

KEAR SAGA^{II}

The Newsletter of the Kearsarge Association

WINTER

CV, CVA, CVS-33, LHD-3

1995

2.8-3

1996 REUNION - SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

The 1996 reunion is fast approaching and Dan Deibert and his crew are going full speed ahead with plans for the reunion. They are working on tours and activities to keep us entertained while in San Diego. Rumor has it that he was even trying to get the Hollywood Theater reopened. More than half of our 125 block of rooms has been reserved so don't put off making reservations.

Hanalei Hotel
2270 Hotel Circle North
San Diego, California 92108
1-800-882-0858

A registration form will be mailed in a few weeks so you can register for the reunion, sign up for the dinner dance and any tours you wish to attend. In addition to the tours that will be offered through the Kearsarge Association, we will furnish a list of other attractions you and your guests might want to visit on their own. Once you register for the reunion a packet will be waiting for you at the hotel with an agenda, tickets for those things for which you have registered, discount coupons for restaurants and other attractions in the area.

Raffle Donations

A raffle is tentatively scheduled for Friday night, March 1st at the reunion in San Diego. Your contributions of crafts or other items to raffle/sell would really be appreciated and are needed to make this event a success. All proceeds will go to the USS Kearsarge Association.

KEARSARGE GOES HOLLYWOOD

(Continuing Saga)

I remember clearly the stories written by Clifford Weirick and Karl Schindl, however there is an addendum to Clifford's story, which goes as follows:

Yes, the catapults on the *Oriskany*, CVA 34, our sister ship, did have a mechanical failure, and the movie crew relocated to the *Kearsarge*. The 33 on our flight deck, and hull, I believe, were painted with a 34 for consistency in the movie. However, when it came time to repaint our 33

prior to entering Yokosuka harbor, we had no white paint, or very little left, and the *Oriskany* wouldn't give us any of theirs. As a result there were two aircraft carriers with hull numbers 34 in Yokosuka at the same time. I recently met an *Oriskany* sailor, who had served in the early 70's and they still laugh about that story on the *Oriskany*.

A humorous incident occurred during the filming of "The Admiral Hoskins Story," which was renamed by Hollywood as "The Eternal Sea," that I would like to relate to you:

The *Kearsarge* was enroute to Pearl in 1954 with Republic Studios on board. Starring in the movie were; Sterling Hayden, Morri Ankrum, Dean Jaegger, and Ben Cooper. The flight deck had been rigged with torn sheet metal and drums of burning oil to make it look as if the ship had taken a direct hit on the flight deck. The oil was burning profusely, pouring out black smoke, when a sea going tug about five miles ahead of the *Kearsarge* radioed a message asking if they could be of assistance. Sheepishly we radioed back our thanks, but that it was only a movie in the making.

Wayne E. Dempster, '53-'55

THAT INDESTRUCTIBLE MARINE

During World War II there was an article in Life magazine on aircraft carriers. It stated, "Multiply the perils of war by three and you have flight operations on an aircraft carrier." A good example of this statement occurred on July 13, 1953.

During ORI operations off Hawaii, Marine Captain Robert R. Klingman was taking part in carrier qualifications. Captain Klingman was attached to VMF 235 from El Toro, California and



was flying a F9F-2 Panther. In his landing approach that was low and slow he apparently ignored the wave off by Lt. Robinson and the aircraft hit the ramp on the after end of the flight deck and broke into several pieces.

From my vantage point on the catwalk just forward of number 2 elevator I saw the jet engine aflame rolling

up the flight deck and the fuselage, also aflame, came to rest upside down. The tail section, in flames, came to rest on the port side of the flight deck. Captain Klingman remained in the cockpit until the flames were extinguished and the "HOT - PAPA" pulled him to safety. He did something that supposedly could not be done; He survived with only singed eyebrows and a small burn on his arm.

The flight deck crew did a great job in saving Captain Klingman's life and were the heros on July 13, 1953.

