

LST534 Newsletter

July/August/September 2000

Volume 3, Issue 3

A Personal History

Below is the history of Captain George B. Olson, as written by his son George Edwin Olson. We all need to thank George for giving us such a personal glimpse into the life of our first Captain, George B. Olson.

Here is a story of my father. Partly from his service records, partly from memory, and partly from stories of family members.

Born February 19, 1911 his full name was George "B" Olson. No middle name, just the letter "B". (My name is George Edwin Olson so I'm not really Jr.). He grew up on the family farm in Minnesota with three older sisters, one older brother and one younger brother. The family also had a store in town. His parents both died when he was young and the older sisters each took care of one of the boys. After finishing high school he was working in the family store. He woke up one morning to minus 45 degrees and said "What the heck am I doing here?" He got on the train and left for San Francisco to join the Navy.

He enlisted in March of 1930 and was sent to boot camp in San

Diego. From there he went to Aviation Training School in Great Lakes, IL. After completing school he was shipped to Pearl Harbor, T. H. for duty. From late 1930 to late 1933 he was stationed at the Fleet Air Base on Ford Island in Pearl Harbor. This was certainly the highlight of his young life. 19 to 22 years old and living in Paradise! To go to Honolulu on liberty he would have to ride the train to get to town. I think the Royal Hawaiian was the only hotel at the beach. By the end of his duty in Hawaii he had made Seaman 1st.

In June of 1934 he saw his first sea duty on the Gannet. The Gannet was a small Geodetical survey ship that surveyed land and sea. I guess they were preparing for war with Japan at this early date and needed charts of the Pacific. During this time he became a "Shellback" by crossing the equator ship.

After two years on the Gannet he was transferred to the Milwaukee. The Milwaukee was an old four stack cruiser. It was during this time, mid 1936 to late 1937, that he started his training

as a signalman. It was during this time while the Milwaukee was in San Francisco that he met his future bride, Eileen Osgood. Even while courting he was away at sea most of the time.

In late 1937 he was transferred to the Somers 381. The Somers was a brand new destroyer operating out of New York. During this time he and my mother were married. She moved to New York to be with him, although he was at sea most of the time. The destroyers at that time were doing a lot of anti-submarine training. This took him from the North Atlantic, to England, to the South Atlantic, and through the canal to San Diego. It was while the Somers was operating out of San Diego in 1940 that I was born. In June of 1940 while the Somers was in Pearl Harbor he was transferred to the Mayo.

The Mayo 422 was a brand new destroyer of the Benson class operating out of Newport, R.I. So, before I was six months old we moved to the East Coast. During this time on the Mayo he became a Quartermaster in what was the roughest sea duty one could imagine, Neutrality Patrol

LST534 Newsletter

in the North Atlantic. He had told me many stories of the U-boat attacks on the convoys, the depth charging, and the attacks and sinking of destroyers in his group.

In mid 1942 he was transferred to the sub-chased San Bernardino 59. I really don't know or remember much about his time on the "San". He was given the rank of Quartermaster at this time. I know that we moved back to San Francisco and that Darleen was born after we were in S.F. The San Bernardino was in the South Pacific during '42 and '43, but I don't know what, if any, action they saw. In later '43 he was appointed to the rank of Ensign and shortly after detached from the ship. It was at this time that the picture in the paper was taken.

In November of 1943 he was sent to Amphibious school. In January of 1944 he was sent to Evansville to take command of the 534. I'm sure you know the history of the next year and a half better than I do except to say that he was given the wartime rank of Lieutenant.

Then on his 34th birthday, 2-19-45 he was relieved of command and reverted to the rank of Ensign. Thus ended almost eleven years of sea duty.

He then went to the Branch Hydrographic Office in San Pedro, CA where he was the Officer in Charge. This was the first time we lived together as a family. We lived in Naval housing until the war was over, and then bought a real house on a

real street! It was the first time that I started school. However in 1947 it was back to sea again. This time as Navigator and Executive Officer.

The ship was a small gasoline tanker operating out of Guam. It supplied gas for the Occupation Forces in the Western Pacific. My mother, sister and I moved to Hunters Point Shipyard (S.F.) and lived in a hut. In 1949 he was given orders to report to a small costal -13 stationed at Treasure Island, San Francisco Bay.

This was just like shore duty because there were never any mines. He was promoted once more and was in charge of the boat. It was a great time for me because sometimes when he had the weekend duty I could go along with him and spend the weekend on the ship. We lived in a great house in the Richmond district of S.F. near Golden Gate Park. But as usual it didn't last long and in 1952 he was given orders for shore duty in Alaska. Shore duty meant that we could go along. We bought all kinds of warm clothes to prepare for the life in the cold, but in the mysterious ways of the Navy, two weeks before we were to leave his orders were changed to Pearl Harbor, T.H.!

His job at Pearl was the Ships Boarding Officer. He was the person on any ship that entered Pearl. He would check their papers and forward any new orders. Life for us as a family was truly wonderful. I didn't have to

wear shoes to school! We went to the beach every weekend, and on one vacation we went to the Big Island (Hawaii) on the LST1134. They loaded our car into the tank deck and we were on board for the 24 hour trip. It was a wonderful experience for me. My father took me all around the ship and explained how everything worked. I was amazed at how much the whole ship twisted in the rough seas. This was during the Korean War, so there was a great deal of ship traffic at Pearl. It was at this time that a friend of mine and I started collecting matchbook covers from ships. This collecting led us to study the history of the various ships.

