

The BEXAR GROWL

Volume 11 Issue 4

July 2005

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS BEXAR APA 237



Items of Special Interest

- *Jim Redding explains the contributions/subscription details in his message. See the cover article for details.*
- *Welcome Aboard is on page two with ten new names. Hope they will become active members.*
- *James Bell shares lots of good memories from his '62-'65 time aboard the Bexar. See his story in Mail Call on page three.*
- *Responses from the e-mail about losing two sailors in an incident in 1959 are on page three also.*
- *Gene Aittala's column about Retiree and Veteran's Issues starts on page three.*

FROM YOUR SHIP REUNION COORDINATOR

There has been some misunderstanding regarding monies sent in as 'voluntary contributions' to your Bexar newsletter fund. This fund is comprised of your monies from a few different sources. It includes all subscriptions remitted to MLRS, raffle income from your annual reunions and voluntary donations by shipmates and/or families. When you remit money intended to pay your newsletter subscription, you should note on the check/money order "USS Bexar newsletter subscription." If it's to be a donation, just write "USS Bexar donation" and MLRS will know how to handle it. If it's for both, please indicate the

amounts for each. It's very important to always identify your ship unit and what any money is for, so it may be accounted for properly. I have spoken with MLRS and, from now on, newsletter subscriptions will run for the calendar year (Jan. thru Dec.). They will assume that any monies you send in after any year's reunion date and the end of the year are for the next year. Monies sent in prior to the reunion date in any given year are considered as a subscription for that year and you should request the back issues you are entitled to. This situation should only come about for the first time a newly located shipmate joins the association, as it is hoped that everyone will

remember to use the memorabilia form that MLRS sends out after each reunion to pay the next years dues. Even if you are NOT ordering anything, you SHOULD use that form to remit your dues. That will go a long way to eliminate any confusion.

Thanks,
Jim Redding

**USS BEXAR
REUNION
SEPT. 22-25, 2005
WASHINGTON, DC
CRYSTAL CITY COURT-
YARD BY MARRIOTT
ARLINGTON, VA**

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



WELCOME ABOARD!

The USS BEXAR Reunion Association takes great pleasure in piping on-board the following newly located shipmates:

Richard Singer

Al Mendina

Richard Quinn

*James Bell
1962-65*

*Glen Cheek
(1952-54) 1st Lt Deck*

*Douglas Frank
(1965) 1st Lt Batt 'B' XO*

Gordon Turner

*Dennis Ramirez
(1966-69) RM3 OC*

*Herbert "Woody" Wood
(1948-50) SM3 OPS*

*Paul Stelmack "PJ the DJ"
(1966-67) SN*

At the request of your association, we will no longer publish the addresses and phone numbers of the new shipmates. If you would like to have an address, please contact ML&RS at our address below.

Published by:
Military Locator & Reunion Service, Inc
PO Drawer 11399
Hickory, NC 28603
828-256-6008 (voice)
828-256-6559 (fax)

"Our reunions work so you don't have to"



TAPS

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

*Douglas Myers, Sr.
Died April 20, 2005*

*Charlie Perera
(1952-54) HM2 Med Div
Died March 24, 2005*

*Tony Baker
(1958-62) RD2 Ops
Died 1993*

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Funds available after 04/05 issue
\$1789.63
Funds received since 04/05 issue
\$637.00
Total available for 07/05 issue
\$2426.63
Funds expended for 07/05 issue
\$ 128.49
(Mailed to subscription members only)
Balance remaining for 10/05 issue \$2298.14

Please send your \$5.00 subscription for the newsletter to ML&RS at our address below.

