



U.S.S. SUWANNEE CVE 27 NEWSLETTER 2011 #1

Editor's Note

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Vice-President

Bill Hunter

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Norm Jennewein

President's Message

I would first like to wish everyone the very best for the coming year of 2011, and say that I hope to see you all at this year's reunion in Seattle. We'll get details out to everyone as soon as they are available about that.

Norm and Dot Jennewein and their family did such a great job with the reunion in St. Louis. Everyone seemed to have a great time getting together, and the events they had lined up for everyone really brought forth a lot of positive comments.

All told we had 24 shipmates in attendance, and a total of 100 for the big banquet on Saturday night. As usual, we had some first-timers, and we look forward to seeing them again at the 2011 reunion.

Thanks, Norm, to you and your entire family for the great job.

**Charles Casello,
President**

Several families have shared photos and data files with us that are too large to include in a newsletter, so we have placed those on the Suwannee website. To review them, go to <http://www.ussuwannee.org> and click on the "Links" and "Action Reports" options available on each page.

These include photos sent by Jan Correll of her father Frank Elshesen. Dan Hughes provided photos of his uncle Edward R. Harrington. Mary Jo Gauthier sent photos and logbook entries regarding her uncle James Joseph Joyce, who was killed along with Obed Slingerland when their plane crashed on the deck of the Suwannee. Dave Kerr, the nephew of Joe Halchak, went to the NARA II in College Park, MD and obtained copies of a number of [action report](#) records relating to the Suwannee. Finally, Michael Molsbergen, son of Jack Molsbergen, has provided photos of his father's logbook, which document some of the Suwannee's movements after the war, including the visit to Nagasaki.

-- Bill Reddell

P.S. If you are the "Man in the Hat" from the story on page three, let us know at reddell@sbcglobal.net.

Killed in Action – But Not Really

My father, Claudell Bratcher, thought that Ensign Earl George was killed when they took the last kamikaze in the Battle of Leyte Gulf, as Ensign George was blown overboard. Dad was reported KIA by mistake by the Chaplin. It was actually one of my father's friends by the name of Brashear. Dad was following Brashear down to the hanger deck when the second explosion occurred. The concussion from the gasoline explosion killed Brashear but blew my father out to safety, only injuring his leg with shrapnel, which he refused medical care or a Purple Heart for, although it hurt him the rest of his life. I still marvel at the scar it left on his leg.

In the confusion after the battle, the Chaplin confused Bratcher with Brashear and notified my grandparents of my father's death. The Chaplin realized his mistake immediately and told my father about it but could do nothing to inform my grandparents that my father was alive. My father kept trying to write his parents to tell them he was still alive but his mail came back marked "Censored," as he was supposed to be dead. Finally when the ship made it back to Hawaii, he ran into a guy from home and asked him to give Melvin and Thedasia a message that "They will be getting some great news about Claudell real soon!" Thus my grandparents found out for the first time that my father was alive.

When he went home on his 30 day leave when the ship made it back to Bremerton, Washington, he told my mother that he would marry her the next time he came home. He returned to the ship after 30 days and was going up the gangplank to rejoin his shipmates to go back to sea when he was met by the Chaplin who had made the mistake. The Chaplin asked my father how my grandparents had taken it when they heard that he had been killed in action. My father told him they were devastated. The Chaplin was aware my grandfather was in poor health because he had delivered several messages about operations he had experienced while my father was on ship.

The Chaplin told my father that he had been thinking about him for a long time and felt bad about the mistake and he was going to give him another 30-day pass and was going to give him shore duty for the duration of the war. Hence my father went back home to Texas. When he first saw my mother he asked her if she was going to hold him to his promise and she said "Yes!" Therefore, he was trapped into getting married earlier than he had planned, in February, 1945. It only lasted 64 years. Dad was stationed in Oakland and my mother followed him out there and worked at the base until the war was over.

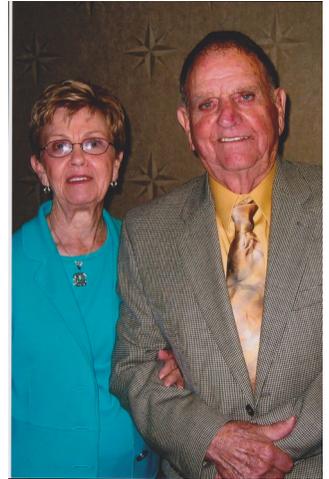
Photos from Reunion 2010 in St. Louis



Charles Casello keeping the hospitality room running smoothly.



