

PAWCATUCK PILOT

Volume 17 Issue 2

March 2010

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS PAWCATUCK AO-108



Points of Special Interest

- *David Willis encourages you to start thinking about the 2011 reunion site. See his column on the cover and Mark McPherson's on page two.*
- *Welcome Mat on page three has four new members.*
- *Be sure to read the important announcement on page three about a possible scholarship for a family member.*
- *Thomas Blood wants to hear stories from the "Snipes." His letter is under Mail Call on page three.*
- *Did you ever meet someone you knew at a totally unexpected place? Read the stories on page four.*
- *Thomas Blood's memoirs continue on pages 4-6.*

COORDINATOR'S COLUMN

Shipmates and family members,

Yes, it is time again to come to our 18th annual ship reunion, and I hope many of you will join us in San Antonio, TX from the 3rd to the 6th of May 2010. Wear your western gear and I hope that you all come.

Last year we changed our format on how we pick cities. I receive invites from a lot of cities. So last year I put ten cities on the list and asked the committee what they wanted to do and they voted to pick three cities and then those in attendance to pick one city for 2010. So this year, because of time, I sent a list of ten cities and the committee picked three cities from that list. They are as follows: **Chattanooga, TN;**

Albuquerque, NM; and **Williamsburg, VA.** So between now and May you can figure what city you would like to go to for 2011 reunion.

Now there has been a suggestion on some cities to attend. Problem—we have already been there. Here is a list the cities we have visited for our reunions.

1993 Myrtle Beach SC
1994 Norfolk, VA
1995 St Augustine, FL
1996 Newport, RI
1997 St Louis, MO
1998 Nashville, TN
1999 Biloxi, MS
2000 Lancaster, PA
2001 Charleston, SC
2002 Phoenix, AZ
2003 Hickory, NC
2004 Pensacola, FL
2005 Norfolk, VA

2006 Nashville, TN
2007 Jacksonville, FL
2008 Little Rock, AR
2009 Baltimore/DC
2010 San Antonio, TX

These are the cities where our reunions have been held since 1993. As you can see, most have been on the east coast. I have separated the muster list by states and 83% live in the east. Regardless of where you live and where we go it will be far for some. So please let's share this beautiful country and visit different cities across the country. Thanks to all who have come to our reunions and please join us this year in San Antonio.

The picture on the front of the newsletter is a pic-

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ture of the ship taken back in 1985 by a sailor of the Italian Navy who sent this to me back in January of this year. If you receive the newsletter by email download and you will see it is a good colored picture.

Until we meet in San Antonio, have a good spring and have a super day.

Yours,
David Willis Reunion Coordinator
for the USS PAWCATUCK AO-108
dwshs53@aol.com

**2010 USS PAWCATUCK
REUNION**
MAY 3—6
SAN ANTONIO, TX
EL TROPICANO HOTEL

Financial Statement

Balance after 12/09	\$1070.54
Received since 12/09	\$10.00
Available for 12/09	\$1080.54
Funds used for 03/10 issue	
	-\$177.53
Balance remaining for 06/10 issue	\$903.01

The Pilot is mailed **only to those who have returned the coupon to receive it by postal mail**. Those with e-mail may access the newsletter on the internet at www.mlrsinc.com/pawcatuck. Please continue to contribute \$5.00 for the publication of the newsletter. Send contributions to ML&RS, Inc at address below.

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“Our Reunions Work So You Don't Have To”

**MCPHERSON'S
MESSAGE**

Howdy Shipmates and Members of the PAWCATUCK Family,

The major holiday season is over and we have entered into a new year. We have seen a lot of changes already, not only in our National leadership, but also in the weather. There have been major rain storms in the west, record snow falls in the east, surprising snow fall in the south, and a normal winter in the Buckeye State, finally, and with the winter games having warm and rainy weather.

I hope by now ya'll have made your plans to join us at the Pawcatuck (Round-up) 2010 reunion, which is fast approaching upon us. This year we will be in San Antonio, Texas, beginning 3rd MAY 2010, at 1200 hours. I hope your calendars are marked and you are planning on being there. As always, try to contact other shipmates and invite them to join us.

If you have not yet reviewed the 2010 Reunion packet, please do so. There are some wonderful tours that are being offered and as always, friendships will be renewed and new ones made, old sea stories exchanged and you might even learn some new things that you did not know about our ship from other shipmates.

