

The FLAGSHIP

Volume 15 Issue 1

May 2007

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS ROWE



Special Points of Interest

- Learn more about the legendary "Mary Soo" in our cover story, thanks to Herbert Royster from the USS Ernest G. Small.
- Six new names for the roster are found in the Welcome Mat on page two.
- Mail Call has news from shipmates Delbert McFadden, Edmond St. Laurent, Jr., Allan Fleischer, Jan Bohren and Dave Erb.
- Also in Mail Call, read the story behind the story of Carl Cramer's tale about being on Shore Patrol that appeared in the last issue.
- If you remember George Fitzgibbons or Capt. Durburrow, you'll enjoy Jan Bohren's letters on page five.

MORE ABOUT MARY SOO

*Editor's Note: Last issue's cover story entitled "Mary Sue's Painting Service" rang a bell with me; I knew I had heard of this lady before. So I started searching my files and came across this story which was written by **Herbert Royster** for the USS Ernest G. Small newsletter, the Small Talk. I contacted Mr. Royster and got his permission to use his story in the Flagship. I thought you would enjoy his story about "Mary Soo."*

Hong Kong has been judged the absolute best liberty port in the world. This high rating is from sailors who have tested liberty all over the world. When sailors speak of liberty ports, it is accepted that the ladies are not far away, if only for the great

scenery they provide. After spending several months in Hong Kong, one lady emerges, who stands head and shoulders above all the rest. She was one of a kind, and provided an incomparable service for the sailors on extended stays in the city. She is known throughout the world, and in one magazine, was the featured centerfold. She is Hong Kong's infamous Mary Soo.

Unlike other ladies, she was granted freedom to move around select ships in the harbor without restriction, plying her trade, and in the process, relieved many sailors aboard ship, whose duties were onerous. Like many ladies, she was a shrewd businessperson, and never passed up a profitable deal. And like most, she accepted no checks, no

credit, and no promises. She worked strictly under contract, and required payment for services as rendered. Some claim she was an artist, enhancing each sailor's world with her special touch. Others said she was a workhorse, dedicated to an incomparable service. On the Gardiners Bay we knew her intimately. We had an understanding with Mary Soo.

While Mary Soo worked well for her customers, she was also the head honcho lady, the madam working a bevy of like-minded and well-trained girls. They arrived at the ship each and every day on their sampans, small boats that were perfectly adapted to working at the water's edge. Mary Soo and all her girls worked for our garbage.

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Following the strictest of standards, the leftovers from the mess-hall after each meal were collected in individual containers and delivered to Mary Soo each day. To receive such fine service for that which otherwise would have been thrown away, was an unbelievable bonus value.

From top to bottom, stem to stern, all around, she painted the ship. Day after day, with long poles in hand, they painted the ship's hull with loving care. We provided the paint, and they painted the ship for the garbage, no questions asked. It was a big ship, and required long poles, many girls, and many days for a single coat. Exactly how many coats of paint might have been applied is not known. It was such a fine arrangement, the ship was painted over, and over, and over until it was just right. What a novel way to relieve the sailors.

She kept our beautiful little ship in top shape, and carried off the excess food as a bonus. It is understood that she gave much of the food to her many working girls. What they did not want, she distributed on the streets throughout Hong Kong. Through this process, we were feeding those many starving Chinese we had heard so much about.

In the late fall of 1955 we came to the end of our tour as Station Ship, and knew we would miss Hong Kong. We knew that many tears would be shed. For our departure, Mary Soo planned a mighty going away celebration. She rigged a sampan with one of her many long poles, and from the high end of the pole suspended a twelve-foot long cluster of firecrackers. Then she summoned four of her most loyal girls to follow us out of the harbor. As we pulled away, she lit the firecrackers. For five minutes the crackers swished like the tail of an angry dragon, almost blowing Mary Soo and her girls out of the water in the process. Then we were gone.

As we passed out of sight, Mary Soo shed buckets of tears, because she knew we were taking all our garbage with us. What a deal.

COORDINATOR'S MESSAGE

Looking forward to a good turnout at Harrisburg, PA for the Rowe reunion on Sept. 13th thru 16th.

For any Watts shipmates that show up, I still have 9 caps to dispose of, free or whatever.

Looking forward to seeing everybody.

