

PAWCATUCK PILOT

Volume 10, Issue 4

December 2001

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS PAWCATUCK AO-108



Special Points of Interest

- *Test your memory of your first days in the Navy and read about a visit back to the Pawcatuck in David Willis's article one pages one and two.*
- *The newsletter will now be available on line. See details on page three.*
- *Remember the story from the last issue about sinking the tug? Hear the story from someone with real first-hand knowledge. Read his story under MAIL CALL on page four.*
- *Read about Phoenix and fill out the survey for the 2002 reunion on pages six and seven.*

A JOURNEY BACK IN TIME

Dear Shipmates,

I would like to take you back in time to when you joined the Navy. Do you remember what day you joined? Where did you go to boot camp? How old were you at the time? Now you're at boot camp and you are probably asking yourself why did I do this? I am sure all of us had our reasons for joining and what you wanted to be when you joined.

Now I take you back when you finished boot camp and you received your orders. I am sure some of you went directly to a ship, or a Navy school,

or shore duty somewhere. Many of us went to the USS PAWCATUCK AO-108. Now I remember asking what in the world is an "AO"?

Well, as many of us found out it was one of the biggest ships many of us had seen in our young lives and of course there were the battleships, carriers, tenders, repair ships and destroyers. When we say the USS PAWCATUCK we thought it was big, especially if the ship was on empty. Now we were all assigned to our divisions and started to work as sailors in the greatest Navy in

the world. Do you remember the first day you went to sea and started fueling the other ships in the fleet?

We are now on our way to some port that we had never been to or thought we would ever see. My first foreign port was San Juan, PR. Beautiful city and had a good time. Then we went to Havana, Cuba. Now that was nice then, but I am sure it has changed in the last forty-six years.

Can all of you remember your first foreign port? We all went someplace different, but as young men we were enjoying the time

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on the ship and of course working and learning a trade while we were at sea and in port. We all did our watch standing and before you knew it time had gone by and our enlistment was up and we were heading home to our families and back in the work place. Then some of you stayed in the Navy and made a commitment to stay for twenty or more. To those who did that, I commend you for your service and keeping the peace. Myself, I went back in Navy Reserve and then transferred to the Air Force Reserve and retired in 1992.

We can all say that we served our country and made a difference.

Now over the years many of us wondered where our ship was and if it was still afloat and doing the same job as when we were on it from the time it was commissioned to the time it was taken out of service.

Some even wondered if there were reunions and where they were being held. Myself, I wondered the same thing until six years ago I found out the answer in the "American Legion Magazine." So now I looked into where, and went to my first one on the first weekend of June in 1997. It was a great time and I looked forward to the next one which was in Nashville, TN.

During that time I bought a computer and once I got on line, it was like one thing led to another. I found out the ship was on the James River off of Fort Eustis, VA. During that time Shipmate Tom Pollard found out there was a charter boat out of Hampton, VA. So on the weekend of the 22nd and the 23rd of May 1999, eleven of us met and took the charter boat out and saw our great ship. We did not get on the ship at that time.

When Jan and I were flying back to Phoenix after seeing the ship, I started to wonder if it would be possible to get something off

the ship. So after over two years of trying, the Maritime Association, who has custody of all ships that have been put out of service, says we are now going to get some small items from the ship. The items will be going to American Legion Post 26 back in Shelby, OH. That is where I grew up and this was decided over a year and a half ago.

Now to tell you the end of the journey. On the 16th of October of this year I flew to Richmond, VA and met with shipmate Joe Roades, who served on board from 1952-1956. We went to Newport News, VA and got a motel room and on the morning of the 17th of Oct. we headed to Fort Eustis. We arrived at 0730 hours and were greeted by Mr. Rohr, one of the men in charge of the "James River Reserve Fleet." Mr. Bagley (Superintendent) was not there as his wife had a stroke the weekend before we arrived. Mr. Robert Jacobson, one of the workers, was our guide out to the USS PAWCATUCK AO-108, (later known as US Naval Ship PAWCATUCK TAO-108).

