

The BEXAR BROWN

Volume 11 Issue 1

October 2004

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS BEXAR APA 237



Items of Special Interest

- *A great Bexar Reunion just finished up in Seattle, WA. Read all about the fun in the cover story.*
- *"Mail Call" is on pages three and four. Harold Swardson remembers another time there were women's and children's things on board; Jon Mullarky reviews a book; and Buck Sykes gives a big thank you from his Marine unit.*
- *Gene Aittala writes an informative article for you about retiree and veteran issues on page five and six.*
- *A fallen hero is remembered on page seven.*
- *Take a few minutes to read and fill out the survey of the Washington/Baltimore area. See page 8.*

GREAT TIME IN SEATTLE AT 2004 REUNION

The tenth reunion of the USS Bexar (APA-237) was held on September 16-10, 2004 at the Prime Hotel, Seattle, Washington. Thirty-eight former Bexar sailors and thirty-two guests enjoyed one another's company and fellowship during the three day event.

The reunion began on Thursday with registration and the hospitality room opening at noon. Attendees registered, got settled in their rooms and then made their way back to the hospitality room to see who had arrived. Friendships were renewed as each new attendee was welcomed into the group. At 5:00 pm the first official event of the reunion took place.

The Welcome Reception was a great way to see everyone together for the first time and enjoy a drink and hors d'oeuvres. Janet McRoberts, Director of Sales for the Prime Hotel, and James Redding, USS Bexar Reunion Coordinator, welcomed the group. Richard Beckley brought a tape of the Bexar during the late 50's through Aug 60. Everyone enjoyed seeing the "old gal" again! A banner designed by Kay and Martin Hughes was presented to the group for use at all future reunions. Lois Nangle, ML&RS, Inc. on-site manager for 8 of the 10 Bexar reunions, presented the reunion group with a U. S. flag and a unique holder. A big thank you to these folks! The five

first time attendees had great stories to tell and quickly became part of the group. The remainder of the evening was free for reminiscing and catching up on the details of the lives of old friends, either in the hospitality room or at dinner.

Friday morning started out with a delicious breakfast buffet and then the business meeting at 9:00 am. James Redding was readily accepted as coordinator for another year. The Baltimore/Washington, DC area was chosen as the site for the 2005 reunion. At the last business meeting Jon Mullarky told the group about a plaque for the Navy Memorial in Washington, DC and that

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

he would research it if the group was interested. Jon was given the go-ahead, so at this year's meeting he reported on his findings. He told of the price, type selected by the group and the process to do it. Jon will do the foot work and collect the necessary funds. It should be ready for presentation at the next reunion in September 2005.

At 11:30 am most of the group left for a tour of the city of Seattle, with a stop at the Space Needle and various other sites. In the late afternoon everyone boarded a boat for a trip out to Blake Island to experience the Pacific Northwest Native American culture. Here the group was served a wonderful meal highlighted by salmon roasted on cedar stakes over alder fires. Entertainment during dinner was by Native American dancers in full costume, rich with the vibrant colors of red, royal blue, black and white. Everyone agreed that this was a day of beautiful sights and delightful entertainment.

Saturday began with another great breakfast buffet and then the Naval Day Tour. The day's sights included the shipyard at Bremerton, Bangor Naval Station and the Undersea Museum. Located in Bremer-ton is the USS Turner Joy, a restored Navy Destroyer and POW Memorial. After an in-depth tour of this former Pacific Fleet Destroyer, the tour continued to the All Veteran's Memorial, commemorating the Vietnam POWs. The many types of artifacts that were on display at the Naval Undersea Museum made history come to life. The tour returned to the hotel in mid-afternoon, giving everyone a chance to relax before the festivities of the evening.

