



Association Officers

President
Charles Casello

Vice-President
Bill Hunter

Secretary/Treasurer
Norm Jennewein

President's Message

First, I hope that every one of you are having a great summer and thinking about the upcoming Reunion, Oct. 6-8. If you have not made your reservation, please do so ASAP. There has been a bit of a misunderstanding in regard to the membership letters being sent out for this year. You send your membership dues to:

Norm Jennewein
4664 Telstar Drive
St. Louis, MO 63128

I know the By-Laws of 1998 were amended to read that dues are payable on Jan. 1 of every year and become delinquent after Mar. 31. We will disregard this for this year only, so please try to get your dues in as soon as possible. All dues paying members will receive an updated list and a financial statement upon payment. Life members will receive an update list at the time of the reunion and receive the financial statement, revised

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U.S.S. Suwannee CVE 27 Newsletter

July / Aug. 2005

Editor's Note

First of all I want to thank all of you who sent such positive comments about the newsletter. These came in many forms: with a request for a DVD (over 40 of those), over the phone, through e-mail, snail mail, and even in person from a couple of locals here in San Antonio.

By phone "Frog" LaFargue from Air Group 60 was grateful for two phone calls he had gotten from Suwannee shipmates after the newsletter went out. We also heard from Norm and Dot Jennewein, Harold and Mary Lou Lawson, John DiGiovine, and Charlie Casello, who reports that there are already over 100 registered for St. Joe. Don Rennie also called, as did Harry Pappas, who could not identify the other person in the photograph with him and Bill Peterson that was included in the last issue.

I realize I can't list everyone, of course, and if you called and your name was not mentioned here, it is not because I did not appreciate it.

Among the emails was one from Ray Moore, whose health has kept him from coming to the reunions. Ray wanted to know if I knew Harold Fines, one of his special friends from the ship. I was happy to be able to tell him that I did know Harold, having worked with him, and he really was a great guy.

The spouses and children of deceased shipmates also contacted me to thank the organization for keeping them on the mailing list. Several of them also asked for a copy of "Moment of Impact."

Harry Hepler of K Division sent some pictures that you will see elsewhere in the newsletter. R. C. Myers sent a very interesting "Oral History of the Battle of Leyte Gulf," written by Dr. Walter B. Burwell, which I had not seen before. It is too lengthy to include in the newsletter, but I will try to bring it to the reunion.

Daniel "Duke" Ducic has been in touch a couple of times, and you will read something elsewhere in the newsletter from him. I had far too brief a visit with Bill "Rigger" Riggs, gave him a DVD, and got a story from him. It will appear either in its entirety in this issue, or will be included in parts over this issue and the next.

I also had a really nice visit with John Ash from VC-60, right here in San Antonio. I won't mention any names, but several of you promised stories that I have not yet received. You'll need to send those in if the newsletter is going to be effective as a way of our sharing the history of the Suwannee, both among ourselves, and with the generations that follow.

It couldn't happen, but . . .

One of the requests that came in for a "Moment of Impact" DVD was from a woman whose brother served on the Suwannee. She is still on the mailing list for the newsletter, and was interested in the DVD as a way of understanding more about her brother's experiences during the war.

Her request came by email, and she included a question about exactly where we live, as her daughter has a home in a subdivision with the same name as the street I live on. As it turns out, her daughter lives right between our house and my son's, about a block from each of us. It seems that we find members of the Suwannee family just about everywhere we look nowadays. – Bill Reddell

I remember . . .

Sixty-five years ago at this time the *Suwannee* was mopping up in the South Pacific. The two atomic bombs had been dropped in August on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We were hanging on anchor in Buckner Bay at Okinawa when the Japs surrendered.

A few of the men with a lot of sea duty and “points” were given the opportunity to start for the States to get a head start on the jobs and the girls. The rest of us were beginning a really interesting cruise, taking us to Tokyo and eventually to the foot of Broadway in San Diego.

Along the way we dropped anchor in Nagasaki Harbor. On September 19 some of us were granted liberty and given a tour of Nagasaki. The city was absolutely demolished. The destruction was unbelievable: Metal had melted from the heat, while mortar and concrete had been turned to dust. The smell of death lingered in the air. It was eerie. About the only buildings still standing were a hospital and a church. I returned to Nagasaki in 1986 (over 40 years after the drop) to find a beautiful, modern, clean city. And yes, the same church was still standing.

On the way back to the states after leaving Nagasaki we picked up troops in Guam. On the ship there were continuous showers and chow lines. It was told by several of the troops that the *Suwannee* chow was some of the best food they had while on military duty. About 500 of the troops slept on the hanger and weather decks, or wherever they could put a cot.

What a welcome home we received in San Diego! I recall a Navy band playing on the pier, and the Navy Mothers were there to serve us coffee, fresh milk and donuts. I received a special welcome from a lovely mother. When I reached the bottom of the gangway and put down my bags this mother came over to me and said, “I need a hug, as my son will not be coming home.” We hugged each other. I never knew her name, and at the time it happened it did not impress me much, but through these many years I have thought about her and have wondered what ever happened to her. It has helped me to realize how very abundantly I have been blessed with great friends and family.

Submitted by William B. Riggs Pr 1/C
“Rigger” - VT-40

Shipmates

Daniel “Duke” Ducic writes, “As usual, I am not able to attend the reunion. The *Suwannee* has been one of the most important parts of my life. Is it possible to find out how many “Plank Owners,” are still alive who served the entire war on Her Majesty? Many that I know have expired. I realize this is a big job. It is unusual to commission a ship and stay with her until the end. Any information you can find out will be appreciated. I was a Fire Controlman 2/C, firing the aft starboard quad mount. Chief FC Best had the port one.”

