



U.S.S. SUWANNEE CVE 27 NEWSLETTER SPRING 2009

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President's Message

I hope this newsletter finds you and your family doing well.

I first want to thank the McCarters for the great reunion in Cape Cod. Bob and his family, with a lot of help from Carol Correia, did a really fine job on it.

There is information elsewhere in the newsletter about the 2009 reunion. Cactus and Terry Ann Walters are hosting it in Reno. Be sure to make your hotel reservations as soon as possible so that we can lock in the great rate they got for us.

Be sure to check out the article on shipmates or family members who have made contact through the website. If someone you remember from the Suwannee is included in the article, give them a call. I am sure it would mean a lot to them, and probably to you, too.

See you in Reno!

**Charles Casello,
President**

Editor's Note

If you missed the 2008 reunion in Cape Cod, you have probably already heard what a great job Bob McCarter and his family did, with a lot of help from Carol Correia. Thanks, Bob. Those of us who were able to attend will long remember our Cape Cod experience.

I was fortunate enough to be a part of the group that toured the U.S. Navy War College in Newport, Rhode Island on the Saturday of the reunion. The facility itself was very impressive, particularly the technology being used to prepare surface ship commanders for combat situations. But more impressive than the facilities and technology were the people serving their country at the War College.

The War College Director, Rear Admiral (Ret.) Roger Nolan, conducted the tour of the actual War College, informing us of the founding and development of the institution, along with more recent programs involving military leaders from around the world.

The Surface Warfare Officer School Director, Captain Jeffrey S. Jones, then took us through that facility. It featured a bridge simulator from which trainees have a 360-degree view of the area surrounding the ship. (See photo below.) Trainers can create mock combat situations involving other ships, airplanes, missiles and other weapons coming from any and all directions. The trainees react by giving commands to deal with the threats, and are evaluated based on the effectiveness of their responses.



I think everyone in our group came away from this tour with great pride in the quality of the personnel who currently serve in the U.S. Navy. I know I did.

-- Bill Reddell

Photos from Reunion 2008 – Cape Cod



Reunion host Bob McCarter presents a giant snack cup to Earl George, who drove from Washington State.



Norm Jennewein and family, who will serve as hosts for the 2010 reunion, scheduled for St. Louis.



Edgar Lafayette, J.C. Beard, Jack Beard and Carol Correia visit after the memorial service.



Bob and Jackie McCarter with one of the gorgeous table decorations she made.



The Leyte Gulf veterans in attendance proudly display plaques presented by Bob McCarter.* (Pg.4)



The Van Nords, Imhoffs and Pecks smile for the camera following Saturday's banquet.



B.J. Garner with wife, Laura, and daughter Julie Garner Martin. B.J. wrote the "Cactus" article on page 3.



Harold Lawson ® reads the names and George Norrell rings the bell at the memorial service.



Suwannee plank holders are honored by banquet attendees.** (Page 4)



The Saturday tour bunch gets together near the water for a group photo.



Charles Bowen (l) visits with his family following the banquet.



The Naval War College tour group gathers for a photo.*** (See Page 4)

Cactus or Tex



During his first and second terms as President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt picked John Nance Garner as his running mate.

Vice President Garner was better known in his home state of Texas as “Cactus Jack.”

Mr. Garner had a second cousin serving aboard the USS Suwannee in Air Group 60. His name was Lt JG Roy C. Garner, also a Texan. “Cactus Jack” was a source of family pride because of his rise to national political prominence. He was also fiercely independent and it was said he could be as “prickly as a cactus.” Roy Garner had some of those same traits.

Roy decided that, since most Naval aviators had nicknames, this was his

opportunity to continue a family tradition. He announced that he wanted to be referred to as “Cactus” Garner. He was told, however, that the ship’s crew already had a “Cactus.” In fact, Paul “Cactus” Walters was assigned as plane captain for Garner’s “Wildcat” and later “Hellcat” aircraft.

Garner approached Walters saying, “Hey, son, where did you get the name, “Cactus”?”

“At Guadalcanal, where I served in the “Cactus Air Force,” Walters replied. This collection of allied planes, pilots and support crews had played a critical role in the victory at Guadalcanal.

Despite the urging of friends to pull rank and take the name for himself, Roy said, “No, Walters earned the right to that name. I’m from Texas, so I’ll go by “Tex.” The name stuck.

Walters also informed Garner that the aircraft was his, as plane captain. He cared for it and kept it maintained; he only let Garner fly it. Therefore, “Tex” should bring it back in one piece. Fortunately, both men performed their jobs well.

Throughout the rest of his naval career, Roy was glad to be called “Tex” Garner and he and “Cactus” Walters became great friends.