E-mail correspondence to:
Office manager:
dinamlrs@charterinternet.com
Newsletter items:
karenmlrs@charterinternet.com

WWW.MLRSINC.COM (web site)



MAIL CALL

James Redding,

I served aboard the Bexar Oct. 25, 1962—July 2, 1965. Took Marines to Gitmo during Cuban Crisis, left San Diego and went along the Mexican/Central American Coast. We saw giant turtles along the way, then went through the Panama Canal and saw BIG flowers, then on to Guantanamo Bay to drop off the Marines. We then went on to Rose Roads, Puerto Rico, then to the Island of Vieques, then R&R at Port-au-Prince, Haiti. We then picked up personnel off the coast of Jamaica, then to Gitmo and took Marines back to San Diego. It was very foggy starting 12 hours out of Diego, but we made port safely! We were in dry dock in San Francisco and saw Alcatraz, Golden Gate Bridge, etc. One time we hit a whale off Long Beach. I was on the bow of the ship and the poor whale dived after we hit it. I've seen bad storms at sea and times when the water was like a mirror—not one wave, just calm. We had swim call one time and saw a giant sea snake and a shark off the coast of the Philippines. It must have been 20 ft. long—BIG shark. We also saw blue-green fish almost that big! We went to 5 places in Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Okinawa, Philippines, Subic Bay and R&R in Olongapo. We made the biggest amphibious landing since Inch'on, Korea in March 1965 at Chu Lai, South Vietnam. We also went to Da Nang. We were out of Vietnam November 1964—April 1965. One time we were 180 miles off the coast of Siberia, USSR and the Russians sent out a big bomber to take photos of us. That was awesome! Once we hit a Jap fishing boat and cut it in half. I could tell you a couple hundred other stories, Jim, but my hand is giving out on me! Ha! So, I'll close now and write more later when I hear from

you! Oh, one day we were shooting at a sleeve behind an airplane and almost shot the airplane out of the sky! Had to let our anchor go one time to avoid a collision! I'll tell you more later. Like when we almost got hit by a big water spout a couple of times. "So on-so on."

Take care, Jim Bo,
James Bell

Editor's note: We are reprinting the following e-mail from the last issue because we had several responses to our request for more information about the incident. So, just in case you have forgotten what it said, here it is again:

Dear Dina,

My memory recalls that in 1959 the USS Bexar was astern of the USS Washoe County LST-1165 and had two sailors washed overboard. Two officers attempted to rescue them and also drowned. Do I have the correct ship?

Responses

The Bexar Growl,

In Volume 11, Issue 3 in the Mail Call column is a piece about the inci-

dent with a Typhoon. I'm sure it is partly correct, but I remember we lost two Marines overboard and a Lt. died trying to rescue them. Could have been 1959, but no mention in my yearbook for that year.

We also suffered a severe engine room fire while at anchor in Buckner Bay, Okinawa.

Sincerely,
Michael Petrusha

Dina,

In the Mail Call of the last Bexar Growl, regarding the e-mail remarking about an incident involving the Bexar with the Washoe County ahead of us. That's erroneous scuttlebutt and not correct. The much written about Typhoon Ellen incident in '59 (when I was on-board) had nothing to do with the Washoe County and they were NOT steaming with us.

Robert 'Bob' Weiss

Editor's note: Any more responses to this incident?

RETIREE AND VETERAN ISSUES

BY GENE B. AITALA

The following is an article from the office of Congressman Gene Taylor (D-MS) Which I received from Floyd Sears at fsears@bellsouth.net. This is part of an on going issue as a part of lawsuit@classact-lawsuit.com.

Taylor Demands Closer Look at BRAC Changes to Military Health Care

GAO Study Should Focus on Our-of-Pocket Cost to Service Members, Retirees

WASHINGTON, DC (May 18) – The House Armed Services Committee today approved an amendment sponsored by Congressman Gene Taylor (D-MS) to require an evaluation of the full cost and effects of the changes to the military

health care system recommended by the Department of Defense.

According to the base realignment and closure (BRAC) recommendations released on May 13th, the military health care system would become increasingly reliant on a civilian medical network of civilian hospitals and VA medical centers. The Department of Defense has proposed stripping nine military medical facilities, including Keesler Air Force Base, of their inpatient services mission and converting them into outpatient clinics and ambulatory surgery centers.

