

PAWCATUCK PILOT

Volume 12 Issue 2

December 2003

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS PAWCATUCK AO-108



Special Points of Interest

- *Your coordinator and assistant coordinator both have messages on pages one and two. Check it out.*
- *What did you look like at 17? H. Trattner brings up some great ideas to ponder in his article on page four. Let's hear from you.*
- *Read about a painted door that's causing a lot of talk aboard the USS Nimitz. See the article on page five.*
- *Some positive news from Iraq is on page six. It's good to hear some good things that are happening.*

WILLIS'S WORDS OF WISDOM

Dear Pawcatuck Family,
Hello again from sunny Arizona. Yes the sun is still shining and we are doing just fine. Keeping busy and still enjoy the beautiful weather. I hope everybody had a great summer and fall. It is almost Thanksgiving and another month from tomorrow will be Christmas.

Since the last newsletter we are still at one new shipmate. We have not gained any for a while. Other news of interest are as follows. Some of you might know that Lynn Love got married to a Chief Warrant USN. Our congratulations to her and her new

husband.

In August Jan and I went to Albuquerque, NM. for a military fam. There were thirty-seven attending and we had a great time. We were honored to have some very special guests on Fri and Sat night. The gentlemen on Fri night was originally from Holland and he told a very nice story about when he was very young in 1944 and the Germans came into their town. I will not, nor do we have room in the newsletter, for his little speech, but if you all come to the reunion next year we will read the whole thing at the reunion.

Then on Sat night we

had the President of the Navajo Code Talkers Association at the dinner, and he sat at our table. He explained briefly about how they came up with the code and after he got out of the Marines he went on to get his PHD. At the time he said there were still four of the original twenty-nine still alive.

Then in Oct I went back to Ohio for my 50th class reunion from high school. We had 45 from the class and a total of 75. We have lost 24 classmates. Then on the 19th I drove down to see Mark McPherson and his wife Shirley and stayed

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

over night. Had a good visit and then on Monday drove down to see shipmate Ray Staubach and his wife Janet in Georgetown, Ohio. They live two houses away from President Grant's birthplace. I had not seen Ray since I left the ship back in March of 1957. It was a nice visit.

Looking ahead to our 12th reunion next May in Pensacola, Fl. I hope that we pass the 100 mark. To those of you who have never been to a reunion, I hope that you will consider coming and enjoying each other and remembering the times we all spent on the Pawcatuck. We still need your help to make sure we get the newsletters coming each quarter. Last year I asked if everybody would send just five dollars each year, we would not have to worry if we have enough money to get the newsletters out.

Some groups have an association and they charge from 10 to 20 dollars a year. We rely strictly on donations from many to keep us going. So again I am asking that you please send those dollars to Military Locator and Reunion Service and mark the checks for the Pawcatuck. As in many groups, just a few do the donating, but if all of you who receive this will help we will not have to have an association.

I will close and hope to see you in Pensacola from the 16th to the 19th of May.

So from Jan and me, we wish you all a very happy Holiday Season and a great New Year. Say a prayer for all our comrades who are serving our great country. We have to support our troops.

One other thing, the old ships are starting to be taken away for scrapping. The USS Caloosahatchee AO-98 and USS Canisteo AO-99 were towed to England last month and others to follow. No word on the Pawcatuck as yet.

Yours,

David Willis, Reunion coordinator
for the USS PAWCATUCK AO-108

MCPHERSON'S MESSAGE

Dear Fellow Shipmates and Family,
Greetings from the state of Ohio, on this July 4th, where like others of our Pawcatuck Family, my wife and I will be enjoying and honoring our freedom by attending a Fireworks display this evening at our local fairgrounds.

We, who have served our country during the calm times and the war times, are blessed to be in a country where we can honor our founding Fathers. We are allowed to express our right to freedom, be it the written word, spoken word or by show of fireworks, with no worry of being harmed.

We, the Pawcatuck Family, have become bonded by our common tour of duty on the Smiling Indian. We have found old friends, established new friends, and remembered all the great ports of call we have visited and enjoy remembering our time aboard our ship. We also share in the sadness when we are informed of the passing of one of our fellow shipmates, who have gone on to our Eternal Father.

The only way that we can keep informed, is from this newsletter that we receive. At our reunions we remind all that it is by our support that we are able to mail this out. I am asking all shipmates to at least give one dollar a month and more if your budget will allow it, so that we can continue to publish this newsletter.