Then in early 1954 he was given orders to Naval Base, Japan. His job was fleet training. He would train US Navy ships as well as other United Nations Navies. It was hard on my mother living in a foreign country, but I had a great time. The Navy Base had a yacht club where I learned to sail. Sailing and Yacht design is what I have done for most of my life. For my father it was good also, he was promoted again.

In early 1958 he was given the choice of reverting to Chief or retiring. This really wasn't a choice as a retiree makes more than an active Chief. Thus ended the 28 year history of George "B" Olson.

LST534 Newsletter

Reunion Update

The US LST Association is having their reunion in Buffalo, New York, August 30th - Sept. 4th. I am planning to host the LST534 reunion during two of those days, Saturday, September 2nd and Sunday, September 3rd. We should all try to go to the final banquet on Sunday evening. I plan to arrive on Friday, September 1st, and I will leave on Monday, September 4th. Please remember that there are a lot of activities going on at the US LST Association. If you have any questions about the LST Association Meeting, call Linda Gunjak at 1-800-228-5870. You need to register for the US LST Association in order to get the hotel rooms at the hotel.



NEWS

Combat Action Ribbon to be awarded retroactively.

Fred Maddix, S1c, submitted the following information that was in *The Purple Heart Magazine*:

Navy and Marine Corps veterans who served in combat in or after World War II are now eligible to receive the Combat Action Ribbon (CAR). Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig has recently authorized this award for those who served in combat, but never received their CAR.

"At a time when we are focusing on the contributions of these great Americans, this seems especially

fitting," said Danzig.

In order to be eligible for the CAR, veterans must have participated in ground or surface combat after December 6, 1941, but before March 1, 1961 and cannot already have been recognized for the same participation.

Under Public Law 106-65, Danzig can award the CAR to veterans retroactively. The time period required for submission is being waived in all cases. Two blocks of time have been designated by Danzig for eligibility of the CAR: World War II: December 7, 1941 - April 14, 1946, and Korea: June 27, 1950 - July 27, 1954.

Navy Veterans who served during these periods may write directly to the Navy Awards Branch for settlement at:

Chief of Naval Operations
(N09B33)
200 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350

The following information must be provided:

Standard Form 180 or cover letter with the following information: full name, social security number, service number (if applicable), period of eligibility, unit assigned at the time, and mailing address.

Copy of Naval Personnel Form 553 or Defense Department (DD) Form 214; DD-215 (if applicable).

Additional substantiating documentation (optional): copies of combat awards; copies of evaluations; muster sheets or orders showing assignments to the unit for the period requested.

Birthdays

July 11

Bill McAndrews, HA2c
P.O. Box 781546
Wichita, KS 67278-1546

July 13

Jim Sarres, Lt. (sg)
1010 N. Westfield St, #510
Oshkosh, WI 54902-8771

July 16

Lawrence Killian, S1c
Rural Route 4
Dallas, PA 18612

July 17

Spencer James, R1M3c
40 Fulton Ave.
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

July 18

Harold Makinster, SM2c
1132 19th Ave
Longview WA 98632

August 11

Larry Gray, F1c
101 Forrest Hill Drive
Taylors, SC 29687

August 12

Robert A. Goldsmith, MoMM3c
95 Shepherd Drive
Wakefield, RI 02879

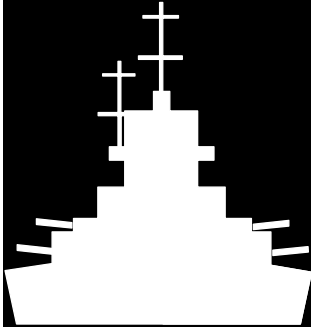
August 16

Joseph H. Blackburn, S2c
4206 Deer Run Drive
Knoxville, TN 37912

Luther Curtis Lyles, S2c
2407 Reynolds Road
Wauchula, FL 33873



LST534 Newsletter
62 W 62nd Street
Apt. 26B
New York, New York 10023



LST534

LST534 Newsletter

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!

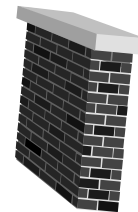
Thanks Jim.

D Day Museum

The following DDay Museum bricks have been ordered to be placed in a group on the walk at the DDay Museum in New Orleans.

Crew of LST534
Duncan Robey, MoMM
Spencer James, RM
John W. Wright, Lt.
A.P. Bonner, Jr., Navigator
Gene C. Dallas, RM
Harold Makinster, RM
Henry Norman Alvers, Coxswain
Bernard H. Coles, Engineering

Richard Nitsche, RM
George B. Olson, Captain
Douglas A. Brownell
John J. Hoyt, Seaman
Milton S. Smith, QM
Thomas F. Long, QM
Edgar Overstake, SM
Edward J. Holt, SM
Norris C. Long, QM



If you are interested in reserving a brick with your name on it, call Sara at 504-558-0311 and tell her to be sure to place it with the LST534 grouping. Each brick costs \$100. I ordered the Crew's brick and my Dad's, and we can thank Norris Long, QM for the others. Isn't this so exciting??

U
D
S
T
F
O
R
F
U
N
W
I
T
H
R
O
U
T
T
H
E
C
O
U
N
T
R
Y