Captain Klingman was no stranger to danger. A "mustang" who started his military career when he joined the Marines in 1934. After four years with the Marines he spent two and a half years in the Navy before being offered a special discharge so he could enter flight training and become a Marine aviator in 1942.

During World War II while flying a F4U Corsair at 38,000 feet he encountered a Japanese twin-engine "Nick" aircraft. Even though his six 50 caliber machine guns were frozen and wouldn't fire he destroyed the plane by using his propeller to chop up the tail of the "Nick." He won the Navy Cross for his effort.

This "Cat" has nine lives and he and his wife Jackie reside in Tustin, California and will be celebrating his 79th birthday January, 1996.

Does anyone remember the name of the "Hot-Papa" ?

T.W. Smith, VF112,

FLASH

The "Hot-Papa" has been located. His name is Novel E. Rogers and lives in Petal, Mississippi. Novel is now a member of the Kearsarge Association due to the bloodhound instincts of T.W. Smith.

WITNESS - SASEBO FIRE

Michael Rea Hudson needs witnesses to verify that while he was stationed aboard the ship Dec. 23, 1967, there was a shipboard fire and he was a member of one of the fire parties. Anyone who can help is urged to write: Michael R. Hudson, 4754 N. Laird Way, Tucson, AZ 85705, Phone 520-888-2667

The above is from a notice in the American Legion magazine. Sent in by R.R. Pence, W. A. Krein, and T.W. Smith

I was in charge of electrical repairs after the fire and many of the repairs took place while

standing waist deep in foul smelling water which I later found out contained dioxane from 55 gal. barrels stored in Hangar Bay 2. I have been very sick since the incident and got lung cancer from Agent Orange aboard the *Kearsarge* and am on 100 % disability from the VA because of it. If any of those on these work details suffer similar problems because of the incident please contact me to assist you in getting your VA Disability.

Robert W. Brown EMCS retired, P.O. Box 97, Coleman, FL, 33521 - 904-748-3736

RESCUED RUSSIANS

On March 7, 1960 four Russians were rescued from their disabled landing craft after being found adrift in the northern Pacific 890 miles from the nearest land, Midway Island, by the *USS Kearsarge*. The ship was enroute to San Francisco, California from Yokosuka, Japan after completing a six month tour in the Far East when the sharp eyes of one of her pilots from VS21, on a routine training flight in an S2F Tracker, spotted a rusty derelict, apparently drifting. On closer inspection four men were seen leaning against the superstructure of the tiny amphibious craft which resembles an American LCM. The *Kearsarge*, commanded by Captain Robert Townsend and the flagship of Rear Admiral Frank Brandley was 15 miles away from the Russian craft when it was sighted. The *Kearsarge* immediately turned to a closing course and launched rescue helicopters from HS6. The decks were lined with men watching as the helicopters hovered over the rusty hulk and hauled up the four men by sling.

Aboard *Kearsarge* the Russians were given hot soup, bread, coffee, and cigarettes but could not eat much due to their weakened condition. They were taken to the ships sick bay to be bathed, and put to bed for some rest.

The Russians spoke no English and Chief Philip Kaznetzoff of HS6 acted as interpreter. They told the chief that they had left one of the Kurile Islands on the 17th of January on a training exercise and had become lost in a storm and had been to sea for 50 days. Long unkempt hair, beards, red rimmed eyes, and the state of their uniforms testified to their ordeal. They were coherent and cooperative when brought aboard but had each lost about 30 lbs. They had left on their training mission with one loaf of bread and three cans of meat. When they were picked up they were drinking rain water and eating shoe leather. They had seen three other ships during the 50 days adrift but due to high seas and poor visibility they were not seen.

The Russians were taken to San Francisco where they were turned over to the Russian Consulate.

