

The BEXAR BROWN

Volume 10 Issue 3

April 2004

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS BEXAR APA 237



Items of Special Interest

- If you haven't seen a history of the Bexar, Vernon Pittman has his from 1952. See the cover story.
- We welcome four new members on page two under "Welcome Mat."
- A great series of stories for "Mail Call" begins on page three. Lots of good memories are shared.
- Read about the VA funding on page seven. It may affect you now or in the future.
- Be sure to read the important message about the newsletter mailings on page eight.
- Get your dues sent in so you don't miss another issue. See page eight.

HISTORY OF USS BEXAR (APA 237)

Submitted by Vernon Pittman.

He says he has had it since 1952 and that it was included in his Album of Salts.

Division of Naval History
Ship's Histories Section
Navy Department

The auxiliary attack transport USS Bexar was constructed by the Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation in Portland, Oregon, July 21, 1945.

Commissioned approximately two months later, the BEXAR was named in honor of Bexar County in the state of Texas.

BEXAR's career began after World War II,

when she was assigned duty with the Magic Carpet Fleet. She operated in this capacity, returning veterans of the Pacific campaigns to the United States for discharge.

She served in this capacity from October 1945 to February 1946.

After a brief tour of duty on the West Coast, BEXAR was assigned to "Operation Crossroads" in early 1946. She proceeded to Bikini Atoll for the atomic bomb tests.

In August 1946, BEXAR returned to the United States for deactivation as a result of radioactivity. She was cleared by Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in January 1947 and stood out for Norfolk via the Pa-

nama Canal.

BEXAR spent the whole year of 1947 on duty with the Atlantic Fleet, ranging from Cristobal, Canal Zone to as far north as Argentina, Newfoundland.

In December 1947, she sailed from Morehead City, North Carolina, for the Mediterranean Sea, loaded with Marines to relieve personnel assigned to ships on foreign duty.

USS BEXAR remained active with the U. S. Atlantic Fleet.

STATISTICS

Displacement	14,837 tons
Overall Length	455 feet
Speed	17 knots
Beam	62 feet

Compiled December 1952

WELCOME ABOARD!

The membership of the USS Bexar Association welcome you and hope that you will be able to become an active member and experience all the very positive experiences of attending our annual reunions. Our association has a Shipmate Reunion Coordinator who co-chairs the reunions along with the MLRS, Inc. reunion representative. James "Jim" Redding is your coordinator. Jim has been re-elected on a regular basis by acclamation. The reasons for this are varied. He has done a fine job, has a great personality, sense of humor, thick skin, does not get insulted easily and takes direction from his wife well. Besides,...., nobody else wants the damn job! MLRS, Inc. is the private company with whom we are contracted. They have, as their responsibility to us, the following:

1. To obtain the best possible deal for us in arranging for our accommodations provider and to attempt to do so considering the date we provide as our first choice. To make ALL arrangements, from check-in to check-out.
2. To provide us, via regular mail, a regular reunion packet detailing ALL costs and specifics of the accommodations and indicating ALL available options once a year. This is usually done in mid-July for our reunions, which are normally held between Labor Day and the first week of October.
3. To publish our newsletter, currently on a quarterly basis, with content we are responsible for providing.
4. To make available, once a year, a Sentimental Journal and SJ update and; in addition, memorabilia items for sale. They publish the journal and update.

At each reunion, we hold our annual business meeting. At this meeting, we also hold nominations for Shipmate Reunion Coordinator and for the city venue for the next year. We have adopted a policy of trying to rotate the reunions around the country fairly and realize that for reasons of age, health and economics, many folks find it difficult to travel great distances. We have divided the country into East, Central and West regions and rotate around in that order.

I set up and maintain an E-mail directory for those members who are online and have a website set up also. The

URL is <http://www.ussbexar-apa237.org/> and I encourage you to stop by and visit and make an entry in our log. Should you have some old pictures I would love to put them up in the appropriate website pages. Pictures of somewhat humorous nature are welcomed, but please exercise discretion as to content.

Please save this letter for your future reference as it details much contact information.

