

USS Gunston Hall LSD 5

Newsletter of the USS Gunston Hall Reunion Association

Spring 2006

And the winner is ...

San Diego, California

by a large majority!

The ballots are in and counted and San Diego is the clear winner for the 8th biannual GHRA reunion.

The tally:

San Diego 71

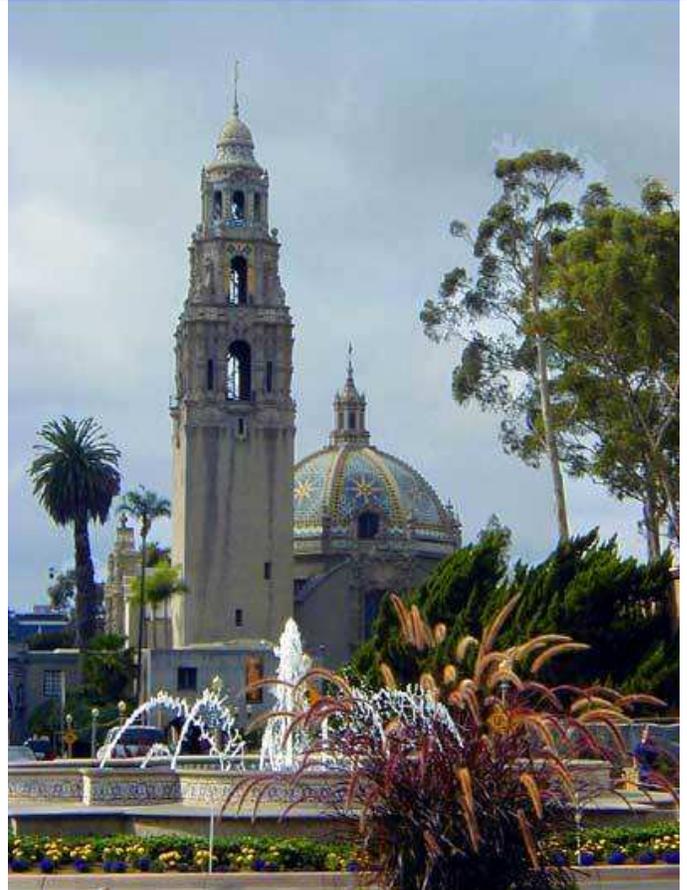
Norfolk 44

New Orleans 6

The dates are not yet firm but the reunion will be at the end of April or the beginning of May 2007. It is helpful to have some flexibility when making arrangements with hotels. Often a week one way or the other can result in a significant savings. At this time, we have been in contact with the San Diego Convention people and a number of hotels.

For many shipmates, this will be the first return trip to the old home port. For all who have not been there in a while, there are surprises in store. San Diego has grown up; it is no longer a sleepy Navy town. Rather, it has become a very cosmopolitan city with many of the features and attractions usually found only in much larger cities.

The city is rich with attractions ... there are excellent restaurants, museums, galleries as well as things Navy like the USS Midway, the naval station itself and more. If you have internet access you will find hundreds of sites using any of the search engines.



Balboa Park

In future newsletters we will highlight a few of the more popular attractions.

Reunion VIII

Our eighth reunion will be in Spring 2007

In Memoriam

We regret to inform our members that we have lost two more shipmates recently.

Henry K. (Hank) Sorenson, BM, 58-60 passed away on Jan. 13, 2006. Hank was an active member of our association and attended our last reunion in 2005.

George Biss, MM, 60-63, was killed in a tragic car accident on Oct. 25, 2005. His wife Juanita was badly injured but is on the mend. George attended three of our reunions, most recently in 2005.

Our condolences and sympathies go out to their families.

Commanders

The Gunnysack had seventeen captains in its 27 year history:

CDR DALE E. COLLINS	NOV 43-FEB 45
LT. WILLIAM F. BENTLEY	FEB 45-APR 45
LCDR MORGAN A. POWELL	APR 45-DEC 45
LCDR WALTER H. BARKMANN	DEC 45-JUL 47
DECOMMISSIONED	JUL 47
RECOMMISSIONED	MAR 49
CDR JESSE H. MOTES	MAR 49-DEC 49
CDR C. W. MUSGRAVE	AUG 50-AUG 51
CDR G. T. BAKER	AUG 51-FEB 53
CDR H. M. LINDSAY JR.	FEB 53-APR 54
CDR R. J. DURTEA	APR 54-JUN 55
CDR D. B. COHEN	JUN 55-OCT 56
CDR C. L. BEST JR.	OCT 56-NOV 58
CDR SCOTT BURNS JR.	NOV 58-AUG 61
CDR JOHN SPARGER	AUG 61-FEB 63
CDR E. L. BALL	FEB 63-JUL 64
CDR R. J. RADCLIFFE	JUL 64-SEP 66
CDR W. A. SUNDT	SEP 66-OCT 68
CDR GORDON R. WEST	OCT 68-
FINAL DECOMMISSIONING	1970



USS Gunston Hall LSD 5 Reunion Association

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623/907-3688

DUES

Remember ... your dues MUST be current for you to attend the reunion and for you to continue receiving this newsletter. Check the expiration date on the mailing label or the e-mail header. Send your 20 bucks for one year to:

*Chod Cremer
PO Box 201
Agency IA 52530*

Nostalgia

When Gunston Hall sortied from San Diego in the Summer of '56, little did the crew know that they were about to make history. Some say that "hindsight is better than no sight at all." Well, folks, here is the stern gate view of what happened 50 years ago.