Bob Wood

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Balance after 02/07 **\$686.10**

Funds received since 02/07 issue
\$30.00

Funds available for 05/07 issue
\$716.10

Funds Expended for 05/07 issue
\$124.40

Ending Balance for 08/07
\$591.70

This issue is being mailed only to those who returned the coupon to receive a paper copy. Others can view the newsletter at the website www.mlrsinc.com/rowe. Please send contributions to ML&RS at the address below.

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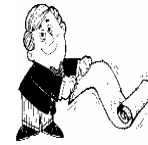
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Our reunions work so you don't have to.



WELCOME MAT

The following shipmates have been located since the last issue of the newsletter. Welcome aboard. We hope to see you at the next reunion.

Jan Bohren

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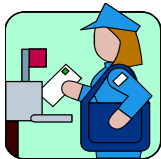


TAPS

The Flagship has learned of the following deaths since the last publication. Not all deaths were recent, but were just learned of. Every member of the Association sends his heartfelt sympathy to the family and friends of the deceased.

Glen Penley
Died August 31, 1989

David Erb
(1945-46) *Ens Gunnery Div*
Died April 9, 2007



MAIL CALL

Mr. Carl Cramer,

Thanks for the call. Surprised me to hear from someone from the USS Rowe DD 564. I was on board, I think, in about July of 1955 and was in Radar School before that. Spent all my time on the ship. There were about 6 of us that went up the ranks pretty quickly in CIC. The first part of my tour our bunks were in the fore part of the ship and then we got moved back to the stern. I liked the front better. It was a good experience for me. I retired from being a Superintendent of Schools and I have a PhD from the University of Idaho and three degrees from Brigham Young University. I have also worked as an adjunct professor for Idaho State College. Married, three children, two girls and a boy. My wife and I were in South Carolina in 2004-2005. It was great to hear from you.

Dellbert McFadden

Shipmates,

DC2 Edmond (Ed) St. Laurent, Jr. is a USS Rowe DD-564 shipmate. He served aboard the Rowe in 1951-54 and was in the "R" Division. Ed's wife Ann sent Paul and Mary Kennedy a letter informing them of some of the medical problems he is having. Here is the letter.

Ed St. Laurent went to the hospital Jan. 30 for knee replacement and was in good health at the time, or so they thought. However, the antibiotic activated his dementia which they were not aware that he had and left him with many health problems. He has gone through a lot of rehab and now back in the hospital due to kidney infection. The infection got in the knee replacement and he is going through about another month of rehab. He will then need to have more knee surgery. I am sure Ed would appreciate cards from his shipmates. His address is:

Edmond St. Laurent, Jr.
192 Greenfield St.
Seekonk, MA 02771

Submitted by Carl Cramer

Shipmates,

Ltjg Allan Fleischer is a USS Rowe DD-564 shipmate. He was the Electronics Officer when I was aboard (1952-55). A couple of nights ago, I found this on the internet. I think it would be a good article for our Flagship publication. Shipmates like to read about other shipmates. Here is the article:

CAREER WEEK SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY ALLAN FLEISCHER

Allan retired in June of 2005 from Alara, Inc., a company that developed, manufactured and marketed digital radiographic imaging systems that utilized new technology to replace the use of film as a radiation sensor in the dental field as well as a device to measure bone density in the phalanges. Prior to joining Alara in 1996, he worked as an independent consultant advising management

on business development, strategic planning, capital formation, research and development and marketing. Allan founded Medi-Physics, Inc. in 1973, a company that marketed drugs used for the diagnosis of cancer, heart and lung disease, as well as other metabolic disorders. In 1972 he was responsible for establishing a joint venture with Sumitomo Chemical (Nihon MediPhysics), which is now the largest and most successful radiopharmaceutical company in the world. In 1965 Allan founded The Cyclotron Corporation that manufactured particle accelerators and radiation detection instruments. He earned a BS, MS and Ph.D. degrees in physics from Yale University and attended Stanford University Business School. In addition, he spent 3 years in the US Navy aboard the USS Rowe (DD-564). Allan spends most of his spare time pursuing his photography hobby and recently won Image of the Year at the Berkley Camera Club. He also spends one day a week as a SCORE Counselor in Oakland, California.

Submitted by Carl Cramer

Dear Karen,

The article about me being on shore patrol that I wrote for the USS Rowe (DD-564) Flagship newsletter actually came about because of an article in Sharkhunters International, Inc. Yes, I am a member of Sharkhunters International, Inc. Sharkhunters is honest submarine history with major emphasis on German U-boats, and no propaganda. The official publication of the history of the U-boat Waffee has over 7,000 members in 42 countries. Former President Ronald Regan had been a member since 1991. Well, enough about the history of Sharkhunters.