For **James "Jim" Redding**,
Shipmate Reunion Coordinator
221 So. Joaquin St.
Coalinga, CA 93210
OR
559-935-1439

For **Robert "Bob" Weiss**
Volunteer Membership Secretary
P.O. Box 303
Brookhaven, NY 11719-0303
OR
631-399-1717

OR
ussbexar@verizon.net

For any website or newly located shipmate related information
OR

doctorhugo@verizon.net

For all other information

For changes in your information on the roster/mailling list and most importantly **your** address changes any method of contact to me as Membership Secretary and I, in turn, will advise MLRS and they will change their records.

To submit any content to our **newsletter**
ML&RS, Inc.
3330 Springs Road
Hickory, NC 28601-9100
(ATTN: KAREN)
OR
karenmlrs@charterinternet.com

To submit any content to our **Sentimental Journal** (same MLRS, Inc. address) and **ATTN: ELAINE**
OR
elainemlrs@charterinternet.com

Any **other problems** with reunion deposit receipts, not receiving your newsletter or reunion packet or things that are MLRS, Inc. responsibility (same MLRS address) and **ATTN: DINA**
dinamlrs@charterinternet.com

Welcome Aboard,
Robert "Bob" Weiss
Volunteer Membership Secretary



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.

James Coleman (1966-68)
2133 Hwy 570 North Ext
Ruth, MS 39662
JCol500@aol.com

Gary Ritter (1966-69)
FN/SFM3/SFM R Div
3989 Orchard Knoll Dr
Greensboro, NC 27405
336-621-3735

Lawrence Hayes (1961-63) Deck
PO Box 296
Wrightsville Beach, NC 28480
910-620-4130
lpsh@ec.rr.com

Clifford Wynes
13112 East 53rd Rd Ln
Yuma, AZ 85367
928-345-3004



TAPS

The Growl was notified of the following shipmates' deaths since the last newsletter was published. Our deepest sympathy goes to the widow, family and friends of the deceased.

Ernst Mikulecky
Died February 1997

Wayne Litfiy (1948-52) EM3 A Div
Died March 28, 2004

Capt Forrest Peterson (1967-68)
Died December 8, 1990

Coy Habich (1964-67) BM 2 Deck
Died 1997

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

ATTENTION SHIPMATES!

The Ship's Store was created by and for your association to enable you to have certain 'pride' items to display that are NOT available from ML&RS, Inc.

Vendor prices were negotiated to obtain the best pricing for each item, which involves a large initial item purchase. If you don't support the store then new funds needed for procuring additional items such as coffee mugs, etc. will not be available. The small amount made on each sale is retained toward future purchases. Support your store. It was set up for you.

Robert 'Bob' Weiss

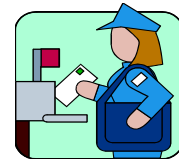
ATTENTION SHIPMATES!

Your association's new website is now up and running. The URL is <http://www.ussebexar-apa237.org/>. If you have a chance, please stop by and take a look. We have set up two pages, currently, for displaying photos and encourage you to send some in via regular mail to the below indicated address OR by email attachment to:

ussebexar@verizon.net

If you wish the original pictures returned, just so request and I'll comply. If I get a good response, I'd like to set up a third page to display family group pictures of shipmates who wish to submit same. It should be noted that we'd like to have pictures from shipmates who are not regular reunion attendees as well as those that are. It's your association, so why not become an active member in it. We want to encourage those who are unable to attend reunions to feel welcome to participate. Send in a short story to your newsletter about some shipboard recollections and/or participate in the website. Hope to hear from you. Regards to all.

Robert "Bob" Weiss
Voluntary Membership Secretary
USS Bexar Reunion Association
PO Box 303
Brookhaven, NY 11719-0303



MAIL CALL

Editor's Note: After a plea by e-mail for stories from former USS Bexar sailors for this issue, I got a great response. The following stories were received from that request. Thanks, guys! Please let us hear from those of you who haven't given us your story.