Cmdr. Clay Mason, a 22-year Navy veteran, addresses the group at the banquet on Saturday night.



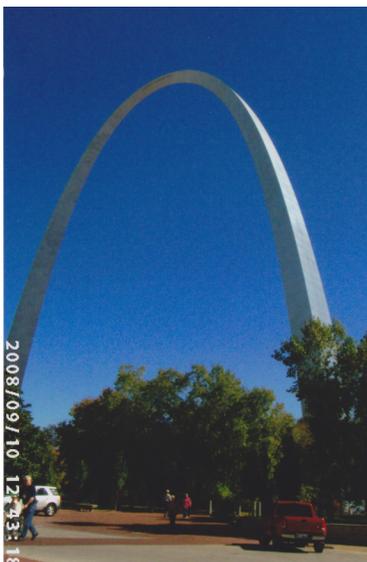
Dot and Norm Jennewein, who hosted the St. Louis reunion.



Earl George visits with his niece, Margaret George.



Bill and Margie Hunter.



The Gateway Arch, one of the reunion tour stops.



Cmdr. Mason poses with "The Strutters," the St. Louis-area tap dance group that entertained the crowd at the banquet.

The Man in the Hat

By Mark Oser / son of Jack Oser

Waking up at 3:30 AM on a Sunday morning to catch an early flight to go to work throughout a newspaper production night can really can get a guy down; especially when it's a new press start-up. Twenty-six hours on a cement floor, press stoppages, deafening loudness, along VP's everywhere. The tension at the plant was enough to break an anchor free from the deep depths of its Pacific moorings, holding the proud but punished U.S.S. Suwannee (CVE 27) in place.

Grabbing my bags and jumping off the car park shuttle, for the first time in my stellar forty seven year career in the graphic arts trades, a proud printer, I had a vary bad feeling about how the rest of the day was about to roll out. I had an attitude, and didn't know why. It just came over me as if the Japanese Zeros, like flies on a warm sunny day buzzing a food flooded picnic table. I needed an adjustment...an attitude adjustment!

Dreading my task of going through security, I slumbered slowly in taking off my shoes, placing my computer into the tray, and lifting my tool laden suitcase onto the conveyer. I just didn't want to be there; while noticing numerous older gentlemen in front of me wearing gold scrambled egg embroidered baseball caps. They were moving slower than me, thank goodness, they saved me the embarrassment of being the slowest one in line. With their age noted, my impatient demeanor reversed its course, as my dad imbedded onto me as a youngster, "Always respect those older than you! And most important, allow them to mentor you if they wish."

While aiding one of these gentlemen, by lifting his small

meager suitcase onto the conveyor in his behalf, I noticed a bright silver glimmering emblem, that of a WWII aircraft carrier, proudly displayed above his gold laden brim. His Pacific colored aquamarine blue eyes said it all; "I have seen tragedy, the likes I hope no one ever has to see again. He said, "Thank you", and the little man, hunched over by his years of life, scuffled through security as to denounce another strike against our freedoms. I, in my nasty temped mood, watched him slowly walk away.

The plane to Dallas departed on time, and upon reaching an altitude of 39,000 feet, the stewardess, over the PA announced it was safe to move about, and turned off the seatbelt sign. Mother Nature was calling due to the "five dollar" cup of Starbucks I deluged my insides with. I unbuckled my seatbelt, stood-up, and headed to the closet size bathroom towards the front of the plane. In doing so, I felt a heavenly caress engulf me. It was surreal. It was a feeling of "something" I have never felt or experience before. I stopped, looked over my left shoulder, and there was the man with the navy blue embroidered hat. He smiled at me, and I waved back. He motioned to me to visit with him. I turned and slowly headed in his direction. As I approached him, from four rows away, that heavenly caress engulfed me once again, disrupting my balance, but not making me unsteady. I felt like I was floating, guided only by spirit.

As I approached the man, my eyes drifted to what was written above the embroidered aircraft carrier on his hat. My eyes filled with wet emotion, my throat

dry as the desert sands, my heart pounding from my chest, and in "gold", the words U.S.S Suwannee glimmered from the suns rays as they beamed through the aircrafts window.

As I talked with this man, tongue-tied like a school child, I came to realize some very important things not ever considered before by this 56 year old sole. He has seen things that no one would want to see. He experienced sights and sounds of death by the hundreds; and survived.

