

The BEXAR GROWL

Volume 7, Issue 2

January 2002

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF US BEXAR APA-237



Items of Special Interest

- *Get a comfortable seat, sit back, and enjoy reading more about the most memorable characters from the BEXAR. Stories begin on page one and continue thru page three.*
- *WELCOME MAT on page three has eighteen new names for the roster. See if you know anyone.*
- *A new idea for some stories is on page four. Hope to hear from you.*
- *The Bexar Growl is now available on line. See details on page four.*
- *Read all about Charleston on pages four and five, then fill out and return the survey on page six.*

MOST MEMORABLE CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN HALL & "TOMCAT" THOMPSON

I served aboard the USS Bexar during the period that Captain Madison Hall, Jr. was the Commanding Officer. Each day I gave him a weather briefing and enjoyed working with him. As Johnny Wells wrote, he was a real character. When I think of Captain Hall, two incidents come to mind.

We were tied to the dock at the Naval Station in San Diego, CA just before departing to return to Korea. Captain Hall and his friends had a wonderful "farewell evening" just before we departed San

Diego. The party went all night long and Captain Hall came aboard just before the ship departed. He had several car loads of friends along with his wife there to say good-bye. As the ship pulled away from the pier, his wife and friends left to return to Coronado, CA.

In the 1950s, ferries ran between San Diego and Coronado. There were anywhere between two and six ferries moving between the two cities across San Diego harbor. Captain Hall's wife and friends took a ferry back to Coronado and then waited on the dock to watch the Bexar go past.

Captain Hall was

standing on the port wing of the bridge as we approached the area where the ferries ran. He waved to his wife and friends and then went over and gave nine short blasts on the ship's whistle to say "good bye" to his wife and friends. Nothing in the "Rules of the Road" is covered by nine short blasts. Ferries started signaling, altering course and there was general confusion in the area as the Bexar steamed proudly through the area and out to sea as Captain Hall continued to wave.

During our shuttle service between Sasabo, Japan and Inchon, Korea,

(Continued on page 2)

we would have an occasional "Rest and Recreation" break in Beppu, Japan. Beppu was a quiet port up the coast from Sasabo, and ships were sent there one at a time.

The 82nd Airborne Division was stationed near Beppu. On our first night in Beppu, two crew members were "roughed up" by four 82nd Division MPs. Captain Hall heard about it the next morning. At 10 A. M. he had his launch "called away" and he went ashore. I don't know what Captain Hall said to the commanding officer of the 82nd Division, but Beppu was "off limits" to any army personnel for the duration of our stay in Beppu. Captain Hall always looked after his crew.

Another interesting character was "Tomcat" Thompson. "Tomcat" was a 3rd class boatswain's mate with about ten years of service when I met him aboard the Bexar. He loved to dance and knew every dance there was to know. When we were in Sasabo, we would all go to the EM Club to watch "Tomcat" dance with the Japanese hostess. Naturally everyone bought "Tomcat" a beer so he became more "fluid" in his dancing as the evening went on.

One evening we boarded the "Mike" boat to return to the Bexar moored at the last buoy in the harbor. The wind had risen while we were watching "Tomcat" dance and when we arrived at the ship, the young boatswain couldn't bring the "Mike" boat alongside the gangway. After getting about a dozen men off the "Mike" boat, we would circle around and repeat the process. It took a while, but we managed to get everyone off of the "Mike" boat except "Tomcat" and the seaman "bow hook."

The Officer of the Deck yelled down to "Tomcat" and instructed him to go and tie the "Mike" boat off the boom on the port side and not to attempt to climb up the rope ladder and walk the boom back to the ship. "Tomcat" replied, "Sir, I'm too damn drunk to try that." The seaman "bow hook" replied, "I'm too

sober to think about trying that." They both saluted smartly and took the "Mike" boat to the boom and tied her off. "Tomcat" and the "bow hook" spent the night sleeping on the life jackets aboard the "Mike" boat.

I'm sure we could write a book about the characters we met while serving aboard the Bexar. The crew was great and looked after each other and the ship. Good memories of a good group of sailors.

Submitted by:

Ralph Wicke AG2 Navi '53-56
118 Southern Hills Dr
New Bern, NC 28562-2947
wicke@newbernnc.com

**CAPTAIN HALL, LT. BRISKI, ENS.
BRAND & IVAN KLATT**

The stories being told of and by shipmates are all very interesting, even when those incidents were at a different time from our service time on the BEXAR.

In the last issue, John Wells had some interesting stories—I was aboard at the same time. I would like to elaborate on several of our shipmates: Capt. Hall; Lt. Briski, Navigator; Ens. Brand, Disbursing Officer; and myself, Ivan Klatt, the Supply Officer.