We arrived on board at 0815 hours and proceeded over to our ship which is the fifth one from where we took the gangway up to the first ship. We were given a large belt with a large battery. Attached on it was a small light like you would see miners use in the mines around the world. He took us down into the engine room and we saw a lot and of course Joe Roades was in his glory as that is where he had worked while on board. I had worked in supply and deck force so I never got to the engine room. We then went back up to top side and went through the galley, chow hall and sick bay. We then went out on deck and for many of you the ship is much larger than it was when we were on the ship. The ship had a conversion back in 1966 in Lorain, OH shipyard. There were no guns on the ship and we could see where the five inch had been on the fan-

tail. We went forward and of course from bridge area to the bow was a lot longer as they had a helo pad between the bridge area and the bow. I had taken a US flag along so at 1100 hours (not planned) we went to the bridge and raised the flag just about to the top with the help of Robert Jacobson (worker) as he did not want to have it get caught and not be able to take it down. We then went back down to the main deck and left the ship and went over to the USS TRUCKEE AO-147, which is tied up on our starboard side. Robert has his office on that ship and we took a little break. We left just after 1400 hours and headed back to the dock and left and thanked everybody that made this trip possible.

I hope that all of you that can, come to next year's reunion. Plan on being there. I will be showing the pictures and there are close to one hundred that Joe and I took. The ones taken in the engine room came out real good and they look like there were lights on but the light came from the two small lights Joe and I had and the flashlight that Robert was using.

I wish more of you had gone, but they will only allow two people to go on board. The trip was a success. The next day Joe and I went downtown in Norfolk and got on the USS WISCONSIN BB-64. While on board they had a re-enlistment for twenty-nine shipmates from the USS ENTERPRISE CVN-65.

All in all it was a great trip and the weather was just right.

Those of us who have been to previous reunions look forward to seeing many new shipmates next year and we all hope to surpass this year's total of ninety-eight.

Yours,
David Willis,
Reunion Coordinator for the best
oiler in the fleet, the USS PAW-
CATUCK

NEWSLETTER NOW AVAILABLE ON LINE

The Newsletter for the USS PAWCATUCK reunion will be available soon to download from the Military Locator & Reunion Service Inc web site.

If you are able to visit our web site and download the Newsletter, and therefore do not need a paper copy mailed to you, please let us know.

Please visit our web site at www.mlrsinc.com, then follow the link labeled Reunions, then scroll down until you see the listing for the USS PAWCATUCK. Click on the button labeled Newsletters, and in a few minutes the newsletter should appear on your screen. (As a side note - it took about 4 minutes on my computer). This will only work if you have Adobe Reader 4.0 or higher. You can also download this viewer for free from our web site.

If this works for you and you would like to receive all future mailings from us in this method, please send me an e-mail requesting to subscribe to the PAWCATUCK E-mail Roster. Each time something new is available, we will send you an e-mail informing you something new is available on the web site.

Please let us know if your e-mail address changes so you don't miss any important information.

To subscribe to the PAWCATUCK E-mail Roster please send an e-mail to:

SubscribeMLRS@aol.com, put the phrase **SUBSCRIBE PAWCATUCK** in the Subject line and type your **name and e-mail address** in the body of your e-mail. You will be placed in the e-mail roster.

Your name and postal mailing address will remain in our computers and will appear on all mailing lists, etc distributed to other members of your group.

If you have any question regarding this, do not hesitate to ask!

Dina Coffey

WELCOME MAT



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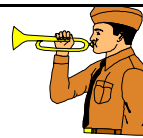
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Victorville, CA 92392
(Would enjoy getting Christmas cards from anyone who remembers him.)



TAPS

The Pilot was notified of the following shipmates' deaths since the last newsletter. The entire crew sends our deepest sympathy to the widows, families, and friends of the deceased.

Joseph Alko
Died July 5, 2001

Darwin Brown
Date of death not known

Richard Davison
Date of death not known

Francis George
Date of death not known

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*Jack Holt
Date of death not known*

*Doug Joyce
Date of death not known*

*Eugene Parrish
Died 1992*

*Ron Godby
Died November 2001*

Anyone knowing of the death of a shipmate, please notify *The Pilot* at ML&RS. We want to recognize the former crewmember by listing his name in *The Pilot* and by placing his name on the Pawcatuck Honor Roll.

