

# GURKE NEWSLETTER

Volume 3 Issue 2

August 2009

## OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE USS GURKE (DD-783)



### Special Points of Interest

- *A review of the events of the 2009 reunion are given in the cover article.*
- *President Bill Phipps has some important news in his column beginning on page two.*
- *The Tin Can Sailors organization is grateful for the donation by USS Gurke Association. See their letter on page three.*
- *What was the funniest thing that happened to you in the Navy? See what some of your fellow shipmates have to say on the subject. The stories begin on page four.*
- *Be sure to fill out the survey of Washington, DC on page six.*

## 2009 USS GURKE REUNION REPORT

In spite of a few surprises, the 2009 USS Gurke reunion came off without a hitch. The reunion was held May 27-30, in Rapid City, SD and attended by 22 shipmates and 18 guests. Attendance was down a little, but it is fully expected to recover next year.

The biggest surprise came two days before the reunion when we learned the Alex Johnson Hotel - for reasons still not clear - had transferred the reunion to a sister property, the AmericInn a couple of miles from the Alex Johnson. Without going into a full scale analysis of the wherefores and whys let's just say the move turned out to be a good one. Guests received the same type of breakfast (no loss there) and the rooms were actually nicer and more spacious. Transportation was not a problem - so all in all it worked out OK. In fact, the hospitality room was brand new, the USS Gurke has the distinction of holding the first function in the room.

The reunion kicked off

right on schedule with the registration and hospitality room opening mid morning. Association VP Charlie Betschart was the first person at the hotel, but Tom Beishuizen was actually the first person to register at the reunion. Most of Thursday was spent with guests arriving, usually somewhat surprised at the change of hotels, and congregating in the hospitality room.

At 5:00 PM the first official function, the Welcome Reception, was held. After a few short remarks by VP Charlie Betschart, beer and pizza were served. Accompanying the beer and pizza were breadsticks and a variety of pasta dishes. Cindy, from the Hotel Alex Johnson, who was also the van driver, sent two large cookies with icing spelling USS Gurke 2009 Reunion. Our thanks to Cindy for her kindness! Rumor has it that the reception fare was ample for dinner as well. Since it was a travel day for most guests the evening ended somewhat early.

Friday dawned bright and clear and practically everyone present boarded the motor coach for a visit to Mt Rushmore and the Crazy Horse Monument. The visit to Mt Rushmore was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The carved figures of the four Presidents are truly a work of art - to be viewed by every American. The Crazy Horse Monument is not completed, but it is designed to pay tribute to one of the great Native American leaders. Everyone agreed that it was a great day.

Meanwhile, back at the hotel, a few more members checked in and took advantage of the hospitality room while they waited for the tour group to return. When they did, there were the expected greetings between shipmates. The remainder of the afternoon was spent relaxing.

At the appointed hour, everyone met in the lobby and once again boarded the

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motor coach for a short ride to the Flying T Ranch for a cowboy-style supper followed by entertainment by the Flying T Wranglers. The Flying T hostess gave the group a warm welcome and invited us into the chow hall – which featured picnic-style tables in a converted barn – just the right atmosphere for night. When the dinner bell rang, the hostess gave a quick lesson on how to go thru the serving line using the tin plates. Her advice, which later proved to be true, was not to hold the plate under the hot meat or it would burn your finger – rather hold the plate under the apple sauce. Dinner was served in just a matter of minutes and a strange silence descended while everyone chowed down.

Following the meal, we saw a great show by the Flying T Wranglers. Their music, as you would expect, was a variety of country-western tunes, some traditional country ballads, mixed with Bob Wills western swing, (Faded Love & Rose of San Antonio), Sons of the Pioneers (Water, Cool Clear Water), and some old timey fiddle tunes (Orange Blossom Special among others). Then of course there was the audience participation portion where our own Clarence Golden played a respectable washboard in concert with an Australian lady playing a homemade one-string wash tub bass fiddle. Although the evening was a bit out of the ordinary, everyone had a great time.