As an aside note, many of our cruises to Korea, loaded with Marines, were difficult. After off-loading U.S. Marines at Inchon (we didn't bring many back!), we took Korean Marines out for amphibious exercises, and it seemed that almost always we were in the worst of cold weather, and our debarkation stations at 0400 were not pleasant, but worse for the poor Korean Marines—they seemed so afraid that this was to be their last day, while being hunkered down waiting to go over the side into bouncing boats. On our first trip over, during winter-time, and during these exercises, we noticed that our ship's store supply of Aqua Velva after shave lotion went out of stock fast. Someone noticed one of the Marines drinking

the stuff just before assembling for debarkation, and that gave us the clue! So, the next trip out, we took 6 times as much Aqua Velva! As an aside, it was during these drills when all the boats were coming back aboard, followed by the Boat Commander Ens. Tom Wooten and crew coming up the side of Bexar in the gig when a hoisting line broke, throwing crew members into the icy water, and Tom caught between the boat and the side of the ship. The other boat crew members were rescued in short time, as 10 minutes in that water would have been the end of them. Tom suffered major injuries, spent many years in hospitals, and today still has major problems.

Capt. Hall and Lt. Briski were always partners in the bridge card games in Capt's quarters, and Jack Brand and I their competitors. I use the word "competitors" loosely, because we knew that the two of them had all kinds of secret bidding codes, but there was little we could do about them (obviously). Often Jack would have the mid watch coming up, and would hit the sack early, only to find me waking him, under Capt's orders, to get him to the bridge game. One night, while amphibious ships were in sailing formation, Ltjg Delaney with the Conn, came over the voice tube excitedly telling the Capt. that he had shifted to manual after steering, and had lost control of the ship. Capt. Hall went right over the bridge table to the deck, where in short time, control was brought back to the bridge. Capt. wanted to play some more bridge after he had rested for a while. About 10 minutes later, someone started to say something over the voice tube, then excused the interruption, but that was the bridge for that night!

After a payday, Jack Brand came to me to say that they had been working for hours to find a \$4,000 error, and presumed at this point that it had been lost or stolen. We tried the old disbursing trick of dividing the discrepancy by 9, as this is most always the sign that two numbers have been incorrectly transposed. No such luck.

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

After another 6 hours, I told Capt. and we went over all the processes of balancing. The next morning I had the message ready to send to the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts notifying them of the loss. Before signing off the message, Capt asked that we go through all activity before and after pay day. The first action was for Jack to go to the money bag that he carried the money to payline with, and low and behold, in this unlocked compartment, and in the bag, were 4 bundles of tens, our \$4,000!

On one trip back from Japan via great circle route, a week or so after departing, we got into dense fog, and it lasted for 12 days. The Navigator, Joe Briski, had not had a star, moon, or sun reading in all that time. He really never got more than a couple of hours sleep at one time. Of course, everyone on the bridge through all the watches knew that we could be in deep trouble. Every movement of the compass was watched and recorded. This long story is made short in that when we finally got clearing weather, we found that we were very close to San Francisco, instead of further out to sea on the way to San Diego. Everybody wanted to go on in to San Francisco for a special liberty, and I am sure that Capt. Hall would have been glad to oblige, but higher authority had other plans!

I ended up serving 33 years of active duty, having started out in 1942. After sea duty during WWII, I got out, finished college, was called to active duty for Korea, went to Officer Candidate School and Ensign Supply Corps. BEXAR was during Korean Conflict. In a previous GROWL article, I told of the horrendous exercise when BEXAR took two loads of 2,000 each of fleeing Chinese from the Tachen Islands to Keelung, Formosa. If anyone would like a copy of that account, I will send it. During Vietnam, I was on USS PIEDMONT (AD-17) for 3 years as Supply Officer.

Ivan Klatt
3937 Rd 274 #42
Bass Lake, CA 93604
papabbl@sierratel.com



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.

David Campbell (1960 SN 3rd Div)
700 SE Crescent Dr
Shelton, WA 98584
360-426-4513

Mike Marsack (1962-65)
SF3 R Div
1457 Realty Rd
Ramona, CA 92065
760-789-5761
mikem226@juno.com

Richard Morrenzin (1962-65)
MM2 B & M Div
669 Oklahoma Way
Elk Grove, IL 60007
847-895-5613
rmorrenzin@aol.com

Oscar "Jack" Huggins (1961-65)
BMSN/BM3 3rd/Boat Group
3018 Hwy 55 West
Kinston, NC 28504
252-520-0023
jackhuggins22@hotmail.com

Monty Jantzen (formerly Ken Miller)
1962-66 SFM2 R Div
3791 Center Ave
Santa Barbara, CA 93105
805-682-1931
carell@egan.org

James Love (1964 FN BM Div)
Rt 2 Box 232-2
Leonard, TX 75452
903-587-0002
j19145@aol.com

