

LST534 Newsletter

October, 1998

Volume 1, Issue 6

Reunion Edition

Let me see if I can get every little detail of the reunion here on paper! All who attended agree it was just incredible.

Shipmates attending include:

- ⚓ Oscar & Helen Cress
- ⚓ Andy & Rose Cumella
- ⚓ William Dox
- ⚓ Alex Fielder
- ⚓ Frank & Evelyn Frame
- ⚓ Larry & Opal Gray
- ⚓ Willie & Marty Gunn
- ⚓ Lyle & Helen Kingsbury
- ⚓ Norris Long
- ⚓ Luther Curtis Lyles
- ⚓ Johnny Medeiros
- ⚓ Duncan & Carole Robey
- ⚓ Jim Sarres

Also attending: Johnny Wilson's family (wife Betty, son John, daughters and their families; Stephanie & John Evans, Melonie & Roger and 10 year old Rachel Posten; Tamara Wilson Black and Jill Wilson) plus other friends of shipmates.

Thursday evening, September 3, 1998, several shipmates and their wives and friends helped decorate the Capitol Room at the Hyatt Regency. We put up fishnets, anchors, life preservers, shells and turned the room into a nautical delight. John Wilson Jr.

contributed a stately banner to the LST534 Reunion. It was a lot of fun and prepared the way for our formal program on Friday.

We opened the 1st Annual LST534 Reunion doors at 8:00 AM on Friday, September 4th. The first order of business was to light a candle on my Dad's Memorial Table. This candle was my Mom's way of remembering and honoring her husband, my Dad. It also represented our respect to all of our deceased shipmates and we will continue this candle burning every year at the reunion. The candle burned continuously for 39 hours.

All day Friday, we played one hour excerpts from the video taped interviews. Everyone enjoyed watching and listening to each persons remembrances of life on board the LST534.

At 2:00 PM we stopped the interviews long enough to play a tape from the Naval Department on training for the LST and LCVP operations. That sure brought back a lot of memories.

All day long, people would come and go, in and out of the reunion room. We had coffee and drinks in the back of the room all day, in addition to donuts and cookies as appropriate.

Friday evening we all gathered to watch the movie that was playing on board the night of the Kamikaze attack, "The Constant Nymph". What really happened? The ladies watched the movie and the men talked, reminisced, exchanged stories, poured over pictures and genuinely had a good time.

Saturday was shirt day. Everyone who attended the reunion got a navy blue polo shirt and we all wore them on Saturday. We played more interviews during the day. We also showed 45 minutes worth of "home" movies shot on board the LST534 in 1944 and 1945 by Quartermaster 2C Norris C. Long. Thanks, Norris, for finding and sharing these valuable memories with us. Actually, several minutes of this original footage is shown in the documentary.

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On display throughout the room was:

- ⚓ the administrative deck logs from the ship
- ⚓ shipmate's memorabilia, including the flag that flew on the LST534 on D-Day at Normandy – displayed thanks to Harold Makinster SM2c.

We signed greeting cards for all those that could not attend. I will get those in the mail shortly. We also recorded messages for the time capsule. At 3:30 PM on Saturday, we all left the reunion to go get “dolled up”, for the screening and reception dinner. We really dressed up the reunion room. At 5:00 PM, as shipmates, families, and invited guests began to arrive, they were greeted with a three piece band ensemble playing melodies from WW II. There was an open bar and a light dinner buffet. We ate, we danced, we laughed, we talked and we took lots of pictures.

About 6:15 PM, we were honored with a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Howard K. Smith. As you know, Mr. Smith is our host/narrator for the documentary.

It was indeed an honor and privilege for all of us to talk with and listen to Mr. and Mrs. Howard K. Smith.

At 7:00 PM, I took the podium and began our formal program, which was the private screening of the documentary.

It is titled, “Onto Rugged Shores: Voyage of LST534”. I thanked some very special people who have helped me throughout the year. I forgot to thank Tom Cummings and some other very special people who helped along the way – so a big thanks to all of you. I briefly introduced how the documentary got started. Then Mr. Smith addressed the shipmates, families and friends. He told us about the importance of the LST's during WWII. He also commended the crew of the LST534 and told us he was honored to host our program!

We then played the documentary that has been in the making for the last 15 months. For 56 minutes, I sat there and watched a room full of 65 people view what I have poured my heart and soul into. There was occasional laughter, some tears, a sense of calmness and solitude, an intensity that was demanding. At times it felt like it was happening in slow motion. I wanted so much for those present to really “love” the show. I wanted to tell the story of the LST534 in a way to make them proud. I wanted my Dad to be proud.