Hi,

I have just been thinking about some funny things that happened while I was aboard the old Bexar. One of the funniest things I remember happened at Inchon, Korea, somewhere around Christmas 1954. John Flynn, who was a good friend of mine and a fellow radioman, had a saying that he used a lot. He was from NY and had that NY accent. He would always say, "Don't sweat it ace." Well, the first time we got to go into town after our three week crossing from San Diego was quite an event. It was mighty cold and we took a liberty boat in to see what we could see. I remember one thing in particular and that was the open sewer running along the walkways in the town. John, several other radiomen and I found what was designated as the EM club, which was an old quanset hut. At that time they still had beer in cans and I remember those beer cans were rusty, but it was beer. I think maybe we had a few too many of those old rusty beer cans before we headed back to the ship. The boat dock where the P boats would unload and pick us up was a bunch of pontoons lashed together and some of them were not tied real tight together. As a result of that, there were wide gaps between them. Well, by this time it was night, and it was as dark as the inside of a cow. We were standing there on those pontoons waiting for a boat. It

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was freezing cold. All of a sudden, John was no longer with us. He was a small guy and didn't weigh more than a hundred and ten pounds, and wouldn't you know it, he fell in between two of those pontoons. We could hear him splashing around, but we were not sure where he was. I looked down one of the openings and all I could see was his white hat. As we were fishing him out, he let go with his famous saying, "Don't sweat it ace." He wasn't sweating much by the time we got back to the ship. He was more like an ice cube.

Oh, the good ole days...

Roger Schmidt RM3
Bexar Duty 11-54 to 2-57
dotrog3637@aol.com

Hello,

Let me introduce myself. I am Logan I. Grayson, ENCS USN Retired, and I served on USS Bexar from Feb. 1963 until Feb. 1967. The story I am sending you is about, I believe, the only sailor that was killed in Viet Nam that was stationed on board USS Bexar. It was Richard H. Langford, EN2 USN on 23 April 1965. We were in Da Nang and the USS Cook needed to borrow a boat engineer to do a Marine recon landing. So Richard was sent (TAD) temporary additional duty, to the USS Cook for that mission, but was still assigned to the Bexar. Although I know that there were Marines KIA that were put ashore from USS Bexar, I have heard of no other sailors. My part in this was that I was requested by his wife, to escort Richard's remains to Russellville, AR for burial.

Regards,
Logan Grayson
loganlg@cableone.net

Hello,

I have this story on the Bexar page of my web site <http://www.members.cox.net/oldbluejacket>. It happened to me during my tour on the USS Bexar from 1967-68. I was

a ETN2 at the time.

Our skipper was Captain F.S. Peterson (the vaporizer—who later became the skipper of the Enterprise and eventually became a Vice Admiral) who flew the X-15 (or one of those experimental planes). I know because he made the whole crew watch his home movies of him flying it. One time, while working on the fathometer in the pilot house, I heard this ungodly loud screaming and hollering coming from outside the porthole. Not thinking, I stuck my head out (or as far as it would go anyway) the porthole to see what the yelling was about. I ended up with my head right between the skipper and an individual being chastised during a Captain's mast proceeding being held on the bridge wing. I looked to the right at the victim of the chewing out and then to my left, right into the face of the skipper! I never moved so fast in my life! I was gone! I stayed away from the bridge for a while!

Warren Willis
CWO4 USN Retired
thewillises@cox.net

Hi,

I recall when the Bexar made a port visit to Beppu, Japan, in 1955. A local dignitary and his wife/girlfriend visited the ship, and were transported by one of our ship's boats. In the process of climbing aboard the accommodation ladder, one of the lady's dressy shoes (gaita) fell into the water, where it fortunately floated. Quick as a flash, the boat crew went after it, but no matter how hard they tried to catch it with the boat hook it eluded them for about a half-hour. All this time the young lady, clutching her hands to her bosom, politely cried out encouraging words. When it was finally retrieved and presented to her, she was extremely pleased and thanked the presenter profusely. It was a nice break in the routine of the day.

Ed Martin
edmartin@san.rr.com

Hello,

My name is Ray Butler. I served aboard the Bexar during 1946 and

1947. I was Radarman assigned to the Navigation Division. It was my privilege to paint the "Beer Flag" which flew from the mast when the Bexar sailed into the Bikini Atoll, Marshall Islands. The flag was to let participating crews aboard all ships, for the 1st Atomic Bomb Test held there, to know that we had several thousand cases of beer in our holds. What hadn't been siphoned off during the cruise over from San Francisco was eagerly consumed by enlisted men and officers alike, while preparing for the historic tests.

