

GURKE NEWSLETTER

Volume 2 Issue 3

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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE USS GURKE (DD-783)



Special Points of Interest

- *Your responses to the best officer you served under are the cover story. See if you agree with any of the choices. If you didn't get a chance to submit your favorite officer, please send in your choice for the next issue.*
- *Only one new member was found since the last newsletter. See who he is under Welcome Mat on page three.*
- *On page four you will find some interesting facts about the Korean and Vietnam Era.*
- *Note the dates for the 2009 reunion on page four. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend.*

THE BEST OFFICER ON THE GURKE

Editor's Note: This is the question we posed to GURKE shipmates for this issue of the newsletter: "Who was the best officer you served under while you were aboard the GURKE? What made him a good officer? Are there any examples that you recall that caused you to think of him as the best officer you served under?" Following are your responses:

Mike Elliott:

The best officer I served under while on the GURKE was **Ensign Crumrine** who was the officer who took the time to read the service record of a boarding seaman, recognize that I'd had early electronics training and helped me transfer from the deck force into the ET gang. I was able to serve my tour on the GURKE as a trouble-shooting technician and kept the messengers-of-the-watch from waking up the entire ET gang at 0300 to find the right one to work on a particular piece of equipment. Ensign

Crumrine wasn't afraid to buck his superiors on behalf of his crew, which gave us the latitude to do things for our shipmates that we might not otherwise have been able or willing to do, such as keeping their tape decks and stereos running and repaired for them.

Norm Gassett, F1c:

I came aboard on the 12th of Jan 1946 at Buckner Bay, Okinawa. Since I qualified as engineering group, I was assigned to **Mr. White**, who was Chief Engineer for the GURKE. I believe he made Lt. Cmdr while I was aboard. As I came aboard, I was introduced to him and he took me to his stateroom to interview me. First off he stated I was out of uniform—I came from the SeaBees, and we wore greens—Marine fatigues—and so I told him they were the only clothes I had, and he said they would provide me with new jeans. Then he asked me if I knew anything

about the engine room, and I answered nope. He asked if I wanted to learn, and again I answered nope. Then he asked me the same about the boiler room and my answers were again nope. He informed me that when you address an officer you answered, "Yes, Sir," or "No, Sir," and I responded, "Okay." He said he didn't know what to do with me, and as he excused me and as I was exiting his stateroom, he asked if I could type. My response was yes and he asked me how fast. I said give me a couple of days and I could produce 70 words a minute. He said I was pulling his leg, and I said no. Then he informed me that the guy in the logroom wanted back in the boiler room and asked if I wanted the job. I said I would try it. I served 6 months and never stood a watch. He was over the age of retirement, but one of the finest officers I served under. He didn't have

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a lot of use for reservists, but we got along real fine. I also took over as head movie operator, and as I wrote the liberty lists for Eng. I made 11 straight weekends—the best the officers were doing was 3 out of 4. He offered me 3rd class if I would re-enlist, but I wanted to go home. He was really the only officer I had much to do with on the GURKE, but I did my job and we got along real fine. We stayed in and around San Diego, doing mostly bird dog duty while they trained new recip pilots learning to fly off carriers. We usually picked up one or two pilots a day out of the water. Back in the 90s a Will Gassett signed the GURKE log book. He served in the 60s aboard the GURKE. I contacted him by e-mail and we finally met at the reunion in Tucson about 2000. He and I are cousins—his great, great grandfather and mine were brothers in the mid 1700s in Mass. His line went to Calif during the Gold Rush and they stayed in Calif. Guess I have rambled on enough, but hope you can use this info. I was one of the first new guys aboard the GURKE after it left the states in 1945.

Bill Strauss, HM1, USN:

Commander Ron Berger the CO



at the time was the best officer I served under. He had an ear for the enlisted men and listened to them anytime they would ask or need an answer. A great CO and a great officer in my humble opinion.

Ken Masters:

Cdr Radel, our Captain in 1951 and 1952, was the best officer I served under. He was most knowledgeable and although I was very green and possibly immature at first, he treated me as a man and fellow officer and it probably helped me mature. It was fun serving under him.

Ted Szenborn, FTG-2, 1967-70:

The best officer I ever served under was **Lt(jg) Terry Reeder**, because he treated me and all of the other sailors of WG Division with respect and dignity.

Lou Courtney RD2:

When I boarded the GURKE in 1956, we had an operations officer, **Lt. Kennedy**. His manner and character were that of a gentleman. I never went to see him with a problem that he did not take into consideration and give a response. It may not have been the answer I was looking for, but I always felt like he had heard the problem, gave it some thought, and then gave an answer. Of all the operations personnel, he treated his crew as though they were as important to the operation as he himself was. I had, and still have, a lot of respect for him as an officer and a gentleman.