Saturday evening was a special night, and everyone dressed accordingly. The pre-dinner cocktail hour began at 7:00 pm, along with a photo session of each couple or individual who attended. Then at 8:00 pm the grand event began. The 2004 USS Bexar banquet commenced with the National Anthem led by Kay Hughes and the invoca-

tion by Marvin Tabor. In celebration of the tenth anniversary of the USS Bexar reunion, an anniversary cake with the ship's picture on it was served. The cake was cut by the most senior attendee, Art Battson, Skipper from 1964-65, and the youngest attendee, Tom Whiteley, BT3, 1968-69. It was noted that Don and Jo Grant have been to all 10 reunions! Each person introduced himself/herself and those that had a story to tell had a chance to do so. Next came the USS Bexar annual raffle. Three lap quilts made by Mary Catherine Redding, a pillow/blanket with the Navy insignia brought by Carolyn and Tom Whiteley, two wooden drawer cabinets made from two blocks of wood and a ship's seal were raffled off. Two hundred sixty-eight dollars was collected for the newsletter. Carolyn Whiteley will be finishing the quilt with everyone's signatures for next year's raffle. Thanks Carolyn! Following the banquet's activities, the annual memorial service was held. The service was led by Lois Nangle, ML&RS, Inc. on-site manager, and Jim Redding, USS Bexar reunion coordinator. Names from the Honor Roll were read aloud by Jim Redding, and Ron Harris pealed the bell in remembrance of the fallen sailors. The tenth anniversary celebration was a great success, as evidence by the reaction of everyone in attendance.

Sunday morning's breakfast was the last chance to say good-bye, and everyone was a little reluctant to go. It had been a great three days and no one wanted it to end just yet. However, real life must return and slowly the room emptied. Another year will see everyone together again in the Baltimore/Washington, DC area. Hope to see you there.

2004 REUNION ATTENDEES

Art & Roz Battson
 Richard & Grace Beckley
 John & Sandi Beeler
 Delbert & Marcile Beikmann
 Glade & Lois Bigler
 Celedonio & Clariza Blancaflor
 Ray Butler & Lois Williams
 Arthur & Mary Canfield
 Vern & Patricia Carmichael
 Robert & Katherine Cunningham
 T. W. (Bill) & Lois Downs
 James & DeEtta Engelken
 James & Barbara Fiorello
 Joseph & Vicki Fisher
 Myron Goss
 Donald & Josephine Grant
 Jay & Diana Greenspan
 Ronald Harris & Wanda Sparks
 Richard & Garland Head
 Arthur & Valerie Henderson
 Floyd "Hank" Henderson, Jr.
 Martin & Katherine Hughes
 Toshio Kimura
 Walter Malloy
 Frank & Rosalie Matthews
 Richard & Ellie Miles
 Muarice & Judith Moeser
 Urshal & Pat Moore
 Jon Mullarky
 William Oviedo & Marlene Jackson-Oviedo
 William & Sally Patton
 James & Mary Catherine Redding
 Mel & Judy Schweitzer
 John Shaffran
 Michael & Juanita Steinbach
 Marvin & Dolly Tabor
 Jed & Karen Weidell
 Thomas & Carolyn Whiteley
 Fred & Marie Zoeller

Total Members:	39
Guests:	33
GRAND TOTAL:	72

MORE REUNION NEWS

From the 2004 reunion attendees, "Get Well" wishes were sent out to Mary Canfield, Delber Ayers, and Bob Askren; also, "Thinking of You" to Bob Weiss, who could not attend due to the illnesses of his two brothers.

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 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. **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 on page 6.

*Dan Tuoto
(1967-68) EN3 A Div*

Gerald Banks

Paul Anderson

*Peter Brett
(1952-53) ENS/LTJG Deck/Gunnery*

Jesse Lowder

*Scott Kjelmeyr
(1952-54) RD3*

*Jerry Barbon was **incorrectly** listed in the last issue. He was not a former USS Bexar sailor.*



TAPS

The Growl was notified of the following shipmate's death since the last newsletter was published. Our deepest sympathy goes to the family and friends of the deceased.