The last several issues have had articles "Diving with Dex" (submarine stories from sub vet "Dex" Armstrong). Dex rode USS Requin and this is another of

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his great insights into the life of a submarine sailor. I am enclosing a copy for you of the one of his articles that prompted me to write the story about shore patrol. I am also enclosing a copy of the next issue which had my story in. Hope you enjoy the articles.

Carl Cramer

From "Diving with Dex"

Stone, you old oxidized sonuvabitch, I'm seeking support for the Retroactive Consideration of my Application for the Award of a Purple Heart.

"In 1960, in action against a hostile foreign power and in defense of my country, I was hit by a high velocity projectile and had to be removed from a non secured combat zone."

Sometime in the spring of 1960 while visiting Bells, that well known establishment where members of Naval Subsurface community went to seek refined refreshment and sophisticated interaction with members of the delicate sex. Bells, where you could get drunk and set a doeskin 'blues' simultaneously. Bells, where it was impossible to use "**CLEAN,**" **SANITARY**" and "**MEN'S ROOM**" in the same sentence. Bells, where iguana piss was a buck fifty a pitcher.

HNCS TERRA NOVA was in. The "**TERRY N**" was some kind of whiz kid Canadian can. In '60, she was so new she still had strips of masking tape around her hull numbers. We'd been out...came in, got mail, fresh milk, put in a charge, Blues, half a bottle of Aqua Velva, bum five bucks—and over the side. Nothing complicated—just wanted to get off the gahdam boat. We had reached that point where 'Fresh air, a f#@k and a bicycle ride would kill you. Strictly SubRon 6.

We're in Bells minding our business, enjoying polite conversation such as the global economy, women's rights, environmental is-

sues, SAT scores vs. the entrance requirements at M.I.T....the kind of stuff all submariners discuss. Wait—maybe it was 'who played first base for Cleveland in 1938?'...'sex with small animals' or 'how to steal electrician's knives from Fleet Supply...I forget.

Anyway, I had wrapped myself around the better part of a pitcher of draft. I had your basic E-3 bladder. If you were equipped with an E-3 bladder, they came with a high pee rate. In other words, compared with a high capacity Master Chief bladder, you were looking at something like four trips to the head versus one. Or considering the Chief, maybe four head runs vs. a stop in the alley on the way back to DES/SUB piers. Above E-6, the whole world was your urinal.

I was in the head, returning Bell's Best to the Elizabeth River when one of the lads from the neighborhood up north—Her Majesty's Fleet Elite—made some very intelligent, observation regarding the United States having some form of solo intercourse with itself. I was not present to enjoy this intellectual discussion.

I was a recently qualified mess cooking escape who was rapidly reaching the point where the operation of 13 buttons and urinal plumbing became mental challenges. Once I figured it all out, I congratulated myself and made the big mistake of attempting to return to my point of origin.

When I opened the door, it was obvious that Canadian-American relations had rapidly degenerated. I was later told that I got in some good licks...you couldn't prove it by me. For at some point early in the action, one of our former allies bounced a gahdam pool ball off my head and put my lights out.

Somebody brought me back to the boat. Doc Rohr repaired me. Doc was a kind of veterinary surgeon who studied under Genghis Kahn. For weeks at morning quarters, I was referred to as the '**Eight ball who took an eight ball**' and the '**Cueball screwball.**' Sympathetic consideration among submarine sailors begins with limb and sight loss.

I was wounded in action against a hostile foreign power while defending the United States. It was in the middle of the Cold War; the '**Battle of Bells**'...Cold War. Don't know who won, but it WAS a hostile action. Anyone who doesn't believe it was hostile wasn't between the juke box and the pool table at Bells that night. Someone told me that some poor sonuvabitch off the **CUBERA** got his hair parted with a pool cue and that when the action concluded, they found some Canadian with his head stuck through the juke box speaker.

Should you have the sort of influence necessary to effect consideration of such an award, it would be the "**Cold War Diesel Boat Purple Heart**" with subsequent recognition for "**Black Eye in Bermuda**" and being "**Cold Cocked in Montevideo.**"

If the Secretary of the Navy is not available, how about Sherri at Houlihan's? She's prettier, smarter and has chest development—the kind that teenage late night fantasies are made of. Hell, all the SecNav has are three-piece suits and lousy neckties.