After breakfast on Saturday morning the group once again boarded the motorcoach for the scenic ride through Spearfish Canyon to Deadwood, SD. The scenic beauty of the ride was well worth the cost of the trip. Deadwood, as you will recall, is where Wild Bill Hickok was killed while playing cards. He is buried in the local cemetery, and in accordance with her wishes, Calamity Jane is buried along side him. One interesting note from Calamity Jane's brief bio noted that she was a "sometimes" prostitute, but because she was so ugly she did very little business and gave it up.

After returning to the hotel, the

annual business meeting was held. William Phipps was elected as president. Charles Betschart remained as VP. Washington, DC was selected as the 2010 reunion site.

The Saturday night banquet was of course the highlight of the reunion. The banquet was held at the Alex Johnson hotel. Several members of the Gurke family, two nieces; four great nieces, two great-great nieces, and the husband of one of the great nieces were very special guests at the banquet.

The banquet formally opened with the playing of Anchors Aweigh followed by the National Anthem. VP Betschart welcomed everyone and dinner was served. The meal was excellent! Following dinner the special guests were introduced and new President Phipps officially assumed his position. His remarks assured everyone of his commitment to serve the association and that he truly felt honored at being elected to serve. The memorial service was also held paying tribute to all deceased shipmates, but emphasizing those who died or whose death was learned of since the last reunion.

Sunday morning breakfast was the last formal event and was marked by the emotion displayed as each person said their good-byes. Final words heard were, "See you in D.C."

## 2009 REUNION ATTENDEES

Thomas & Cele Beishuizen  
Charley & Cherry Betschart  
Jeraldine Boyd  
Sharla Boyd-Hayfor  
Sharon Brennise  
Neil & Anne Clukey  
Richard Flanagan & Coralea Samson  
Jennifer & Shelby Frasier  
Diane, Robert & Erin Giesen  
Clarence Golden  
Nan Green  
Frank & Helen Hickam  
Ralph & Florence Jakwerth  
George Kaspar  
Marlyn & Pauline Kienbaum  
Jack & Verne Lewellen  
Bill & Lavoy Phipps  
Waldemar & Ginger Post  
Leo Sangiolo  
Craig & Jill Smith  
Thomas & Donna Stephenson  
Robert & Darlene Struble

<b>Total Members:</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Guests:</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL:</b>	<b>37</b>

by visiting every 10 years or so. The Flying T supper and country singing was certainly out of the ordinary, especially the washboard concert by our shipmate Clarence Golden. The hotel did provide a voucher for some dollars to spend at Deadwood, but it didn't take long to dispense with that. Our best time in Deadwood was spent eating at Kevin Costner's Midnight Star Casino and restaurant, where his wardrobes are displayed that he wore in all his movies. Our banquet was held at the Alex Johnson Hotel and special guests were two nieces of the Gurke family, along with their daughters and granddaughters. At our business meeting, the officers elected to help this year are Charley Betschart, Vice President and Parliamentarian; Dick Bruno, Secretary; Frank

*(Continued on page 3)*

## COORDINATOR'S MESSAGE

**By Bill Phipps:**

As I sit here today in Texas with 103 degree weather, I fondly remember enjoying temperatures in the 70s during our reunion this year in Rapid City, SD. Larry and Brenda Eckard with ML&RS did an excellent job planning the reunion and dealing with surprise issues such as change in lodging. The free beer and pizza made up for it. The tours were great; I had never seen Mount Rushmore from the side and I try to keep up with the progress on the Crazy Horse Monument