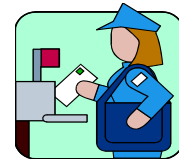
*William Trainovich, Jr.
(1945-46) LT Executive Officer
Died July 14, 1995*

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



MAIL CALL

Dear Sir,

I read the article by Walt Ganey CWO4 USN Ret. In the Bexar Growl, Volume 10, Issue 4, page 5 concerning the loss of six LCVPs during the MIKI operation in Hawaii. This happened in the 1st week of Nov. 1949. I served on the Bexar from June 49 to May 52. I was a EN2 in the "A" Division-located on the port side -aft of #5 hatch.

I was interested in the article because I was the engineer in LCVP #17 which was one of the six boats that were lost. If my memory serves me correctly, I remember that my LCVP #17 breached and the sides collapsed. Walt was right about the surf being reported 2 feet, but was 12 feet.

Eugene V. Carr

Editor Bexar Growl,

I am grateful to Carl Fox, whom I remember well, for bringing back memories of Captain George Wilson as a leader. In 1952 I was one of several junior officers, newly arrived from the Reserves, whose inexperience made them pretty tense under pressure, and likely to lose the whole load if a tense C.O. added to it. Well, one of the first things Captain Wilson did after he arrived was schedule a shiphandling exercise off San Clemente where he could observe us. We were to take turns bringing the Bexar alongside some boxes thrown in the water to simulate a dock. I was first at the conn and, you guessed it, crunch, right through the boxes. I would have put his ship half-way up the shore to the Chief Petty Officer's Club. All the officers waiting behind me, picturing their future on the bridge, waited for the flame. Captain Wilson looked mildly out from under the bill of the baseball cap he always wore on the bridge and said, "Well, you'll never learn any younger. Take her around again."

By the time we headed for WesPac several of us had qualified as underway OCD's, and no captain in the squadron had a happier, or more competent wardroom.

I am also grateful to Ed Poenicke for mentioning women's clothes and baby supplies on board. His cruise wasn't the only time. In 1952 we had women in officer's quarters, diapers in the laundry, and playpens on the 01 Deck—all with the permission of the Chief of Naval Operations. Our captain had made a case to him that if his crew, just back from a nine-month deployment to Korea, had to leave their families for another three months during the upcoming yard period in Hawaii their morale would suffer. He suggested that since we were an APA we could move officers and crew into troop quarters and take our families along. All it would require would be suspending about 16,000 regulations. CNO agreed, cut through all tape, and there we were, commuting to Pearl Harbor from Waikiki in our own automobiles, which we had combat-loaded into

No. 1 Hold.

Harold R. Swardson

Heads up Bexar Buddies,

The Naval Institute is about to publish a new book *America's First Frogman: The Draper Kauffman Story*. Then Capt Kauffman commanded the Bexar in the mid 50's. I'm sure many of our reunion group served under him.

Here's what the Naval Institute says about the book:

"Although bad eyesight kept him from receiving a commission in the U.S. Navy when he graduated from the Naval Academy in 1933, Draper Kauffman became a hero of underwater demolition in World War II and went on to a distinguished naval career. Today Admiral Kauffman is remembered as the nation's first frogman and the father of the Navy SEALs. His spectacular wartime service disarming enemy bombs, establishing bomb disposal schools, and organizing and leading the Navy's first demolition units is the focus of this biography by Kauffman's sister, Elizabeth Kauffman Bush, who is also the aunt of President George W. Bush, draws on family papers as well as Navy documents to tell Kauffman's story for the first time.

