

LST 534 Newsletter

April, May, June 2012

Volume 15 , Issue 2

“SURFING USA”

Many of you met Captain Olson's son George and his wife Lyn at our LST 534 reunion in Buffalo, New York. It was an honor to meet the family of our first beloved leader, Captain Olson. I often heard through the interviews over time that Captain Olson was a true Navy man in every sense. It only seems appropriate that his son would get some of those genes.

Come to find out, his son George designed and manufactured surf boards. His little surf board business produced some 2,500 boards and each was numbered.

His wife Lyn was recently contacted by a young man named Jason who tracked her down through surf board magazines and internet blogs.

Quoting Lyn, “Jason Baker was given the board by his father who had received it when doing a remodel in Bakersfield, CA. Since Jason surfs every day his dad gave him the board. He decided to research it and went to the site Swaylock, a surfing site. When George died the news was immediately posted to this site and to a sailing site. I found both sites about 9 months later and responded to emails although a lot of time had passed. Jason read the emails, found information about George, and my email address. He then

asked me if I wanted the board (as a donation) as he wanted it to come back to the place where it had been made. I asked him to check the stringer just above the fin and tell me what number was written in pencil under the resin. It was 528 and when I saw the writing it was definitely a board built by George as his printing never changed.

Jason lives in Pismo Beach, two blocks from the beach which is visible from his sidewalk. The houses are similar to where George spent most of his childhood vacations with his Grandmother in Pleasure Point, a part of Santa Cruz. It was amazing to me to see this beautiful setting right by the ocean and no high risers in the neighborhood. I think Jason is late 20s early 30s, schooled at some Chef's institute, and works as a chef or cook.

It was a friend of his that thought the TV station might be interested in doing a spot on the giving of the board to me and the article that will appear in a surfing magazine. His name is Elliot and is in his early 20s. Both boys reminded me of George.”

Lyn sent me the story and I of course had lots of questions. Did she know George made surf boards when they met? Did Captain Olson help his son in this

business? Lyn responded with a history of the surf boards and some information about Captain Olson and his family. I want to share her story with you.



From Lyn Neale: Yes, I knew all about his surfing and surfboard building days, (which was before he met me) and when we were building boats (the racing sailboats, all designed by George) someone purchased an unused Olson surf board in an antique shop near San Francisco and drove down to our shop in Santa Cruz to give it to George. George did not mention this to me until he had given it to one of our workers on the same day. When someone came to our house in Santa Cruz a couple of years later and offered a used Olson surf board to me (I had answered the door), the board became mine and I still have it. George was out of surfing by the time I met him and into sail boat design and racing. He never looked back once he finished anything, but went on to the next adventure – and we had lots.

He made 2,500 boards and yes

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he talked about the hobby and how it was becoming too crowded when he stopped surfing in the late 60s. He surfed at

the same time that Jack O'Neill did. Jack is probably one of the most famous of all surfers as he invented and still sells wet suits. He is from Santa Cruz and surfed locally. Because the wet suits were not invented at the time George was surfing, when he surfed he wore a wool sweater as it kept him warm when wet. That is what all surfers did and you can imagine how heavy it must have been.

George and his father did not have any hobbies in common. George the Captain was very regimented in discipline and little George was quite rebellious so there were differences of opinion, strong enough that George moved out when he was 17, and by that time had started bolting his sister's roller skates onto boards and thus began the era of skate boarding. Some where I have a photo of George and two friends on their skate boards. It was taken in the 50s.

The family was very close during the years living in Hawaii and Japan. When George was 22 he got married and had two children. While his dad and mom were a part of their lives, I don't think his father (or mom) ever participated in any of his sports, or business ventures, such as helping in design, finances, or as a sideline coach or cheerleader. When I said that when George moved on

from anything that time was closed, I meant that he never held onto the past. He was quite Buddhist in philosophy.

Captain George died in the winter of 1974 and I met George in March of 1975 when I moved out from the East Coast and went to work for the same designer and fabricator of race boats where George was working. It was only two weeks before we paired up (for our life time) and we went to see his mom every Sunday that we were in Santa Cruz and spent holidays with her. George was also very close to Darleen, his younger sister and many of his cousins. He learned good mechanical skills from his dad and they built a house together in Santa Cruz.

George always loved water sports and speed. He learned how to sailboat race while living in Japan and in high school, so after his dad retired from the service and they settled in Santa Cruz (the home of George's maternal grandmother) any water sport would have appealed to him. He was very competitive and won many races and is called the father of the ULDB (ultra light displacement boat). He contributed ideas that are still used and were used as a springboard for racing sailboats today. I am sending one picture of one of his designs. It is an Olson 29. We built 25, 29, 30, 34, and 40-foot in length racing fiberglass sail boats (over 500 of them from 1978 to 1987)

When Jason contacted me, I told him to look at the board in the area above the fin and tell me if there was a number there. That told me if it was one of George's

boards or not. George numbered each one in pencil and his lettering was constant during his entire life. The surfboard is number 528 (too bad it wasn't 534). Jason emailed me photos of the board and although the artwork on the board was not one I was aware of, the number told me it was one of George's boards. Jason offered to deliver it, but I live alone and am a bit remote so decided it would be better if I drove down to get it. When I arrived the TV camera people were there to shoot and interview us for the magazine article and a local television story. A couple of days later I took the board to one of George's employees at that time the board was built (Jim Phillips) to ask him about the board. He said it definitely was one of George's, but someone had crashed it, broken the nose, reshaped the front and painted it to cover the reshape job.