John Logie, in the Navy 1961-66:

When I was finishing up OCS Newport in the summer of 1962, I received a letter with the return address: "Commanding Officer, USS GURKE DD-783, FPO San Francisco, CA." Sure looked Official. And it was—the classic "Welcome Aboard" letter to an about-to-be commissioned Ensign. It was signed by Capt. Kipe. Oddly enough, a second letter, looking like the first on the outside, was from Ens. Phil Edema, on GURKE, then the Ship's Secretary.

I had known he went through OCS ahead of me, because we graduated from high school in Grand Rapids and the University of Michigan together and were friends. Out of 900 ships on active duty at the time, and with only 6-7 ensigns aboard, what a wonderful coincidence! Phil was SO happy to see me, because he graduated from, and handed me all the duties of the SLJO. I also became the Ass't CIC Officer.

The exec was an LCDR mustang from World War II, who, at our first meeting, told me, "Mr. Logie, there are 5 ways to get things done in this mans' Navy: The Right Way, The

Wrong Way, Your Way, My Way, and the Navy Way. As long as you do things my way, we will get along." And Ted Kent wasn't kidding.



In the time it took me with some leave, and to travel from Newport to Grand Rapids to San Diego, Capt Kipe had been replaced by **CDR Charles R. Anderson, USN**. So he beat me aboard by just a few days. In my first interview with him, he told me he had served in destroyers years before, and various shore billets, and that his most recent command had been a big, old slow LSD. He was anticipating being back in the Greyhound Navy. But he said something kind to this new ensign I've never forgotten: "John, you and I are just going to have to learn about this ship together."

Because he was my first Skipper, I had no other reference points. Because I was new Navy, I didn't have many of those. Until much later, when we took the ship to FRAM in Bremerton, he was always helpful in my learning process. We both left GURKE. I don't think I realized just how much help he had been 'til I went to my next destroyer, USS HOLLISTER DD 788, out of Long Beach. In GURKE, I became qualified deck officer, the special sea detail officer, a CDO, made JG and moved up to CIC Officer.

Capt Anderson was tough enough, but friendly. He had the kind of humility that men who are comfortable about who he is, and what he knows, to give young men lots of opportunities to try, to make mistakes, and to grow.

My final story involves GURKE coming back into San Diego from a short stretch of local ops. We were going back out in a couple days, so our berth was a nest alongside another Gearing Class DD at a mooring across from the Destroyer Piers. I had the conn heading in, and as we approached the other ship, Capt. Anderson, who I don't think

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had tried many landings, and all of them at a pier, said he would take the conn. I said, "The Captain has the conn," and stood by. There was seldom any wind that far into the bay, and none at this time. His approach was good, speed a little fast. As we slid alongside our neighbor-to-be, he misjudged the separation distance just enough so that our rubtail snapped several life-line stations on our sister ship. Didn't really hurt us at all. As he left the bridge, and handed her back to me, Captain Anderson said, "John, the next time I get the urge to do something like that, remind me about this." Our ship's pipefitters spent the night fixing things up and both ships were good to go on time. I liked and respected him a lot.

Dave Crowell:

I was a Sonarman 3rd Class on the GURKE from 1958 to late 1961. I would like to recognize John Fox as the best officer I was ever involved with. My station during GQ was in the CIC Room, on the 5 inch gun mount director. My superior officer in charge, was **LT(jg) John Fox**. We would be at GQ for extended periods of time, and Mr. Fox was always right there with us. All of the enlisted men that had contact with Mr. Fox had nothing but the highest regard for him, as he was always one of the guys, but we all knew that he was an officer, and he always got the respect, even when we were at a ship's party, or a group of us sailing a sailboat together in the Philippines. He never talked down to an enlisted man, and treated us with the same respect that we gave to him. He was one of the few officers that we all would have walked to the end of the world for. He was always in complete control, except for a few miscues on the beach, and all of the enlisted men would stand up and go to bat for him, as well as he would for us. I know a few of the officers were jealous of the rapport that Mr. Fox had with most of the crew, but he deserved it and earned it by being a man, a friend, an officer, and sometimes a gentleman (just joking). He

was always a gentleman, even after he came back from having his butt chewed out by Snake, who did not like him, as Mr. Fox had the respect of the crew that Snake wanted, and never had.

Charles Karp:

There were 2 officers on the Gurke that I would have followed anywhere. Lt. Steussy (engineering officer) and Captain Holland.

Whenever there was a problem in engineering, no matter where, you would find Lt. Steussy there with a greasy uniform and a wrench in hand, so to speak. He knew each sailor in his charge and talked to all of us every day. He pretty much knew how you were handling things, both personally and professionally. If you needed something out of the ordinary, he was always available to help when he could. You respected him no matter the situation, even though sometimes rank "went out the window" and he never seemed to separate himself from the enlisted men the way other officers did. At the ship's functions, he was there to play chef, throw a horse shoe or share a beer.

