

# KEARSARGE SAGA II

## The Newsletter of the Kearsarge Association

Fall

CV CVA CVS 33 LHD3

1992

### THE FIRST REUNION IS HISTORY

After months of planning the first Kearsarge reunion has taken place. As most of you know, it all started when Kenneth "Mac" McDaniel began looking for some of his "E" Division friends and which led to a full ships' reunion being planned. During the planning I heard Mac say more than once, "Do you really think we can pull this off?" Not only was it pulled off, but a great time was had by just about everyone.

The reunion was scheduled for May 14th through the 16th but when I arrived Tuesday afternoon (the 12th), Mac and his wife Billie were already checked in and ready to go. In fact, they left their home in Tennessee in such a hurry they forgot to bring their clothes with them. By Tuesday evening several more shipmates had arrived to help get things set up and swap a few sea stories, and by Wednesday evening the hospitality room was full of shipmates, wives, and friends. Cruise Books from various years were being passed around as well as scrap books and other memorabilia from the "MIGHTY KAY". Right away, old friendships were being renewed while new friends were being made. The former shipmates were pleased to find Kearsarge hats and t-shirts being sold. Seeing all of these men with Kearsarge hats on was quite a sight.

Thursday, tours left the hotel to visit the USS Alabama at Mobile Bay and to visit the historic section of Mobile. That afternoon a Cheese and Wine Hour (it turned into hours) was held in the Hospitality Room. By the end of the evening more shipmates had arrived and more sea stories were told. Noel Binder had some

interesting stories to tell about "The Phantom", who was a sailor who stalked the sleeping compartments after taps and supposedly left unwanted gifts in a sleeping sailors footwear. Shipmates from '47 to '70 had heard about "the Phantom", while they were aboard, so quite possibly his tour of duty spanned the life of the Kearsarge.

Shipmates who were on the first shakedown cruise as well as those who were aboard the Mighty Kay her last time at sea, were present at the reunion. Air Squadrons, The Marine Detachment, and Ships Company were all represented, as well as, two former Commanding Officers, Captain Cook and Captain Nyberg.

Friday morning, there was for those who wanted to go, a trip to the Pensacola Naval Air Station and a visit to the Air Station Museum. At the Museum, there was a ten foot model of the Kearsarge, as well as the ships' bell, which most shipmates were particularly surprised to see. Also at the air station, the USS Forrestal was in port and a few of us checked her out.

The business meeting was held Friday afternoon and new officers were elected, for a two year term.

John Bishop.....President  
1404 Ave H  
Lovington, NM 88260

T.W. Smith.....Vice-President  
1172 Delon St.  
Clarkston, GA 30021

John Bennett....Sec/Treasurer  
815 Savannah Dr.  
Columbus, OH 43228-2944



Steve Udell.....Historian  
RR 1 Box 131  
Young America, MN 55397

Kenneth McDaniel was asked to keep his position as Sec/Treasurer but had to decline because of his health, although he has promised to help with anything he can.

Also, it was decided to have a reunion every other year and a vote was taken for the time and place of the next reunion. The 1994 reunion will be held in May of that year, at Norfolk, Virginia. (This will be the home port of the new Kearsarge.) The reunion for 1996 will be somewhere on the west coast.

We were given a larger room Friday so everyone was able to stretch out a little more. Art Buchner set up a display of Kearsarge memorabilia and Paul Litchfield had his flight gear, on display, for everyone to look at. I think we had at least one Cruise Book from each cruise plus a wide variety of photos. Art Killian was busy selling license plate holders, hats, t-shirts, and ship pictures.

The Kearsarge Association Officers were invited to a dinner at The LaFont Inn, Pascagoula, Mississippi to honor General Colin Powell and his wife Alma. About 240 guests were on hand, that evening, to honor the Powells in a first class manner with a fine dinner and many champagne toasts. We had the pleasure of meeting General Powell and also the Commanding Officer of the new Kearsarge, Captain David Montgomery and his wife Nancy. We decided the new Kearsarge is in good hands, with Captain Montgomery.

When we returned to Mobile the days events were winding down. A few men were watching war movies and talking about the "Phantom".

With Saturday came the event most of us were anxiously awaiting, the christening of the new Kearsarge LHD 3. The event would take place at Ingalls Shipbuilding, Pascagoula, Mississippi. We had rented busses for the trip and that was an event in itself. Our bus driver had one story after another to tell, most of them about sailors or cajuns. As we passed through Pascagoula and

nearing the shipyard we could see the new ship in the distance. Everyone was getting excited as we entered the shipyard and started nearing the pier where it was docked. As we walked to our reserved seating we passed a stand selling Kearsarge LHD 3 hats and T-Shirts. Most of us were not able to pass by without a purchase. While waiting for the ceremony to begin, many pictures were taken of former shipmates as well as the new ship. Captain Nyberg was dressed for the occasion wearing a blue blazer and the ball cap he wore while serving as the Commanding Officer of the Mighty Kay from 1966-1968. The hat was presented to Captain Nyberg when he flew aboard the Kearsarge to assume command by Captain Hershey. Captain Nyberg said the hat has a special place among his trophies, and has even had it resewn once.

The dignitaries started arriving and the usual formalities and speeches were made. General Colin Powell was greeted with a standing ovation and during his speech he commended the Kearsarge veterans for their love of country and ship.