*(Continued from page 2)*

Hickam, Treasurer; Thomas Stephenson, Necrology and Membership Lists; and Wally Post, Board of Directors. These shipmates have all worked and provided support and leadership for the Gurke Association over the course of several years and we appreciate their continued effort so we can keep having these reunions. We could use a volunteer to step in as Chaplain, and our Web Master, Tom Cheatum, has asked that we replace him with a volunteer because he has worked on the Gurke website since 1985 and he is ready to retire. Tom has done an excellent job on our website and we would like to preserve his work. Jim Golden, Clarence's son, has agreed to provide interim support and is presently doing an outstanding job updating the site. He probably would appreciate help maintaining the site after all the changes are made. We also voted to have our 2010 reunion at Washington, DC, in April during the cherry blossom season. You need to see this festival at least once; it is a real treat. We actually plan to stay out near Dulles Airport so we can have reasonable rates during this time of year. Please consider e-mailing at least one shipmate and asking them to come to DC and share sea stories. I read in the past newsletters and Gurke website and am reminded of all the good times and growing up that I experienced, like changing from a pollywog to a SHELLBACK while going from Saigon to Singapore, and getting nuked by all those Atomic bomb tests. I will be looking forward to the tours and seeing all of you there next year.

## 2010 USS GURKE REUNION

**APRIL 8—11**

**WASHINGTON, DC**

HAMPTON INN  
DULLES AIRPORT HOTEL



## WELCOME MAT

The USS GURKE takes great pleasure in announcing that the following shipmate has been located since the last newsletter. Welcome Aboard! We hope to see you at the next reunion and that you will become active in the association.

**Ernest Harris**  
(1962-63) ICFN E Div  
109 San Jacinto St  
Redlands, CA 92373  
909-798-2433  
ernieh7475@aol.com



## TAPS

The Gurke Newsletter was informed of the deaths of the following former crewmembers since the last newsletter. The entire crew extends our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of the deceased.

**Winfred Myrick**  
(1952-56) EM3 A Div  
Died July 3, 2009

**James Supple**  
(1951-54) SN1 Deck  
Died March 22, 2009

Anyone learning of the death of a former crewmember please notify the newsletter so their passing can be acknowledged in TAPS and on the Honor Roll at the reunion memorial service.

*A golf club walks into a local bar and asks the bartender for a pint of beer. The bartender refuses to serve him. "Why not?" asks the golf club. "You'll be driving later," replies the bartender.*



## MAIL CALL

*The following is a thank you letter from the Tin Can Sailors, Inc. to the Gurke Association.*

July 16, 2009

Dear Mr. Hickam:

Thank you for your letter and the generous \$200.00 check from the USS Gurke (DD-783) Reunion Association. This contribution will be added to the Thomas J. Petlin Destroyer Museum Grant Program.

The cost of operating and maintaining a destroyer as a museum/memorial ship is far greater than most people realize. Paint, metal, insurance, utilities, etc.; they all add up to far more than ticket sales can ever be expected to cover. The support of ship associations is vital to the survival of these ships that serve as memorials to all destroyers and those who served aboard them.

On behalf of the seven ships we support, I thank the USS Gurke (DD-783) Reunion Association for their generosity. Their support is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,  
James V. Jones  
President

*Editor's Note: One more story from the last issue's topic on the most surprising thing you learned in the Navy.*

**Ron Hoyez:**

About the biggest surprise I had was while serving in Japan on-board the Gurke. I had sent my wife home for a visit and we had left on a cruise. While gone, a storm had hit Japan and a mudslide had pushed my car from the

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driveway to the street. When I got home I had no idea anything had happened. My neighbors, all Japanese, had cleared the mudslide and cleaned everything, including my house. The only way I found out was a friend saw the cleanup in progress. The people involved said nothing and wanted nothing. The amazing thing was that nothing was taken from the house, which had to be opened and dried. How do you repay something like that?

#### Financial Report:

The cost of this issue is \$149.28, mailed to 54 dues paying members without e-mail addresses.