Captain Holland knew each of the crew, as well as their backgrounds. He has my undying respect to this day because when he called me into the wardroom, it wasn't to chew me out, it was to deliver a red cross telegram about my grandmother having had a stroke. The very minute I asked for leave, he told the personnelman to go and make up the papers. Then he wrote down his direct line to his cabin and told me to call him 5 days later, and that would be when my leave would start. Captain Holland always expected and got the respect from his crew and ship.

Because of these 2 officers, I often don't even claim sometimes that I wasn't assigned to a different ship while on leave. Let me tell you, the officers in the service fleet aren't the same, and I'd rather have served them my entire enlistment.



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.

Archie Hyde
(1955-57) BTFN/BMSN E Div
153 Cedar Ln
Hartwell, GA 30643
706-376-1957
a_hyde007@comcast.net



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.

Wallace Townsend
(1946-47) EM3 E Div
Died June 21, 2008

Bayard Welch
(1954-57) Lt(jg) OPS
Died June 29, 2008

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.

Financial Report:
The cost of this issue is \$114.70, mailed to 58 dues paying members without e-mail addresses.

KOREAN & VIETNAM WAR FACTS

KOREAN WAR ERA

- Korean War (actual hostilities): June 27, 1950 to July 27, 1953.
- Official Korean War Era: June 27, 1950 to Jan. 31, 1955 (The extended period was designated by Congress to define a period of eligibility to include a period of uneasy peace negotiations following hostilities.)
- 6.8 million served on active duty during the Korean War Era, making them veterans of the war, the war era, or both. 997,000 also served during WWII, 347,000 during the Vietnam War and 291,000 during all three wars.
- 1.8 million served in theater during the three-year period of hostilities.
- 4 million served elsewhere in the world during the period of hostilities.
- 36,940 died in theater during the era—33,665 from battle wounds and 3,275 from causes unrelated to battle. Of the 33,665 battle dead, 23,898 were determined Killed In Action, and 2,438 died while prisoners of war.
- 17,320 U.S. Military servicemembers died elsewhere in the world during the Korean War Era.
- More than 92,100 U.S. military servicemembers were wounded in theater, some multiple times, accounting for more than 103,200 incidents in which U.S. personnel were wounded.
- 8,176 are listed as Missing In Action (bodies not recovered). This number is subject to change as remains are identified
- 7,140 were POW's, of whom 4,418 returned, 2,701 died in captivity, and 21 refused repatriation.

VIETNAM WAR ERA

- 9,087,000 military personnel served on active duty during the official Vietnam Era from August 5, 1964 to May 7, 1975.
- 2,709,918 Americans served in uniform in Vietnam
- Vietnam Veterans represented 9.7% of their generation.
- 240 men were awarded the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam Era.
- 58,148 were killed in Vietnam.

USS GURKE (DD- 783) REUNION

MAY 28-31, 2009

RAPID CITY, SD

HOTEL ALEX JOHNSON

NOTE EXPIRATION DATE ON ADDRESS LABEL

Please check the address label on your envelope or the top of your e-mail for your dues expiration date. If it is past, this is the last issue of the newsletter you will receive until dues are paid again. **Send dues to Frank Hickam, 25 Harlech Dr, Wilmington, DE 19807. Make checks to USS Gurke DD-783 Reunion Assoc., Inc. Dues are \$10 for 1 yr or \$50 lifetime.**

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Our reunions work so you don't have to.

- 75,000 were severely disabled
- 23,214 were 100% disabled
- 5,283 lost limbs
- 1,081 sustained multiple amputations.
- Of those killed, 61% were younger than 21.
- 11,465 of those killed were younger than 20 years old.
- Of those killed, 17,539 were married.
- Average age of men killed: 23.1 years
- Five men killed in Vietnam were only 16 years old.
- The oldest man killed was 62 years old.

STATEMENT OF PUBLICATION

The Gurke Newsletter is the official publication of the *USS GURKE* Association. From now on it will be published quarterly in February, May, August and November, *subject to receiving sufficient funding.* The Newsletter is funded by voluntary contributions from the membership. All members are encouraged to support the voice of the *GURKE*. A financial statement appears in each issue of the newsletter. In the event there is insufficient funding for a regularly scheduled issue, all funds received will accumulate until the next regularly scheduled quarterly issue. Out of sequence issues will not be published merely to "catch-up."

The newsletter is intended to be a vehicle for the members to express opinions, make suggestions and **especially share experiences.**

Unless otherwise stated, the views and opinions printed in the newsletter are those of the article's writer, and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Association leadership or the Editor of the Newsletter.

All letters and stories submitted will be considered for publication, except unsigned letters will not be published. Letters requesting the writer's name be withheld will be honored, but published on a space available basis. Signed letters with no restrictions will be given priority.

Letters demeaning to another shipmate will not be printed; letters espousing a political position will not be printed.

The editor reserves the right to edit letters to conform to space limitations and grammar.

ML&RS, Inc. is not responsible for the accuracy of articles submitted for publication. It would be a monumental task to check each story. Therefore, we rely on the author to research each article.

You are encouraged to actively participate in the newsletter family by submitting your stories and suggestions.