From information sent in by:

ROBERT WILDERMUTH V1 DIV., '56-'60

AIRCRAFT CARRIER MEMORIAL

The bronze life size Sailor statue at the Aircraft Carrier Memorial was dedicated VJ Day, 2 September, 1995 at San Diego, California. The Aviator statue is the next in line to be

dedicated . Donations and membership in the Aircraft Carrier Memorial Association are still being gratefully accepted. Donations from former Kearsarge shipmates is at \$525.00. Anyone wishing to join the Aircraft Carrier Memorial Association should send their name, address, phone number, and the hull number of the carrier/s you served on to: ACMA, P.O. Box 390177, San Diego, CA 92149-0117. Membership is \$10.00 per year . Make out checks to AMCA.

USS KEARSARGE

Sloop-of -War

For months, Union ships had been haunted by a Confederate terror of the seas - The *Alabama* which had been secretly built for the Confederacy at Birkenhead, England. With incredible skill, her captain, Raphael Semmes, eluded the warships of the Federal Navy. But all too frequently he had the *Alabama* on hand to intercept a commercial ship, with valuable cargo, on its way to a Northern port. In a two-year period between 1862 and 1864, the raider had captured or sunk more than fifty Union ships with cargoes valued at six and a half million dollars. Despite the best efforts of the U. S. Navy, no Northern vessel had ever engaged the *Alabama* in combat. Suddenly word came to Captain John A. Winslow of the Federal sloop *Kearsarge*, that the enemy ship had been forced to put into port at Cherbourg, France, for repairs. A few days after the *Alabama* docked, on June 14, 1864, the *Kearsarge* appeared off the coast of France where she waited for the Rebel vessel to make for the sea.

On board the Union warship, Quartermaster William B. Poole nervously anticipated the approaching battle. Should it be his turn at the helm when the battle began, he would bear an awful responsibility. Another quartermaster aboard the *Kearsarge* sat in the brig, more concerned about being court-martialed. This was James Saunders who had gotten himself into trouble on a recent shore leave in Holland, where he had been involved in a brawl.

On the morning of June 19th the *Alabama* appeared to be getting up steam. The sky had been overcast and there was still a threat of low clouds and squalls. Captain Winslow, observing the enemy through binoculars felt certain the *Alabama* would attempt to make a run into the teeth of a rain squall. He ordered the *Kearsarge* to be made battle-ready. Gun crews were sent to their stations, decks were cleared and sanded, and, as every able man was needed, James Saunders was released from the brig to take part in the approaching battle.

At about 10:00 am the *Alabama's* sails were suddenly unfurled and the dauntless confederate ship moved rapidly out to sea. By this time, hundreds of spectators had gathered on the bluffs along the French coast. They could clearly see the warships as they began to circle and close in for an engagement. The threatening skies had largely cleared, but the natural haze was soon to be replaced by clouds of acrid gunsmoke. It was close to 11:00 AM when the first broadsides thundered.

Aboard the *Kearsarge*, Quartermaster Poole stood calmly at the helm, following the commander's orders and steering in a steadily tightening circle, closing the gap between the two ships. Below, the gun crews sweated in stifling heat, bandannas tied over their foreheads. They

ran their guns back from the gun ports, rammed powder charges into the muzzles. The shells were then forced down on top of the charges. After loading the crews rolled the ponderous weapons back into place while the gun captains inserted priming wires through breech holes to pierce the power bags. Next, each gun captain sighted and fired his piece by inserting a lighted swab into the breech. With a roar, the iron monsters recoiled. Though the guns were restrained by ropes, occasionally lines were known to snap and the canon would smash through the opposite side of the ship, killing and maiming sailors on the way. Meanwhile, enemy shot, flying splinters and shell fragments took their grim toll.

The exchange of firing between the *Kearsarge* and the *Alabama* was so rapid that the booming of canon became one continuous roll of thunder. At times the dense smoke-clouds completely hid the vessels from the crowds lining the shore. But the *Kearsarge* gun crews far outclassed those on the *Alabama*. Out of some 350 rounds fired by the Confederates, only 25 or 30 were reported to have struck the Union ship, whereas the well-drilled Yankee gunners poured broadside after broadside into the battered *Alabama*. One Confederate shell landed near the *Kearsarge's* helm, hitting the sternpost with a shuddering crash. Still, Poole and Saunders unflinchingly guided the *Kearsarge* in for the kill. Incredibly, the shell never exploded.