Ray Butler
r.j.butler@att.net

Hello all,

In the fall of 1947, just before the cruise to Argentina, Newfoundland to land Marines for cold weather operations, the large gear wheel to the laundry machine broke. We were to sail to Morehead City in two days and it was said this was a health hazard. It was not possible to order and receive a new wheel in a two day time span. In order to get the wheel replaced, permission was received to send shipfitters over to another APA in Norfolk that had the same type of laundry machine and remove their laundry wheel and install in on the Bexar. The other ship would have a new one delivered to them in five days.

On this same cruise when the Marines were being picked up on shore, a number of the LVP's had holes made in the wooden hulls from the rocky shore line, that allowed water to rise up to the troops knees. When all the boats were aboard and secured the announcement came over the PA that all boat crews were to report to sick bay and the troops were to report to the mess deck. The troops received hot coffee and the boat crews in sick bay all received a shot of whiskey from the doctor so he would not get sick.

As a personal note, I believe

the first incident occurred just before Thanksgiving 1947. We also stopped at Halifax, Nova Scotia for Liberty on the return trip. If anyone can verify my recollections, I would like to hear from you at ejkp@juno.com.

In late 1947 or early 1948, just before the Mediterranean Cruise to take Marines to Malta Harbor to be transferred to the carrier FDR, about 100 crewmembers were transferred one morning to other ships in the Amphibious Forces. In the afternoon, replacements of the same rates came aboard. We did not know where we were going, but you had to have nine months remaining in your enlistment if you remained aboard. It was interesting because we had women's clothing, baby clothes, bottles and formula sent aboard with the other stores. When we left Norfolk for Morehead City to load troops, we had sacks of potatoes covered with canvas stored on deck around #1 hatch. *(Tell us hear why the women's clothes and baby's supplies were on board!)*

Sometime in early 1948 on the Cruise to the Mediterranean, just before noon, the announcement came over the PA system for the commissary officer to report to the Captain's Cabin. About 15 minutes later the commissary officer returned to the supply office and the Supply Officer asked him what the Captain wanted. Oh, he had gotten a bowl of soup from the general mess to go with his lunch and found a cockroach in the soup.

"What did you tell him?" the Lt. asked.

"I told him I didn't know how it happened, Sir, because we had just taken muster and they were all accounted for."

Horrified, the Lt said, "YOU WHAT?"

The Commissary Officer said, "No, but I wanted to."

Submitted by Ed Poenicke SK2
Aboard Mid 1947 to Fall 1948
ejkp@juno.com

Name: Paul Nichols
Rank: Lt. CMDR
Service Branch: US Navy
Significant Duty: USS Bexar APA 237

During the November—December 1950 period, the USS Bexar was assigned to a task unit, consisting of several warships such as destroyers, DE's, French and British destroyers, APA's, Fleet Tugs and other auxiliary ships. The purpose of this assignment was the possible evacuation of U. S. Army troops that reportedly were re-treating south after Communist China entered the War in November 1950.

The task unit was ordered to steam north from Inchon in the Yellow Sea to the estuary leading to Chinnampo. This estuary was quite narrow, probably less than 1 or 2 miles in width and the strong tide of 25-30 feet caused the depth of the sandy bottom to shift constantly. As a result, the navigator was taking bearings every one or two minutes from the time we entered the estuary until we arrived at Chinnampo. When we arrived at Chinnampo, the entire coast, harbor beach areas were lined with hundreds of Korean refugees.

We spent most of the day at Chinnampo waiting for word from the U.S. Army. Because no information was forthcoming from the Army and it was just before twilight, the task unit was ordered to leave Chinnampo and return to Inchon, Korea.

As we departed, all the ships were ordered to shell and bombard the beach facilities including supply warehouses, petroleum storage tanks and other North Korean War materials. After the bombardment, the whole harbor and surrounding areas were engulfed in flames that were visible for miles. As we were leaving Chinnampo, as twilight faded into nightfall, and knowing that those many refugees were still present, it left a sick and eerie feeling in the pit of my stomach. We viewed these flames from the time we departed until they disappeared over the horizon.

After leaving Chinnampo and while steaming in the estuary toward the Yellow Sea, the Bexar ran aground.

Our Commanding Officer became so excited; he contacted the Admiral in charge by voice radio to report our situation. Admiral ordered all ships to continue on to Inchon except one fleet tug which was ordered to remain with the Bexar and try to pull her off the sand bar. If that was not successful, we were ordered to wait for high tide which presumably would float the Bexar off the sand bar. When we ran aground, the ship lost suction resulting in loss of electricity.