Editor’s Note – I called several shipmates and looked through past reunion books for pictures and sent Duke a list of thirteen “Plank Owners” who are still living, as far as we know.

If you are a “Plank Owner,” or know of one, please send the information to:

Daniel Ducic
13624 Crossburn Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44135-5030

A Serious Need

We need the e-mail addresses of as many shipmates and family members as we can get. Each newsletter we can send out by e-mail instead of through the postal service saves postage and paper, and you get your copy at least two or three days sooner.

We have calculated that we can save the association about \$1.50 for each newsletter we send via e-mail.

Please help the association with this! Thank you.

If there are any *Suwannee* crewmen or Air Group members who have not received a copy of “Moment of Impact,” please let us know. The DVD tells a part of the story of October 25-26, 1944, during the Battle for Leyte Gulf. One free copy is being provided to each sailor, airman or surviving member of the *Suwannee* family. Those receiving a DVD are free to make copies for friends and family.

Larry Reddell
3701 Big Meadow Dr.
San Antonio, TX 78230
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Rev. McClellan, Chaplain
(Submitted by Harry Hepler)

From Margaret F. (Mrs. Eli) Sobel

The Reverend McClellan presided at our wedding when Lt. Eli Sobel and I were married in Seattle while the Suwannee was in dry-dock in Puget Sound Navy Yard after the Battle of Leyte Gulf. He signed the Marriage Certificate as Harvey H. McClellan, Lt. Cmdr ChC USNR. He was then recruiting for the Chaplain Corps from an office in San Francisco. He was on his way to Alaska and stopped to marry us in Seattle.

Your father's story of the two "Bills" reminds me of the saddest moment in my late husband's memory of the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Eli was a bomb disposal officer and was in charge of the ordnance "gang," most of whom died in one of the kamikaze attacks (I believe the second). There was a "Billy" whom Eli assured that he'd be safe if he stayed by Eli. Eli found him burned to death. He had come through the fire to the flight deck, where he expected to find Eli. I grieve, as Eli did, for "Billy."

Editor's Note: Rev. McClellan was on the ship when it was commissioned, and served aboard her until November of 1943. At that time he was succeeded by Father Walsh.

Order of Service - Mother's Day – May 9, 1943 Service Held Aboard the Suwannee

Call to Worship

Praise #106: 1-4

The Apostle's Creed

Praise #128: 1, 5

Prayer

Sacrament of Baptism

Responsive Reading

Proverbs 31: 10-31

Praise #97: 1-3

Sermon: "Give Her the Fruit of
Your Hands" – Your Mother

Praise 140: 1-4

Benediction

A Prayer for Mother

"Lord Jesus, Thou has known a mother's love and tender care, and Thou wilt hear while for my own mother most dear I make this Sabbath prayer. Protect her life, I pray, who gave the gift of life to me; and may she know from day to day, the deepening glow of joy that comes from Thee. I cannot pay my debt for all the love that she has given; but Thou, Love's Lord, wilt not forget her due reward – bless her in earth and heaven. Amen."

-- Taps --

*In loving tribute to those who
have fallen.*

Robert E Taylor

April 1, 2005

Marvin A. Snider

Feb. 23, 1925 – May 17, 2005



Please send information regarding the passing of a shipmate to the editor, Bill Reddell, 12101 Mission Trace, San Antonio, TX, 78230. bill.reddell@sbcglobal.net

Reunion Reminder

Remember that the deadline for registration for this year's reunion in St. Joseph, Missouri is **SEPTEMBER 6.**

Contact:

James Modis
5506 South 38 Terrace
St. Joseph, MO 64503
(816) 364-2558



Shown above is one version of the ship's band. The group's membership, like the ship and air group's personnel, changed frequently.

(Photo courtesy of Harry Hepler)

President's Message
(from page 1)

issue of the constitution and by-laws under separate cover. A revised mailing list is available upon request. It will include email addresses when they are available.

If you have any questions about any of the above, please let me know and I will respond.

We miss many of you at our reunions, and feel that you are missing out on the efforts that your shipmates have gone through to ensure a good time for everyone. As Eric often said, the reunions are indeed a "memorial to our fallen shipmates."

Next year's reunion will be headed up by Carl Bell in Montana. We should be getting more information at this year's reunion in October in St. Joseph, Missouri.

Pres. C. P. Casello
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Watertown, MA 02472-3640
(617) 924-0730
usssuwannee@msn.com

Internet Links Related to the *Suwannee*:

<http://www.historycentral.com/navy/oiler/suwannee.html>

<http://www.answers.com/topic/uss-suwannee>

**U.S.S. Suwannee CVE 27 &
Attached Air Groups Assn.**
c/o Bill Reddell
12101 Mission Trace
San Antonio, TX 78230

Something you may not have known . . .

Joe Halchak's nephew, John Allen, has discovered some interesting information about the pilot of the kamikaze of October 26. His name was Tamisaku Katsumata and he held the rank of Naval Air Pilot 1/C. The Zero that he flew into the Suwannee had been flown by Japan's most successful fighter pilot, Hiroyoshi Nishizawa. The aircraft was nearly worn out by hard combat flying by Nishizawa, so it was determined to be a good candidate for a kamikaze mission.

Ironically, Nishizawa died on that same day. He was a passenger in a transport plane bound for Clark air base in the Philippines, which were still under Japanese control, where he was to pick up a new Zero. The transport was shot down by U.S. Navy fighters.

John's source is the book *Samurai*, written by Saburo Sakai, another of Japan's most successful fighter pilots.