FRIENDS NEED SUPPORT

David Willis was informed of the death of George McKenzie's wife in November and of the death of Ron Godby. Mr. Willis requests that sympathy cards be sent to George and to Ron's widow. The addresses are as follows:

George McKenzie
115 Catkin Dr
S Burlington, VT 05403-3003

Mrs. Ron Godby
412 Arnold Rd
Peoria, IL 61611-2207

Financial Statement

Balance after 09/01 issue **\$442.89**

Funds received since 09/01 **\$15.00**

Funds available for 12/01 **\$457.89**

Funds used for 12/01 issue **\$313.81**

Balance remaining **\$144.08**

Funds will be needed for the next issue. Please send contributions to address at right and state they are for the Pawcatuck Pilot.

STATEMENT OF PUBLICATION

The PAWCAUCK PILOT is the official publication of the USS PAWCATUCK AO-108 Association. It will be published quarterly in March, June, September, 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.

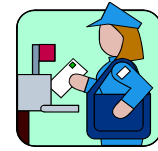
The editor reserves the right to edit letters to conform to space limitations and grammar.

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

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

MAIL CALL



Karen,

I received the Pawcatuck newsletter and I read with interest Jim Whitaker's remarks concerning the tug sinking and Billy Phillips. I was Executive Officer at the time, was "driving" the ship so I remember events well. His letter had several mistakes in it, including identity of the CO at the time, so I write this to set the record straight.

I have written to Jim about this incident and am attaching a copy for you. If you want any really good stories about Billy Phillips, let me know.

Enjoy reading the newsletter.

You do a good job with it.

Best Regards,
Jack Connery (69-71)

The following is Mr. Connery's letter to Mr. Whitaker.

Dear Jim:

I just received the September Pawcatuck newsletter and read with interest your comments about Captain Billy Phillips and the sinking of the tug. I would like to take this opportunity to correct a few mistakes in your account of the incident. I was XO and had the Conn (control of the ship) coming back into the Mayport channel after very successful sea trials. We had just completed yard overhaul.

All day long, the Pawcatuck hull and superstructure had been like a sail. All the tanks were empty and we were very high in the water. We bobbed like a cork. Half of each screw was out of the water, along with part of the rudder. The wind could blow us around like a top. As we approached the number 1 channel buoy we had to make a 30 degree (about) turn to port to line up with the channel. I ordered the turn

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just a bit late, and as we slowed making the turn, the wind caught us and we (the stern and starboard screw) were set onto the buoy and the screw got caught up in the mooring cable. We stopped the stbd screw, considered dropping the anchor but did not, thinking we could hold our own until the tug and pilot arrived. They were on their way out and were very close. The pilot came aboard and assessed the situation. He wanted the tug on the port quarter to pull us away from the buoy but we cautioned him about the screws. We decided to put the tug just abaft of the beam and so instructed the tug master, a BMC as I recall. As he came up the port side, he got in too close and the suction effect pulled him into the port screw. In about 20 seconds, the tug sank. All the crew - - five I believe - - got off safely. I think we had two, one swam ashore and the other two were picked up by someone else. We limped on into port (we were not towed) where we had assistance from other tugs in docking. Now, the rest of the story.

Captain Billy Phillips was not CO at the time. Captain Jack Youngblade was CO. He retained command through the short yard period to repair the screws, than took the ship to Gitmo for underway training. We were there about two weeks when Billy Phillips took command. Captain Youngblade, the finest officer I worked for in 21 years in the Navy, had two staff jobs after leaving Pawcatuck then took command of the CVA Saratoga. While CO of the Sara, he was selected for Rear Admiral. At least that's how I remember things happening. After he made Admiral, I visited with him and asked if that accident had much of an effect on his career. He said it slowed him down about two years making admiral. It hurt me career-wise as it was my responsibility for hitting the buoy (not the tug sinking), but the Board of Investigation could not separate the two events. The accident cost me a command at sea, which to a line officer is what

the Navy is all about.

Yes, Billy Phillips flew with the Blue Angels at one time. I used to kid him about trying to drive Pawcatuck like an F-8.

The tug was on the bottom for quite a while - - three or four weeks. You could see its radio antenna above the water's surface. Some sort of a buoy was tied to it. However, it did not effect shipping going in and out of the Mayport basin. Ships came and went every day, I think carriers included.