Lenonard Ransonette (1961-67)
SFP2 R Div

314 Evanston St
Houston, TX 77015-2319
713-451-4571

Anthony McBride (1962-65)
SFM2 R Div
402 Scarborough Rd
Warner Robins, GA 31093-1405

Charles Smith, Jr. (1958-60)
SN 3rd Div
1125 NW 13th Terr
Stuart, FL 34994
561-692-3661
skip1994@bellsouth.net

William Figge (1968-69)
RD3 OS Div
411 E Santa Inez
San Mateo, CA 94401
408-656-3599
wjfigge@netscape.net

Larry Burkin (1955-57)
ET3 OE Div
2293 Keokuk Dr
Pella, IA 50219
641-628-1827
larrybee@kdsi.net

Joe Shaffer (1967-69)
RM2 OPS Div
2165 Rutherford Ln
Fremont, CA 94539
510-623-0750
jpublic89@attbi.com

Herbert Massey (1955-59)
E-3 FN A Div
284 Jim Gulley Rd
Hartwell, GA 30643-5240
706-376-3779

Harry Kinney (1948-49)
SA Supply
670 Tawa Ct
Prescott, AZ 86301
928-443-0781
hak4827@hotmail.com

Richard Haymes (1948-49)
BM3 3rd
11 Deerwood Trail
Warren, NJ 07059
732-560-9211
rickmedcom@aol.com

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

Jerry Alexander (1958-62)
SN 1st Div
100 Drake Blvd
Longview, TX 75605
903-757-6155

Geoffrey Rickard
4207 Burke Ave N
Seattle, WA



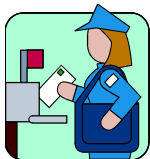
TAPS

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.

Robert Sherman
Date of death not known

Howard Wurzbacher
Died May 30, 2001

Leroy Amadisto (1958-62)
Date of death not known



MAIL CALL

Jay Grubb came up with a good idea for future stories for the Bexar Growl. He writes the following:

Another story for future articles might be something we remember quite well... like knowing the right people aboard the ship that helped make a difference...like the guys

who had keys to all departments... and it was a habit to lay out steaks to thaw for Sunday's steak and eggs. Well, if you knew the right personnel, sometime in the middle of the night, one could have a "steak fry". We had no barbeque grill, but we did have welding torches and a metal piece or maybe even a pan pointed under it to make a steak how you wanted it cooked... has the time limit run out on this crime? Well, I was just a "gobbler" not a "getter", but it sure was fun.

If you have any of this kind of story (or any other kind), please send it in to be published in the next issue of Bexar Growl. We will be eagerly awaiting your stories!

mail Roster please send an e-mail to SubscribeMLRS@aol.com, put the phrase **SUBSCRIBE BEXAR 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

NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ON LINE

The Newsletter for the USS BEXAR 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.mrsinc.com, then follow the link labeled Reunions, then scroll down until you see the listing for the USS BEXAR. 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 BEXAR 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 BEXAR E-

NEXT REUNION— CHARLESTON SEPTEMBER 26-29, 2002

The dates for the 2002 reunion are confirmed for September 26-29, at the Town and Country Inn in downtown Charleston, SC. We hope that many of the newly found members whose names were published in the last newsletter will attend the reunion. Everyone has a great time reminiscing with old and new buddies. Please make every attempt to attend. You won't be disappointed!

Charleston is located on a narrow, low-lying peninsula between the Ashley and Cooper rivers, at the head of a broad bay leading to the Atlantic Ocean. It also includes an area on the western bank of the Ashley River.

The nearly landlocked harbor handles both coastal and overseas trade, giving it the reputation as one of the busiest ports of the southeastern United States.

A major tourist attraction is the extensive historic district, noted for its lush gardens and the varied architecture.

Three fortifications stand at the mouth of the Charleston Harbor: Fort Sumter and Castle Pinckney

(Continued from page 4)

(1797), both built on shoals, and Fort Moultrie, on Sullivan's Island.

The city's points of interest are sure to attract many for this annual gathering. As you know, your time together will be short, so let's make the most of it at the places that interest you. Read over the Sneak Preview of the popular attractions in Charleston. Mark your choices on the survey form which is included in this newsletter to let us know what you would like to see. Be sure to return it just as soon as you can, so we can finalize your reunion activities.

Sneak Preview

Boone Hall Plantation:

Historic Boone Hall Plantation was used in the filming of the television mini-series "North and South." It was the background setting for parts of "Gone With the Wind." You can watch the ladies make their sweetgrass baskets, in addition to touring the lovely Georgian-style plantation.

Charles Museum:

Founded in 1773, it is the oldest museum in America and contains natural science, cultural history, ornithology, and ethnology departments, the Charleston Silver Exhibit, which is internationally recognized work by local silversmiths, dating from Colonial times to the 19th Century.