We had no idea where the North Koreans were, so we went to general quarters and manned all our battle stations, waiting for the high tide to float us off the sand bar. After waiting several hours in the dark, the tide fortunately did float the Bexar off the sand bar and we continued to Inchon, Korea.

I consider my assignment and accomplishments aboard the USS Bexar APA 237 during the Korean War the high water mark of my entire 22 year Navy career. As the Supply Officer of the Bexar, I played a major role in accomplishing our assigned mission of landing the Marines at Inchon, Korea on September 15, 1950 and the subsequent Korean War Campaigns we participated in.

Paul Nichols
406 Royale Park Dr
San Jose, CA 95136

Bexar Growl,

On 27 June 1960, after loading 600 Marines and their equipment, BEXAR departed San Diego for a normal WESTPAC deployment. The ship stopped at Pearl Harbor from 3 to 5 July before proceeding to Okinawa. We arrived there on 17 July. We spent 2 days there during which time we off loaded the Marines. When we arrived we anchored and waited for the pilot and tugs to take us alongside the pier. By the middle of the afternoon when they hadn't arrived,

the Captain couldn't stand it any longer and decided to move the ship by himself. Captain Otis Wesche was something else! He was very smart, very capable, and an excellent ship handler, but had a short fuse and demanded perfection—on an APA yet. (Surprisingly he came close to getting it.) Now as far as moving the ship, you remember that the BEXAR was built on a merchant ship hull with a single screw and not much backing power. A big lumbering beast. I'll give Wesche credit in that he called the XO (Alonso E. Belch) first and told him what he was going to do. The XO was an ex-BM and also an excellent shiphandler as well as a very competent officer. The XO agreed with his plan. So Wesche got the ship underway and headed for the pier with no tugs or pilot. He put the ship alongside the pier with one of finest pieces of ship handling I have ever seen. He basically told the base to stick it in their ear. Of course the base commander wasn't too happy with the whole drill and I understand Wesche got a little verbal abuse about it. This was the start of a very interesting deployment that turned into a world cruise by the seat of our pants— basically making it up as we went along. The ship took 1400 Indonesian troops to the Congo in support of the United Nations and then came home via the Panama Canal with many stops en-route.

Peter J. Watson
Operations Officer
p-j-Watson@earhtlink.net

Hello,

During my time aboard the USS BEXAR, there were instances that really mess with my mind. We had an Ensign that really thought he was the cat's meow. A young guy right out of the academy, with about enough sense to come in out of the rain. He would strut around like a peacock and when he was officer of the deck, you had better watch out. I nicknamed him Smiling Jack, and he did not like that one bit. Me, being a seaman deuce signalman striker,

really rubbed him the wrong way. I didn't think he was funny, so he came back at me with, Unsmiling Pittman. He had it pretty well figured; I didn't see anything in the Navy to smile about.

I was new to the ship and was striking for signalman. The third class in charge of the signal bridge advanced to second-class pretty soon and had his favorites and was trying to pull them along with him. This leader was the only one I ever saw who would tell you the chief said to do this or that and begin to cry before he finished. Well, it was not long and I was dissatisfied up there and not getting along too well. A yeoman friend told me you have been placed on the list for transfer and the opening was aboard an LST, upkeep Sasebo, Japan for the next 6 months. Not liking Japan at all, I began to look for relief. I had friends that were cooks and they told me to check with their officer. He decided to give me inner ship transfer to be a cook striker. I will never forget him. The only officer I ever had any dealings with that kept his word. He was not afraid like the rest. After the signal bridge's surprise wore off, things rocked along great. In two weeks I was assigned the watch in the galley. There was an officer assigned to eat with the enlisted men at every meal. In about a month, here came Smiling Jack. The boys on KP were instructed to give no more than two hot cakes with the breakfast serving. Smiling Jack reached into the pan of hot cakes and grabbed more. It just so happened that I was standing there and saw the whole thing. I immediately put the Ensign on report. You don't reach in others food, even if you are an Ensign.

By this time we were coming back to the states. Smiling Jack sure was not smiling then, and the only way he got out of it was that the officer that gave me a break asked me to give the Ensign a break. I owed my officer and I asked that the charges be dropped. Did not have any trouble from him after that. I finished two years aboard the Bexar.