So saddle up those autos; planes or trains, pack your bags, and get the reservations in, and mosey south to San Antonio, Texas, for the PAWCATUCK 2010 Reunion. Make sure that you bring your western wear or at least your jeans for the first night's tour.

Until we meet in San Antonio,

Mark McPherson
Assistant Reunion Coordinator

**STATEMENT OF
PUBLICATION**

The PAWCAUCK PILOT is the official publication of the USS PAWCATUCK AO-108 Association. It will be published three times a year in March, June, and December, *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 PAWCATUCK. A financial statement appears in each issue of the newsletter.

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.

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

**NAUTICAL TRIVIA
Church Pennant**

The Church Pennant is the only flag authorized to fly above or at the same point of hoist as the National Ensign, however, it can only be done at sea and only during the hours of a divine service.



WELCOME MAT

The following shipmates have been located recently. Welcome aboard. We hope to see you at the reunion and that you will take an active part in the association. We welcome:

Jerry Gram (1968-70)
2024 N 4th Ave E
Newton, IA 50208
641-792-2874
jerncher@mchsi.com

John Frye (1969-73) SH3
505 Jeffrye Ave NW
Massillon, OH 44646
330-837-3196

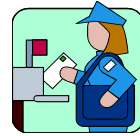
Tom Summer
PO Box 398
St. Clair, MO 63077

Jimmie Herbold
3690 Good Luck Rd
Seguin, TX 78155

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Attention Pawcatuck shipmates who attended reunions from 2005 (Norfolk) to 2009 (Baltimore). Your children and grandchildren have an opportunity to receive a scholarship for the 2010 fall semester. Please e-mail Elizabeth (spouse of shipmate Ralph Jordan 1966-68) at ecjordan@bellsouth.net for a copy of the scholarship and the guidelines. The deadline to submit the scholarship and documentation is April 9, 2010. The scholarship is sponsored by the wives of Pawcatuck shipmates.

As funds grow, the scholarship offer could be extended to relatives of all who served aboard the USS Pawcatuck. If you are unable to attend the reunions, we would welcome your donations to the scholarship fund. Our children are our future. Contact Elizabeth at the above e-mail address to be part of this project.



DECK FORCE

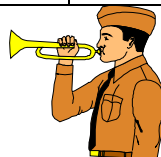
Karen,

I do download the Pawcatuck newsletter when it comes out even though I am one of the 3 remaining plank owners left that I know of. However, as much as I like reading about what happens topside, I would point out a fact that since we did away with sails and went to Diesel and steam, nothing moves on a modern ship unless the black gang/engineers are below doing their job. No power, no steam, no electricity, radio, lights, heat, winches, water, steerage, nothing. The ship is just a big hunk of steel or wood.

I would like to see some input from the "Snipes" who feed this beast and made her go. The ones who fix her when she is broke. They are the ones tied to every living beat of her engines and make her a living, breathing thing; the ones who live in her womb and in turn nurture her in a symbiotic nature. They take care of her and she takes care of them.

Sincerely,
Thomas M. Blood CWO 4/USN/
USCG Retired

Editor's Note: Okay, you "Snipes." Someone wants to hear from you! Take this as a challenge for the next newsletter and let's see how many stories we can get from you!



TAPS

The Pawcatuck Pilot has learned of the following deaths since the last newsletter. Our deepest sympathy goes to the families and friends of the deceased. Anyone who knows or learns of a shipmate's death, you are requested to notify the newsletter so that person can be listed in TAPS and also on the Honor Roll at the next reunion.

David Maylone
(1954-56) SN Deck
Died January 20, 2009

Russell Furst
(1960-61) YN1 (YNC Ret)
Died June 29, 2008

Ronald Shaffer
Date of death not reported

Charles Stark
(1948-53) RMSA-RM2 C Div
Died 2009

Paul Law (1957-59)
Died April 21, 2009

David Phagan, PNI
Died November 5, 2005

Earl Johannes (1965-69)
Died August 8, 2009

ORIGIN OF THE WORD "ROOM"

It's recorded that when the Vikings took their long sea voyages, they took their families with them. Upon making land fall, they would turn over their long boats and hang canvas from the ribs. The space between these ribs were then occupied by the family groups. The space between the ribs the Vikings called room. Hence the name "rooms" in our modern day usage.