The following members have paid dues:

#### Life Dues \$50.00

George Kaspar-5/30/09

Robert Struble-5/30/09

Ralph Jakwerth-6/26/09

#### 1 Year Dues \$10.00

George Jokisch-6/26/09

Joe Sanders-6/26/09

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*Our reunions work so you don't have to.*

*The psychology instructor had just finished a lecture on mental health and was giving an oral test. Speaking specifically about manic depression, she asked, "What label would you give an individual who walks back and forth screaming at the top of his lungs one minute, then sits in a chair weeping uncontrollably the next?" A young man raised his hand and answered, "A basketball coach?"*

## THE FUNNIEST THING THAT HAPPENED IN THE NAVY

### Richard Urias, QMSN 1951-52:

In 1951 serving under the command of Cdr. Radel after we came back to Yoko after serving in Korea in the Chinampo area, then with Task Force 77, then to the east coast of Korea, the officers were granted liberty in the town of Atami; no enlisted men allowed. I was on signalman watch on the bridge and I saw a string of lights signaling nan tare sugar yoke (NTSY) and so I immediately sent a king in that direction via a search light. The message read, "Send boat," so I notified the quarterdeck of the message and they dispatched the gig to pick up the officers on liberty.

When they returned, I asked what was being used to call the ship and the communications officer said that they had no method of transmitting to the ship, so he disconnected the wires at the base of the street lights and that by touching the wires he sent the message.

The QM gang consisted of Roe, Smith, Hatton, Mayhle, Roberts, Murphy & White. There may be others, but I cannot remember. When I left the Gurke, I was sent with the expeditionary forces to the port of Pusan, then in '54 I was sent to H5, the signal tower in Yoko. I then served on the Minesweeper USS Merganser MHC 47, then to the USS Shields DD 596 from where I left the service as SM1 in 1960.

### Dave Crowell, SOG3 1958-61:

In either 1959 or 1960, the Gurke had a ship's party at Gab-Gab Beach in Guam. Andy Bobbett and myself were sitting on the sea wall watching guys about 15 ft below us play horseshoes. Of course there was a lot of drinking going on with us and the guys playing horseshoes. One of the horseshoe players got a little over-excited and threw the horseshoe a little too high and it hit Andy Bobbett along the side of the head and knocked him out. He fell down to the beach be-

low. Luckily, because of the sandy beach below and plenty of party fuel, Butch was not hurt—he only had a big knot on the side of this head for a few days. It is funny now to look back on, but at the time it was pretty serious. Butch got up, shook himself off and went back to the party. So all was well, except for the big knot on his head. The story doesn't end there, as is the case so many times with service friends. Andy and I remain friends to this day. We lived close to each other in Great Falls, Montana for a number of years, and we watched each of our families grow up and now in later years we live within a 100 miles of each other in Arizona. We have stayed in contact as well. Andy just had heart bypass surgery about a month ago, but is doing well and on the road to recovery. Navy buddies are always buddies, so it seems.

### Richard Bruno EM3:

This happened during one of our WESPAC cruises (1956 or 1957). We had participated in an exercise where our 5-inch guns had been fired. Following the exercise someone evidently had not "dogged" one of the access doors in the forward gun mount that was positioned above the mess deck. Built into the deck of that gun mount was a man-hole type, non-water tight cover that would be opened during firing so that the hot shells could be dropped through to the mess deck.

A few days later we hit a bad storm and the Gurke was rolling and pitching as only a Tin Can does. Even though much of the crew was queasy from the constant movement, many went down to the mess deck to partake of the greasy pork chops the cooks presented us that day. During the meal, we hit a particularly deep trough in which the bow went deep and the gun mount went partially under water. The improperly dogged access door opened up about that

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time and the gun mount began to take on sea water, which in turn started pouring through the hot-shell cover and onto the mess deck.

Seeing sea water pouring in from the overhead, several men got up and started to run for the exit, leaving their food tray, with the greasy pork chops on the tables. With the next roll, several trays flew off the tables and the food mixed with the sea water now covering the deck. The result was a slippery mess and as several men were trying to exit the area, they started to slip, slide and fall. One crew member slipped all the way from port to starboard with the grace of an Olympic skater, only to fall into the lap of another crew member on the opposite side.

When the excitement died down and everyone realized that we were not sinking, someone went up and closed the access door. As the mess crew surveyed the situation, someone said, "This gives a whole new meaning to the term, 'mess deck.'"

Later, some of those who first exited the mess deck were being teased about running like chickens, but they retorted with, "We were heading for our General Quarters station."