Determined to defend the cause of freedom long before the U.S. ever entered the war, Kauffman was taken prisoner by the Germans as an ambulance driver in France, and after his release, joined the Royal Navy to defuse delayed-action bombs during the London blitz. After Pearl Harbor, his eyes were deemed adequate and he was given a commission in the U.S. Naval Reserve. With his experience, he was asked to establish an underwater demolition school in Fort Pierce, FL, where he personally trained men to defuse bombs and neutralize other submerged dangers. His men were sent to demolish the obstacles installed by the Nazis at Normandy, and Kauffman himself led underwater demolition teams at Saipan, Tinian, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. His men remember him as an exceptional leader who led by example. He trained and fought alongside them, impervious to danger. Be-

cause of the high standards he set for those who became "frogmen", thousands of American lives were saved in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Draper Kauffman's early established UDT traditions of perseverance, teamwork, and a lasting brotherhood of men of extraordinary courage is carried on by Navy SEALs.

This is his legacy to the U.S. Navy and his country. Kauffman's life is recorded with a historian's attention to detail and a novelist's flare for story telling."

The book is due out in October.

Jon Mullarky CDR CEC USN (Ret)

James,

I saw your note about the Bexar reunion while looking at the July/August DAV magazine. I wasn't with ship's company, but rather was the CO for one of the Embarked Marine Units when we sailed from San Diego to Vietnam on 27 July 1966. So, please accept our belated, THANKS!. You guys were great to us! My Company has its own website, and if you scan down the homepage and click on the Deployment USS Bexar link, it will take you to a page that includes a bit of narrative and some photos from that period. I'm hoping that it will bring back some good memories for some of your shipmates. A double-click on any of the photos will bring up a full size photograph. You may have some guys that even find themselves in one of the pix after all these years.

The website URL is simply www.CompanyH.org

My very best to all of you. Here's hoping you have a great reunion. May you all be blessed with "Fair Winds and a Following Sea."

Semper Fi,
W. E. (Buck) Sykes

RETIREE AND VETERAN ISSUES

BY GENE B. AITTALA

I am new at writing an article for the news letter, so allow me to introduce myself: I am Gene B. Aittala. I served onboard the U.S.S. BEXAR from February, 1959 to May, 1960. Looking at the roster, put out each month by Bob Weiss, I see by the names I knew some of you personally.

In this first article I will not spend much time on any one given Retiree/Veteran issue. Retiree/Veterans issues are constantly changing, making it difficult to write an article for a news letter with a quarterly issue.

VA HEALTH CARE: An issue near and dear to Retiree and Veteran alike is VA health care. You may have already heard the news on National Defense Authorization bill (S. 2400) that would have guarantee full funding for Veterans' health care. The bill fell short by 11 votes of the 60 votes needed for adoption. We will remain at the mercy of **IFFY** politicians for funding of VA health care each year and each year the funding is always less than required.

The support for S. 2400 was essentially along party lines. Of the 49 Yeas, only 3 were Republicans and of the Nays, only 2 were Democrats. Only 3 Senators did not vote on the bill, Senators Brown (R-KS), Kerry (D-MA) and Sununu (R-NH). For additional information on this issue you may visit www.dav.org. Also, at this website you can check out your elected officials voting records. You might find out just how poorly some of so called Veteran supporting Senators and Congresspersons voted on the Veterans issues.

It seems that Retirees and Veterans are used as politically pawns, especially during election years. We need to remove the politics from VA health care and all other Retiree/Veteran issues.

For the Retiree, another option besides TRICARE may be on the horizon. House bill HR-3474 and its

companion Senate bill S-2065, known as "The Keeping Our Promise to America's Military Retiree Act". This would allow Retirees to join federal civilian health care coverage. In addition, this may allow Retirees to enroll in Medicare Part B without premiums. Check it out, and be in touch with your elected federal officials.

Perhaps I am a bit radical, this is my opinion of VA health care: I call it the "**DOG THEORY**"; you have crime in the neighborhood you get a dog, crime goes away you shoot the dog. You do not need the dog anymore, so why keep something that you no longer need. With the military, you have a conflict some where in the world, call up the American troops; conflict is over, send the troops home and tell them if you are ill it is all in your head and we will call you—do not call us.

It seems our government uses the idea "it is cheaper to bury a Veteran than it is to treat a Veteran to decent health care."