It was part of my job while on board to publish the daily newsletter; it kept all informed of the next day's schedule. This is the same thing and I look forward to receiving it in the mail.

Looking forward to our next reunion in Florida. Keep searching for others that you know of who have not attended one of our reunions. Have a safe and healthy year.

Assistant reunion coordinator,
Mark McPherson
2029 Musser Rd
Baltimore, OH 43130
lambmac@hotmail.com

WELCOME MAT



The following shipmate has 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:

*Rick Drayer (1972-73) E-4
36285 Elk Township 251
Lower Salem, OH 45745
740-934-2004*

Financial Statement

Balance after 07/03 issue **\$420.35**

Funds received since 07/03 **\$35.00**
Flowers for Joe Roades **\$53.25**

Funds available for 12/03 **\$402.10**

Funds used for 12/03 issue **4349.50**

Balance remaining **\$52.60**

PLEASE CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE \$5.00 TO THE NEWSLETTER. YOUR \$5.00 CAN KEEP IT COMING EACH QUARTER.

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"Our Reunions Work So You Don't Have To"



TAPS

The Pawcatuck Pilot has learned of the following deaths since the last newsletter. Our deepest sympathy goes to the widows, 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.

*Leonard Lanteigne
(1964-65) BM1 2nd Div
Died January 25, 2002*

*Walter Beardslee
Died July 28, 2003*



MAIL CALL

To Whom It May Concern:

I want to report to you my husband Walter L. Beardslee's death. He left us on July 28th, 2003.

He served aboard the following ships:

USS Mattabassett AOG-52
USS Pawcatuck AO-108
USS Dodge County LST-722
USS Betelgeuse AK-260
USS Orion AS-18

I am enclosing a copy of his obituary.

Sincerely,
Jeannine E. Beardslee

Obituary for Walter Beardslee
Walter Lee Beardslee
Age 73
July 28, 2003
Greenbrier, TN
Died Monday, July 28, 2003. Born

April 12, 1930 in Elmira, NY to the late Grant and Doris Bush Beardslee. He was retired from the U.S.Navy and was a member of the First Church of the Nazarene in Nashville. Preceded in death by his son, Grant E. Beardslee; brother, Donald Beardslee; grandchild, Jessica Stevens. Survived by his wife, Jeannine Estep Beardslee of Greenbrier; sons, Dale Beardslee of Hendersonville; Todd Beardslee of Springfield; daughter, Cindy Stevens of Arapahoe, NC; grandchildren; Amy Medana, Justin Beardslee, Benjamin and Joel Stevens, Ashton Beardslee; great-grandchild, Spencer Grant Medana. His remains rest at the Robertson County Funeral Home where funeral services will be conducted Thursday at 1 p.m. with Dr. Millard Reed and Dr. Gary Henecke officiating. Honorary Pallbearers will be the members of the Becomer's Sunday School Class of the First Church of the Nazarene. Interment will follow in the Spring Hill Cemetery in Madison.

Editor's Note: The following is the correspondence between David Willis and The Roanoke Times.

Hello from sunny Arizona,

I would appreciate if you could please send me a few copies of the obituary of Joe Roades. We served on the USS Pawcatuck AO-108 and 20 months ago, Joe and I were allowed to go on the ship as it sits on the James River off of Fort Eustis, VA.

We had a great trip and Joe was thrilled to be able to get on the ship. If you could send just that copy I would appreciate it. To take it off line, I would be printing the whole list.

Your cooperation in this matter will be appreciated by his shipmates.

Yours,
David Willis, Reunion Coordinator for the USS Pawcatuck AO-108

Obituary for Joe Roades
ROADES, Joseph Edward, 70, of Roanoke and Moneta, VA, passed

away suddenly on Tuesday, July 1, 2003. He was a retired school teacher from Roanoke City Schools with 32 years service. He taught Machine Shop at Jefferson High School from 1963 to 1978 and at Patrick Henry High School, Gibboney Vo-tech from 1978 to 1995. He still volunteered as a teacher at Roanoke City Governor's School until recently. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1952 to 1956 as a Machinist's Mate, 2nd Class aboard the USS Pawcatuck. He was also a member of the Masonic Lodge and the Ruritan Club. He is preceded in death by his father, Milton Preston Roades and his mother, Virginia Maupin Roades. He is survived by his wife, Judy Hallis Roades of Roanoke; stepson, James Hallis, Jr. and wife, Ericka Hallis of Fayetteville, NC; stepdaughter, Stephanie Hallis and grandson, Brandon Snead of Roanoke; brother, Marshall Roades and wife, Marlene Roades of Wirtz, VA; aunt, Lucille Lawrence of Roanoke; niece, Debbie Johnson of Vinton; stepbrother, Bill Atkins of Vinton; stepson, Douglas Eubank of Bedford; stepson, Daniel Eubank of Bedford; stepdaughter, Susie Roach and husband, Darrin Roach; stepdaughter, Cassandra Mitchell and husband, William Mitchell. He attended Bethlehem United Methodist Church of Moneta, VA. Funeral services will be held 10 a.m. Saturday, July 5, 2003, at Oakey's North Chapel with Rev. Riley Smith officiating. The interment will follow in Sherwood Memorial Park.

