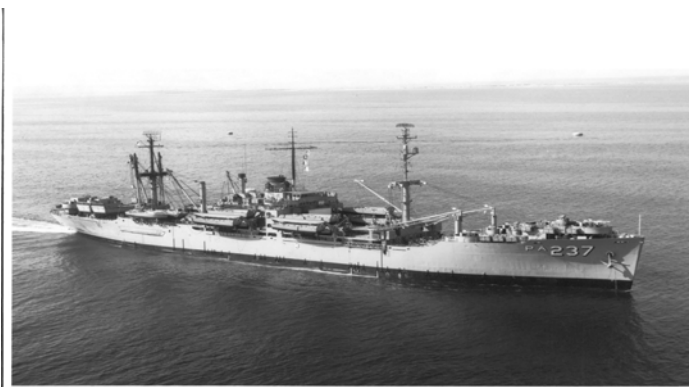


The BEXAR BROWN

Volume 9 Issue 3

April 2003

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS BEXAR APA-237



Items of Special Interest

- *Be enticed to San Antonio by the cover story. You'll see why it's a choice reunion destination.*
- *ATTENTION NEW SHIPMATES: See the article on page two about the subscription dues.*
- *Many of you have been busy collecting names for the WELCOME MAT on page three and four. You'll surely see a familiar name.*
- *Bob Weiss has some good advice for getting attendance up for the reunion. See his ideas on page four under MAIL CALL.*
- *We put out a plea for stories for this issue and got a few. See them in MAIL CALL on pages 4 and 5.*

HISTORIC SAN ANTONIO FOR 2003

Welcome to San Antonio, the Jewel of Texas. Home to world famous hospitality, attractions, and visitor facilities, San Antonio is a tourist's dream. The city is rich in history, having been settled by Spanish missionaries in the early 1700's. The Mission San Antonio de Valero, better known today as the Alamo, was the site of the famous battle between defenders of the fledgling Republic of Texas and the Mexican army under General Santa Anna. Although the Texan defenders lost the battle and were put to the sword, the two-week siege allowed Sam Houston the time to form an

army capable of beating Santa Anna.

San Antonio is the tenth-largest city in the United States, with just over one million residents. Mild winter weather reinforces San Antonio's reputation as a premier destination for travelers. The downtown area is one of the nation's top choices for reunions.

San Antonio's diverse cultures provide a unique Tex-Mex flavor. The city is known for its huge celebrations and party atmosphere, but it is also known for being very laid back and relaxing. There are several military bases in the area, and as a result, many military retir-

ees choose San Antonio as their permanent home.

With world class attractions, such as the Alamo, Majestic Theatre, the San Antonio Zoo, the Witte and McNay Museums, and more than 25,000 hotel rooms, San Antonio is made-to-order for entertainment. Of course, you can't come to San Antonio without sampling the nightlife and Tex-Mex cuisine. Start with the world-famous River Walk, home to hundreds of restaurants, shops, and drinking establishments. If you're interested in nightclubs, try Park Place. With several clubs under one roof,

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it is San Antonio's choice for night-life.

Also, you may want to tour the historic downtown area, including La Villita, the oldest, permanently inhabited settlement in the nation, and King William District, a collection of beautiful German homes from the turn of the century. The River Walk is the choice for shopping, eating, drinking, and generally wasting time.

Don't miss Fredericksburg, with the Admiral Chester W. Nimitz Museum and Historical Center, a fitting reminder of World War II sacrifices and Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, a huge outcropping of pink granite. Other parks include Lost Maples, which has an annual, breathtaking display of fall colors, and Garner State Park. For a taste of European charm, drive out to Castroville, the Little Alsace of Texas. Bandera, about forty-five miles out, is the Cowboy Capital of Texas. A popular and cool summer pastime is Toobin', floating down a river on a tire inner tube. Nearby, the Guadalupe River in New Braunfels is the toobin' capital of the free world. Don't forget the beer. Sportsmen don't have to look too far from San Antonio to find excellent hunting and fishing. The South Texas white-tail deer hunting is legendary, as is the fall bird hunting. Area lakes provide ample space for fisherman and water-sports enthusiasts.

San Antonio is a traveler's dream. Whether you're looking for a relaxing retreat, an exciting, fun-filled vacation, or beautiful outdoor surroundings, San Antonio can't be beat. Come experience the history, the charm, and the flavor that is pure San Antonio.

SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

From now on, only those who have paid the \$5.00 dues will be receiving the *Bexar Growl*. The new subscription year begins when the memorabilia order forms are sent out after each reunion. Please encourage any of your former shipmates that you are still in contact with to make their dues payment so they can receive the newsletter. We also highly recommend (O.K.—beg) that you write a letter or article describing any memorable event or your general experience while on board the BEXAR. These kinds of stories are what makes a good newsletter and is what everyone likes to read. Send in your stories to Military Locator & Reunion Service at our address on the left. Let's have a newsletter filled with *your* stories from now on.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Funds available after 01/03 issue
\$1871.17
 Funds received since 01/03 issue
\$335.00
 Total available for 04/03 issue
\$2206.17
 Funds expended for 04/03 issue
\$154.95
 Funds expended for ship's store supplies **\$240.00**
Bal remaining for 07/03 issue
\$1811.22

The Bexar Growl will be sent only to those who have paid the **\$5.00** annual subscription from now on.

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"Our Reunions work So You don't have To"

STATEMENT OF PUBLICATION

The BEXAR GROWL is the official publication of the USS BEXAR Association. From now on it will be published quarterly in January, April, July, and October, *subject to receiving sufficient funding*. The Newsletter is currently funded by annual subscription of \$5.00 per annum, per member and all other monies raised/donated are added to this fund. 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.

It should be understood that this newsletter is for the participation in, by and for the enjoyment of all Bexar shipmates. That it is also recognized that many shipmates for reasons of health, distance/travel, etc. are not able to attend reunions and may feel left out is a concern. To address this, we urge these folks, most especially, to write in letters and articles that reflect on memorable experiences/incidents/shipmates. You may be surprised that such may provoke a former shipmate to seek you out, via phone, regular mail or e-mail to reminisce and get reacquainted. That is the main reason for maintaining and disseminating the mailing list... to provide "contact" information. Don't pass up the experience.

**2003 REUNION
 SAN ANTONIO, TX
 OCTOBER 2-5
 SHERATON FOUR
 POINTS RIVERWALK
 NORTH**

Not-For-Profit Ship's Store

Through the efforts of some of your shipmates this enterprise has come to fruition. For items indicated, necessary minimum purchases all have been made and sold to obtain these low prices. Now you all may individually order direct.

BUMPER STICKER (4" by 11")



Cost: \$4.00 (includes shipping)
Check or M/O payable to:
Photovision, Inc.
and notated USS BEXAR
Mail to:
Photovision, Inc.
P.O. Box 313
Riverton, N. J. 08077

EMBROIDERED PATCH (3")



Cost: \$3.25 (includes shipping)
Check or M/O payable to:
John Flynn
And notated USS BEXAR
Mail to:
John Flynn
P.O. Box 23518
Washington, D.C. 20026



TAPS

The Growl was notified of the following shipmates' deaths since the last newsletter was published. The deaths are not necessarily recent but were just learned of. Our deepest sympathy goes to the widows, families and friends of the deceased.

Marshall Bekins (1955-58)
QM3/SM2 OS Div
Date of death not known

Robert Tarr (1962-64)
EN2 A Div
Died July 2002

John Gutting (1963-64)
Capt. C/O Div
Died July 2002

Richard Langford (1964-65)
EN2 A Div
KIA April 1965

Thomas Burns (1954-55)
Died 1975

Joe Dan McKnight, Sr (1951-54)
SN 1st Div
Date of death not known

E.J. Toups (1960-61)
SM1 OC Div
Died 1999

DON'T FORGET YOUR SECRETARY ON APRIL 23

Some 3.4 million American men and women work as secretaries, administrative assistants, and other similar professional positions. Secretaries Day is the largest work day observance in the U.S., apart from birthdays and traditional holidays.



WELCOME MAT

The following shipmates were located since the last newsletter was published. Welcome Aboard! We hope to see you at the next reunion. You are invited to become an active member of the association.

Due to the large number of new names, space does not allow for all the addresses to be printed, but if you see a familiar name and would like to have his address, please let us know and we will gladly furnish it to you.