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what was left. Then when we pulled into port we would fill those tanks with fresh (?) water, transport that load to another port (one I remember was Malta). We were told it was for domestic use. With all the hoopla today about breathing fumes, we sometimes got soaked in this stuff, like the BTs and cleaning up with Carbon Tet. It makes me wonder just where the truth lies. Were all our leaders ignorant, uncaring or uninformed, or is this vast environmental industry founded on half-truths, outright lies and willingness to do anything to promote their industry under the banner of "It's better to err on the side of caution" and their other one called "For the greater Good"?

Carbon Tetrachloride used by the gallons.

There was one electrician in the gang who was a hard worker, whatever the task at hand, as were all of us electricians. One thing we had to do, periodically, was clean the generators. Especially the DC exciter which had carbon brushes and would collect quite a bit of carbon dust mixed with engine room fumes. For this we would tie tooth brushes on long wooden dowels and dip into a can of carbon tet. We would use upward of 2 gallons at a cleaning, plus cleaning up ourselves.

One night they hauled this kid off the ship, as white as the sheet he was lying on. A victim of Carbon Tet poisoning. He recovered, although they said that if it had hit him later he would have died. It wasn't until well after I got out of the Navy that they declared the stuff hazardous.

Don't try and outsmart a white hat.

Pretty hard to outsmart a white hat, especially a number of them. On the mid watch in the engine room, we used to shut down one of the engine room blowers. There were 3 supply and 3 exhaust blowers, and we usually chose one of the supply ones. This would create a slight negative pressure and alert us to anyone opening a hatch (thus reduc-

ing the probability of a surprise inspection). Mid-watches being boring, the most exciting thing was normally a game of "Acey-Ducey."

Innovation and necessity.

An interesting innovation of the engineers was our "washing machine." You haven't seen dirty clothes until you've seen the apparel a snipe wears for cleaning out bilges, working on equipment that processes bunker C, and the various everyday tasks required of a tanker man. I don't know who came up with it, but it worked great. It took a load off the laundry and reduced the ship's service laundryman's wrath. (His favorite saying was "It'll come out in the wash." and his favorite words were "Hey, bob-a-re-bob," the only words of a then popular song that he knew.)

This washing machine consisted of a GI can with a water and drain line, also a steam and air line connected to it. You filled the can with water, turned on the steam, added the magic ingredients, (boiler compound AKA TSP) dumped in the dirty clothes, then turned on the air, and in fifteen minutes or less, viola! Clean clothes. If left in the machine any longer, chances are you would wind up with what looked like paper pulp.

Someone from the deck force saw us cleaning deck swabs by hanging them over the side while underway. He thought this would be a great way to clean his duds, so he tied them to a line, hung them over the side, and went to chow. When he came back, all he had left was a few threads on the end of the line. Such things steepen the learning curve.

Daylight requisition, or how to keep your stock of coffee and midnight snacks.

There were two windows of opportunity in which we in the bowels of the ship could replenish or augment our night rations. One was during gun practice, in which they fired the 5/38 which was located aft on the fantail above the freezer, and the other time was during routine maintenance of the circulating fans. The

firing of the 5/38 would knock out half a dozen lights and the fans would seize up in the freezing temperatures, not being designed for that type of service. Of course we could have used low temp oil on the fans, and rough service lamps, but somehow this never came about. The trick was to go in with a box or carton of lamps in which the lower layer was not filled, replace or repair these items, refill the box space with goodies and not push your luck. We did this just on special occasions and took not more than what the normal mid watch would have been issued.

In all fairness we were well fed, had great cooks and one of the best bakers ashore or afloat. I was always hungry, but so were all 18 year olds, still growing up and putting in a 12 plus hour day. One of the things we used to do when going ashore was stock up on munchies such as sardines, crackers and the like, also a private stash of coffee and spare coffee cups (personalized). There always seemed to be a shortage of cups below decks. I suspect it was because people would leave them in the last place they stopped. It's a different thing when you pay for your cup and perhaps had your monogram on it.

Coffee, or was it Tanna leaves?

Our coffee pot in the engine room was located on the generator/evaporator flats. The only thing stronger was TSP. Come coffee time, most of the cups would be gone. I would go back in the generator flats, take a rag or glove, and unscrew a "steam tight," one that was not good and hot. Then I would hang out and sip my coffee until someone (usually from deck) would come down, look around, and finding no cups, see me drinking from a steam tight and unscrew a cold one. When that hot coffee hit that cool glass, the bottom would come right out. I never did let on as to what they were doing wrong. They never got enough liquid in the steam tight to do themselves any damage. Sometimes they would try a second one, figuring they had

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AN UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER!