REMEMBERING JOE

During idle times, we tend to privately reflect on times past. Recently, as I was reflecting on the past 10 reunions which Gloria and I have attended, we have met and enjoyed the company of many shipmates which we may or may not have known during our tour of

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

duty on the AO-108. Yet, the friendships which have been created through these reunions, have been strong and everlasting. But we must remind ourselves that we are not eternal on this earth and that our friendships are interrupted by death. We recently lost one of our shipmates, who was not only a shipmate, but a friend and gentleman. Joe Roades was the type of man I would be proud to have at my side at war, at sea, at play or simply on holiday together. It has been my pleasure and my good fortune to have known Joe Roades, for he was, and is, truly one of the "Good Guys." To paraphrase what Joe Roades would say to me, "We love you Brother, Godspeed."

Shipmates forever,
Joe "Nick" Nicastro

Pawcatuck,

Thank you all for the beautiful flowers that expressed your sympathy in our recent sorrow of Joe Roades' passing. It was so thoughtful of you to remember us.

We so enjoyed our reunion there this year and have always enjoyed the reunions.

Joe was such a good person and will be remembered by all who knew him.

Sincerely,
Judy Roades

WHAT DID YOU LOOK LIKE AT 17?

The items in the Pawcatuck Pilot, from time to time, remind me of how quickly time has passed and the changes that have occurred to me and to the world in which I (and you) live. But what was it really like when you were 17 years of age and took the oath and entered a world of which most of us at that age knew nothing? What were your thoughts and what did you look like, when contrasted with what you are now?

After reading the recent article about the reunion in North Carolina, I rummaged around in the file that contains an assortment of pictures, mementos and just "stuff" and came up with the enclosed picture (see *below*). It was 1946, and we were on our second or third trip in the Atlantic. The figure on the right is Martin Toohey (Marty), currently residing in Bloomfield, Michigan, and I am on his right.

I note that it was chilly, hence the jacket and sweater; I did not need glasses to read; I had a crop of hair that seemed to grow like the proverbial weed requiring frequent haircuts, according to the leading P.O. at the time. I no longer have that problem. Marty and I were both learning the mysteries of signaling and navigation (we were in what was then called "C" division); and fumbling our way toward maturity, and what we now refer to as Adulthood. Perhaps you have had some experience with this process, through your children. No doubt some of you may have by-passed this stage of development.

We learned about mid-watches; 8 bells, attention to colors and a host of other strange and mysterious terms. It was a learning experience. In addition, for we two and most of the crew at the time, had never been more than 50 miles from home!

In reading the items in the Pilot, I rarely see anything from the "old-timers," all of which are well into their 70s and some 80s at this reading. There are vague references to incidents, and attempts to find old buddies, but with one exception



very little about the original shock of being in the Navy and having to grow up in a hurry; of being held to account as an adult; of being responsible for your own job and, upon occasion, that of your crew mate; of having to double over on standing watch, because your relief was ill; of missing chow because of a lot of signal traffic and you couldn't leave the bridge... and the list goes on.

To those plankowners who are still among those present, would I recognize you if I saw you? I suspect not. Equally, would you know me? Unlikely. It would, however, be worth a try to find out,... wouldn't it?

And in the unlikely event that we did meet, how much reminiscing could you stand of my stories, and me of yours? They would, of course, "grow" in the telling, and be somewhat embellished. This we refer to as "yarning."

So, to those of you who are still among us, and who can look back some 50 plus years to then, with the satisfaction that you survived, and may even have prospered, I salute you and offer the old adage: "May you have fair winds and following seas" for the rest of your voyage.

H. Trattner
One time QM/3
USS Pawcatuck A)-108

Editor's Note: I think Mr. Trattner is encouraging you to express your thoughts on the things upon which he was reflecting. Please let us hear from you.