Harry Piaczynski (1966-68) SM2
Anthony Fascinella (1951-54) BM2
William McBee (1947-51) SH3
Dr. Robert Fordtran (1958-59) LT
Frank St. Peter (1951-53) BM3
John Ray (1947-52) CS2 Cook
George Leidolph (1949-52) SN
Hal Moats (1959-62) ETR2
Adger Standridge (1947-53) BM3
William Daugherty (1953-56) DK3
Russell Brown (1954-57) QM2
Edgar Boudinot (1965-66) Capt
Arthur Battson (1964-65) Capt
Eugene Prate (1946-47) LT(jg)
Donald Laubhan
James Menges (1960-62) RD2
Hannes Andersen (1946-47) LT
Gene Landry (1966-69) MM1/MMC
Albert Archuleta (1956-59) FN
Eugene Gockel (1953-54) EN2
Kenneth Francis (1954-56) SK3
M.M. Peprusha
Michael Cole (1963-64) RMSN
Raymond Butler (1946-47) RD3
Thomas Meek, Jr. (1963-64) EN3
Leroy Summers (1961-63) SN
Joyce Trevathan, Jr. (1946-47) SN
Edward Etchason
John Ducich (1960-62) SN/QM3/Q
Robert Williams (1966-68) RD3
Wincell Cates (1959-62) SN/QM3
James Pouncey (1960-63) SN
Neil Skaarhaug (1961-63) EN2
David Skogheim (1960-62) EN2
John Shaffran (1961-63) ENS

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

Robert Norvell (1952-55) QM2

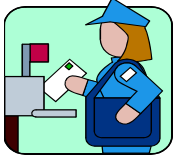
John Atwell (1964-68) ENCS

Willis Rhodes (1955-57) HM2

Peter Grothe

Norman Johnson (1964-66) SK3

MAIL CALL



Shipmates,

I recall having written an item, which appeared in one of the year 2000 newsletter issues, documenting a bit of what the first reunion experience meant to me. Since that time I have become actively involved with this association in trying to do my part to guarantee it as a successful ongoing venture.

At present, we have in excess of 560 former shipmates of all eras on our roster/mailling list. When you reduce that number down by deceased shipmates and incorrect addressees we have accumulated, the real number comes in at around 520 or so. I mention this to make a point and it is that to have only, on average, about 10% of our 'real' membership regularly attending reunions puts us in the category of the "average" group/s. We should endeavor to be above average though and with a little effort from the more active members we can achieve a higher rate of attendance amongst the membership. I maintain an up-to-date copy of the roster/mailling list apart from that kept by MLRS. I have made it available, once yearly, to all members on our email directory and send it out about a month or so after each annual reunion. MLRS has made their copy available upon request. It takes only a little effort to peruse that list and spot a former shipmate you are familiar with and try to make contact with them. THAT is the main reason

the list is kept with the data that is shown for each individual. If each of us, who are regular reunion attendees were to make contact with one former shipmate who was listed, but never attended, you would see that that effort would make a difference. In an earlier article for the newsletter I noted my observation that Father Time is not on our side as our ranks are being whittled away day by day and if one recognizes that we have no source of new shipmates, being a now non-existent ship...it behooves us to go forth and try to swell the ranks of those actively involved in our reunions. They, after all, are the heart of our existence.

Of course, I...as we all do, recognize that health, traveling distances, other reunion/family plans and finances are all valid reasons that many members find it difficult to attend at all. Recognizing that is why we have a policy of trying to rotate the sites of our reunions around the country in the hope that we give as many folks as possible the chance to attend. However, if you do attend regularly you do it for one reason and that is , because you and yours thoroughly enjoy the renewing of old and new acquaintances and the thoroughly enjoyable experience our reunions are. So why not make a promise to yourself to try and make contact with one or more of your former shipmates and let him know that he is more than welcome and you'd really like to see him attend, if at all possible. It doesn't have to be a hard sell, just a friendly conversation. There's a satisfaction at shaking the hand of a former shipmate whom YOU have actively encouraged to attend, even if you didn't know him all that well when you both served aboard. For me...it was easy! Get all boilers online and All Ahead Flank and I haven't slowed down a bit. Since I got involved with this, using every means I can muster, I have just logged on-board the one hundred and sixty-fifth Bexar shipmate as a result of my direct efforts. My ego does not need the recognition, be-

cause that's not why I do it. I do it simply because the Bexar reunion experience has been emotionally motivating and rewarding to me and I'm a dedicated individual who commits to an effort and then sticks with it. Give it an effort. You'll find it to be a personally rewarding. See y'all in Ole San Antoine.

Bob Weiss

Karen,

Told this story at the reunion in St. Louis, but maybe some others would enjoy it, especially folks who were aboard during this time, but didn't make that particular reunion. Needless to say, it is a true story.

On 27 November 1957 we departed Okinawa with 3rd Bn 1st Marines embarked. We arrived in Dingalen Bay in the Philippines for PHIB-LINK exercises on 30 November. We completed the amphibious landing exercises (landed the Marines, they did their jungle thing for a few days and then we recovered them) and had started back to Okinawa when, on 10 December, we were diverted to a point off of Indonesia. It seems as if there was a lot of trouble and unrest in Indonesia and there was some thought that, being combat loaded, we would have to land the Marines to protect American nationals. We arrived at our rendezvous point on 15 December and just steamed around a particular area waiting for the powers-that-be to decide what we would do.

As radiomen we were the point on the ship that would initially receive the orders from higher authority. After about a week of anticipation and circling around and around a very long encrypted message came in on the teletype. Encryption meant it was secret and had to be decoded by the communications officer. Of course we all strongly suspected it was our orders, but to do what, we didn't know. We rushed to get Lt. Davis to come and decode the message. He arrived and went into the little cryptographic room where the decoding devices

(Continued from page 4)

were located. He comes out in about thirty minutes with a covered clipboard that we knew had the decoded message on it.

Naturally we started to bug him about what it said, what are we going to do, and when are we going to do it. He smiled, stepped back, lifted the cover on the clipboard, and in a very officious voice began to read (we thought). He said, "From: Commander-in-chief Pacific Fleet. To: Commanding Officer, USS Bexar. Subj: Orders. You are to continue steaming in ever-decreasing circles until you disappear up your own ass." Then he laughed out loud and went off to show the message to Captain Kauffman.

Shortly thereafter we set sail for Subic Bay, arriving on Christmas Day 1957. The first few days in Subic were very interesting because the Marines had no liberty uniforms and had been aboard the ship for almost a month, but that is a story for another day.

Jim Engelken

Editor,

Thanks for the new letter from the Bexar Growl. I was one of the first crew to go aboard the Bexar. The ship crew was ready to go aboard and take possession of the ship. Just prior to the finishing of the ship, it caught fire and had to be redone. The total crew spent a few months waiting in San Francisco for the ship to be finished. We made one trip to Japan and brought back a load of Army troops from Japan. I had my 21st birthday on the ship and when I returned to the States, I received my discharge.

I would be interested in contact from anyone who was aboard during that time. I was a part of the Amphib.

Thank you,
Clifford Collins, BM2c
4609 Chippendale
Fort Collins, CO 80526

Editor,

In response to your request for material for the April "Bexar Growl" I would like to report that Jeff Shenkman (Bexar 1967-68 Boat Group) is still a patient at the VA Medical Center in Northampton, MA as a result of injuries received in any accident aboard the ship at the end of 1967. It would be great if any shipmate who remembers Jeff and is traveling through the western Massachusetts area might stop and visit. Jeff is in the Nursing Home Care Unit ((East) at the hospital, or contact Jerry Tierney, (413) 527-7823 for directions etc. My email is jerr@hge.net

Regards,
Jerry Tierney

Hi,

Just a note of Thank You for the latest bulletin and our Charleston update. The update is the best we have received and enjoyed it very much. Am looking forward to San Antonio. We had a ball in Charleston.

Catherine Redding
Wife of Jim Redding

Hello,

We thank you all very much for all the good wishes sent to Frank for his recent illness. He is doing very well now. Wishing you all a very happy and healthy year.

Millie and Frank Lucanegro

Hello,

I had spent two years in the southwest Pacific with considerable action, on a PC, and had never seen an American casualty. I returned to the US in mid-1945 and was assigned to the Bexar in September-October. We put the ship in commission at Portland and sailed down the coast to San Francisco, Long Beach and San Diego, all the time in shakedown. We were in and out of

San Diego several times when one day a fighter plane crashed near us in the harbor. It was our unfortunate duty to pick up the body of the young pilot. I can remember the body stretched out on one of the tables in the hospital ward. I left the Bexar shortly afterward. In the 57 years since then, I have wondered many times at the irony of the tragedy. The war was over and yet the young pilot's life was over before it could begin. The scenes of the current war in Iraq remind me of war's ironies. God Bless America.

Ed Sidebottom

Shipmates,

If you have never been to the port city of Otura on the Island of Hokkaido in the middle of winter, you haven't missed anything.

Late one afternoon myself and a bo'sun were sent out to relieve the crew on one of our Mike boats that was sitting on top of a pile of rocks in Otura Harbor. We were told to bring the boat back to the ship when the tide came in. "Wrong!" The weather turned bad and when we had enough water to start the engines, I found both cooling pumps were out. At this point we put out our anchor, but forgot to secure it first. "Dumb!" With the wind taking us across the harbor we used all of the shells for the flare pistol. One of our boats finally found us piled up on some rocks. When we finally made it back to Bexar, a change of underwear was in order.

James Redding, EN3

ML&RS sent out an e-mail asking for anyone with a family member involved in the War for Iraqi Freedom to let us know what they have heard so far from their loved one. We also asked for anyone to express their thoughts and well wishes to the troops. These are the only responses we received, but are very thankful for them.

(Continued from page 5)

Those of you without e-mail may send in your story and support for our troops for the next issue.

We are the grandparents of SPC Brian Mascarelli, son of our daughter Marie and her husband Mark Dunn. Brian graduated from Sonoma Valley High School in June of 2000 and joined the Army in August. After boot camp he spent a year in Korea and after 9-11 he came back to the United States and was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. On Feb. 12, 2003, he was deployed to an undisclosed location near Iraq. His mother has received 2 letters—the last one dated March 2nd. Brian will be 22 years old in September. The mail takes approximately 30 days to arrive from over there. We try to write as often as we can and say a lot of prayers. We also sent a care package, but haven't heard if he received it yet. We sent some soap, shampoo and candy.

This is Brian's address:

SPC Brian Mascarelli
TF 11th AVN REGT
A CO 1-227 AVN
APO AE 09303

Please pray for all of their safe return.

Don Grant and wife Josephine

I am a 62 year-old retired Navy man and want those guys to know they are in my prayers and I am ready to stand alongside them and fight today. Let Freedom Ring. GOD Bless America.

Harry Piaczynski

THE AVERAGE MILITARY MAN

The average age of the military man is 19 years.

He is a short haired, tight-

muscled kid, who under normal circumstances is considered by society as half-man, half-boy. Not yet dry behind the ears, not old enough to buy a beer, but old enough to die for his country.

He never really cared much for work and he would rather wax his own car than wash his father's; but he has never collected unemployment either.

He's a recent High School graduate; he was probably an average student, pursued some form of sport activities, drives a ten year old car, and has a steady girlfriend that either broke up with him when he left, or swears to be waiting when he returns from half a world away.

He listens to rock and roll or hip-hop or rap.

He is 10 or 15 pounds lighter now than when he was at home because he is working or fighting from before dawn to well after dusk.

He has trouble spelling, thus letter writing can be hard, but he can field strip a rifle in 30 seconds and reassemble it in less time in the dark.

He can recite to you nomenclature of a machine gun or grenade launcher and use either one effectively if he must.

He digs foxholes and latrines and can apply first aid like a professional.

He can march until he is told to stop or stop until he is told to march.

He obeys orders instantly and without hesitation, but he is not without spirit or individual dignity.

He is self-sufficient. He has two sets of fatigues: he washes one and wears the other. He keeps his canteens full and his feet dry.

He sometimes forgets to brush his teeth, but never to clean his rifle.

He can cook his own meals, mend his own clothes, and fix his own hurts. If you're thirsty, he'll share his water with you; if you are hungry, his food.

He'll even split his ammunition with you in the midst of battle when you run low.

He has learned to use his hands like weapons and weapons like they were his hands. He can save your life or take it, because that is his job.

He will often do twice the work of a civilian, draw half the pay and still find

ironic humor in it all. He has seen more suffering and death than he should have in his short lifetime.

He has stood atop mountains of dead bodies, and helped to create them.

He has wept in public and in private, for friends who have fallen in combat and is unashamed.

He feels every note of the National Anthem vibrate through his body while at rigid attention, while tempering the burning desire to 'square-away' those around him who haven't bothered to stand, remove their hat, or even stop talking. In an odd twist, day in and day out, far from home, he defends their right to be disrespectful.

Just as his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, he is paying the price for our freedom.

Beardless or not, he is not a boy.

He is the American Fighting Man that has kept this country free for over 200 years.

He has asked nothing in return, except our friendship and understanding.

Remember him, always, for he has earned our respect and admiration with his blood.

Please pray for all our American Fighting Men.

BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW THIS ABOUT TEXAS

- The Confederate Air Force in Midland, TX is the home of the world's most complete collection of working WWII aircraft.
- Fort San Antonio has more historical buildings than Colonial Williamsburg.
- The Port of Houston, TX handles more foreign cargo than any other port in the U.S.
- The longest highway in any one state is U.S. 83 (903 miles from Brownsville, TX to the Panhandle).
- The world's tallest masonry structure is the San Jacinto Battlefield Monument.