



U.S.S. SUWANNEE CVE 27 NEWSLETTER WINTER 2008

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President's Message

I would like to wish each of you the happiest of New Years, and hope to hear from you during 2008.

We had a great time at the reunion this past October, and only wish that more of you had been able to attend. I would like to thank Bill Reddell and his family for the fine job they did in putting on our reunion for 2007.

The 2008 Suwannee Reunion will be held in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and will be hosted by Robert McCarter. We have already identified the hotel we will be using, and will be contacting everyone later with the exact details. The reunion is scheduled for October 16-18, 2008.

**Charles Casello,
President**

Editor's Note

I hope the new year finds each of you in good health and spirits. Things are going well here, as we start up with our first newsletter of 2008.

As many of you have probably already heard, we had a great time at the 2007 Reunion in Fairfax, Virginia. While overall attendance was down, we had at least two of our former shipmates who were attending a Suwannee Reunion for the very first time. In both cases, family members had located the Suwannee website (<http://www.usssuwannee.org>) and had contacted us about attending the reunion.

One of the men, Robert Maxey, was a teammate of mine on the ship's softball team. We had a great time catching up with old times, as did other men who remembered him.

The other new attendee was Charles Bowen, who came with two of his sons and one grandson, from Canton, Ohio. Charles had been in the Navy since the early 1930s, and shared with everyone a wonderful scrapbook containing photographs from his years in the service.

The only day we had bad weather was, of course, the day we took our tour, but we had two full buses of men and their families who braved the rain to visit the World War II Memorial, the U.S. Navy Memorial and the Iwo Jima Memorial. Most of us stayed in the buses at other sites such as the U.S. Capitol, the White House, the Lincoln Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery and a number of other very special places in Washington, D.C.

We had two wonderful speakers during the time we were there. Lt. Commander Gil Gibson, a retired Navy Chaplain spoke at the Memorial Service on Friday night. His address was truly heartfelt, and touched the hearts of many in attendance. Robert Cressman, Director of the Ship's History Branch of the U.S. Naval Historical Center, showed a real appreciation for the service of the Suwannee and its men, and pledged to make sure that the information at the Center does a better job of reflecting the full story of what we accomplished and endured.

As she does every year, Sheila Fischer did a magnificent job of selling raffle tickets. Her efforts made the drawing for prizes a big success.

Also, Carl Bell did his usual sterling job as master of ceremonies at multiple events. He always brings just the right touch to those duties.

-- Bill Reddell



Reunion 2007 Photos – Fairfax, Virginia



The Reddells and Breeses enjoy a great meal at the Thursday night dinner.



Mary Lou and Harold Lawson and Tom O'Connell at the Iwo Jima Memorial.



George Norrell rings the bell as Harold Lawson reads the names of those lost.



Newcomer Robert Maxey and his son at the Thursday night dinner.



A group gets together for a photo in the rain outside the White House.



President Charles Casello addresses the group during the memorial service.



Newcomer Charles Bowen and his sons tour the World War II Memorial.



Reunion attendees take a close look at the Iwo Jima Memorial.



Bill Reddell thanks Chaplain Gil Gibson for his speech.



The Bell family takes a walk around the World War II Memorial.



An honor guard member participates in the wreath-laying service.



The Wingert family donated this cake in the shape of the Suwannee.

John Imhoff and Suwannee Featured in Local News Item

Suwannee crewmember John Imhoff's service during the war was featured in his local newspaper. To read the article, use the Internet to go to

<http://www.northsideplanningcouncil.org/news/October%202006.php> then scroll down and click on "Page 25 – East High School".

What Did They Do After the Suwannee (Continued)

By Jack Smith

The most prevalent field chosen by others in our sample was agriculture. Yet even here the diversity was significant. Frenchy Kilpatrick raised peanuts in Louisiana, Frog LaFargue raised rice in Arkansas, Bill Block raised corn in northern Missouri, Bob Smith farmed in Vermont and I suspect this may have included harvesting maple syrup, Cess Wilson farmed in Texas and I believe it involved horticulture, and finally Herb Beckerdite was involved with agriculture in California and though I am not sure of details it seems to have had to do with matching crops and soils.

Many people retained an interest in aviation in one form or another. Joe Delk flew for Eastern Air Lines. Bill Garlitz was involved in light plane maintenance, learned to fly, and earned a civilian pilot's license. Tex Garner, our Texas cattleman and bull shipper extraordinaire, ran an insurance agency while keeping an airplane and doing an occasional charter flight. Many others retained their interest in flying through association with the Naval Air Reserve. These include Cornwell, Pitcher, Beckerdite, Garner, Finley, Kalal, J. Smith, and Golsh. I'm sure there were others but I'm uncertain as to who they were. I am also certain that there were many who did some private flying but again I don't have names. An exception and outstanding example of a name that I do have is Earl George who attended our last reunion in Billings. Earl is now 93 or 94 and has been

taking flying lessons in a Cessna 150. His flight instructor says he is ready for solo but there is a hang up on getting FAA approval—I hope he makes it.

