



# U.S.S. Suwannee CVE 27

## Newsletter

May/June 2005

### Association Officers

President

**Charles Casello**

Vice-President

**Bill Hunter**

Secretary/Treasurer

**Norm Jennewein**

### **President's Message**

The vacation season is upon us and with this thought in mind I wish everyone a happy and healthy vacation. First of all, I want to thank Don Rennie and daughter, Mary, for their work on the newsletter for the past few years. Thank you very much. Don has had a couple of operations on his kidneys, but is now doing much better.

William (Bill) Reddell will be our new person to do the newsletter. His address is:

12101 Mission Trace  
San Antonio, TX 78230  
(210) 561-7668  
[bill.Reddell@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bill.Reddell@sbcglobal.net)

Jim Modis has the October reunion well in hand and reservations are coming in slowly. Please send in your reservations as soon as possible. I hope to see many of you on Oct. 6. Hopefully, this will be another happy occasion.

**C. P. Casello**  
**President**

### **Editor's Note**

What should a newsletter do? This was the first thing I asked myself when Charlie, our president, asked me if I would consider taking over this responsibility until Rennie could do so again. I believe it must tell the news; things that interest, and are of importance to, our members, families and associates. Stories, even though they might be slightly embellished, may make the day for some who read them. Pictures can also serve to jog our memories about the time we spent together. Things that make us laugh and things that make us cry. All of these may be used to make a good newsletter.

I know without a doubt that I could never produce such a newsletter, but I also know that with your help, and the help of my son, Larry, I can produce something interesting to you every quarter, or more often, if needed.

Some of you may be asking yourselves, "Who is this guy, Bill Reddell?" I'll try to answer this briefly. I came aboard the Suwannee in early August of 1943. I spent two weeks as a deckhand, then saw a notice that the chaplain, Rev. McClelland, needed an assistant who could type, file and take care of the library. I thought that sure beat chipping paint and barnacles, so I made haste to apply. Luckily, I could also lead singing, and I got the job. After Rev. McClelland was transferred and Father Walsh came aboard, I continued for a little over a month working with him. I was approached about going into Air Group 60 on detached duty, and served with them for just over 11 months. After Leyte Gulf I was sent back to Division K as a Yeoman 3<sup>rd</sup> Class in the Executive Officer and Captain's offices.

This will be my first experience as a newsletter editor, and I won't be able to do it without your help – your stories, photos and recollections about those we left behind when we returned from the war. By necessity, since my wife, Frieda, and I moved from Lubbock to San Antonio during the course of taking on this assignment, much of what you read in this edition will be based on my own experiences and those of men that I knew. I simply have not had time to contact others to get input. I hope to hear from you between now and the next edition so that we are able to present the broadest range of experiences and perspective from the ship's company of the Suwannee and the men of the Air Groups.

### ***It couldn't happen, but . . .***

My wife was in the line at the post office in Lubbock recently, proudly wearing one of her Suwannee sweatshirts. The man in front of her turned and asked if her husband had been on the Suwannee. When she answered, "Yes," he told her that his wife's father, C. E. Myers, had also served on the Suwannee. He asked her for her phone number. When she walked in the door at home, I was talking to the man's wife, the daughter of C. E. Myers, who had already called the house. Mr. Myers had never mentioned a reunion to them, but they were so thrilled to talk to someone who had served with him. His sight is bad, and he doesn't hear well enough to talk on the phone, so I did not get to talk to him. There are more of us out there than we know.

Do you recognize . . . the fellow on the right?



I know that the sailor on the left is Bill Peterson. The one in the middle I believe to be Harry Pappas. The sailor to the right is identified as “Bill,” but his last name is unknown.

William F. Peterson II, the nephew of Bill Peterson, contacted me from an old letter I had written his mother. He sent this picture, asking me to identify those in it, thinking that I was the “Bill” shown on the right. I told him that it was not me, and that I did not know who it was.

Let’s help out the nephew of an old shipmate. Can anyone provide identification of the sailor on the right?

### Shipmates

During the past several months, I have been in contact with several of our shipmates, most of whom I have called. Quinn (“Frog”) LaFargue, a pilot in VF 60, told me recently when I called him, that he was almost blind and could not attend the reunions, but was always glad to hear from shipmates.

I have also visited by phone with John DiGiovine, who is recovering from a stroke at his home in Pennsylvania.

I also talked to Gerald Patrick in Ohio, who hopes to be in Missouri this year.