COMBAT RELATED SPECIAL COMPENSATION (CRSC) AND CONCURRENT RECEIPT (DISABLED VETERAN TAX):

There is no dead line for filing for CRSC or Concurrent Receipt. The sooner you file the sooner you may be eligible for payments. Payments will be retroactive to June of 2003 or January of 2004 depending on your VA disability rating.

Concurrent receipt is for Retirees who have a VA disability rating of 50% or more and will be retroactive to January 2004. This will impact approximately 200,000 Military Retirees.

For those Retirees with less than a 50% VA disability rating you may qualify for the CRSC payments. This has the potential to impact 400,000 Retirees.

It is possible you may qualify for both CRSC and Concurrent Receipt, but can only receive one or the other. You will be able to choose which is best for you at the time.

Check out the requirements for CRSC and Concurrent Receipt. The rules are complicated.

WIDOWS/WIDOWERS: If you or you know someone who is the Widow/Widower of a deceased Veteran who was receiving VA disability compensation and died as a result of service connected injuries and you/they are over the age of 57, take the time to check this out. You have until 31 December, 2004 to take action. If you have remarried and you were over the age of 57 when you remarried you may be able to have your Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) reinstated. Call the Veterans Administration at 800-827-1000. Remember, you have until 31 December, 2004 to do so.

VOTING: Fellow Retirees/Veterans get out to vote. It is of the utmost importance that you exercise your right to vote. If you do not vote, you do not have a right to complain. The questions you need to ask of yourself is; Am I better off today than I was four years ago? Is the leadership of this Great Country of ours headed in the right direction? Do you feel it is a time for new leadership to be at the helm? Is it really important what happen 35 years ago, or is it a question about honor, honesty and personal integrity?

Most every Retiree/Veterans knows several family members and friends who may be willing to help support Retirees/Veterans issues. Talk to them. Let them know some of the issues.

Be in contact with your elected officials. Call, write, fax or e-mail them about Retiree/Veteran issues. Let them know you are a regular at the voting polls. Check your local newspaper for information on contacting your elected officials.

VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS:

Join and be active in a Veteran organization. These organizations are there to fight for Retiree/Veteran issues. Let your voice be heard. As a single voice your elected officials may not listen, but as an organization of thousands they may get the picture. So, join up and pitch in. We need all the help we can muster to fight for Veterans issues.

All Veteran organizations have a website. Most of these websites have links to your elected officials. A few websites that I use are; www.fra.org, www.dav.org and www.usdr.org. There are many others out there, check them out. Most have prepared letters you can just click and send to your elected officials.

COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICES:

Most counties have a Veterans affairs office staffed by a knowledgeable person. If you have questions or issues contact them for first hand information. In many of the county offices they will assist you in filling out the required paper work.

WITHOUT VETERANS THERE WOULD BE NO UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

In the United States, we value FREEDOM more than life itself. It seems that too many of our citizens have forgotten the true cost of freedom. Too many Americans have paid the ultimate price for our freedoms.

DISCALIMER: 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.

Thank you.
Gene Aittala, USN Retired

BEXAR WEB-MASTER'S ADVICE

Please be advised that the LAT-EST REUNION page pictures currently shown on our website, which are from the 2003 San Antonio, TX reunion will be removed from the site sometime between mid-November and the end of the year to allow for posting of this year's Seattle, WA pictures. Images are NOT 'locked' and to copy any for yourself (in Internet Explorer) simply r/click on the thumbnail or enlarged image and select "Save Picture as..." option to copy to your file/s/

Thanks,
Bob

The Bexar emblem on the front of the newsletter was sent in by Daniel S. Appleton. Thank you!

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Funds available after 07/04 issue
\$1966.58
Funds received since 07/04 issue
\$308.00
Expended for website costs in 2004
\$129.71
Total available for 10/04 issue
\$2144.87
Funds expended for 10/04 issue
\$ 183.59
(Mailed to 131 members)

Balance remaining for 01/05 issue **\$1961.28**

Published by:

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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.