The "Gunny Sack" was just one of the 122 ships assigned to the Commander of the Military Sea Transport Service (MSTS) to invade the frozen seas in the domain of Polaris Neptunus Rex. From both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the United States, the convoys came. Our mission was to transport Landing Craft, Utility (LCU's) of the Army Transport Corps' Heavy Boat Companies in support of the building of the Distant Early Warning (DEWline) radar network across the entire North American continent above the Arctic Circle. Over 60 isolated radar stations stretching between the Bering Sea throughout the length of the Northwest Passage and onward to the Labrador Sea and the North Atlantic. With the aid of Navy, Coast Guard and Canadian icebreakers, the mission was accomplished.

Sailing from Seattle Army Terminal, Gunston Hall proceeded north to the turbulent waters of Unimak (YOO-nee-mak) Pass. Unimak Strait is the most important navigational channel through the Aleutian Islands from the North Pacific Ocean and into the Eastern Bering Sea. If my recollection of these waters serves me correctly, it could well resemble "rounding Cape Horn in a sailing vessel of yorn." Unimak is also a passage for the southbound Alaskan current and hordes of gray whales migrating to Baja. Meanwhile, the flat bottomed Gunny Sack was headed in the opposite direction!

About the time we started pitching and rolling, I was urgently trying to recollect some of the sayings my dear old dad occasionally muttered ... something about "shoveling manure against the incoming tide," or maybe his caution about "relieving one's self into the wind." I couldn't remember my lessons then, but I now know what he meant after experiencing Unimak!

I do remember that our embarked Army brothers had some sort of ritual of sticking there khaki colored gills into a swab bucket and conjuring up the spirit of someone named "Raaallppphhh!" I guess it was some sort of "Army thing" that us "anchor clankers" didn't have the need to know about. I silently chuckled to myself as I munched on a pocketful of saltine crackers liberated from the mess decks.

The task force that Gunston Hall was a part of made landings at a total of four radar sites in Alaska. Cape Lizburne, Point Lay, Icy Cape and finally Point Barrow. At each site the procedure was the same ... ballast down, disembark our Army LCU's, wait for them to proceed to the cargo ships in the anchorage, load, proceed to the beachhead and unload. After

many trips of ferrying cargo ashore they would re-embark in Gunny Sack's well deck and the entire convoy would proceed to the next site. After completing the landing of cargo at Point Barrow, Gunston Hall and the convoy started south ... this time going with the flow ... back through Unimak Strait and the Straight of San Juan de Fuca to Seattle Army Terminal to disembark the LCU's then finally back to our homeport in sunny San Diego. All in all it was a mere six week cruise (that seemed more like six months) of handling LCU lines on the starboard wing wall.

Right then and there I started turning in chits for "immediate and unconditional" transfer from the deck department to Operations. I figured that I would be in the know the next time something of this magnitude was about to happen. We went into the Arctic, did all of that delightful work and all we got was a bunch of memories and this cherished "Blue Nose" Certificate.

Submitted by Don Wagner, SM, 1956-59

Editor's Note: Don went on to make a career of the Navy. We knew him as a signalman but he retired as CTRC. A reproduction of his Blue Nose certificate is on the back page.

Internet Links

lonesailor.org

Ted Reiley writes to tell us ...

"The Navy Log located at www.lonesailor.org has until now been open only to active duty and retired Navy personnel. When I joined it cost me \$25. Sign up is extended, for free, to all Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marine personnel active, retired, or veterans until 31 July 2006. At the web site, click on Navy Log and type my last and first name in the blocks. This will give you an example of what can be displayed. For an additional 25 bucks I could have had my Navy photo displayed."

military.com

A good resource is available at www.military.com. They have an on-line newsletter that contains general information about what is happening in the services now as well as information on benefits available to veterans. There are mortgage programs, educational benefits and discount programs for vets offered by many merchants ... and it is all free! Definitely worth a look

Reunion VIII

Spring 2007 ... Be There or Regret Having Missed It!

History

Part One of a series
Asiatic-Pacific Campaigns
Source: www.navsource.org



Marshall Islands operation
Occupation of Kwajalein and Majuro Atolls
1 to 6 February 1944

Bismarck Archipelago operation
Emirau Island
20 March 1944

Hollandia operation
22 April 1944

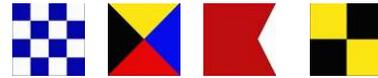
Marianas operation
Capture and occupation of Guam
21 July 1944

Western Caroline Islands operation
Capture and occupation of southern Palau Islands
Pelelieu, 15 September 1944 .

Leyte operation
Leyte landings
20 October 1944

Luzon operation
Lingayen Gulf landings
9 January 1945

Iwo Jima operation
Assault and occupation of Iwo Jima
19 February 1945



Is it VII or VIII ??

Was 2000 the last year of the twentieth century or the first year of the twenty first? Purists among us make a similar argument that the upcoming reunion is the seventh and not the eighth. It all depends on whether the meeting in 1993 was a 'meeting' or the first reunion. Count it any way you like ... just be there!



Don Wagner's Blue Nose Certificate