Also, Norm Jennewein, Harold and Mary Lou Lawson, George Savatgy, and Charlie Casello have been in touch recently.

I would wager that you know a shipmate who would really appreciate hearing from you. **Make that call today!**

### I remember . . . Bill Peterson

I knew Bill Peterson well. We had attended boot camp together and came aboard the Suwannee at the same time. As many of you may remember, he worked in the soft ice cream part of the concessions stand on the ship, which was in the same compartment with the ship’s library, my duty/office. We became great friends and I remember how he loved to box at the smokers we had. I also remember his wonderful smile, delightful sense of humor and his joy of life, often expressed quite vividly when we were on liberty.

Unfortunately, Bill did not survive Leyte Gulf. Perhaps my saddest memory of the war, of my life, was finding his horribly torn body, putting it in his hammock and lacing it up for burial. Bill was one of Suwannee crewmen to whom we as survivors, and our great nation, owe a huge debt of gratitude.

### The Ship’s History

There has been much discussion, particularly during the early reunions, about how many men we lost. I was told by Father Walsh that we buried 169 on the night of Oct. 25, and 58 on the night of Oct. 26. That would be a total of 227 for just those two days in Leyte Gulf.

Of course on both days we had a great many men blown overboard, and on the 26th we also had many who were forced to abandon ship because of their precarious positions. The only official words on these figures was given to Fighter Pilot Tex Garner, when he was to take a group back and drop a memorial on the 50th Anniversary of the battle. The Navy Department would not break down the figures but the total of dead, wounded and missing in action while the Suwannee was in action was 889.

As Cdr. John F. Smith notes in his book, “Hellcats over the Philippine Deep,” the Suwannee is considered to have the fourth highest total of personnel killed in action. The ship was active in the Pacific Theatre of War longer than any other carrier.

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 December 25-26, 1944, during the Battle for Leyte Gulf. One free copy is being provided to each sailor, airman or surviving family. Those receiving a DVD are free to make copies for friends and family. Contact:

Larry Reddell  
3701 Big Meadow Dr.  
San Antonio, TX 78230

(210) 694-2604  
lreddell@sbcglobal.net

Send your email address to [bill.Reddell@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bill.Reddell@sbcglobal.net) and get each newsletter two or three days sooner.

# USS Suwannee Reunion

October 6 - 8, 2005

Please return this form with all reservations.

Activity	Cost/Person	# Persons	Total Cost
Registration	Free	_____	_____
Truman Library	\$20.00	_____	_____
Ladies' Tour	\$15.00	_____	_____
Banquet			
Choice A KC Strip	\$30.00	_____	_____
Choice B Baked Virginia Ham	\$25.00	_____	_____
Choice C Boneless Chicken Breast & Pasta	\$25.00	_____	_____
TOTAL			_____

Please make checks payable to **James Modis**. Mail check and this form **NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 6, 2005 TO:**

James Modis  
5506 South 38 Terrace  
St. Joseph, MO 64503

**PLEASE DO NOT MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO USS SUWANNEE**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Guest Names \_\_\_\_\_

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## Reunion Information

**Room Reservations must be made by September 1, 2005.** The Ramada Inn has given us a rate of \$59.00 + tax per day, 1 – 4 people, with a hot breakfast buffet. Mention the Suwannee when making reservations. The hotel is located at the intersection of Interstate 29 and Frederick Blvd, Exit 47, in the center of the downtown area. The phone number for reservations is (816) 233-6192. **The hotel does not have an elevator, so getting your reservations right away is especially important if you need a room on the first floor.**

Events scheduled for the reunion include a tour of the Harry S. Truman Library, the Memorial Service, a Ladies Tour to Weston, Missouri, an Officers' Meeting, a Members' Meeting, pictures and the banquet. Everything gets started with registration at 10:00 a.m. on October 6.

Everyone on the mailing lists for the U.S.S. Suwannee and Air Groups 27, 60 and 40 should have received a registration form similar to the one on the previous page, along with complete details regarding available transportation, the schedule and activities for the reunion. If you did not receive this information earlier, please contact Bill Reddell at (210) 561-7668 and he will send a copy out to you. We hope to see you there!

### **U.S.S. Suwannee topics and related Internet links appear below:**

**Suwannee History** – <http://www.historycentral.com/navy/oiler/suwannee.html>

**Suwannee Photos** – <http://www.navsource.org/archives/03/027.htm>

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