- B.J. Garner,
Nephew of Tex Garner

(Editor’s Note: B.J. Garner had heard that his uncle’s nickname had changed at some point from “Cactus” to “Tex,” but did not know why until he had a talk with “Cactus” Walters during the Cape Cod reunion in October of 2008.)

www.daveswarbirds.com/cactus/

Suwannee Reunion 2009

By this time you should have received a letter from Paul “Cactus” and Terry Ann Walters concerning the 2009 Reunion. The complete registration packets will be sent out in mid-July. The first letter was sent to let everyone know the official dates and location so that they can make hotel and transportation arrangements.

This year’s reunion will be held October 7-11 at the Circus Circus Hotel in Reno, Nevada.

“Cactus” and Terry Ann were able to obtain a rate of \$59.00

<http://www.ussisuwannee.org>

per night (plus tax). To get this rate, call 1-800-648-5010 and use the special code “U.S.S. Suwannee Reunion 2009.”

Anyone interested in the tour of Lake Tahoe should plan to arrive in Reno on Tuesday, October 6. Also, “Cactus” and Terry Ann recommend that anyone renting a car should plan to return it on Saturday evening and use the hotel shuttle (free) to get back to the hotel and to go to the airport on Sunday. From the car rental return area it is a long walk to the airport terminal if

you return your car at the time you are flying out.

In addition to the traditional activities, the 2009 reunion will feature a “Virginia City Tour with Treasure Hunt” and the “Eldorado Italian Festival,” which takes place just outside the hotel. Be sure to make those hotel and transportation arrangements right away.

The special hotel rate is good for the period from one week before the reunion to one week after.

www.circusreno.com

Contacts Sought by Suwannee Relatives

Over the past few months we have had several people contact us by way of the website who are looking for someone who might remember a relative of theirs who served on the Suwannee. If you recognize the name of a shipmate, the relative listed next to their name would like to hear from you.

Shipmate	Shipmate's Relative	Email Address
Olin Benny Brown	Cindy K. Brown (G-daughter)	cidbrown@satx.rr.com
Russell Earl Coggins *	Meagan Coggins (G-daughter)	xdaysofyouthx@hotmail.com
Clifford Franklin **	Angela O'Donnell (Daughter)	xomemexo@yahoo.com
Harry H. Hepler, Jr. *	Sandy Raypush (Daughter)	sanray1955@windstream.net
Arthur R. Kirchner AMM/2	Bill Daras (Grandson)	lost.beach@gmail.com
Michael Premier	Mary Lou Tucker	jtucker11@neo.rr.com
Glen Arthur Samalaska	Frank D. Samalaska (Son)	shoemaker_dm77@yahoo.com

* Shipmate still living ** See photo below

- Taps -

Edward Blesz	03/22/08
Charles Bowen	01/02/09
Daniel "Duke" Ducic	02/06/08
Harold William Gartner	07/31/01
Page Gibb Gray	02/02/01
Lamar Hurt	01/05/09
Arthur R. Kirchner	10/16/89
Carrol Francis LeBlanc	08/26/08
John K. Lorenz	12/05/08
John J. McGrath	09/27/04
Wallace Ray Moore	12/12/08
Gilbert F. Peglow	04/11/09
Donald Rennie	11/05/08
Charles H. Smith	04/06/09
Edgar "Glen" Tibbs	02/09/09
Peter Van Norde	03/06/09



!!!S.O.S.!!!

If you served aboard the *USS Suwannee*, we need your help. We cannot make this newsletter the kind of valuable tool it needs to be in telling the story of the ship without your assistance. Please take the time to write down some of your experiences during your service and send them to Bill Reddell. The history of the *Suwannee* is *your* history. **Please don't let it go untold.**



Clifford Franklin

Suwannee DVD

If you would like to receive 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 of Leyte Gulf. The DVD is available for a fee of \$5.00 to cover the costs of materials and shipping. Those receiving a DVD are free to make copies for friends and family. Contact:

Bill Reddell
12101 Mission Trace
San Antonio, TX 78230

(210) 561-7668
bill.reddell@sbcglobal.net

* Veterans of Leyte Gulf – (Seated at front) Charles Bowen, (Standing left-to-right) Bill Reddell, Charles Casello, James Frohnapfel, Earl George, Paul "Cactus" Walters, Norm Jennewein, Paul Swenson, George Savatgy, George Norrell

** *Suwannee* Plank Holders – (Seated at front) Charles Bowen, (Standing left-to-right) Harold Lawson, James Frohnapfel, Charles Casello, Paul Swenson, Joseph Kovac, George Savatgy, George Norrell.

*** War College Tour Group – (Top Row) Admiral Roger Nolan (Ret.), George Norrell, B.J. Garner, Mike Slein. (Middle Row) Luke Frohnapfel, Alan McCarter, Bob McCarter, Stephen Breese. (Bottom Row) Larry Reddell, Bill Reddell, Terry Ann Walters, Paul "Cactus" Walters