During the ceremony, Mrs. Alma Powell was introduced as the mother of the new ship. Mrs. Powell said that when she first saw pictures of the Kearsarge she was unemotional about being chosen to christen the ship. But later she said, "Nothing could have prepared me for the emotion I am feeling for this ship right now. An emotional and spiritual bond was formed today and will last forever."

She then broke the bottle of champagne against the bow of the Kearsarge and kissed it. So surprised were the photographers by the kiss they missed taking a picture. They asked her to do it again, which she did. It was a very touching ceremony. From the shipyard everyone went to the LaFont Inn for the reception. About 1200 people attended this event. At the reception Mac presented General Powell and Admiral Kelso (Chief of Naval Operations) with plaques making them honorary members of our association. Also, Mrs. Alma Powell was presented with a tray making her an honorary



member. After the awards were handed out, we had a chance to talk to a few of the enlisted men of the new ship. The men I was talking to were the same rate I was so it was interesting to hear about how they do things some thirty years later. Then later after more speeches, presentations, and great food and drink it was back to Mobile.

Saturday evening we had the banquet. Many beautiful things were donated to the association to raise money, and after eating, we held a drawing to see who won the items. Many of them were hand made and very nice. Pillows, afghans, dolls and art work were just a few of the items.

Macs wife, Billie, and his daughter Janet Keener were presented gifts for all of their help in making the reunion possible. Mac was presented with a plaque for starting the Kearsarge Association. Caleb Shields, who is Tribal Council Chief of the Assiniboine Sioux and ex-shipmate of Macs, presented Mac and Billie with a beautiful quilt made by the women at the reservation.

Art Hassard brought an American flag that had flown on the USS Kearsarge BB 5, when it was part of the Great White Fleet. It was displayed in the banquet room.

After the drawings, and presentations a DJ played music from the 40s to the 90s. Many people danced and the last of the sea stories were told.

Sunday morning Art Killian, Louie Mouse, Ken Best, Bill Smith and I went to breakfast together. We had all worked together in B Div. By the time breakfast was over we had the boilers lit off and ready to get underway. I'm sure many others had similar stories to tell.

Sunday as everybody was leaving many handshakes and fond farewells were exchanged, with promises to keep in touch and attempting to find more former shipmates, by the 1994 reunion.

YES MAC, WE DID PULL IT OFF.

The association would like to thank everyone who attended the reunion for without you it wouldn't have happened. A special thanks to Art and Betty Killian, Chick and Stormy Slepicka, and Fletcher and Dot Yerby. Thanks to all others who helped and those who offered to help.

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Mac and Billie send their best to everyone and a big thank you to all at the reunion for making it happen. Mac has been fitted with a new leg brace and once he gets used to it he should be more mobile. They did remember to take their clothes with them when they left Mobile Alabama.

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Now that we have a historian, Steve Udell will safely keep items of interest to the membership. Anyone having memorabilia that they do not wish to keep please send it to Steve. This could be cruise books, pictures, newspaper articles etc. If in doubt send it. The association would like to set up a Kearsarge Room at one of the aircraft carrier museums so all sorts of items could be used. Steve can be reached at

STEVE UDELL  
RR 1 BOX 131  
YOUNG AMERICA, MN 55397  
612-467-3943

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This is your newsletter so send in items of interest that you would like to have printed. This can be anything from interesting things that happened while you were aboard to general interest items happening now.

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I would like to see everyone try and find a former shipmate. It takes a little work but it is a great feeling when you find one. If you need help write our V-President, T.W. Smith. T.W. is an expert.

Till next time, John Bennett

# KEAR SAGA<sup>II</sup>

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USS Kearsarge Association  
815 Savannah Drive  
Columbus, Ohio 43228

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U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
COLUMBUS OH  
PERMIT NO. 309

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## SHIPS STORE

KEARSARGE HATS CV,CVA,CVS,  
\$15.00  
LICENSE PLATE BRACKETS CVA,CVS  
\$6.50  
VIDEOS OF REUNION ABOUT 1 HOUR  
\$20.00  
PRICES INCLUDE SHIPPING

ART KILLIAN  
3632 SPRINGHILL LAKE  
TUSCALOOSA, AL 35405

## DUES ARE PAST DUE

OUR \$10.00 YEARLY DUES ARE FROM  
MAY TO MAY . IF YOU HAVE NOT  
SENT YOURS IN PLEASE DO . THIS  
COVERS COST OF POSTAGE,  
NEWSLETTER, ETC.

SEND TO

JOHN BENNETT  
815 SAVANNAH DR.  
COLUMBUS, OH 43228

## YORKTOWN PLAQUE

WE STILL OWE \$455.00 FOR THE  
PLAQUE HONORING THE WAR DEAD OF  
THE KEARSARGE. YOUR HELP WOULD  
BE APPRECIATED.

SEND TO

JOHN BENNETT  
815 SAVANNAH DR.  
COLUMBUS, OH 43228

## KEARSARGE PLAQUE

THE ASSOCIATION WOULD LIKE TO  
PRESENT THE NEW KEARSARGE WITH A  
BRONZE PLAQUE. THE COST WILL BE  
ABOUT \$1000.00. THIS IS YOUR  
CHANCE TO PUT A PART OF YOU ON  
THE NEW SHIP. SEND TO

JOHN BENNETT  
815 SAVANNAH DR.  
COLUMBUS, OH 43228