Hey Pawcatuck People,

Do you remember Coldiron from Ferriday, LA? Elizabeth and I met him and his bride about half way and had a meal with them. He always carried the chipping hammer on the ship. Captain Horne had him a gold hammer made and presented it to him just before he left the ship. It hangs on his wall with pride. He hopes to be at the Pawcatuck Ship reunion this next May 2004 in Pensacola, FL

Ralph Jordan, SHB

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

NEWS FROM A PROUD GRANDPA!

David Willis' granddaughter, Jen Christian, is a top ranked high school, soon to be college, volleyball player. She is ranked 8th in the nation for those entering college and she is the Big School Volleyball Player of the Year. The following article appeared in The Arizona Republic newspaper.

Four-year starter to get jump on college game BIG SCHOOL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

By Jose E. Garcia
The Arizona Republic

Jen Christian doesn't appear to want to slow down.

As soon as she finished enrolling at Gilbert High four seasons ago as a 6-foot-1 freshman, the Dayton, Ohio, native was a varsity starter.

"She was awkward, but you could tell even then that she was going to be special," coach Joe Hesse said.

After Christian's sophomore year, the University of Texas reserved a spot for Christian when she orally committed to the school. As a junior, she played in her first state championship match.

And as a senior, Christian will leave Gilbert in December to start training with Texas, five months before she walks with her graduating class. Before she takes off somewhere else, Christian is *The Republic's* Big School Volleyball Player of the Year.

"I don't have any regrets," Christian said. "Why wait? I took other visits to other schools, but I felt confident, and still do, about going to Texas."

Winning a state title is about the only thing Christian had to wait for.

That didn't materialize until her senior year, when Gilbert defeated the team, Xavier Prep, that upset Gilbert in last season's Class 5A title match. Gilbert avenged that loss 15 days ago when it defeated Xavier in

three games in this season's final.

"Last year we were anxious heading into the (title) match," Christian said. "When we were in the locker room (before this year's final), everybody was just sitting around and talking. It was unreal how calm we were."

On the floor, Xavier coach Tim McHale ordered his players to play keep-away from Christian.

"The strategy was to go somewhere else other than Jen," McHale said. "But she had such a profound impact on the match (11 kills, 15 digs). She has surpassed what I thought she was going to become. I didn't realize she was going to be that good. Unless there's an All-American in front of her, she is going to have an immediate impact at Texas."

As one of the nation's top outside hitters, Christian powered her way through, around or over blocks with her right-handed tomahawks from the left side.

Her 6-foot-3 frame also helped Christian amass 432 kills (9.1 kills per match) this season. On defense, Christian was just as impressive, tallying 420 digs.

SYMBOL OF FREEDOM ABOARD NIMITZ HAS FAR REACHING EFFECTS

This article, and the one following it, are both taken from "The Northwest Navigator," and were submitted by Thomas Blood

A work center door displaying the American flag began as a sign of pride and patriotism for a small group of USS Nimitz (CVN 68) Sailors, but has now become a symbol of freedom and dedication for many.

In the high-traffic area of the forward mess decks, the door's artwork has been causing some Sail-

ors to stop and take stock of the importance of the mission they are performing for their country.

The painted door began as a set of sketches for the Sailors in the Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) Work Center. With a number of designs to choose from, it was decided that an American flag would be painted to span the width of the door. The words, "Operation Iraqi Freedom 2003" were added, and shortly thereafter, a patriotic verse appeared. Each damage controlman in the shop contributed to the artwork on the door in one way or another. Work Center Supervisor, Damage Controlman 2nd Class (SW/AW) Shane Morel, said he really encouraged his work center and gave them plenty of time to work on it, once he saw how much it was bringing the shop together. Damage Controlman 3rd Class (SW) Darwin Ky was the one who came up with the sketch. "When I walk up to the door and someone is looking at it, it makes me feel proud," said Ky.

Senior Chief Mess Management Specialist (SW) Fran Cofield says she sees Sailors reading the door all the time. "I think it was a good idea, and it brought back an old tradition," said Cofield, referring to the past times when Sailors painted various symbols of pride in their work centers.

Damage Controlman 3rd Class (SW) Lemont Bagging painted most of the door, and Damage Controlman 3rd Class Joseph Ramirez painted the majority of the lettering. Ramirez also came up with the saying written at the bottom of the door: "From the depth of the sea, to the height of the sky, colors like these never fade, nor run dry."