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.

REMEMBERING A FALLEN HERO

Ship Commander Calls Langford Death 'Heroic'

Funeral services were held Tuesday for Navy engineman Richard Henry Langford, 24, of Scottsville, who was killed April 23 in military action near Da Nang, South Vietnam.

Langford died without seeing a son born three weeks before the fatal action. He had transferred from the USS Bear (*spelled incorrectly in the article*) to the USS Cook a few days before his death.

The Pope County native went to Viet Nam after visiting his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Willis Langford, at Scottsville in November. The following letter dated April 24 was sent to the parents by J.C. Hayes, commanding officer of the Cook.:

In your hours of sorrow, caused by the death of your son Richard, we of the USS Cook join with you in mourning the loss of a friend and shipmate. While your loss was much greater than ours, each of us keenly feels that something fine and good has gone from among us. Please permit me, as Commanding Officer of Cook, to extend on behalf of the entire crew our deepest sympathy.

Perhaps the details of how Richard gave his life for his country and for his shipmates will offer some comfort to you. He was the boat engineer in one of our ship's landing craft which was covering the landing of a Marine Reconnaissance group in South Viet Nam, in the early morning of 23 April 1965.

The Marines went ashore and were immediately pinned down on the beach by heavy small arms fire from an enemy ambush. Although Richard was assigned as boat engineer, he immediately manned a rifle and assisted in providing covering fire for the returning Marines. The fire from his boat was so accurate and effective that it allowed the Marines to re-enter their boat and depart the beach with only one

casualty.

His skillful use of his weapon and his utter disregard for his own safety, without doubt assisted in saving the entire group from complete annihilation by the enemy. He continued his highly accurate covering fire as all boats retracted from the beach but was hit himself when the boats were about 50 yards from the beach. He died instantly and apparently with no suffering.

I am both a father and a commanding officer. Each member of my crew holds a place in my heart very similar to that of my children. Perhaps the thought that consoled me in my sorrow over Richard's death may also console you. He gave his life willingly for his country and his shipmates—no man can do more. "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

A memorial service was held aboard ship yesterday for Richard and his two shipmates who died as a result of the same action. In addition to scripture readings and prayers the following eulogy was given.

"Three of our shipmates have fallen in battle defending their country. They have made the supreme sacrifice. Be assured that their sacrifice was not made in vain. Each of us owes a debt for the privilege of being Americans and our three shipmates have paid their debt with their blood and their lives. We should all pray that we may discharge our debt so nobly and so honorably. We will never forget what they did this morning and neither will their fellow countrymen.

"Let each of us pray for the souls of our dear departed shipmates and pray that their loved ones may be comforted in their time of great sorrow."

Although Richard had been aboard only a very short time, he was a very dear friend of us. His death was a great loss to the ship, the service, and the country.

As a follow-up on this obituary, we move forward in time to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC. The following is an excerpt from an article entitled "Thousands Visit Memorial Honoring Vietnam Veterans."

On further along the wall, dog tags bearing the name of Richard Henry Langford USN EM2, are encased in a plastic bag with a letter and some official documents. The letter is from Langford's Vietnam buddy, Logan Grayson ENCS USN (Ret), who lives in Ponca City, OK.

The letter tells the reader that Langford was Grayson's best friend and they served together on the USS Bexar APS 237 in Vietnam. Langford was killed in April 1965, and Grayson received orders to escort the body back to Langford's family in Arkansas.

Grayson is now 100 percent disabled and cannot speak since he's had a laryngectomy due to throat cancer, but made a special visit to Resthaven to place Langford's dog tags and official transport orders beneath his buddy's name at The Wall.

His request is that the dog tags and the transport letter become a part of the permanent Vietnam Wall Museum in Washington, DC. Logan was then taken to the Watch Fire where he placed a log on the fire and helped burn a U.S. flag in memory of Langford. Grayson served 23 years in the U.S. Navy, his brother served 20 years and a son has served eight years. Grayson is proud of his family's 51 years of military service.



