

USS TOPEKA CLG-8 Reunion Association Newsletter

Volume 4, No. 1

March, 1993



Committee:

Jack Connery, President; Isaac Roberts, Vice President;
Dudley E. Cass, Secretary/Treasurer; Isaac Roberts, Reunion '93 Chairman
Jack Connery, Newsletter Editor

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Seems like a lot going on:

- We can start planning for Nashville now that we have a hotel and date.
- Jack Gelke is in the Hall of Fame.
- A few of the Southern California bunch are gathering in Laughlin, Nev.
- We welcome aboard 17 new shipmates.
- Ann Hojaboom got appointed to high office.
- Northeastern folks have a chance to go on stage.
- Dues are due.

I thought January-March was suppose to be a slow time, letting us recover from the holidays and get ready for the IRS. Guess not.

And about those dues: See the bit about the Mailbox Bandits. After reading that, I checked my label and there's no "D93." I had forgotten. First thing I did was send Dudley a check for the \$15.

I would ask that you do the same thing. If you don't do it now, you'll forget, as I did. And, as stated in the last issue, this will be the last mention of dues.

Regret that we can't give you more information than date and hotel on Reunion '93. At this writing however, Ike is away on two weeks ACDUTRA defending our country. When he gets back, we'll put together a complete package for the next newsletter. I have seen the Sheraton Music City. I haven't stayed there (was down the street), but I do remem-

ber it being a class place. You folks will really enjoy your stay in Nashville.

Jack Connery

SPRINGTIME IN LAUGHLIN

Lets celebrate the arrival of Springtime in Laughlin, Nevada, Friday-Sunday, March 26-28. A group of us from the San Diego/Los Angeles/Oklahoma area met there for a weekend last march and really had a great time.

So, we're doing it again, but want to include anyone else interested in going. There are great casinos there, are situated right on the bank of the Colorado River. And with the rain we've had, the dessert should be in full bloom about then.

We'll meet at the Flamingo Hilton Hotel. Call 1-800-352-6464 for reservations. The rate is \$55 a night on Friday and Saturday. Contact Dudley or Ruth Cass at (619) 267-3123 so we will know who and how many to expect.



1993 DUES

1993 Dues are due. Make check payable to the Reunion Association for \$15 (more if you want) and send it to Dudley Cass, 3028 Bonita Woods Drive, Bonita, Cal., 91902.

Do it now and you won't forget.

As promised, this will be the last mention of dues in the newsletter.



Above is the Sheraton Music City Hotel, Nashville, TN, site of the 1993 TOPEKA Reunion, October 14-16. The hotel sits on 23 landscaped acres and has 412 guest rooms. Amenities include a private balcony or patio, radio/TV, swimming pool and lighted tennis courts, among others. Two miles from the airport with complimentary transportation.

Ike Roberts says this weekend of Southern Plantation type living will be the best reunion yet. He's been to the first three so he is well aware of what he has to top. He's not worried.

Since Ike is off on active duty at this writing, there's not much more information to report. He's working on the possibilities of a river boat cruise (we need to get our sea time in) and tickets to the famous Opryland have already been arranged.

For those who want to make reservations now, the number is (800) 325-3535 (national reservations number) or (615) 885-2200. Fax number is (615) 871-0926.



FROM THE EDITOR

The **Remember When . . . ?** story in this issue is from *The Baka Hachi, 1960-1969*. For you new folks, this is a book we put together in 1991 for the second reunion. It is a combination of the official ship's history, personal accounts of that history, ie favorite stories, pictures, and excerpts from cruise-books. Everybody we had contact with at that time was invited to submit a story.

Jim Ownby and I will undertake a project during the next two years to enlarge on *Baka Hachi*. We want to incorporate information from the ship's Deck Log, and get more personal stories from you. We'll call on our shipmates in the DC area to help

with logs. We want to identify specific important dates in the ship's history, use the official log entries, and include your thoughts, realizing that people in the firerooms, main battery plot, and the signal bridge, etc, all saw things from a different perspective. For example:

- The first shot fired in anger in Vietnam
- Commissioning and decommissioning
- The burial at sea
- The day we learned we were going to the Med instead of WESTPAC
- And many others

Each of us remembers specific dates and events. Let me know your thoughts of those dates, where you were, what you were doing, and the impact on you. We will combine that with the appropriate log entry and catalog it for the first revision of *Baka Hachi*.

In addition, I need your help in other areas. I want to continue the Columns "Remember When . . .?" and "Meet Your Shipmate." I'll be asking for "Meet Your Shipmate" contributions and all are invited to submit "Remember When" stories. Each of those, when published, is worth \$25.

And by the way, copies of *Baka Hachi, 1960-1969* are still available. Send \$10 to me (checks payable to the Reunion Association) and I'll send it.



LETTERS

Dear Ed:

I just sent my dues check off to Dudley Cass, and I thought I would drop a line to help you up to speed on my activities.

I'll try harder to make the '93 Reunion. I was in New York the weekend of 17 October, '92, being inducted into the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Athletic Hall of Fame. A highlight in my life.

I am currently managing the Ft. Ord regional office of the Army Job Assistance Program. The company I work for (RCI) has the army contract on 57 bases around the world. We help soldiers, army civilians, and their spouses transition to civilian and other jobs. We educate them on resume writing, interviewing, etc., and run a worldwide computer service with nearly 6,000 employees.

It keeps me busy. I am also a watchstander at the new Monterrey Maritime Museum.

Jack Gelke (65-67)

Ed note: Bravo Zulu on the Hall of Fame award. You must be very proud of it. Bring your plaque to Nashville so we can all see.

Dear Ed:

It was with deep regret that Ann and I were unable to attend what we both know was a very fabulous reunion. We are looking forward to seeing the newsletters and pictures of it.

Ann was appointed Deputy Grand Matron of the Order of Eastern Star and has five chapters under her jurisdiction, so you can see she is a very busy lady.

One thing by my not being able to attend gave someone else a chance of grabbing the longest time spent aboard TOPEKA award.

Please keep us informed as to where the next reunion is going to be held and the date. I hope we can attend.

John and Ann Hojaboom (60-68)

Ed note: Congratulations Ann. We missed you this year. We didn't award the "longest time award" this year. I think it was retired to your care. See you in Nashville.

Dear Ed:

Back when we first got started, I really looked forward to receiving the newsletter. There were always letters from shipmates. That was the best part of the newsletter and really made it worthwhile. Don't see many now. What's happened.

Jim Ownby (62-65)

Ed Note: Jim, I fully agree. We have three this time, not counting yours, the most in a long time. Hey Guys, let's hear from you. Let us know what you are doing, what you think, etc.

Dear Ed:

Having had the opportunity to finally meet Dan Peters and his wife again after a lapse of thirty years was a moving experience. It is amazing that these years just dissolved and kindred spirits were just as evident as years ago.

Thanks to the TOPEKA Reunion Association, life is richer for me. Thanks again.

Joe Hale (60-63)

Ed note: Amen Joe. I and many others have experienced those same feelings when seeing an old friend from 25-30

years in the past. Hope you and Dan will get together with the rest of us in Nashville.



MAILBOX BANDITS IN BONITA

Mailbox bandits have been pilfering mail in the Bonita, Cal., area. Dudley knows about one piece of reunion mail he did not receive. Your mail (dues) may have been pilfered. Your mailing label on this newsletter shows "D93" if your dues have been received as of Tuesday, 2 February, 1993, and you should have received a directory.

If you have sent a check and your mailing label doesn't show a "D93", contact Dudley at (619) 267-3123. This should not be a problem in the future because secure locking mailboxes are being installed.



WELCOME ABOARD (SINCE NOV. 1, 1992)

Dave Murray, FTG2 (66-69) Newbury Park, CA.
Mike Sitnic, PN3 (61-63) San Diego, CA.
Gerald Dunne, LTJG (64-66) Oakton, VA.
Ervin Kolodzik, BTC (60-67) Buena Park, CA.
John F. Richards, LTJG (64-67), Petaluma, CA.
Greg Davis, LTJG (64-66), Lafayette, CA.
Dee Wayne Poehl, GMM2 (66-69), Cedar Park, TX.
Vern Schlecht, LT (65-67), Hermosa, SD.
Ron Antonio, Cerritos, CA.
Paul Abrahams, LT (66-68), Houghton, MI.
John Woolston, FTG2 (59-62), Santa Ana, CA.
Philip (Tony) Barbaro, BMC (61-62), Poulsbo, WA.
Don Ward, Jr., LT (65-66), Bremerton, WA.
James Scholz, SKSN (59-61), Tampa, FL.
Gerald L. Schmehl, (60-62), Salida CA.
John Howe, LT (60-61), La Jolla, CA.
Manuel Sablan, RD3, San Diego, CA.



WANTA BE AN ACTOR?

For your Northeasterners:

The Cruiserman's Association Inc. is planning a stage production of South Pacific at the newly restored Rhodes on the Patuxet in Cranston, R.I., May 2-6. This will be a fund raising event for their organization.

They are looking for actors.

The organization is looking for amateur acting talent among cruisemen. For information, contact Anthony Totilo at 1578 Cranston Street, Cranston, RI., 02920; telephone (401)943-6431.

Ed Note: During the time I was aboard TOPEKA (64-66), I remember many actors. Just can't remember whether or not they were from the Northeast.

REMEMBER WHEN . . . ?

In January, 1967, we were in Hunters Point Naval Shipyard for overhaul. We sent the Assistant Weapons Officer, LCDR Bob Prather, to San Diego for a two week course of some sort. He called me his first night there to report what he thought was a rather strange incident. In checking into the BOQ where he would be staying, he filled out the standard registration card, which, among other vital information, showed USS TOPEKA as his duty station. He handed it to the steward on duty who read it, looked up and said, "Oh TOPEKA, you're the one going to the Med, aintcha?"

Bob was startled to say the least. It was also a pretty hot news item to me, so I proceeded post haste to CRUDESPEC headquarters in San Diego and accosted the Chief of Staff to find out what was up. He allowed as how the news was correct, and that they had every intention of telling us in due course. He also informed me that it was classified **CONFIDENTIAL** until such time as we sailed for the Panama Canal (about 5 months downstream). NEWPORT NEWS would be going to the Tonkin Gulf, replacing TOPEKA. They wanted the big eight-inch guns on the gun line rather than our six-inch guns. Perfectly logical and it led to a delightful Panama Canal transit and an altogether pleasant Med trip. The fascinating part is how we learned of the switch.

We changed our way of thinking, sorted things out, sailed to the Med in August, 1967, and made a successful Med deployment.

Bill Montgomery, Commanding Officer
From *The Baka Hachi*, 1960-1969

USS TOPEKA (CLG-8)
REUNION ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER
c/o JACK CONNERY
16334 SOUTH LEWIS
BIXBY, OK 74008