My gut reaction to seeing the board was that it was like winning the lottery. I love (still) George very much and he was immensely talented and prolific and an excellent craftsman in everything he did. I am sending you some pictures of things he made, i.e., the speedster which took 4 years and he did everything, the car was not a kit car., the 'dirt boat', Pterodactyl which raced on dry lakes and also on Lake Michigan in the winter, and a photo of George shaping a board for a friend's son in 2004. Now - back to your questions:

I have the surf board, will clean it up a bit (not restore it) and hang it along with the other one I have on my living room wall.

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In the photos I am sending you, one is of George holding his daughter Kristina and there is another person in the photo. He is Jim Phillips who worked with George, possibly on that surf board. (How many of you think George, Jr. looked liked Captain Olson?)



The picture of me shows the art work some other person did. This board is about 8 inches shorter than the normal length. The board George is shaping is a one-off and a short board. It now surfs and lives in Australia and was signed by George.



IN SYMPATHY

William M. Dox, 85, passed away on January 2, 2012. Bill joined the US Navy in 1944. On board LST 534 he was a Yeoman, 2nd Class. After his military service, he became an accountant, eventually opening his own accounting firm in 1972. He retired from the firm and sold it in 2002. His wife, Genevieve, an ordained minister and he were married in 1969. We all

remember Bill from our reunion days. Now he is in Heaven with my Dad and other LST 534 shipmates. May he rest in peace.

Larry Adolph Gray died on October 8, 2011. His wife Opal had passed away earlier. Larry was a Fireman first class on board LST 534 and did basic engine room duty and LCVP motor mechanic. Larry was assigned to the LCVP that my father piloted. Larry and Opal came to our reunions for many years. We miss him and Opal and may they both rest in peace.

Robert S. Mitchell died January 19th, 2012. Robert was a Motor Machinist Mate on board LST 534. Robert and his wife Alice attended our reunion in San Diego in 1999. Robert's daughter-in-law, Carol Mitchell thanked all of us for telling our stories and keeping the story alive of the LST534. She appreciated learning about Robert's experience on board LST 534 through his eyes by reading the interview on www.lst534.com. May he rest in peace.

Our condolences to the families of our shipmates.

BIRTHDAYS

April 1
Andy Cumella
11 Freeport Court
Toms River, NJ 08757

May 17
Jim Miller
1452 Ellsworth Road #221
Yakima, WA 98908



HOLIDAYS

April:

- 1 April Fools Day
- 1 Palm Sunday
- 6 Passover Begins
- 6 Good Friday
- 8 Easter
- 19 Holocaust Remembrance Day
- 22 Earth Day



May:

- 1 May Day
- 5 Cinco de Mayo
- 10 Mother's Day
- 19 Armed Forces Day
- 28 Memorial Day



June:

- 14 Flag Day
- 17 Father's Day
- 20 Summer Begins



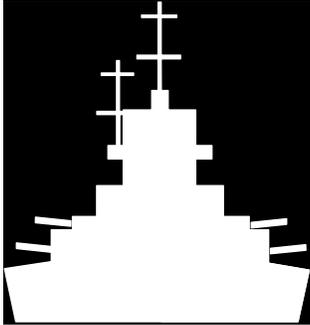
A White House Greeting

Ever think about sending a greeting from the President to a loved one. The White House will send a greeting for a special occasion, and they love to send greetings to Veterans. So if you want your loved one to get a card from the White House, here are some things to remember when sending a request:

- Include the name and home address of honoree(s)
- How do you address this person?(Mr., Ms., Mrs., Dr., Miss, etc.)
- Exact date of occasion (month, day, year)
- Age (birthdays) or number of years of marriage
- Your (the requestor's) name and daytime phone number
- Any specific mailing instructions if other than to honoree's address
- Wedding (Include couple's married names and current or new address)

**Mail the request to:
The Greeting Office,
The White House,
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue,
Washington, D.C. 20500**

LST534 Newsletter
250 West 49th Street
Suite 400
New York, New York 10019



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Just for Fun



A gushy reporter told Phil Mickelson, “You are spectacular, your name is synonymous with the game of golf. You really know your way around the course. What is your secret?” Michelson replied, “the holes are numbered”.

The bride came down the aisle and when she reached the altar, the groom was standing there with his golf bag and clubs at his side. She said, What are your golf clubs doing here? He looked her right in the eye and said, “This isn’t going to take all day, is it?”

NAUTICAL TERMS

Bulkheads...Walls of ship

Dogs...Heavy securing handles of entrance/exit doors.



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