One thing you are right about: Billy Phillips was a memorable character. He stands out in my mind also as the most memorable in 21 years of service. I have many stories, but I don't think the Pawcatuck Pilot would want to print them. However, I don't remember the red flag story. Can you fill me in? I do remember that before going to the Med, we were able to locate several oil company house flags (they flew them on their tankers) We had Texaco, Gulf Oil, an Italian company, and British Petroleum. We always flew one of them when a ship would come alongside for fuel. Billy Phillips always wanted to fly the BP flag because it was his initials.

Just for the record, I will forward a copy of this letter to the editor of the Pawcatuck Pilot by email. Perhaps from it, she can correct the record in the next issue.

Best regards,
Jack Connery

Pawcatuck Pilot,

Just got through reading the latest newsletter and was surprised to see that the Pawcatuck had collisions with the FDR CVA-42 twice, once in 1956 and again in 1959 and also sank tugboats in Mayport and again at Craney Island in Virginia. Can you clarify this? *(If anyone can, please let us know.)* Because in 1956 I belonged to the Missouri National Guard, but in 1959 I was on board the USS Pawcatuck.

Also when I was on board the Paw, I was standing Quarterdeck

Watch when just after sweepers was piped down a brand new fireman recruit came running to the quarterdeck and entered the Resistor House and threw a switch. When he was asked what he was doing, he explained that every time he heard sweepers piped down he had to throw the switch so the sweepers could start their brooms. Keep up the good work,

Jerry Williams (SK2)
SALT1@aol.com

TWO PAWCATUCK CREWMEMBERS MEET AGAIN 47 YEARS LATER

Henry Shore RM3 1952-54, of Jackson, MI and Donald (Slobzeski) Sloan RM3 1952-54, of Cleveland, OH, had a by-chance meeting October 23 of this year. Don and his wife Rita, decided to take a little getaway trip for their 47th anniversary and drove from Cleveland to Jackson. Stopping at a motel, Don looked up Henry's telephone number and gave him a surprise call. They made arrangements to get together the next morning. So what do you talk about after not seeing one another for 47 years—yep, the AO-108 and dragging out the old cruise book and rehashing many fond memories of some of the other crewmembers, like Gerry Lyasght, Russ Berglund, to name a few. Don and Henry had talked on the phone a few times in the past few years and also e-mailed on a couple different occasions, but that was the extent of it.

While Henry and Don were reminiscing, their wives, Liz and Rita, had a great time getting acquainted. Catching up on what happened all those years from 1954 to present took some doing and ended up by going out to enjoy an extended luncheon. By the time Don and Rita had to leave for the trip home, an old friendship had been renewed. What a glorious day it was.

Submitted by Henry Shore

A POEM ABOUT THE TRAGEDY

Written by James Connery, 16, of Denver—nephew of Jack Connery

The towers they may have fallen
The fires burned hard and long
But there is one fire that no one can extinguish
Her fire will burn on

She raises her torch up high
To let the people know
That no matter how dark it gets
Our unity and passion must grow

Her fire burns inside her torch
Ours inside our hearts
We as a nation stand united
We must never part

She is lady liberty
Her fire will forever burn
Forever our country will be free
For what she stands, we will never turn.

BURY ME WITH SAILORS

From a Navy BBS, submitted by David Willis

"I've played a lot of roles in life;
I've met a lot of men.
I've done some things I'd like to think
I wouldn't do again.
And though I'm young, I'm old enough
to know some day I'll die.
and to think about what lies beyond,
Beside whom I would lie.
Perhaps it doesn't matter much;
Still if I had my choice,
I'd want a grave 'mongst sailors when
At last death quells my voice.
I'm sick of the hypocrisy
of lectures of the wise.
I'll take the man, with all the flaws,
Who goes through scared, and dies.
The troops I knew were commonplace
They didn't want the war;
They fought because their Fathers and

Their Fathers had before.
They cursed and killed and wept...
God knows
They're easy to deride...But bury me with
men like these;
They faced the guns and died.
It's funny when you think of it,
the way we got along.
We'd come from different worlds
To live in one where no one belongs.
I didn't even like them all;
I'm sure they'd all agree.
Yet I would give my life for them,
I know some did for me.
So bury me with Sailors, please,
Though much maligned they be.
Yes, bury me with Sailors, for I miss their
company.
We'll not soon see their likes again;
We've had our fill of war.
But bury me with men like them
Till someone else does more."