The man in the hat was a hero, in my eyes, even though at that moment they were streaming with tears of his thoughts and descriptions of the past, as he told me about the attack on the U.S.S. Suwannee in detail.

With my eyes weeping, and my nose running, the stewardess once again came over the PA system saying it was time to return to your seats in preparation for our landing into Dallas. An hour and a half had passed.

As I disembarked from the plane that unknown feeling came upon me once again. As I turned around I noticed the man in the hat had just deplaned. I slowly approached him, shook his frail hand, and thanked the man for sharing his story with me. And then I solemnly said to the man in the hat, "My father was a shipmate of yours."

I guess when it's all said and done, and at the end of that day, I was clearly blessed with a much needed and vary spirited attitude adjustment that I will carry and cherish for the remaining days I have left in life.

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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	Contact Method	Other Information
Bruce H. Austin	Joe Austin (Son)	lepton49@yahoo.com	
Ralph W. Burns	Ralph W. Burns, Jr. (Son)	Rwburns@comcast.net	Pilot – TBF Avenger
Eldred Hopper Campbell	Don Campbell (Son)	lookalive@bellsouth.net	Electrician's Mate
Afton Bernard Crane	Joe Furtak (Grandson)	joseph_furtak@ftn.fedex.com	VT-27
Frank Elchesen **	Janet Correll	jancorrell@cfl.rr.com	Turret Gunner Edward
R. Harrington **	Dan Hughes (Nephew)	danhughes05@cox.net	Aviation Metalsmith
Esteban A. Herrera *	Jane Herrera (Daughter-in-law)	janeherrera@att.net	"Steve"
David Johnson	Howard Gibbons (G-nephew)	hgibbons@oenterprises.com	Ship's Captain
David Johnson	Thomas D. Puckett (Staff)	joyduane909@verizon.net	Served with - Korea
Leo Nelson	Earlene Nelson (Wife)	epnelson1941@yahoo.com	Bombardier
James Charles O'Brien	Joseph M. O'Brien (Son)	josephobrienpg@comcast.net	"Charlie" – A Boxer
Lonnie Mack Osborne	Dawn McGrady (G-daughter)	ddmcgrady@gmail.com	
George Peebles	Peg Kline (Niece)	ronpeg@suddenlink.net	Chief Storekeeper
Robert Louis Pinskston, Sr.	Patty Kaplan	pkaplan@abcoinc.com	
Fred Allen Reed	Curt Stephan (Nephew)	curtncarol@roadrunner.com	Injured at Leyte ****
Joseph Thomas Roderick, Jr.	Timothy I. Roderick (Son)	timothy.roderick@us.army.mil	Vf-60
Howard Spencer	Mary Stilts (Daughter)	mary_stilts@yahoo.com	"Whitey"
Frank A. Urso *	Paul Carlomagno (Son-in-law)	pmcarlom@qualcomm.com	

* Shipmate still living ** See photo below *** KIA **** Reported MIA by mistake



Edward R. Harrington



Frank Elchesen

If you have a story about the USS Suwannee that you have not seen before in the newsletter, please let us know at [reddell@sbcglobal.net](mailto:red dell@sbcglobal.net). Don't let the history of the Suwannee go untold.

To get your newsletter more quickly (by email), send your email address to [reddell@sbcglobal.net](mailto:red dell@sbcglobal.net).

- Taps -

Fred Reed	1961
Howard Spencer	10/15/1971
Bruce H. Austin	12/1972
Eldred Hooper Campbell	08/1977
Leo Nelson	08/11/1983
Afton Bernard Crane	12/21/1989
James Charles O'Brien	02./06/1995
Frank Elchesen	10/08/2008
Claudell F. Bratcher	06/05/2009
Charles R. Henderson	10/1/2009
Samuel Berkowitz	11/10/2009
Julian T. Santisteven	12/01/2009
Thomas M. Evans	12/10/2009
Kenneth A. Doyle	12/14/2009
John DiGiovine	01/18/2010
Ralph E. Feerar	01/20/2010
Robert P. Eustace	01/31/2010
Robert E. Dilworth	02/23/2010
Robert Louis Pinkston, Sr.	03/15/2010
Oscar N. Mullins	04/14/2010
Cecil Vernon Easley	07/02/2010
George H. Manning	07/05/2010
Robert J. Jones	07/10/2010
Lonnie Mack Osborne	08/2010