Ramirez said it describes Nimitz' mission, not only as a seafaring ship, but also as a platform for freedom, changing things from the sea to the sky. He said the red, white and blue of the flag reminds him of a well that will never run dry.

"I've been drawing since I was a kid, and I really put my heart in this," said Ramirez. "There's a lot of eyes

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

on this door." He believes it has a lot of meaning and serves as an outward expression of the whole shop.

And a lot of signatures too. The waving flag provided each of the 21 Sailors in the AFF Shop a stripe on which to sign. Once the door was finished and everyone in the shop had signed it, Morel suggested the shop get the rest of their chain of command to sign it. The door now has signatures by the ship's fire marshal, the strike group commander, and even the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy who signed the door during a recent visit to Nimitz.

SEABEES RESTORE BRITISH CEMETERY IN IRAQ

A unique ceremony took place recently in the old Iraqi town of Al Kut, featuring a distinguished collection of senior military officers.

The event included U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. James T. Conway, Commanding General 1st Marine Expeditionary Force and Brig. Gen. Richard E. Natanski, Commanding General Task Force Tarawa; British Maj. Gen. Robin Brims, Commanding General 1st U.K. Armoured Division; and the U.S. Navy Seabees' Rear Adm. Charles Kubic, Commander 1 Marine Expeditionary Force Engineer Group and Commander 1st Naval Construction Division/Naval Construction Forces Command. They and others participated in a rededication ceremony of an old World War 1 British military cemetery. The ceremony took place in an old part of the city on a lot occupied by 420 British graves dating back to 1914-1918. Also present were senior representatives of the British military chaplains and the Church of England. The area was packed with U.S. Marines, British soldiers, Al Kut city officials and local Iraqi townspeo-

ple, making for a pleasant gathering of old allies and new friends. All were focused on honoring men who came to this area almost a century before and who made the ultimate sacrifice in fighting the Ottoman Turks, setting the foundation for Iraqi freedom. Lost to history today, Great Britain fought a long and protracted military campaign in Iraq known as the British Mesopotamian Campaign of World War I (WWI). From the fall of 1914 through the fall of 1918, some 80,000 casualties were sustained by the British Army, of which 30,000 died. Of these, estimates are that 15,000 were deaths resulting from combat, while the other 15,000 were attributed to disease, mainly cholera.

One of Britain's setbacks in the campaign was the loss of its entire 6th Division following an arduous siege by the Turkish Army here at Al Kut. Greatly outnumbered by the enemy in April 1916, the British unit was forced to surrender when it completely ran out of supplies. From Kut, the Turks forced the British (and many Indian Army) prisoners to march back to Baghdad. Most of the 10,000 prisoners did not survive the ordeal in 120-degree heat with little food and water.

The Kut cemetery thus stood for decades as a memorial to the tragic reality of men pursuing their duty despite insurmountable odds. Though the Kut British Military Cemetery was maintained for years by the British War Graves Commission and members of the local Kut community, the area was ordered desecrated and turned into a city dump by Saddam Hussein's Baathist Party in 1991. This was simply punishment for Britain aligning herself with the United States in the first Gulf War. With the recent capture and occupation of Al Kut by Marine Corps forces of Task Force Tarawa, a group of Marines and the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 133 Seabees from Task Force Charlie of the Marine Expeditionary Force Engineer Group organized a clean-up and repair effort to restore the cemetery. Their motivation was to acknowledge the previous sacrifices of fellow warriors

and to thank Britain for standing closely by the United States in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Seabee contribution by NMCB 133 focused on the unique reconstruction of the central memorial in the cemetery. This included re-fabricating the original steel cross that was mounted in masonry. Under the skillful expertise of Builder 3rd Class Clifford Ainsworth and Steelworker 3rd Class Kevin Lynch, a beautiful new and structurally strong cross was made and re-mounted. A brass plaque was attached to the back side of the memorial commemorating the occasion.

It was indeed a powerful, poignant moment when attendees snapped to attention, the British Army bagpiper played "God Save the Queen," and the Union Jack was hoisted up the pole behind the memorial. Brims graciously acknowledged the heartfelt gestures of the Americans and the unique bond shared as allied nations committed to freedom. Nothing marked the occasion better than the WWI quote by John Maxwell, now clearly inscribed on the Al Kut memorial. "When you go home, tell them of us, and say; 'For your tomorrow, we gave our today.'"

**USS PAWCATUCK
2004 REUNION**

**SUN. MAY 16-
WED. MAY 19**

**HOLIDAY INN
UNIVERSITY MALL**

PENSACOLA, FL

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