**Logan Grayson and Richard
Langford**

BALTIMORE/WASHINGTON AREA IN 2005

Your choice of the Baltimore area for the 2005 reunion is one that everyone should enjoy tremendously. The following are tours that are available in the area. A survey will be included for you to choose the activities you would like to see on your agenda.

Baltimore City Tour: A fully-narrated tour of Baltimore that showcases an array of interesting attractions, restaurants and shopping areas. Hear about Baltimore's history, legends, and lore. See why Baltimore's Inner Harbor has been nationally acclaimed for its extraordinary waterfront development which houses the World Trade Center, USS Constellation, Harborplace, National Aquarium, and Maryland Science Center. Visit Fort McHenry, birthplace of "The Star Spangled Banner." Take a tour of Baltimore's unique neighborhoods of colorfully decorated row houses. Ride by the Shot Tower, Star Spangled Banner House, B&O Railroad Museum, Carroll Mansion, Babe Ruth Birthplace, and the gravesite of Edgar Allen Poe. Cruise through Fells Point, a cobble stoned seaport where you will see 18th century ship captain's homes, high-masted ships, tug-boats, piers, specialty shops, pubs and eateries. Stop briefly at Oriole Park at Camden Yards, and visit Baltimore's Korean Memorial to pay homage to these war veterans and other veterans of American Wars. One option offered on this tour is to board the cargo ship, JOHN W. BROWN, one of only two World War II Liberty ships still in operation. It has been turned into a maritime museum. Be advised that everything described cannot be accomplished in a single day, so on the survey select the items you'd most like to see.

U.S. Naval Academy Tour: As you travel through Annapolis you will see impressively preserved mansions that once belonged to the signers of

the Declaration of Independence and governors of the state. Also see the Maryland State House, the Governor's Mansion and St. John's College where you'll see the famous Liberty Tree and a replica of the Liberty Bell.

At the United States Naval Academy you will ride along the "yard" past many of the Academy's landmarks. A brief stop will be made at the Naval Academy Visitor's Center where a kaleidoscope of Navy memorabilia is available for souvenir shopping. You may also choose a walking tour of the Academy grounds to visit the magnificent Chapel, the Tomb of John Paul Jones, and Bancroft Hall— the midshipmen's dormitory. While here, you may be able to see the Brigade of the Midshipmen perform Noon Formation.

Washington, D.C. Tour: On this drive through tour of the federal district you will pass by the U.S. Capitol Building, Supreme Court, Library of Congress, Jefferson Memorial, Washington Monument, Bureau of Printing and Engraving, National Archives, and the White House. Visit the Korean and Vietnam Veterans Memorials. Stops can also be made at the Lincoln Memorial and the Navy Memorial. Of special interest is the Lone Sailor Statue and a huge granite map— the world's largest map of the world. A wonderful naval museum and IMAX Theater are also at the memorial. Many groups hold their memorial service there, complete with a bugler and color guard. Arlington Cemetery, Union Station are other popular attractions. That can be arranged if you like.

Naturally these are not the only attractions in the Baltimore/Washington area, so your suggestions are welcomed. Hope to see you all in Baltimore.

2005 USS Bexar Survey Baltimore/ Washington Area

In order to give you the best possible reunion at the best possible price, please help us by answering a few questions about the reunion format and activities.

Do you want *only* a welcome reception the first evening of the reunion? _____

Or an evening meal? _____

Do you want breakfast all three mornings? _____

Or only on Sunday morning? _____

Do you want entertainment after the banquet?

Yes _____ No _____

Please check the attractions you would like to see on your reunion agenda.

Baltimore City Tour _____

U. S. Naval Academy _____

Washington, D.C. Tour _____

**Return surveys by
January 10, 2005 to:**

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

**Or Fax:
828-256-6559**

Your suggestions are welcome:
