a beautiful location with mild temperatures and about 300 days of sun per year so we can pretty much count on pleasant weather! Colorado Springs was founded in 1871 as a resort town and has beautiful scenery including magnificent views of the famous Pikes Peak. The great scenery also inspired the famous song “America the Beautiful” written by Katherine Lee Bates. Looking forward to seeing you all in September.

If you have never been to a reunion, please be aware that we are friendly and welcoming group who enjoy meeting long lost shipmates and sharing our common connection to the USS Topeka CLG 8. All are welcome. If you have thought about coming in the past, please join us this year in this beautiful location.

As always, special thanks to Kathy and Ray Spatz as well as Pat and Gary Baker for all their hard work on behalf of the association. We could not continue without the hard work and dedication of these folks.

Anyone with questions about the 2027 reunion please feel free to give me a call. If you get my machine, be sure to leave a message, I will get right back to you.

Wishing everyone a safe, healthy, and happy Fall and New Year. Hope to see you all inColorado Springs.

Fair Winds and Following Seas

Gus

New Members (Since November2025)

None

Taps

Guadalupe Espinoza SMSN 65-69

Reunion Dates:

Monday, September13, 2027, through Friday, September 17,2027

Kathy and Ray Spatz will be hosting our Colorado Springs Reunion. They hosted numerous successful reunions!

Our hotel for the reunion will be Hyatt Place Colorado Springs at Garden of the Gods, 503 Garden of the Gods Road, Colorado Springs, CO.

Accommodation is one King Bed, or two Double Beds. Rates are $129.00 (with taxes and fees $142.25). Mountain view room rates are $139.00 (with taxes and fees $153.25)

Room reservation MUST be made by Sunday, August 22, 2027. After that date the room block is released, and you may not be able to make a reservation.

Room price also includes complimentary breakfast buffet, parking and WiFi.

About Hyatt Place Colorado Springs/Garden of the Gods

Comfortable accommodations at Hyatt Place Colorado Springs Garden Of the Gods in Colorado Springs offers family rooms with air-conditioning, private bathrooms, and modern amenities. Each room includes a tea and coffee maker, refrigerator, and free toiletries. Dining and Leisure Guests can enjoy a fitness center, sun terrace, seasonal outdoor swimming pool, and free WiFi. The family-friendly restaurant serves American breakfast, lunch, and dinner, complemented by a bar offering cocktails. Additional facilities include a lounge, coffee shop, and outdoor seating area. Convenient Location Located 3.7 mi from Garden of the Gods and 14 mi from Colorado Springs Airport; the hotel is near attractions such as Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site and Pikes Peak Center. Free on-site private parking is available. Guests appreciate the breakfast, room cleanliness, and comfort.

SUGGESTED TOURS

I have been researching tour possibilities and the following are some of my ideas. Keeping in mind any mobility issues some of us may have. I have not yet spoken with a tour or bus company.

Shown are just a few suggestions if you have something in mind reach out to me.

Garden of the Gods Visitor & Nature Center

Begin your adventure at the Garden of the Gods Visitor & Nature Center, home to free maps and information about the park, guided nature walks, free interpretive presentations, and features over 30 state-of-the-art interactive exhibits.

TIP: Some of the most spectacular views of Garden of the Gods Park are accessible from the Garden of the Gods Visitor & Nature Center terrace, which spans the entire front of the building.

Garden of the Gods Trading Post

The Garden of the Gods Trading Post is one-of-a-kind gift shop, where you'll find something for everyone on your list. Browse our vast array of collectible handmade jewelry, books, souvenirs, toys for kids, apparel, and home decor items, or admire contemporary, local, international and Native American artwork in the gallery.

Fuel your Garden of the Gods experience with the many food and beverage options available at the on-site restaurant.

Flying W Ranch

Since 1953, the Flying W Ranch has been a Western tradition unlike anything else in the region. Loosen your belt and fill up your tin plate with a hearty cowboy-style barbecue dinner with all the fixins' – served the classic chuckwagon way. Then get ready for a lively evening of stirring Western music and humorous tall tales from the Flying W Wranglers, the second-oldest Western band in the world. Arrive early to explore the Western Grounds, meet our friendly ranch animals, try your hand at roping and other cowboy skills, do some shopping, and see vibrant demonstrations by Osage Nation dancers. It's a night of food, music, and frontier charm your family will never forget.

At Flying W Ranch, you can immerse yourself in simpler times at this western-themed attraction. Completely destroyed by the Waldo Canyon Fire in 2012, the Flying W was rebuilt and reopened in 2020. Folks will enjoy the stunning new facility, expanded list of animal residents, fun pre-dinner activities and the Flying W Wranglers, one of the best and longest-running western performance bands in the world

Dragoman's Military Museum

For decades, Dragonman's has been one of Colorado's most unique destinations for military history buffs. Located on over 260 acres east of Colorado Springs, Dragonman's offers a public shooting range, military museum and many other attractions. Founded by Mel Bernstein.

Pay By Zelle

If your bank uses Zelle to transfer money you can now use it to pay dues, reunion fees, and ship's store orders directly to the association checking account. Activate Zelle on-line at your bank's website and designate the recipient to be gbaker@usstopekaclg.org. For dues send an e-mail to the same address with dues information. For ship's store orders e-mail the order form. For reunion fees e-mail the registration sheet.

YTD Financial Report

A summary of our finances Year-To-Date. As we will no longer be collecting dues after 2028 the operating fund will decline over the next few years. For a more detailed report e-mail Gary Baker at gbaker@usstopekaclg8.org

Account	1/1/2026	10/31/2026
Operating Fund	$12,902.94	$12,703.38
Reunion Fund	$5,546.11	$2,817.26
Ship's Store	$3,472.87	$3,660.62
Total	$21,921.92	$19,181.26

USS TOPEKA REUNION ASSOCIATION
C/O Gary Baker
20 Heather Drive
Billings, MT 59105

TEMP – RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Names and Telephone Numbers

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Vice Chairman, Board of Directors: Arnold Hoel
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Ship's Store

The ship's store inventory includes ballcaps, lapel pins, jacket patches, Navy Veteran and 6th and 7th Fleet bumper stickers. Order forms, and images of items, are on the Ship's Store page of our website. Pat Baker manages the store. She can be contacted by e-mail at pbaker@usstopekaclg8.org or call her at406-252-4546. Orders can be sent to her at 20 Heather Dr, Billings, MT 59105.

Membership and Dues

The Association will cease collecting dues after 2028. Members that have paid dues through 2028 are considered Lifetime Members. Dues are $20.00 per year. Dues can be sent to Gary Baker, 20 Heather Dr, Billings, MT 59105.