Vernon Pittman (1952-54)

IT HAPPENED ON THE BEXAR

There was another time on the Bexar that I had an incident with an officer. It was at liberty time on Friday afternoon. I had liberty and was on deck for liberty inspection. I had an unsealed box that I had received in Uncle Sam's mail. It was apparent that it had not been opened. I knew what was in it, because I had my folks send it to me. I had two surf reels sent to me, with some line. My father was running our fishing tackle business while I was gone to service. I was stationed in San Diego for two years on the athletic company at the training center. I had made some surf rods and needed some reels and he sent them to me.

The Lieutenant in charge of the deck crew was Officer of the Deck and was inspecting the liberty party. He saw the box I had with me and said I would have to open it for inspection before I went ashore. I explained that it was my private property and I did not want to open it for fear I might drop one of the reels and break something. I was told to open it or stay on the ship and miss liberty. If it had been anywhere else I'd have knocked someone's block off. I protested and went to see the Captain or the commander, but they had already gone ashore. There was not any Officer on the ship that out ranked the Lieutenant; so there I was in a Wewoka switch (nothing I could do about it). I returned to the Lieutenant and opened the box (under protest) and took my liberty. He was surprised to find, just what I said was in the box. I could not believe that he could make me open my own mail, which just came to the ship from across the country.

After I got ashore, and went fishing, I forgot all about it and did not pursue it on my return to the ship. It would have caused more trouble then it was worth. He must have figured it that way, too. I had no more trouble with this fellow the rest of my tour. Soon we went to the Naval Air Station to be released from the service. There were 600 sailors in this big hall and a guy came in and said he was supposed to sign

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us up for another cruise. Believe me when I say about 586 guys got up and walked out. Guess they had had enough too.

Vernon Pittman
Cook Striker 1953-54
Verne124@cox.net

Here I go again,

I recently ran across some of my old Navy pictures and sat in amazement at how young everyone looked. Sure that included me too. We fought the battles San Diego, Oakland, and Frisco, Long Beach and Market Street in San Pedro. Boy, that was a tough one, that Pedro. You had to fight your way in so you could fight your way out of most of those places. The Navy did a lot of that. I think that was the reason the people of California didn't like the Navy. One thing I always wondered about when I was on the West Coast, why wouldn't they let us wear our white uniforms?

I guess it was because they would get so dirty during all our fighting.

Some of the best times I had in the Navy was during our fights. We did wear those whites overseas, in Japan, Hong Kong, Manila, and Korea. They had to let us because it was so hot. I remember it being 120* aboard the ship. We could put our mattresses out on deck at night where it was the coolest. If it rained at night, so what. I'll tell you some more about the Navy at a later time. There is plenty to remember.

Vernon Pittman

A big thank you to everyone who sent in a story! To all others, please use these stories as an inspiration to send in YOUR memories also. You don't have to be a great writer, just tell your story in your own words. I guarantee you will do great! Send stories to ML&RS, address page 2

VA FUNDING 2004

Submitted by Bob Weiss

On a 65—28 vote, the Senate approved the FY2004 Omnibus spending bill (PL 108-199) which the president has signed. This bill includes funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs for the current fiscal year, which began last October. The bill provides a much-needed \$2.6 billion increase in veteran's health care and represents a \$1.1 billion increase over both the President's request and the House-passed budget. Appropriators rejected proposals by the administration to impose enrollment fees and higher co-pays on veterans without service-connected disabilities who earn more than \$24,000 annually.

Since October, VA has been running on the same inadequate funding level as it had last fiscal year. Passage can be attributed by the many phone calls and e-mails Congress received from their constituents and the efforts of military fraternal organizations which helped push this important vote through. The Roll Call Vote is available at

www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm

The vote ended the weeks of stalling that prevented veterans from receiving needed funding for health care. The fight will soon begin again, however. In February, the President will release his budget for fiscal year 2005, and we will begin a new year of budget battles. Your voice will be just as important then as it was today. Veterans planning to vote in the upcoming elections are encouraged to vote for legislators who support veteran legislation.

