

LST534 Newsletter

October/November/December 2000

Volume 3, Issue 4

2000 Reunion Coverage

"Rose Cumella will you light our remembrance candle." Thus began our 3rd Annual LST534 reunion. It was 9:00 AM on September 2, 2000, and we convened in Buffalo, NY. Here's who attended:

Oscar Cress and Helen, Andy Cumella and Rose, William Dox and Gen, Larry Gray and Opal, Willie Gunn and Marty, Lyle Kingsbury and Helen and Lyle's daughter Marie, Norris Long, Luther Lyles, Johnny Medeiros, Edgar Overstake and Aldine, Duncan Robey and Carole, Dan Tool and Barbara and my mom, Marian Alvers.

Friends and crew were: Tom Cummings, Ron Pobuda and Matthew Wachsman. And special guest was George E. Olson and his wife Lyn Neale.

The room looked very lively. Thanks to all who stayed late Friday night to help decorate. Saturday morning we spent getting re-acquainted and catching up.

Some of the group took tours to Niagara Falls (my mom included). Saturday night was game night and included LST Bingo,

(developed by my sister last year), the oven mitt game, a few "name the items" games and musical chairs. We thoroughly enjoyed the dinner and ice cream sundaes.

Sunday morning, after breakfast in the room, we all went to the US LST Association's Memorial Service. This was a very nice ceremony with a 21 gun salute and taps. We came back to the suite and watched videos of past reunions.

All day we each enjoyed signing cards to mail off to our other shipmates that couldn't make it.

After lunch, we were honored to welcome the first captain of the LST534, George B. Olson's son to address us. George E. Olson told us many stories about the life and times of Captain Olson as a family man.

Those shipmates who served on board under Captain Olson responded in kind, one by one telling him about Captain Olson as a military man. It was quite an emotional interaction. I had tears in my eyes thinking about how all of you had helped me learn about my Dad, and now we are extending that honor to none

other than the Captain's son, on a mission himself to put the pieces of his father's life together. Thank you George for sharing your father's life with us, and welcome to the family.

Of course, Matthew was there video taping it all. Thanks Matt.

What more appropriate time than this to take our group picture. We had everyone present for the picture except Bill Dox and his wife, Gen.

A few significant events occurred during this reunion.

Willie Gunn had been working on a logo for us and the LST534. He presented me with the final version in Buffalo, and we adopted his design as our official logo. It is quite elaborate and I will ask Willie to write up a little piece about its development for our next newsletter. It's a story you will all love to hear.

Also, a friend of mine by the name of Rich Obertots, was so moved by the documentary and so grateful to all of you, that he took his musical talents to task and wrote an anthem for the LST534. There were quite a few teary eyes

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during the playing of this song that we all adopted it as our official anthem. Thanks to Rich and his friend Kevin Mazey for giving so much of themselves to the LST534.

Additionally, we are happy to induct Dan Toole as a member of the LST534 family. More details will follow.

We also gathered around and had a discussion on whether to meet alongside the US LST Association or to meet separately somewhere else during the year. After talking it out, it was decided to continue meeting alongside the US LST Association and get the many benefits of doing so. Mark your calendars for next year in Mobile, Alabama.

Believe it or not, we left our reunion room Sunday evening, got all dolled up, and went to the annual banquet of the US LST Association. There was music and dancing and a nice dinner and a speaker. It was here we were all treated to yet another surprise. Andy and Rose Cumella presented us with sliced up tomatoes straight from their garden. There's nothing like homegrown New Jersey tomatoes and a great big thanks goes out to Andy and Rose.

After dinner we went back to our suite and packed up. We worked together taking down decorations, carefully packing things away for shipping and talking about getting together next year.

At 10:00 PM, we formed a circle, held hands and Oscar Cress led us in prayer, as we extinguished the flame of our remembrance candle. The candle had burned continuously

for 37 hours.

A note here - this is the last year for this particular candle. We will put it in the time capsule and get a new one for next year.

Birthdays

October 1

Robert Ware, GM3c
2602 Darwood Court
Mobile, AL 36605

October 2

Emmett Cull, F2c
P.O. Box 1885
Portolla, CA 96122

October 4

Leo F. Wilson, Lt (jg)
5 Malvern Road
Norwood, MA 02062

October 27

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

October 31

Oscar Cress, GMC3c
9841 41st Street North
Pinellas Park, FL 33782

November 8

Fred Maddix, S1c
124 Forrest Circle
Glen St. Mary, FL 32040

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 31th Street
Oak Island, NC 28465

December 20

William (Bill) Ayers, S1c
221 Westwood Avenue
Jackson, TN 38301

Wayne Jens Lt (jg)

1220 Weld Azalea Point
Seneca, SC 29678

Website

Here's something pretty cool. Go on the Internet to www.amazon.com. In the search box, enter LST534. You will get a page that says "Onto Rugged Shores". Go to that page. You will see information about it and you can rate the tape. Please LOG on and rate it 4 stars! Thanks.

