

# KEAR SAGA<sup>II</sup>

## *The Newsletter of the Kearsarge Association*

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Issue 15

CV, CVA, CVS-33, LHD-3

February, 1998

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### 1998 CORPUS CHRISTI REUNION

**At last! Reunion News!** The newsletter is late because we've been waiting for President Bruce Covington to put the final touches on the tour and dinner dance packages. Bruce has worked extremely hard putting together packages that are both entertaining and affordable. In the past we have used tour operators but this year we felt it was advantageous to manage our own tours. All reunion registrations (checks made payable to the Kearsarge Association) will be sent to Vice-President T.W. Smith at 1172 DeLeon Court, Clarkston, GA 30021-1032. The registration form will be found elsewhere in this newsletter. Since we will have a limited number of buses, don't delay submitting your applications.

The headquarters for the 1998 reunion (April 29th to May 2nd) will be the Ramada Hotel Bayfront, 601 N. Water Street, Corpus Christi, TX. The phone number is (800) 688-0334 and room rates are \$65.00 + 13% tax which includes an American Breakfast Buffet. All rooms also include coffee makers for your convenience. **These rates are good one day before and one day after the reunion.** Check in is at 3:00 pm and check out is at 12:00 noon. **The association has a block of 150 rooms reserved at these rates but reservations must be made 30 days prior to the reunion to get these rates.** After this time any unreserved rooms from this block of 150 will no longer be reserved for the Kearsarge Association, but released back to the hotel for regular reservations. **When making reservations be sure to mention that you are with the Kearsarge Reunion.**

There is on site covered parking for hotel guests' cars and parking is also available for hotel guests' motor homes. The closest RV Park, for those of you who wish to stay in your motor home, is the Puerto Del Sol Travel Trailer Park located at 5100 Timons Blvd, which is at the north end of North Beach, across the Harbor Bridge, about 10 minutes from the Ramada Hotel. Their phone number is (512) 882-5373.

Registration for the reunion, tour sign up, and the meal selection for the dinner dance is in this issue so please fill it out and return it as soon as possible so we will know how many to plan for. All forms with checks (made payable to the Kearsarge Association) should be sent to T.W. Smith at the address on the form. When arriving at the reunion a packet of information, nametags, tour tickets, etc., will be waiting for you along with information about local attractions. A bulletin board in the hospitality room will keep you up to date on departure times and when any changes in events take place. Don't forget that the dinner dance is going to be aboard the USS Lexington and the dress will be casually nautical for everyone.

**If you desire help with your travel plans you can call Cynthia at World of Travel, 1-800-548-7547**

The reunion is for Kearsarge Association members and their guests. Please check your Kear Saga mailing label to make sure your dues are current, and if not, please send them to Treasurer Robert Finley. (Address on back page)



## CRAFT RAFFLE

Lady Kay Evelyn Hanson, who is in charge of crafts for the reunion, wants to remind all of us that we will be having raffles in Corpus Christi on the evenings of Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Due to the confusion at the last reunion the Lady Kays have volunteered to hold these raffles each evening (except Saturday), making sure the items you contribute go to a happy winner. At other reunions in addition to items like afghans, pillows, crochet pieces, etc., there have been items contributed like Kearsarge hats, restaurant gift certificates, a gnome sailor, a ceramic sailor, dolls, etc. The proceeds will go toward some of the expenses of holding the reunion. This is an opportunity for the Lady Kays to shine and make a positive contribution. If you have any questions, please contact **Evelyn at 708-365-2278.**

## N. T. C. SAN DIEGO

I have memories of N.T.C. San Diego that I would like to share. November 5th, 1952 I came through the gates of N.T.C. confused and scared like the thousands before me.

I was assigned to Company 0866, with Chief Boatswain's Mate James Fritcher, as my company commander. After haircuts, inoculations and indoctrination, we were sent to Camp Elliott, near Miramar for the first half of our boot camp. We then returned to N.T.C. for the second half of training.

As I look back I realize that Chief Fritcher had a real job on his hands, shaping young kids from all walks of life into productive sailors. He did a great job as we won a lot of awards including the meatball flag, which gave us head of the line privileges at the chow hall.

Chief Fritcher made a great impression on me. So much in fact that after 45 years he and I still keep in contact, exchange letters, Christmas cards, phone calls and visits when I'm in San Diego.

But probably the greatest memory and source of pride was to return to N.T.C. after 20 years to watch my son graduate from Preble Field as I had done in 1953.

The Navy has given me great friends and fond memories that I will always cherish. This includes my 1955-56 Cruise on the Mighty "K".

**Mert Rowell AD3, '55-'56**

## N.T.C. GREAT LAKES

In the last edition of "Kear-Saga" Robert H. Williams wrote a piece about the N.T.C at San Diego and rolling clothes. We also rolled our clothes at N.T.C Great Lakes in 1947. The line you used to secure the roll was called a "clothes stop". When you tied your "Square Knot" (never, never a granny knot), you had to tuck in the ends so they were out of sight. A loose end of a "Clothes Stop" was called an "Irish Pennant" and was a real no, no. We also used the "Clothes Stop" to secure our clothes to the clothes line for drying. I don't know why we had to learn to roll clothes. As well as I can remember, clothes were not rolled aboard the Kearsarge in the late 40's and early 50's.

I often wonder what living conditions are like on the carriers of today. Our lockers on the Kearsarge were about 3 ft. square (or really a 3 ft. cube). Everything we had was kept in there except our P-Coats. Each berthing compartment had a P-Coat locker for all men in that compartment. There was no air conditioning and the bare metal decks rusted badly when we went to the tropics. The "Mess-Cooks" used concentrated lemon

powder and a little water to take the rust off the mess decks. They would spread this solution over the deck and skate around in it with big pads of steel wool on their feet.

There were no individual commode stalls in the "Heads". There was a long trough with commode seats on it and sea water was continuously pumped down this long trough.

I wonder if the Navy has continued the old tradition of beans and cornbread for breakfast. We had that one day a week and I think it was Saturday. I learned to love it.

If you were unfortunate enough to end up in the "Brig" you may have been put on a "Bread and Water" diet. Some claimed they got fat in the brig. I guess you got plenty of bread.

Those conditions were not bad for young boys back then. A lot of them left home and went in the Navy to escape more primitive conditions.

**Joseph E. Long SK3, '47-'50**

### **LIFE ON THE FLIGHT DECK**

My name is Frank Rodi and I am a member of the Kearsarge Association. I was ships company aboard the USS Kearsarge CV-33 from July 1946 to May 1948 as an Aviation Boatswain's Mate First Class, in charge of the catapult & arresting gear. I was formally an Aviation Machinist Mate for years and decided to change my rate to go aboard aircraft carriers. I did the Kearsarge, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Badoing Straits, Philippine Sea, and finally the USS Hornet on which I retired after 30 years service in 1962.

The USS Kearsarge was the hardest to work on being a full service carrier and a straight deck at that. We on the flight deck were known as "Blood and Guts", why, because of crack ups, fires, over the side aircraft, missing the cable and winding up in the standing barriers. Sixteen hour days many times, rain, cold, and night flying. The rest of the carrier crew hardly knew what hard work and risk of life was like. As a carrier was built for landing and taking off, either catapult or deck take offs of aircraft. But many times there are stories about sailors aboard ships in the Kear-Saga but little about flying and never a real story about the catapult and arresting gear crew and what the flight deck crew goes through daily.

The catapults, arresting gear, hydraulic barriers, and the cables had to be maintained and maintained in first class condition at "all times". I made Chief aboard the Kearsarge and by that time I had learned the hard way in 1947.

John Wayne was aboard for a short time and later bought the arresting and catapult crew a beautiful silver coffee pot, as he used to stop in the arresting gear shop for coffee and stories.

Many, many times I had to run some of the crew members off of the catwalks during flight operations to save their heads and lives, because they did not know the safety precautions of being around the flight deck. This was no job for the cook, yeoman, radio operator, barber, etc. But it took all of us to operate our carrier.

I remember one real bad crack up, that is still shown on TV sometimes, where the aircraft crashed into the Island after landing on the flight deck and the crew and fire crew just made it into the hatch before it crashed and caught fire. The Captain and I walked in foam two feet deep after the fire to inspect the plane. The pilot received only minor injuries, thank goodness.

I was at the meeting in San Diego and they brought the replica of the Kearsarge out and floated it in the pool. Not a word was said about its history, or to ask a crew member as to what their job may have been. I wanted to speak and maybe tell a blood curling story of flight deck life but I didn't.

Thanks for listening.

From part of a letter from:  
**Old Chief Rodi**



## **TAPS**

It is with regret we announce the passing of Vernon Eugene Franks. Vernon died October 13, 1997 and was buried October 17, 1997 at Williamette National Cemetery with a full military service. Vernon served in B Division and was aboard '56-'61. Vernon and his brothers James and Melvin served aboard the Kearsarge at the same time.

## **ILLNESS**

Edwin Stowers, VF 113, '54 - '54, has been diagnosed with bladder cancer but is planning to be at the Corpus Christi Reunion. Lets keep Ed in our thoughts and prayers.

## **E- MAIL**

Cal Waterbury has received quite a few e-mail addresses from members, has made a list and e-mailed a copy of the list. If you have e-mail and have not sent him your e-mail address please do so you will be included. Cal also wants to remind everyone that they chat on AOL chatroom USS Kearsarge. Cal can be reached at: PURVIS13@aol.com.

## **WHY GO TO A REUNION?**

As the 1998 reunion of the USS Kearsarge Association draws near, two questions come to the mind of this writer. Number one, does time really stand still, and number two, should we live in the past. The answers are later on.

Upon arriving at the Hanalei Hotel in San Diego my wife and I were greeted by many old and new friends, many who had arrived as much as a week before the reunion. There were many hugs and handshakes, pats on the back, pecks on the cheek, the "boy I would have known you anywhere", "you haven't changed a bit", and "its really good to see you again". Then I knew it was going to be another reunion to remember.

The hotel staff went above and beyond the call to insure everything was in order. Dan Deibert and the San Diego Committee made sure it was done with class and A-1 all the way.

The tours of the harbor, the shopping trip to Tijuana( many of us have memories from before) the Point Loma Lighthouse, Rosecrans Cemetery, all first class.

How could one forget the model Kearsarge (that Cliff Weirick built) at pool side that Captain Rankins' wife christened with champagne while the Navy band played Anchors Aweigh.

It soon became evident that the banquet room wouldn't accommodate the number of members that had attended so a large tent was set up in the parking lot along with audio, lights and a portable dance floor for the Saturday night dinner dance and awards banquet which would also mean the drawing to a close of the 1996 50th Anniversary Reunion. At the end of the banquet many groups moved back to the hospitality room for one last get together. Some met Sunday for brunch before leaving and a few even stayed a few extra days.

And now the answers to my questions at the beginning of this letter. I believe both answers are **yes**. Why? Because on a cool windy weekend in San Diego 450 former crew members and their guests came together and went back in time to the 40's, 50's and 60's when they were sailors, all with one common bond that they served aboard and walked the decks of one of the greatest aircraft carriers to ever serve the Navy and sail the oceans. The USS Kearsarge CV, CVA, CVS-33, The Mighty Kay.

And memories from the 1996 reunion will last forever. See you at the 1998 Corpus Christi Reunion.

**Art Killian, B Division, '57-'60, '65-'69**

## **TOURS AND EVENTS**

### **CORPUS CHRISTI HARBOR TOUR**

Wednesday April 29, 1998 - A paddle wheeler that holds 400 will take the Kearsarge Association on a evening narrated scenic tour of Corpus Christi Bay. The paddle wheeler has a refreshment center and enclosed viewing area. Corpus Christi is the sixth largest port in the nation and this tour should be quite interesting. The tour will leave at 7:30 pm and will return after sunset at about 9:00 pm. The paddle wheeler is located a short walk from the Ramada Hotel.

**The cost for this cruise is \$7.50 a person**

### **USS LEXINGTON AND TEXAS STATE AQUARIUM TOUR**

Thursday, April 30, 1998 - 9 AM to 1 PM - . Since the USS Lexington and the Texas State Aquarium are located so close to each other we have combined the tours of these attractions allowing you to decide how much time you want to spend at each.

A memorial service aboard the USS Lexington is in the planning stages and will be held when we first go aboard. Exact time, location and details will be available at the reunion. We want to emphasize that the ladders and stairs aboard the ship have not changed and are still extremely difficult to negotiate. Tennis shoes or similar shoes and slacks or shorts are recommended for everyone who wants to tour the Lexington.

The Texas State Aquarium is the official aquarium of Texas and contains over 250 species of sea life and focuses exclusively on the marine life of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.

**The price of this combined tour is \$15 including shuttle busses**

Ship Launching Ceremony - Tentatively scheduled for 7 PM, pool side at the Ramada Inn. More details will be available at the reunion.

Following the ship launching ceremony there will be an association subsidized buffet from 7:30 - 9:00 PM. The cost to members and their guests will be **\$8.00 per person**.

### **KING RANCH TOUR**

Friday, May 1, 1998 from 8:30 AM to approximately 3:30 PM - The King Ranch is the largest working ranch in the world and maintains a variety of habitats that attracts a rich diversity of wildlife. The King Ranch is famous for its breeding horses such as Assault, who won Triple crown in 1946, and Middle Ground who won the Kentucky Derby and Belmont Stakes in 1950. The ranch also is renown for its cattle breeding programs. Due to the nature of a working ranch it is hard to predict what will be going on at any given time, but the ride to the ranch alone provides a wonderful opportunity to observe this part of Texas. After touring the ranch you will have the opportunity to shop in Kingsville where there are specialty shops, including the King Ranch shop. Many of the items for sale are made of leather taken from cattle raised on the King Ranch. A real Texas



barbeque is provided for lunch and is included in the price of the tour.

**The price including lunch is \$35.00.**

### **NAVAL STATION - INGLESIDE**

Saturday, May 2, 1998 , 11:30 AM to 2 PM - The Ingleside Naval Station is the home of the Mine Warfare Command. We have been invited to lunch and to tour Avenger and Osprey class minesweepers . This is a smaller facility than most of us are used to seeing, but they are looking forward to our visit.

**The tour including lunch is \$10.00**

### **DINNER DANCE**

The dinner dance will be Saturday May 2nd, 8 PM - 12 AM, and will be held aboard the USS Lexington on the hanger bay. Shuttle busses will be available to transport us to the ship. The theme for the event is casually nautical so try to find a uniform, dress or something that will be in the nautical style. Live music and a singer will be on hand for our after dinner listening and dancing. A cash bar will be open during the evening. After the dinner dance the shuttle busses will be waiting to return us to the hotel.

### **MENU**

1. **GRILLED FILET MIGNON** served with bearnaise sauce, fresh vegetables and new potatoes
2. **BONELESS SKINLESS BREAST of CHICKEN** sauted with wild mushrooms and Marsala wine.  
Served with fresh vegetables and pasta
3. **FRESH AMBERJACK** baked with 3 large shrimp and served with fresh vegetables and rice pilaf.
4. **SPINACH LASAGNA** baked with fresh spinach, cream ricotta cheese and mozzarella cheese.

A strawberry tart or chocolate mousse cake is included with each entree as well as iced tea and coffee

**COST FOR DINNER DANCE IS \$35.00**

# USS Kearsarge Association, Reunion Registration Corpus Christi, Texas

			Totals
Member Name	<i>Robert D. Fidler Jr</i>	x \$5.00 registration fee	✓
Guest Name	<i>Paula Peggy Fidler</i>	x \$5.00 registration fee	✓
Guest Name		x \$5.00 registration fee	
Guest Name		x \$5.00 registration fee	
Harbor Tour- Number of Tickets			x \$7.50
Lexington/Aquarium Tour - Number of Tickets			2 x \$15.00 30 ✓
Buffet (Thursday evening) - Number of Tickets			2 x \$8.00 16.00
King Ranch Tour - Number of Tickets			x \$35.00
Naval Station Tour - Number of Tickets			x \$10.00
Dinner Dance - Number of Tickets			2 x \$35.00 ✓
Total			

## Dinner Dance Menu Selections

Entrée #1 Filet Mignon  
 Entrée #2 Breast of Chicken  
 Entrée #3 Amberjack and Shrimp  
 Entrée #4 Spinach Lasagna

Dessert #5 Strawberry Tart  
 Dessert #6 Chocolate Mouse Cake

Name	<i>PAULA</i>	Entrée # <i>3</i>	Dessert # <i>5</i>
Name	<i>Bob</i>	Entrée # <i>3</i>	Dessert # <i>5</i>
Name		Entrée #	Dessert #
Name		Entrée #	Dessert #

Mail To: T.W. Smith, 1172 DeLeon Court, Clarkston GA 30021-1032  
 Make Checks Payable The Kearsarge Association

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**CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL FOR YOUR DUES EXPIRATION DATE**

## DUES & MEMBERSHIP

The yearly dues for the Kearsarge Association is \$10.00. Check your label to see when your dues expire. To pay your dues send a check made payable to the Kearsarge Association: To Robert Finley, address below

To sign up a new member send information to John Bennett: Address below

**FIND A NEW MEMBER FOR THE 1998 REUNION**

Bruce Covington, President, 4928 Admiration Dr., Virginia Beach, VA 23464 757-467-1668

TW Smith, V-President, 1172 DeLeon Court, Clarkston, GA 30021 404-296-3317

John Bennett, Sec., Kear Saga Editor, 815 Savannah Dr., Columbus, OH 45228-2944 614-272-6842

Robert Finley, Treasurer, Box 155495, Bellmead, TX 76715-5495 817-799-4041

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)