The deck of the *Alabama* was littered with dead and wounded as she began to settle, her waterline shattered. After Captain Semmes had directed that a white flag be raised, he threw his sword into the water, then leaped in after it. He was later rescued by an English yacht.

To the men of the *Kearsarge* it was a glorious victory, since they had destroyed the scourge of Union shipping. For their cool courage and skill under heavy direct fire, thirteen members of the gun crews were awarded Medals of Honor. They were: Paymaster's Steward Michael Ahearn, Captain of the Top John F. Bickford, Boatswain's Mate William Bond, Captain of the Forecastle James Haley, Seaman James H. Lee, George H. Harrison, Charles Moore, Joachim Pease and George E. Read; also Boatswain's Mate Thomas Perry, Coxswain Charles A. Reed, Quartermaster William Smith and Captain of the Top Robert Strahan.

In addition, Quartermasters William B. Poole and James Saunders were awarded the Medal. The battle might easily have been lost at the crucial moment when the sternpost received its direct hit, had they failed to remain steadfast. As an additional reward for his courageous conduct, Saunders' punishment was dropped.

Sent in by Harvey Danielson, USMC, Plankowner '46

Kear Saga Stories

We are in need of articles and interesting photos about *Kearsarge* that you may have that can be used in the newsletter. The more material we have the more newsletters you get. Send to: John Bennett, 815 Savannah Dr., Columbus OH, 43228-2944 - 614-272-6842

OLD SALT



This photo of one of our former shipmates was sent to me without a name included but when I checked the postmark it was from Clarkston, Georgia. It clearly shows the results of too many lonely nights aboard ship, too much salt air, and a few too many Asahi beers.

SHIPS STORE

Sale Item

Dawn of Glory Print and LHD-3 commissioning video	\$20.00
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Stock Items

Tie Bar with carrier	\$10.00
Kearsarge Hats CV, CVA and CVS-33	\$12.50
Necktie with gold carrier silhouette	\$17.00
Coffee Mug with CV-33 crest	\$13.50
Coffee Mug with CV-33 crest and LHD-3 crest	\$15.00
License Plate Brackets, CVA and CVS	\$06.50

ALL PRICES INCLUDE SHIPPING --- ALLOW 2 - 3 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY

Order from and make checks payable to:

**Art Killian
3632 Springhill Lake
Tuscaloosa, AL 35405
205-553-2710**

TAPS

Lt. Oscar T. Black, U.S. Navy Retired, entered into rest October 6, 1995. Oscar was aboard the *Kearsarge* from October, 1964 to July, 1966 and was in O Division. Oscar and his wife Betty attended the first reunion in Mobile and also attended the commissioning ceremonies for *USS Kearsarge LHD-3*.

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DUES & MEMBERSHIP

The yearly dues for the Kearsarge Association is \$10.00. To pay your dues or to join the Kearsarge Association send a check made payable to The Kearsarge Association to:

The Kearsarge Association
815 Savannah Dr.
Columbus OH 43228-2944

FIND A NEW MEMBER FOR THE 1996 REUNION

Bruce Covington, President, 4928 Admiration Dr., Virginia Beach, VA 23464 804-467-1668
TW Smith, V-President, 1172 DeLeon Court, Clarkston, GA 30021 404-296-3317
John Bennett, Sec/Treas., Kear Saga Editor, 815 Savannah Dr., Columbus, OH 43228-2944 614-272-6842
Art Killian, Ships Store, 3632 Spring Hill Lake, Tuscaloosa, AL 35405 205-553-2710
Steve Udell, Historian, 211 Northwest First St., Young America, MN 55397 612-467-3943
Kenneth McDaniel, Honorary President (Deceased)