More on DIVING WITH "DEX" STGC Carl Cramer wrote in with this:

"I really enjoyed reading the article by "DEX" in KTB #193. Bells was mentioned in this article many times and I remember Bells very well.

In the early 1950s I had Shore Patrol, and Bells was in our area for Shore Patrol that night. Well, wouldn't you know it, a fight broke out and one of the sailors got cut. I'm not sure if it was from a broken beer bottle and/or broken glass, but he was bleeding. I asked the bartender if he had any Merthiolate and some gauze bandages. He set a bottle of Merthiolate up on the bar and before he could set the gauze bandages up on the bar, the sailor picked up the bottle of Merthiolate and drank it all! I called Shore Patrol Headquarters and told them what happened. They said they were sending an ambulance over right away and we were to

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stay there until it arrived. The ambulance arrived and picked up the sailor for transport. It was my understanding that they were taking him over to Portsmouth Naval Hospital to pump his stomach.

This article brought back a lot of memories: some good and some not so good."

Submitted by Carl Cramer

Editor's Note: The following two letters are correspondence Carl Cramer received from Jan Bohren.

Carl,

First, thanks for the photos—bring back a lot memories.

Don't know if you ever heard about Ensign Fitzgibbons' adventure after he left the Rowe. (He was ASW officer after Pete Quinn.) He became an ASW "expert" (we trained him well) and was assigned a couple of years after he left the Rowe to take a team to Argentina and assist them on identifying a sonar contact they had been following for several days (they suspected it was a Russian sub). Turns out it was a whale, so Fitz headed back to the states on (I think) a cargo plane, which proceeded to have a mid-air collision at 30,000 feet. Fitz was in the rear of the plane looking at sky as it fell to the ocean. My brother had met him, and when he saw the write-up of his miraculous survival (lots of broken bones) in Life Magazine, he called it to my attention. Now, cut 20+ years to about 1981—I was the Director of the Naval Civilian Personnel Command and one of our collateral jobs was to train new shore station commanding officers that were taking on shore station commands where they could have thousands of civilian employees working for them, also requiring that they understand local, county, and state regulations in dealing with political groups, etc. I would always meet new groups of officers coming in for training and one day I walk into a "coffee" and there stands "Fitz" —he was on his way to

take over the Naval Station C.O. job in Guam. We had a good time talking over the old days.

Do you remember the CO that preceded Cdr. Williams? His name was James Durburrow. If you're interested, I have a great story to relate to you about meeting him long after I left the Navy.

Best regards,
Jan K. Bohren

Carl,

I found the item on the Life Magazine article re the mid-air collision involving Fitzgibbons (Life Magazine March 7, 1960). It's only one sentence on the site:

"...includes story of plane crash that killed men of the US Navy band, photos of survivors George Fitzgibbons, Hal R. Halenza, Frederick Wilson." (Fitz was on a confidential mission, so they did not cite why he was on the plane-i.e., he wasn't the trumpet player in the band.)

Tried Googling to get more but came up dry.

Here's my Durburrow story: In about 1982, I'm living in Arlington, VA where I was Director of the Naval Civilian Personnel Command (oversight of 140 civilian personnel offices world-wide with 300,000 civilian employees) and, while visiting some good friends of mine who lived in Wheaton, Maryland, I related some of the USS Rowe days, including the fact that we had a really gutsy commanding officer who had a "sixth sense" when it came to anti-submarine warfare and who helped us win the Squadron "E" for ASW. They (my friends) asked me what the name of the skipper had been—bingo!—"Hey," they said, "That's our neighbor across the street!" So...we walked over, rang the door bell, the door opened, and there stood Capt. Durburrow, who said, "Bohren! What are you doing here?" We had a great talk about "the good old days" and he was very gracious.

Anyway, for your own personal info, in case I didn't tell you, I had several jobs after getting out of college following the Navy. I was with the U.S. Civil Service Commission where I was Assistant Area Manager in San Diego, ran the government's nationwide recruiting program for college graduates, a Deputy Regional Director in the Northwest Region (Seattle), the Executive Director of the Federal Labor Relations Authority, then headed up the Naval Civilian Personnel Command. I then went to the private sector to be Corp. VP for HR at two BlueCross BlueShield companies (CT and NY), and finished my formal career as Head of HR for the Congressional Budget Office. I'm currently a management consultant, doing primarily work in the business ethics area, and am an Adjunct Professor in the Graduate School of HR Management at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, NY.