It happened. When the documentary was over, there was a standing ovation. Thanks to all of you who were there and participated. For that moment, I felt very proud.

Much to my surprise, I was honored with a champagne toast. Then, Willie Gunn, Larry Gray, Frank Frame and Alex Fielder took the podium. Their words were beautiful. They asked me to join them. Frank Frame presented me with a cap bearing my name and a pin of the crossed anchors symbolizing the rank of a coxswain. Larry Gray on behalf of Mr. Dick Drew and the crew presented me with a medallion and the words LST534 and inscribed “from the crew”. Alex Fielder presented me with a miniature purple heart medal representing the two purple hearts my Dad received. Willie Gunn took the podium on behalf of the entire crew and presented me with a plaque bearing a picture of the LST534 hand painted by Willie Gunn, my Dad's medals, and inducting me as an honorary member of the muster roll. This entire event left me speechless-I think I was in shock. It is all so beautiful. I plan to print the transcript of that portion in the next newsletter.

In summary, I think I speak for everyone there when I tell you that it was a very special evening and a truly incredible reunion!

Selling the Show

Our first attempt is to PBS. Jeff Friedman, an Emmy award winning producer at the New Jersey Network, liked the show so much that he is sending it to the Science and History program director at National PBS.

Keep your fingers crossed!

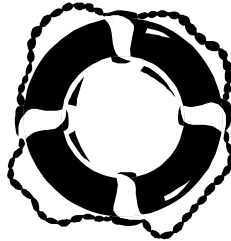
Facts

During WWII, officials canceled the MASTERS golf tournament in Augusta, Georgia so that livestock could be raised on the course.

Thanks for a great time at the reunion came in a poem from Andy and Rose Cumella. It reads:

*Thanks for all the things you ve done.
When God made you, He made only one.
Your lovely eyes and gentle smile
Will stay with us for a long, long while.
The dedication you ve given to the LST
Will always live in our memory.*

Thanks Andy and Rose – you made me cry.



Odds and Ends

Several shipmates approached me about having access to the complete interview footage from each interviewee.

It was John Wilson Jr’s idea to create a rental library.

Thanks John, good idea.

I will let you know about it in the next newsletter.

I’ll also update you on the time capsule in the next issue.

Oops

I missed another birthday...Sorry Al

September 12

Alfred Ellis, F1c
28910 Ann Arbor Trail
Westland, MI 48185

Birthdays

October 27

Johnny Medeiros, Cox
1363 Northeast 56th Street
Ocala, FL 34479

October 31

Oscar Cress, GMC3c
224 Northwest Monroe Circle North
St. Petersburg, FL 33702

November 20

Calvin Hesse, F1c
5045 Highway 956
Weiner, AR 72479

November 27

George Popham, S1c
6575 Juniper Drive
Missoula, MT 59802

December 5

Norris Long, QM2c
145 Northeast 31st Street
Oak Island, NC 28465



Get Well Wishes

Dick Drew, S2c
290 Semicircle Drive
Demorest, GA 30535

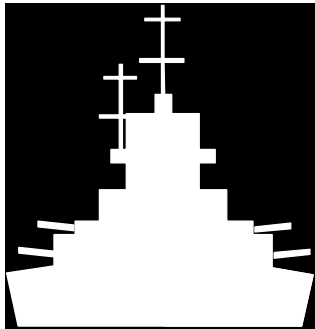
Roman Ritzert
Chief Hull Inspector
Evansville Shipyard
657 S Weinbach
Evansville, IN 47714

John Cain, S1c (RM)
536 Barbados Street
Norristown, PA 19401

Ira Leonard, S1c
2335 Hawthorne Dr
Foristell, MO 63348

Alfred Ellis, F1c
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LST534

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JUST FOR FUN

Just for Fun
is a column
meaning
just that
FUN.

Jim Sarres
has
graciously
volunteered
to keep this
column
going. We
all know
how Judge
Sarres can
keep us
laughing!

Thanks
Jim.

Jokes From Jim

I've seen it all
I've heard it all
I've done it all.
I just can't
remember it all.

There's a new book out
entitled *Sex After
Death or How to Be
Laid in a Coffin.*

Nautical Terms

By James Richard Drew

Cradle A framework
that supports a ship
while she is being
built or whenever she
is out of water.

Drip A complainer,
usually with no just
cause.

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