City Hall Council Chambers:

The City Hall Gallery is located in the Council Chamber at City Hall and was built in 1801. It includes portraits of many important leaders, including one by George Trumbull of George Washington.

Drayton Hall:

Built circa 1738, the Hall survived the Civil War intact and preserved almost in its original condition after more than 250

years. It is considered one of the oldest and finest examples of Georgian Palladian architecture in the nation.

Fort Sumter:

A boat will take you from Patriot's Point to Ft Sumter. Some of you may recall this is the fort that the Yankees secretly, and by night, reinforced (no doubt to launch a sneak attack on Charleston). This overt action forced the Confederates to make a preemptive strike which marked the beginning of what some historians have called the "Civil War." In Charleston it is known as the "War of Northern Aggression." Once at the Fort, a ranger from the National Park Service will give you an informative introduction before you tour this famous bastion and its marvelous museum.

Charleston Carriage Tour:

Leisurely ride through narrow streets and alleyways past carefully restored 18th and 19th century homes and buildings. Your guide will relate three hundred years of history to the accompaniment of horse's hooves clopping along the pavement.

Magnolia Gardens:

Designed circa 1680, this contains America's oldest garden and boasts one of the largest collections of azaleas and camellias. The inside of the country house holds as much history as the gardens, being the pre-revolutionary war summer home of the Draytons. It has something for everyone-nature train tour, petting zoo, wildlife observation tower, orientation theater, gift shop, art gallery, horticultural maze, Biblical Garden, herb garden, and more.

Old Exchange and Provost Dungeon:

No other Charleston attraction presents so much of our American heritage as does the Old Exchange. Early settlers built a Court of Guard here in which imprisoned pirates and Indians were kept in the lower level, while town meetings were held in the hall. The Old Exchange was completed in 1771 by the British. With its striking Palladian architecture, the Exchange dominated

the harbor. It became the social, political, and economic hub of the bustling 18th century port. In 1965 part of the original seawall of Charles Towne was discovered during the excavation of the dungeon.

St. Michael's Episcopal Church:

Located on Meeting at Broad Street and completed in 1761, it is the oldest church edifice in the city and one of the few city churches in America to retain its original design. It was here that George Washington worshipped during his tour of the South in 1791. Its clock and ring of eight bells, except for short absences, have shared the lives of Charlestonians for over 200 years.

Patriot's Point:

This is the world's largest Naval Maritime Museum. Tour the famous WW II aircraft carrier USS YORKTOWN, visit Medal of Honor Museum on board. Also tour the destroyer USS LAFHEY, a participant in the Normandy landings, the submarine USS CLAMAGORE, and the Coast Guard Cutter Ingham. There is also a model of a Navy Base like those used by Naval personnel in Vietnam.

The goal of Military Locator & Reunion Service, Inc is to give you the best possible reunion. We want to offer things that YOU want, not what we "think" you may like. You can help insure that your reunion is *your* reunion by participating in the survey on the bottom of page six. Return it to us at the address at the bottom of the survey, and then we can begin to finalize the reunion plans. We look forward to seeing many new, as well as many "old" faces, in Charleston.

**2002 REUNION
SEPTEMBER 26-29
CHARLESTON, SC
TOWN & COUNTRY INN**

Published by:

Military Locator & Reunion Service, Inc
 PO Drawer 11399
 Hickory, NC 28601
 828-256-6008 (voice)
 8280256-6559 (fax)
 Dinamtrs@aol.com (e-mail)
 mlrsnewsletters@aol.com (newsletter e-mail)
 www.mlrsinc.com (web site)

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 funded by voluntary contributions from the membership. All members are encouraged to support the voice of the BEXAR. 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.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Funds available after 10/01 issue **\$731.92**
 Funds received since 10/01 issue **\$1429.00**
 Total available for 01/02 issue **\$2160.92**
 Funds expended for 01/02 issue **\$127.71**
Bal remaining for 04/02 issue \$2033.21

Thank you for your loyal support. Your contributions keep the Bexar Growl going.

2002 REUNION SURVEY FOR USS BEXAR CHARLESTON, SC

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey of the attractions in the Charleston 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.

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

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Boone Hall Plantation _____ | Charles Museum _____ | City Hall Council Chambers _____ |
| Drayton Hall _____ | Charleston Carriage Tour _____ | Fort Sumter _____ |
| Magnolia Gardens _____ | Old Exchange and Provost Dungeon _____ | St. Michael's Episcopal Church _____ |
| Patriot's Point _____ | | |

Would you like a Welcome Reception the first evening of the reunion?
 Yes _____ No _____

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

Would you like a "low country" buffet on Friday night, featuring Charleston flavored dishes, ? Yes _____ No _____

Do you want entertainment after the banquet? Yes _____ No _____

Other comments and suggestions: _____

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