I will conclude by illustrating specific examples of the diversity of endeavors. Pete Finley sold ocean-going small craft. Blackie Cornwell was in men's haberdashery. Red Rynearson became an aeronautical engineer and worked for one of the west coast aircraft manufacturers. Charles Zubyk was a Judge. Ed Fisher earned his keep from finance and securities; Jim Frohnafel was involved with automotive service and maintenance. From his home Kal Kalal ran a sales business which sold vitamins and non-prescription health products. I made my living in academia and I believe that is also true of Eli Sobel. Ira Pitcher was a banker. I have already noted that Roy Garner ran an insurance business. Our "Digger O'Dell" went back to Billings, Mont., and turned over a little dirt; but you can't say it was agriculture because nothing ever grew—I speak of our own Carl Bell who was a practicing undertaker, or should I say mortician. We are indebted to him for a wonderful 2006 reunion in Billings just as we are to so many people who through the years have expended the time and effort to bring us together each year.

With that I will quit.

In Memory of Navy S 2C Arthur Edward Hepper

(Reprinted from the South Dakota state website)

Arthur E. "Arnie" Hepper was born to Eduard and Rosine (Baum) Hepper in 1920. When he was just a small child, Arthur's father died; his mother later was married to Leonhard Aldinger. Arthur lived with his family, including a brother named Robert, in Mobridge, South Dakota, where he went to school. Upon entering the Navy, Arthur received his boot training at Great Lakes, Illinois, was sent to San Francisco, and then out to sea to the Pacific theater of operations.

The following is from a letter Seaman Second Class Arthur Hepper wrote home to his brother in May of 1943, while stationed on the aircraft carrier, USS Suwannee.

I am sorry to keep you waiting so long. I am getting along just fine and I am feeling all right and I hope everybody feels the same at home. And how is my dear Mother getting along? I hope just fine. I received the package Mother sent me. It sure was good things she sent me. I am sorry I didn't send her anything for Mother's Day, but I remember her just the same for what she done for me when I was home.

A kamikaze suicide aircraft hit the Suwannee on October 26, 1944. Two days later, Second Class Seaman Arthur E. Hepper died of wounds he sustained in the explosion. Arthur was buried at sea. His name is listed on the Tablets of the Missing at Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines. He was awarded the Purple Heart.

Arthur's mother received a telegram and later a letter from his commanding officer on the /USS Suwannee/, which stated in part:

It is my duty to notify the Navy Department that your son had died in battle and undoubtedly you have been so advised. I should like to add a brief word of my own as his Commanding Officer. Although I cannot tell you how he died at this time for reasons of military security, I want you to know that he died fighting for his country and the Navy and that you have every right to be proud of him. I and the officers and men of the Suwannee are all proud of him. I know too well that these words are of little or no consolation to you now. But I hope that as time passes your pride will take some of the sting from your grief.

Contacts Made by Way of the Suwannee Website

During the past year, we have had a number of men from the Suwannee or surviving family members make contact with the Suwannee Reunion Association for the first time via our website. In nearly every case, they expressed an interest in talking to someone on the ship. The veterans who contacted us wanted to hear from their old shipmates or air group buddies. Surviving family members wanted to talk to someone from the ship who

remembers their father, brother, uncle or other relation.

Since this newsletter is posted on our website, I am hesitant to include contact information. If you remember any of the men on the following list, and would like to contact them, or their surviving family, please give me a call at 210-694-2604 or by email at lreddell@sbcglobal.net and I will provide the contact information that I have. – Larry Reddell

Wilbur H. Bailey
Charles Bowen
Russell Brooks
Francis J. Capron
Allen Corkill
Edward L. Bridgers
Thurman Crawford
Clarence Delk
Oren Dunn
Frank A. Ferguson, Jr.

Jason Ford
Walter Kelsch
Dale Floyd Mabry
Robert Maxey
Patrick O'Neal
Harold Olfert
Robert Kidd Patton
Clarence Petty
Franklin Jefferson Pierce
Adron George Pribble

John H. Shanklin
Martin G. Slattery
Walter C. Slaughter
Alexander Smuszkievicz
Jim Stewart
Lester Swanson
Ralph Triggiano
Stanley Wyrebek



Phillip Crawford provided this photo of a celebration in the Officers' Mess. His father, Dr. Thurman Crawford, is in the far left corner. Do you recognize him, or anyone else in this photo? If so, let us know.

!!! 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.**

- Taps -

Charles W. Anness
December 17, 2006

Roy F. Darity
November 2, 2007

Oren D. Dunn
December 25, 1991

Jason Ford
August, 1998

Earl E. Hartman
September 10, 2007

Lloyd Higgins
January 20, 2008

John J. McGrath
September 27, 2004

H. William Strom
April 3, 1970

James R. Summey
May 17, 2007

Thomas C. Tyndale
October 1, 2004