Sure they were.

#### **Dave Cargill:**

We had a Petty Officer in the fall of 1964 who liked to drink a little too much. He returned to board the ship one evening, which entailed crossing about 6 or 8 ships. He got to the end destroyer, looked aft, and there was the Gurke.

#### **Ron Hoyez (Ron H Neosho Mo):**

Well, wouldn't you know it, the one that came to mind was from the Gurke. We were on a search and rescue for a downed pilot from the Midway. It was late at night and no moon, real dark. We were manning the rail. Well, the guy standing next to me was hit by something and he thought it was me that hit him. I swore I didn't and he didn't believe me, of course. The next day we both went on deck and there, where he had been standing, was a flying fish. That was better than the tattoo incident at an engineering party.

#### **Jim Lewis, Ex-employee of the "Grey Funnel Line":**

The funniest thing that happened to me whilst on the Gurke, didn't happen aboard ship, but ashore in Hong Kong. You must remember that the incident occurred about fifty years ago, so some latitude must be given due to dementia or other problems of the mind.

It was 1961, and our current Gurke Association President, Mr. Bill Phipps and I went ashore. We had hit all the hot spots, including the China Fleet Club, the China Nights bar, etc., etc. I was drinking San Miguel, but can't tell you what Phipps was into, but I can tell you that neither one of us was feeling any pain. A good pace had been established when it was realized that my drinking buddy had to catch a boat back to the Gurke in about an hour's time. Hong Kong had "Cinderella" liberty for all U.S. Navy personnel at that period, with an hour or so discrepancy between seaman-fireman and P.O.s.

With a clear case of discrimination

present, it had to be rectified. Why should Phipps not be allowed to continue drinking, despite the fact that another beer was needed like a hole in the head? It was decided that for him to avoid being picked up by the shore patrol, he needed a "crow" on his sleeve, so off we headed to the closest tailor shop. Upon reaching one, I pointed to my sleeve and stated "he needed one just like mine," in a real hurry. Well, the little Chinaman started running in place, sweating, and repeating over and over "very quick, very quick." We were only there for less than it took to down a couple beers and he was back with the jumper.

We started drinking our way toward the quay where the boats left from. This is when it became a bit hazy, but we passed quite a few shore patrol without being approached. I can't speak for Phipps, but I was thinking smugly that the system collapsed due to our superior intellect.

We arrived back aboard, by either liberty boat or water taxi (to this day I couldn't tell you which one). As we approached the quarterdeck, both the messenger and P.O. started laughing hilariously and pointing at Phipps's sleeve. The "crow" he was sporting was some kind of an obscure "Airedale" rating, not what a "tin can sailor" would have on his arm even in his worst nightmare.

After all these years, I still remember this episode and start laughing.

## **WASHINGTON, DC IN 2010**

The 2010 USS Gurke Reunion will be held in Washington, DC, April 8-11 during the Cherry Blossom Festival. The host hotel will be the Hampton Inn/Dulles Airport, so you might want to plan your flight into DC to arrive at Dulles Airport.

Following you will find some of the attractions you might want to include on your agenda for the reunion. Please read over them and then choose those you would most like to see from the survey on the next page. Return the survey to ML&RS, Inc and we will plan your reunion agenda accordingly.

### **ATTRACTIONS**

#### **WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL**

The World War II Memorial honors the 16 million who served in the Armed Forces of the U.S., the more than 400,000 who died, and all who supported the war effort from home. Symbolic of the defining event of the 20th

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century, the memorial is a monument to the spirit, sacrifice, and commitment of the American people.

### KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL

The new Korean War Memorial lies in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial, near the Vietnam War Veterans' Memorial on the west end of the Mall. It consists of 19 larger-than-life U.S. ground troopers equipped for battle moving toward an American flag. Etched into the granite are photographs of hundreds of faces taken from military archives.

