

USS Suwannee - CVE 27 Newsletter

Fall 2006



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President's Message

I would like to thank Carl "Bill" Bell and his family for a great reunion. I believe we all had a fantastic time and enjoyed the food very much. Bill and Dorothy worked very hard to make this reunion the great success that it was.

The 2007 reunion will be held in Washington, D.C. and chaired by Bill Reddell.

I have been talking with Royce Hall, and he informed me that Sidney Johnson would like to know if anybody served with his father, Darwin Johnson. He was aboard the ship as Chief Pharmacist Mate in 1944. If any one served with Darwin, Sidney would be very grateful to hear from you at 850-973-3462.

Many Get Well Wishes for Peggy Modis, Dee Kilchrist, Bob Eustace, Bill Reddell and others who missed the reunion due to sickness.

Have a Blessed Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, and Joyous New Year.

Charles Casello

Editor's Note

Hello, fellow shipmates and friends.

I would like to start by telling you how much I missed being at this year's reunion in Billings. Several reports have given me a glimpse of all the good times had by those who attended. It is obvious that the Bell family did the great job we all expected.

I would also like to thank each one of you who uttered a prayer, sent a card or letter, made a phone call, or just thought of me during some very difficult times. We are more and more certain that we were meant to be in San Antonio. Our children and grandchildren have been a real blessing during this time. I am slowly gaining a little strength but still have no real idea of what has been going on, except for the problem with my knee. I have been poked, prodded, scoped by the following specialists and they still do not have a definitive answer. I have seen my cardiologist, my gastroenterologist, a new pulmonary specialist, ear nose and throat doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist, hematologist, urologist and knee/bone specialist. This latter resulted in a need for surgery on the knee. I am able to get around on it, but not very fast or for very long. The doctor says golf in two more weeks if nothing else happens. Of course so we could spread the wealth around, we also had to see various labs for MRI, CT scan, all kinds of blood work and other lab procedures, such as colonoscopy (two of them), endoscopy, sonic exams for kidney and liver, and best of all, the scope of the prostate.

God remains faithful and has been right with me all the time as has my precious wife, Frieda, and various other family and friends. We are expecting better health and look forward to a wonderful reunion in Oct. 2007.

Bill Reddell

The Message of the USS Suwannee is Spreading

As most crewmen and their families are aware, word about the record of the USS Suwannee has been slow in emerging for the general public. This is partly a result of the reluctance of many in the ship's company and air groups to talk about their wartime experiences and partly due to the fact that information about the ship was classified for several decades.

The message is spreading, however, as searches of the Internet will illustrate. The ship is mentioned in countless ways. It shows up on sites dedicated to military matters, such as those listed below.

<http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/s20/suwannee.htm>
<http://uboat.net/allies/warships/ship/2426.html>
<http://www.adamsplanes.com/USS%20GI%201945%20journey.htm>
<http://www.airgroup4.com/wildcats.htm>
http://www.flightdecs.ca/A_techmode_32_.htm
<http://www.w2aircraft.net/forum/aviation/fw-190a5-vs-f4u-1d-f6f-3-a-840.html>
<http://www.nimitz-museum.com/memorial-wall/photos.php?img=Suwannee.jpg>

In some instances information about the Suwannee appears on sites that cover history in general, as in the examples below.

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

The site below belongs to a public school, which references the ship in tribute to a local resident.

<http://www.longwood.k12.ny.us/history/ww2/burns.htm>

Family history sites like the one below proudly reference the service of family members.

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~darleenz/helvey.htm>
http://www.michalik.com/families/In_Memoriam/in_honor.htm

In the site below a religious organization mentions the Suwannee on a part of their web pages dedicated to veterans.

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Features/WWII/feature0905.asp>

The Suwannee is also referenced in sites dedicated to honoring military veterans, as in the following. The first memorializes John A. Peoples, the second pays tribute to Quentin R. Nordin, both of whom died on the ship.

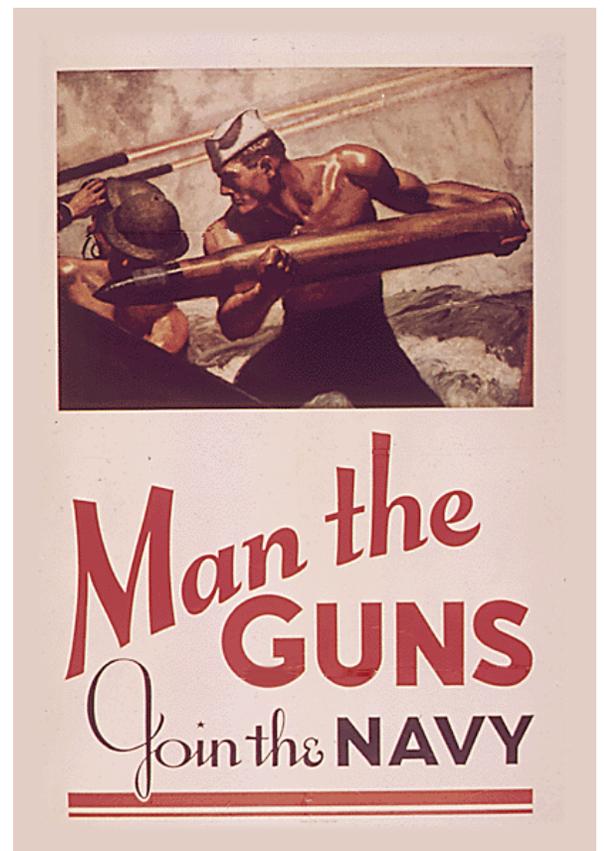
<http://www3.roanoke.com/roatimes/memorial/ww2p.html>
http://www.homeofheroes.com/guestbook_2003.html