Editor's Note: We sent out an e-mail request for stories about meeting someone at an unexpected, far off place—either someone from your hometown while you were in the Navy or someone from the Navy after your returned home. If you didn't get a story in for this newsletter, please send it for the next issue. Here are the responses we received:

T. David Parker, EM3:

Pawcatuck had liberty in Naples the winter of 1970. Leon Stohler and I were going in and out of some of the shops there. We heard a group of college kids singing Christmas carols in English. We stopped and listened to them for a while. As they started to walk off, I asked them where they were from. They told us that they were spending Christmas overseas and were from Georgia Southern College in Statesboro, Georgia. I told them that I was from Savannah, Georgia, which is about 40 miles from Statesboro. They went everywhere that we went until we had to go back to fleet landing.

Ed Bernier, RM3 (1966-68):

Our ship came into Malta for port of-call in 1968, and in the next pier over was the USS Shenandoah AD 26. My best friend I grew up with, Lou Benoit, was an ET on that ship. We spent a lot of time hanging out all throughout our school days, especially high school. We double dated a lot because he was seeing one of my cousins and I was dating her friend. We joined the Navy together and went to Great Lakes boot camp also.

Then he went to ET school and I went to radio school. So I went aboard the Shenandoah and surprised him. We spent the next couple of days remembering old times and meeting his shipmates as well as mine. I told him I was getting married when I got out at the end of the year and he agreed to be my best man. Later the next year, I was his.

Rod Clark, SM3 (1971-73):

After I left active duty I returned as a student at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, spring semester 1974. One day walking through the student center, I noticed a Navy Officer recruiting table in the lobby. As I got closer, Ltjg Helman, former navigation and ON division officer, was manning the table. (I was his bearing recorder on sea and anchor detail.) We talked for a while and went out to dinner that night and told some sea stories!

My second encounter was former LT Doug Holladay, former AO 108 ops dept head in Atlanta. I was at a cable TV industry luncheon in 1983. He was with the Weather Channel and I was working for Time Warner Cable in Birmingham. More sea stories that day and he visited our offices several months later.

Two very unexpected meetings of former Pawcatuck crew!

Henry Shore, RM3 (1952-54):

The 108 was anchored off of Leghorn, Italy. I was going from Leghorn to Pisa to see the Leaning

Tower and then a tour of Florence. When the motor launch pulled up to the pier in Leghorn, there was a series of steps to climb up the seawall. At the top of the stairway there were a couple Shore Patrol. One of them looked at me as if we knew each other. As it turned out, we did. His name is Jim Gamble. He went to a high school in a different district and we had played sports against each other. So it maybe had been 3 or 4 years since we had last seen each other. So after a short while of catching up on how things were in the Navy, we parted company.

Now the rest of the story.

Can't exactly recall how long it was from the first meeting, but I had developed an infection of some sort in my left ear. The Chief Pharmacist Mate sent me to another ship which had a medical staff aboard. I believe it was an APA. While walking through sick bay or whatever it was called where they bunked the treated sailors for a short while, who did I run into but Jim again. He was there for some sort of foot problem as I recall. We exchanged our medical stories and most likely talked about others we knew. It has been 56 or 57 years ago, so trust my recollection of the chain of events.

Several years later, I answered the door bell and who was standing there? None other than Jim. He had located a picture of me that was taken some time at sea on the USS Glennon. I have seen him one time since.

MEMOIRS OF A SNIPE ABOARD USS PAWCATUCK AO-108 1945-1950

BY THOMAS M. BLOOD, USN, PLANKOWNER
USS PAWCATUCK

Continued from 12/09 issue

Talk about sending the Greenies into overload.

We used to "Butterworth" our

tanks out at sea, when empty. That is a process where you steam-heat sea water and pump it through a rotating nozzle (rotated in kind of a figure 8) all the time pumping this

slush overboard. Then after an appropriate time of venting with blowers, they would send men down with buckets and shovels to clean up

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somehow picked a defective one, with the same result.

Mid watches were dull, and thank God for that, but this did lead to a problem of staying alert and awake. Of course, an active mind is always inventive. I liked working with my hands and used to make rings out of Monel. Some folks took to making rings out of silver coins by using a stainless steel spoon and hammering on the edge. This would turn the edge and form a lip that you could read the inscription on. When they finished, they would cut the center out of it, and the size of the coin would determine the inner size of the ring. For months you could hear the tap, tap, tapping of these mini-factories.