Now I know you have heard this before, but I really mean it. I am working on the website. Those of you who have access to the Internet, look up www.LST534.com. The most exciting part is the log. I will be calling each of you to get information so our muster role will be accurate. You can read all the interviews, word for word, read all the newsletters, and we are trying to link to other sites of the interest. At the reunion we scanned many pictures for our "Photo Gallery". Please help me thank Kandy Steinfurth in the Denver office for jumping right in there to help me update this really neat website. You can call Kandy at 1-800-373-4465. Tell your friends to log on too.



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Speaking of reunions, here is a wonderful story by one of my employees in our San Antonio office:

By Ct. Ed Dyer

May 29, 1969 - July 22, 2000

In 1969, as I lay in a Da Nang hospital bed with massive wounds to my head, torso, and right hand, I remember Chaplain (Cpt) Ron Benzing standing next to the bed praying for me. LTC George Eliis, my battalion commander was with him. I lived, went through a year of physical and occupational therapy and malaria, and returned home after almost 7 months in country with three Bronze Medals for "Valor", two Purple Hearts, and an Army Commendation Medal.

For thirty-two years I remembered the chaplain who flew through the night to pray for me when I thought I was dying. Then, I retired from the Army in September 1996.

Meanwhile, Chaplain (Col) Benzing finished his tour in Vietnam, and then was stationed in Korea, Germany and all over the USA, until his retirement from the Army in March 1995. In spite of the downsizing of chaplains, Ron Benzing chose to continue his ministry in Garmisch, Germany, as a civilian contract chaplain, where his wife, Hazel, and he can still minister to the military community.

During the Christmas holidays, I was surfing the Internet looking for information on my old Army unit from Vietnam. On the Fire Support Base Hill 4-11 web site, I discovered names of soldiers I hadn't heard about in decades.

After finding a chaplain listed in the guest book, I sent an email to Ron, asking "Were you my battalion chaplain in Vietnam?"

Ron was excited to hear from me--whom he remembered as a young lieutenant who took him out on his first patrol. Flipping through his daily journals, which he'd kept, Ron found four entries mentioning me and others in B company-- and even pictures of me sitting on sandbags while he conducted a worship service near Duc Pho.

After that first e-mail, we reminisced, caught up on each other's lives--- and renewed our relationship through the Internet. Ron e-mailed me copies of the notations in his journal and we traded recent photographs so we could recognize each other at the reunion.

Then, on July 22, we met again in person, at the 15th Reunion of the 3/1 Infantry Battalion, which gathered at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial for a memorial service led by Chaplain Benzing.

Seeing Ron again--and hearing him preach--brought back a lot of memories. But we also found that we have a lot of things in common. We unknowingly served with mutual friends; and we've had assignments in the same vicinity. We also found that we shared July birthdays-- and were born a day apart in the same year.

What's it like to see your "war buddies" after so many years? For me, it's a way to revisit memories of the war and a way to thank people who shaped and influenced me, and I know saved my life many

times. For Ron, it was a chance to introduce his wife Hazel to people she'd heard him talk about--and to have them tell stories that made the war vivid for her as well as us veterans.

Also I see the reunion experience as a time of closure. In the past I'd shied away from books or movies about Vietnam. I needed this reunion because I really wanted to see my former Battalion Commander George Ellis, Company Commander Willie Williams and Chaplain Benzing one more time to tell them how much I respected them. Seeing the wall, rubbing my hand over the names of soldiers I will never forget, reminded me how very precious life is. Now I feel a satisfaction inside, that the demons of the past have been tamed.

It's OK to remember, and to cry, this chapter of my life remains closed, but not one that I'm as afraid to open up and talk about.

Get Well

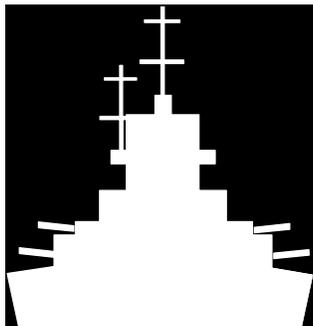
Alfred Ellis, F1c
28910 Ann Arbor Trail
Westland MI 48185

Alex Fielder Lt (jg)
5950 Ambassador Drive
Fairfield, OH 45014

Don't forget to drop these guys a line to wish them well!

**If not for stress,
I'd have no energy
at all.**

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



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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 By Jim

“George, why don’t you play golf anymore?”

“Would you play golf with a fellow who moved the ball with his foot when you weren’t watchin’?”
George asked.

“Well no”, admitted his wife.

“Neither will my friends!”

Nautical Terms

In memory of James Richard Drew who contributed to this column until his passing.

Jacob’s Ladder:

A rope ladder lowered from the deck as when crew, pilots or passengers come on board.