Author unknown

PREVIEW OF PHOENIX, ARIZONA AREA

The 2002 Pawcatuck reunion will be held in sunny Phoenix, AZ on June 19-23 at the Sheraton Crescent Hotel. We will attempt to give you a preview of some of the activities Phoenix has to offer and then let you decide what you would like to do during your reunion there. Read over the attractions and then fill out the survey to make your wishes known. ML&RS will then design your reunion to reflect the wishes of the majority and input from your coordinator. Don't let your chance to have a voice go unheard. Return the survey so we can plan based on your choices.

ABOUT PHOENIX

With a population of 1,200,000, Metropolitan Phoenix is the seventh largest city in the United States. It began in 1865 when the U.S. Army established an outpost and reopened the irrigation canals the Hohokam tribe had built centuries before. Now with water for the arid fields, the area became bright with barley and pumpkins and

earned the name of Punkinsville. The 300 residents were sure their new city would rise "like a phoenix" from the ashes of a vanished civilization. They were right! With the advent of low-cost air-conditioning in the 1950s, summers became bearable, and from then until the 1990s its population quadrupled. Today the area has much to offer its visitors—hiking, golfing, shopping, spas, art, and Southwestern cuisine. Phoenix is "the world's largest small town."

ATTRACTIONS

ARIZONA SCIENCE CENTER: This combination museum, theater and planetarium features "please touch" exhibits that help explain many of the mysteries of science. The 60-foot dome of the planetarium will dazzle you with computer graphics that simulate orbits and eclipses. The theater shows films about nature and science on a 50-foot high projection screen.

PHOENIX MUSEUM OF HISTORY: Get an idea of what life was like be-

ginning in the 1860s through the 1930s from the tour of interactive exhibits that traces the history of Phoenix. Learn about Phoenix's multicultural heritage and be a witness to Phoenix's growth. The museum building itself is a stunning structure of glass and steel—an architectural sight.

HEARD MUSEUM: This is the nation's premier showcase of Native American art, basketry, pottery, weavings, and beadwork. Housed in the Spanish-colonial-revival building built by Phoenix pioneer settlers Dwight and Maie Heard, this is a must see for any visit to Phoenix. The gift shop offers authentic, high-quality crafts.

RAWHIDE WILD WEST TOWN: This is another "must see" destination in the area. The Old West Town features gunfights, stuntmen, Main Street and theater style entertainment, stagecoach rides, bull riding (mechanical & the real thing), gold panning, fifteen unique shopping experiences and more. Rawhide's

Steakhouse serves up savory mesquite grilled western specialties and lively entertainment.

DIAMONDBACK BASEBALL GAME OR STADIUM TOUR: If a Diamondback game is scheduled during the time of the reunion, tickets could be purchased for anyone interested in taking in a game. If no game is scheduled, tours are offered of the stadium itself.

RED ROCK COUNTRY OF SEDONA: The colorful collection of buttes, pinnacles, mesas and canyons surrounding Sedona is famous the world around for its red rock vistas. Over the years, this area has served as the setting of many western novels and movies and has been the subject of uncounted paintings, photographs and other works of art. The remains of ancient wetlands, these crimson cliffs have been carved by the forces of the desert into one of nature's most magnificent masterpieces.

2002 REUNION SURVEY FOR USS PAWCATUCK PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey of the attractions in the Phoenix area and return it to Military Locator & Reunion Service, Inc. We will use the surveys to custom design your reunion to what you want to do. Registration packets will be mailed approximately ninety days prior to the reunion.

Please check the attractions you would like to visit during the reunion.

Arizona Science Museum _____

Phoenix Museum of History _____

Heard Museum _____

Rawhide Wild West Town _____

Diamondbacks Game or Stadium Tour _____

Red Rock Country of Sedona _____

Would you like a Welcome Reception the first evening of the reunion?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, would you prefer only an hors d'oeuvre platter _____

or a hamburger/hot dog or soup & sandwich type dinner? _____

Do you prefer breakfast all three mornings _____ or only on Sunday? _____

Do you want entertainment after the banquet? (Keeping in mind this will increase the banquet cost to pay for the music) Yes _____ No _____

Other comments and suggestions:

Return to:

Military Locator & Reunion Service, Inc.
PO Drawer 11399
Hickory, NC 28603