I liked to make my own knives. I would save the old worn out files and anneal them in the boilers. If you left them too long, they were history, as they would literally melt and disappear up the stack. After they cooled down, I would hand file them to shape, temper them in a mixture of oil and diesel fuel, then fit them with rings of leather soaked in Glyptol. (Insulating varnish) When this hardened, I would shape it to fit my hand. I still have two of them.

To be continued in the next issue.

SPORTS HUMOR

A guy took his girlfriend to her first football game. Afterward he asked her how she liked the game. "I liked it, but I couldn't understand why they were killing each other for 25 cents," she said. "What do you mean?" he asked. "Well, everyone kept yelling, 'Get the quarterback!'"

"Get this," said a wife. "Some guy put an ad in here offering to swap his wife for season tickets."

"Hmmm," her husband mumbled, engrossed in his magazine. Wanting to test him, she asked, "Would you swap me for season tickets?"

Absolutely not!" he said. "The season's more than half over!"

FROM ML&RS, INC

OK Guys, here it is! We have found an outstanding reunion site for you – Plano, Texas! Your first question is probably "Where the heck is Plano, Texas"? It is a suburb of Dallas in proximity to all of the major Dallas-Ft Worth attractions. Historic downtown Plano holds something for everyone....shopping, dining, nightlife, culture, etc. Unique and one-of-a-kind of stores and boutiques line the brick street. In addition to shopping you can stop for a bite to eat and one of the many eateries located downtown or a drink after a hard days touring or shopping.

You owe it to yourself to consider Plano for your next reunion; you'll never regret the decision to allow Plano to host your 2011 reunion. We here at ML & RS, Inc heartily endorse Plano!

As your reunion planner for many years, you know we have never so enthusiastically endorsed any reunion site. Since this is an endorsement of Plano, not of a specific hotel, all we'll say about accommodations you will be more than pleased.

Some groups have actually extended their reunion by a day just to take advantage of everything that is available. Let me tell you, in no particular order, just a few of the things that are waiting for you in and around Plano; how much you do depends on how long you stay in Plano.

Southfork Ranch, home to the Ewings is probably the most famous place in Plano and no visit to the area would be complete without Southfork on your agenda. You can tour the famed Ewing Mansion and re-live exciting moments from the series in the "Dallas Legends" exhibit, featuring an exciting array of memorabilia from the series. See the gun that shot J.R., Lucy's Wedding Dress, the "Dallas" Family Tree, and Jock's Lincoln Continental. Relax on a guided tour of the ranch grounds. Eat at Miss Ellie's Deli and shop in

two themed retail stores, offering a diverse selection of clothing, accessories, gifts, and collectibles. You will want to plan in advance for the famous South Fork Chuck Wagon-style buffet followed by some cowboy music. This is a special event for groups, not to be confused with the dinner that is open to the public. Anyone who doesn't love a Southfork evening is un-Texan!

For a taste of Texas night-life there is "Billy Bob's Texas" the world's largest "Country Music Honky-Tonk" where you ride and shoot the bull. Food is excellent, and there really is live bull riding right in the club – and be sure to take advantage of the photo bull. Did I forget to mention the live entertainment?

For the cowboys in the group a visit to the Ft Worth Stockyard Historic District is a must. Here you can see a real cattle drive. For the drovers heading **longhorn cattle** up the **Chisholm Trail** to the railheads, Fort Worth was the last major stop for rest and supplies. Beyond Fort Worth they would have to deal with crossing the Red River into Indian Territory. Between 1866 and 1890 more than four million head of cattle were trailed through Fort Worth which was soon known as "Cowtown" and had its own disreputable entertainment district several blocks south of the Courthouse area that was known all over the West as "**Hell's Half Acre**", Now the beautiful Fort Worth Water Gardens.

For the more serious minded, you'll want see Dealey Square, the site of President Kennedy's assassination. See where the President was gunned down, visit the building the fatal shots were fired from, see the Courthouse where Jack Ruby shot Lee Harvey Oswald. All things and more are awaiting you and the cost is no more than you've been paying. Give it a try!

MORE NAUTICAL TRIVIA: "Knock Off Work" Aboard sailing ships, the galleys used to be rowed to the rhythm of a mallet striking a wooden block. When the knocking stopped, it was a signal to stop rowing.