### VIETNAM WAR VETERAN'S MEMORIAL

Inscribed on black granite walls are names of the 58,209 Americans missing or killed in the Vietnam conflict. The innovative, V-shaped memorial designed by Maya Lin is breathtaking and sobering, drawing crowds who look for the names of relatives or who simply take in the enormity of the war and its aftermath. Also see Frederick Hart's "Three Soldiers," a life-sized bronze sculpture of three young servicemen.

### FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT MEMORIAL

The memorial traces twelve years of American history through a sequence of four outdoor rooms—each one devoted to one of FDR's terms of office. Sculptures include: A 10-foot statue of Roosevelt seated in a wheelchair and a bas-relief of him riding in a car during his first inaugural.

### IWO JIMA MEMORIAL

The statue depicts one of the most famous incidents in World War II, the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima on Mount Suribachi on the island of Iwo Jima. The figures of the five men who raised the flag are 32-feet high and are shown erecting a 60-foot high bronze flagpole from which a cloth flag flies 24 hours a day. The base of the memorial has the names and dates of every principal Marine Corps engagement since the founding of the Corps.

### WHITE HOUSE TOUR

It may be possible to visit the White

House public areas upon approval of a request to do so. ML&RS, Inc will not know until 30 days before the date of the visit whether or not our request has been granted. Therefore, if we do plan to visit and the request is not approved, we will have to rearrange our tours accordingly. No change would be made in the price of the tour package.

### ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Arlington Mansion and 200 acres of ground immediately surrounding it were designated officially as a military cemetery June 15, 1864, by Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton. More than 260,000 people are buried at Arlington Cemetery. Veteran's from all the nation's wars are buried in the cemetery, from the American Revolution through the Persian Gulf War and Somalia. Take a narrated tram ride through the grounds, with a stop at the JFK gravesite and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to view the "Changing of the Guard."

### NAVY MEMORIAL

Located in downtown Washington, D.C., the Navy Memorial houses an IMAX theater featuring a moving presentation, a computer center where you can search for your records and a museum of artifacts and exhibits showcasing the Navy and thousands of former sailors. Many groups choose to conduct their memorial service on the front plaza area of the Navy Memorial Building.

### RIDING TOUR OF THE CAPITAL CITY

Enjoy a fully narrated driving tour of Washington, passing by the White House, Capitol, Supreme Court Building, the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument and other famous sites.

### STEVEN F. UDVAR-HAZY CENTER

This Center is the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum's annex at Washington Dulles International Airport. Opened in December 2003, the Udvar-Hazy Center displays historic aviation and space artifacts, especially items too large for the National Air and Space Museum's building on the National Mall. Exhibits include the *Enola Gay*, the Boeing B-29 bomber Superfortress that dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan; the Space

Shuttle *Enterprise*; the Gemini VII capsule; an SR-71 Blackbird; an Air France Concorde supersonic airliner; a Japanese balloon bomb like the one that killed six U.S. civilians in Oregon during WWII and many, many more. If you would like to see a more extensive list of exhibits, go to the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center web site.

### MAIL TO:

**Military Locator & Reunion Service, Inc.**  
P.O. Drawer 11399  
Hickory, NC 28603-6402

### OR FAX:

828-256-6559

### OR ONLINE AT

[WWW.MLRSINC.COM/GURKE](http://WWW.MLRSINC.COM/GURKE)

### Reunion format:

Do you want entertainment after the Saturday night banquet?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

### Please indicate which activities you would like to see on your reunion agenda:

World War II Memorial \_\_\_\_\_

Korean War Memorial \_\_\_\_\_

Vietnam Memorial \_\_\_\_\_

Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial \_\_\_\_\_

Iwo Jima Memorial \_\_\_\_\_

White House Tour \_\_\_\_\_

Arlington Cemetery \_\_\_\_\_

Navy Memorial \_\_\_\_\_

Riding Tour of Washington \_\_\_\_\_

Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE RETURN SURVEYS BY  
SEPTEMBER 14, 2009**

**REGISTRATION PACKETS WILL  
BE MAILED OUT APPROXIMATELY  
90 DAYS PRIOR TO THE REUNION.**