Source: Military Service Coalition Newsletter, Jan 04

IMPROVEMENTS FROM VA FUNDING INCREASES

Submitted by Bob Weiss

Recent and proposed funding of the VA has allowed a number of improvements in their capability to serve the veteran community. These include:

A new directive stating that all veterans requiring care for a service-connected disability must be scheduled for a primary care evaluation within 30 days of their desired date.

The opening of 194 new community clinics during the last three years, bringing the total to 676. Nearly nine out of every 10 enrolled veterans now live within 30 minutes of a VA medical facility. The number of veterans living within 75 miles of a national or state veterans cemetery will increase to 83 percent in 2005 with the opening of new national cemeteries and state veterans cemeteries. The figure was 73 percent in 2001.

Reduction in the backlog of pending claims for compensation and pension from 432,000 to just over 250,000 by the end of 2003.

Reduced the time a veteran waits for a decision on a claim from an average of 223 days to process a claim in 2002 to about 150 days today. It is anticipated that average processing time will be further reduced to 100 days by the end of 2004.

A multi-year expansion of the nation's cemetery system. When completed, the expansion will increase the capacity of VA's national cemetery system by 85 percent. In 2005 five new national cemeteries will provide service in the areas of Atlanta, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Sacramento, CA and south Florida.

Initiatives for the VA and DoD to enhance coordination of the delivery of benefits and services to veterans. These include facilitating electronic sharing of enrollment and eligibility information for services and benefits; establishing an electronic patient

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health record system that will allow rapid exchange of patient information between the two organizations by the end of 2005; and increasing the number of shared medical care facilities and staff.

Source: VA News Release 2 Feb 04

BEXAR GROWL SENT TO ALL MEMBERS THIS ISSUE ONLY

This issue is being sent out to everyone on the mailing list to let you see what you have been missing if you have not received the *Bexar Growl* in a while. For the past year, the newsletter has only been sent to those who have paid the \$5.00 dues. If you would like to continue to receive the *Bexar Growl*, please send your \$5.00 dues to the address below.

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

(Be sure to state that your dues is for the *Bexar Growl* Newsletter.)

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 (this year it will be Sept). 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.

NEWLETTERS, E-MAIL, SPAM FOLDERS & YOU

ML&RS, Inc. has tried diligently over the last 18-24 months to establish a method for distributing our printed material (newsletters, registration material, etc.) via the internet in order to save money. It seems like the electronic method should be a way to reduce costs associated with postage, paper, printing, envelopes and such. However, we keep running up against one stumbling block after another. The latest development is that a lot of people's software has automatic filters that block emails that are sent to multiple recipients. This means a lot of you are not getting the emails we have sent out with the newsletter or registration material (or whatever we happen to send) attached to it. Even MY OWN computer filters out mail I send to myself.

Therefore, we are going back to mailing everything to everyone by US Postal mail. We will still send out emails occasionally, so I encourage you to check in your filtered mail and see what's in there before you automatically delete everything in it. I have even noticed in mine there are emails from people who are not "bulk mailers". And if there is someone out there reading this who knows of a way to keep my email from ending up in the recipients' spam folder, please let me know! I can be reached at:

DinaMLRS@charterinternet.com

Dina Coffey, ML&RS, Inc

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Funds available after 01/04 issue
\$2162.59
Funds received since 01/04 issue
\$120.00
Total available for 04/04 issue
\$2282.59
Funds expended for 04/04 issue
\$441.77 (Mailed to 513 members)

Balance remaining for 07/04 issue **\$1840.82**

NOTE NEW E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Published by:

*Military Locator & Reunion Service, Inc
PO Drawer 11399
Hickory, NC 28601*

*828-256-6008 (voice)
8280256-6559 (fax)*

**Dinamlrs@charterinternet
karenmlrs@charterinternet.net
(newsletter e-mail)**

www.mlrsinc.com (web site)

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

USS BEXAR 2004 REUNION

SEPT. 16-19

SEATTLE, WA

WYNDHAM HOTEL

30 YEARS DIFFERENCE

1974: Long hair
2004: Longing for hair

1974: Going to a new, hip joint
2004: Getting a new hip joint

1974: KEG
2004: EKG

1974: Acid rock
2004: Acid reflux

1974: Moving to CA because it's cool
2004: Moving to CA because it's warm

1974: Growing pot
2004: Growing pot belly

1974: Hoping for a BMW
2004: Hoping for a BM

1974: Killer weed
2004: Weed killer