Finally, newspapers pay tribute to Suwannee crewmen, either through sections dedicated to veterans, or, too often nowadays, in obituaries.

http://community.theolympian.com/gallery/view_album.php?set_albumName=album260
<http://www.heraldguide.com/obituaries/oct03.htm>

World War II Navy Recruiting Posters

The following recruiting posters from the World War II era were located on the Internet. I thought that some of the Suwannee crewmen and their spouses might remember them from that time gone by.



Operation Torch: The Suwannee's First Action



OPERATION TORCH

As those crewmen who were aboard the Suwannee from the very beginning will remember, the ship's first combat action came during Operation TORCH. This was the British-American invasion of French North Africa.

The Soviet Union had pressed the United States and Britain to start operations in Europe, and open a second front to reduce the pressure of German forces on the Russian troops. The allied command decided on an attack on French Northern Africa, which would clear the Axis from North Africa, improve naval control of the Mediterranean and prepare an invasion of Southern Europe.

French North Africa was in the hands of the Vichy French (Nazi-collaborationist) government, which had around 60,000 soldiers in Morocco as well as coastal artillery, a handful of tanks and aircraft, with ten or so warships and 11 submarines at Casablanca.

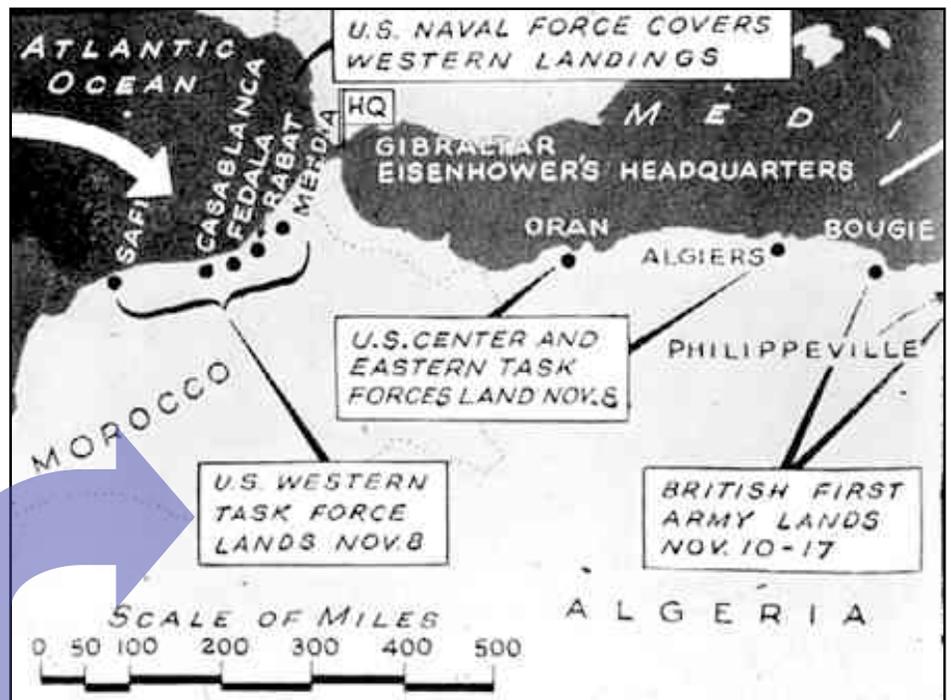
The Allies planned a three-pronged amphibious landing to seize the key ports and airports of Morocco and Algeria simultaneously, targeting Casablanca, Oran and Algiers.

The Western Task Force (aimed at Casablanca) comprised American units, with Major General George Patton in command and Rear Admiral Henry Kent Hewitt heading the naval operations. This Western Task Force consisted of the US 2nd Armored Division, the US 3rd Infantry Division and US 9th Infantry Divisions - 35,000 troops in all. They were transported directly from the United States.

A strong squadron of the Vichy French navy at

Casablanca, including the unfinished battleship Jean Bart, along with a number of cruisers, destroyers and submarines, made a sortie to oppose the landings but was defeated by superior firepower. Many French ships were lost, including the Vichy French submarine Sidi-Ferruch. Planes from the Suwannee struck and sank the Sidi-Ferruch in what has been credited as the first submarine sinking of the war by unassisted, carrier-based aircraft.

At the time, Operation Torch was the largest amphibious assault attempted by the Allies, and would serve as a sample of things to come for the U.S. Navy in general and the USS Suwannee in particular.



The U.S. Western Task Force included the USS Suwannee, her sister ships Chenango, Santee and Sangamon, and the USS Ranger. They engaged Vichy French forces off the Atlantic coast of Morocco, near Casablanca.