The measure, which Taylor introduced as an amendment to the FY2006 National Defense Authorization Act, instructed the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to calculate their out-of-pocket costs for active duty service

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

members, military retirees, and their dependents if they are forced to rely on civilian facilities for health care.

"If these changes are implemented, we're looking at a situation where a young airman and his wife used Keesler Medical Center free of charge when they had their first baby. Now, you're telling that same young airman that in addition to saving up for all the expenses that come with having kids, he'll need to put aside even more money from his paycheck to pay a part of the cost for a civilian doctor," said Taylor. "That's not what these kids signed up for, and they deserve better."

Taylor also emphasized the possible impact on military retirees. If DoD scales back its medical services, retirees between the ages of 38 and 65 are going to be forced to pay out-of-pocket for health care. This is the same health care they were promised in return for their service to our nation. Even with the Tricare program, retirees will be faced with enrollment fees and co-payments," he said.

"I think it's fair to ask for the true costs before we saddle our servicemen and retirees with the catastrophic expense of private care, especially when they've been promised otherwise," Taylor continued.

"What we're finding is a DoD plan to renege on its promise to provide free health care to the men and women who served this Nation and held up their end of the bargain," said Taylor. "Rather than take responsibility for the health care of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Retirees, Secretary Rumsfeld is playing a shell game. He's trying to farm out health care services and dump military medical cost on the other government agencies, our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Retirees," said Taylor.

The Taylor provision also directs the GAO to assess "the costs that would be shifted to Tricare and other agencies of federal, state and local governments." The amendment goes on to require the GAO to itemize costs by agency for each proposed military facility closure or realignment.

According to the language in Taylor's amendment, the GAO is also obligated to consider the effects of BRAC proposals on recruitment and retention of military medical personnel.

Additionally, the GAO is required to delineate and evaluate the estimated savings from the current round of BRAC by separating the savings or costs that will come from reducing the number of

personnel from the savings or costs that will come from infrastructure, facilities, and any other aspects of closure or realignment.

"I'm suspicious of the savings estimates that Secretary Rumsfeld has been throwing around. We know that since 1988 most of the savings from BRAC have come from reductions in end strength for force structure," said Taylor.

"Now, I'm looking at numbers for the 2005 BRAC that just don't add up. There are no cuts in end strength or force structure, but there are billions of dollars slated for new construction when troops are forced to relocate," he continued. "It's my responsibility to demand honest answers from an impartial source, without the smoke and mirrors I get from the Pentagon."

By law, the GAO must submit an analysis of the 2005 BRAC evaluation process and recommendations to the various congressional defense committees by July 1st, 2005. The questions put forth in the Taylor amendment will be included in that report.

Taylor's amendment received the support of House Armed Services Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter (R-CA) and was passed in Committee by a voice vote. The amendment will now be included in the FY2006 National Defense Authorization Act, which the full House of Representatives will consider next week.

Congress Taylor is a senior member of the House Armed Services Committee and serves as the Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Projection Forces Subcommittee. A long time opponent of BRAC, Taylor has sponsored and supported provisions that would have repealed BRAC or delay the BRAC process.

In the current BRAC round, Keesler Medical Center at Keesler Air Force Base in Taylor's South Mississippi district is recommended for conversion to an outpatient clinic and ambulatory surgery center.

Released by Courtney A. Littig, Communications Director, The Office of Congressman Gene Taylor.

DISCLAIMER: Gene Aittala, USN Retired

The information and opinions contained in the article are the views and opinions of the writer and are not to be considered as an official source of information. If you have questions or wish to express your views you can contact me at www.GBAittala@aol.com or by telephone at 256-773-6283.

I believe this gentleman, Congressman Gene Taylor, could give you a more concise and comprehensive view of the veteran and retirees issues we face today than I could.

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.

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.

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.