Oh, my wife is VP for External Affairs at MIT and our son Jonathan is just finishing up his second year in robotics engineering at the University of Pennsylvania. In his senior year in high school, he was captain of the U.S. National Team that competed in the 18th International Young Physicists Tournament in Switzerland in 2005. In short, he's a "super geek."

Thanks for "working" the site, Carl, and good to catch up on stuff from the old crew.

Regards,
Jan Bohren

Dear Friends,

Talked to Mimi Erb several weeks ago. Dave died of cancer on April 9, 2007.

During WWII he served aboard the USS Rowe and USS Stoddard. In the Korean War he served on the USS Laws.

We will all miss Dave, our group singer at the reunions.

Clarence M Stegeman

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Following is a portion of the obituary that Mr. Stegeman enclosed in his letter:

David Harris Erb

David Harris Erb, 82, of Roanoke, died Monday, April 9, 2007 after a seven year battle with prostate cancer. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Margaret, daughter Anna Margaret, and son, Paul William Erb. He is survived by his second wife, Meta "Mimi" Hill Erb; one brother, two sons, a "elective extra son," five stepchildren, four grandchildren and eleven step-grandchildren.

An outgoing man, Dave found his greatest joy in making new friends. His booming bass voice and boisterous laugh resonated everywhere he went, most notably at Raleigh Court Presbyterian Church, where he sang in the choir and served as an elder and church treasurer. He played sousaphone in the University of California marching band and tuba in the Roanoke Valley Community Band, and sang in the Roanoke Valley Chorus and the Boar's Head Feast. He was an accomplished woodworker and an active member of Tin Can Sailors, an organization for destroyer veterans. A lifelong outdoorsman and athlete, Dave hiked the John Muir Trail at age 16, played varsity baseball and rugby at Cal, and played racquetball and many other sports regularly until weakened by illness in 2006. A 1947 Naval ROTC graduate of the University of California School of Forestry, he served during and after World War II on the USS Rowe and USS Stoddard. While stationed in Philadelphia in 1946, he met Margaret Niemeyer. They married on January 1, 1949. Dave worked for the California Division of Forestry, then moved east to work for Westvaco. Recalled for the Korean War, he served two years on the USS Laws, achieving the rank of Lieutenant before returning to civilian life. Dave and Margaret moved to Roanoke in 1966 when Dave began selling logging equip-

ment. Dave later owned and managed a Dunkin' Donuts shop, worked in sales for the Niemeyer Corporation, and owned and managed the Country Store of Check before retiring in 1987. One of Margaret's closest friends, Mimi Boynton, lost her husband Doug to cancer shortly after Margaret died of the same disease. Dave and Mimi began spending more time together, and married on June 27, 1992. Together they traveled extensively, remained active in the church, attended classes and Elderhostels, and otherwise expanded their already wide horizons.

Rowe Shipmates,

Bravo Zulu to Karen Hoyle, editor of the Flagship publication. I think the last issue (Vol. 14 Issue 4, February 2007) was one of the best Flagship publications that we have ever received. I believe what made it so great was the fact that so many different shipmates sent in articles and/or stories to you for the publication. I really hope that this continues because it makes for a great publication which all shipmates should enjoy reading.

As to RD3 Paul Siegel's article about Mary Sue and here side cleaners (painting service), I believe we also were required to allow them to sell Coke-a-cola on the fantail of the ship. If my memory serves me right, I believe the ship furnished the paint that Mary Sue and her side cleaners used. BMSN George Halter might know because I believe he was in charge of and/or working in the paint locker at that time.

Karen does an outstanding job of putting the Flagship (USS Rowe DD-564 newsletter) together for us. She can only continue to do this if we continue to send her articles and/or stories for her to edit and publish. So please continue to send her your articles and stories (sea stories) so that she can continue to produce an outstanding newsletter for us.

Submitted by STGC Carl Cramer, USNR (Ret.)

STATEMENT OF PUBLICATION

The Flagship is the official publication of the USS ROWE 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 ROWE. 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.

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 submitter to research each article.

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

USS ROWE 2007 REUNION

SEPT. 13-16

HARRISBURG, PA

RADISSON PENN HARRIS HOTEL