

# USS Caliente (AO-53) Association



# PIPELINE

March 2010

## President's message

By Pat Hurton

Norm, Karl, Red and I hope everyone had an enjoyable holiday season and that everything is well with you and your families.

As most of you are aware we are going to have our 2010 reunion in San Diego, CA. The dates of the reunion will be Thursday Sept. 16 through Sunday Sept. 19. We have selected a first class hotel that is near the waterfront and has access to all forms of public transportation. The hotel is The Westin San Diego. There are two Westins in San Diego that are fairly close to each other. The other Westin is called the Westin Gaslamp Quarter so please don't confuse the two.

The Westin San Diego is located at 400 West Broadway, San Diego, CA 92101. We have managed to get a great rate of \$129.00 per room (single or double occupancy) plus tax. The rate will be good for three days before and three days after the above dates for those of you who wish to arrive in San Diego earlier or leave later. You should make a reservation now by calling the hotel reservations department at 888-627-9033. You must identify yourself as part of the USS Caliente (AO-53) National Reunion. We have guaranteed only so many rooms, therefore booking early will guarantee that you will get the preferred rate. I would ask that you book early so that, in the event we look like we need more rooms, I



This photograph of the USS Caliente (AO-53) at Auckland, New Zealand, was placed on Shipspotting.com by Chris Howell. He is not sure whether the picture was taken in 1968 or 1969. For news coverage of the eventful 1968 visit, see page 6.

can work with the hotel to secure additional rooms at the terrific price. Norm Street deserves kudos for obtaining the \$129.00 rate at this four star hotel in such a prime location.

After reviewing the possibilities for tours in San Diego, I think the best alternative may be to allow attendees to decide their own agendas. We could arrange a bus tour of the San Diego area but the least expensive tour is approximately \$60.00 and takes about six hours. The alternative is the hop-on, hop-off trolley tour where you decide when you want to go and what you want to stop and see. That cost is \$32.00 booked at the trolley (or \$28.00 booked on-line in advance). The trolley stops very close to the Westin.

I have also looked at harbor cruises that leave from less than one-half mile from the hotel. The private luncheon cruise is a two-hour narrated cruise of the harbor and would cost \$60.00 per person. The same narrated tour (without the lunch) is available for walk-on, walk off customers for \$23.00 (senior/military) or \$25.00 other adults.

I am still looking at the possibility of a tour of the Naval Base but have been unsuccessful in getting a return phone call from Naval Public Affairs in San Diego. If anyone can help please let me know. The USS Midway is located a short distance from the hotel and is available for touring.

I would appreciate your ideas before I finalize the agenda. The hotel is firm, the business meeting will be on Saturday morning (early) and the banquet on Saturday night, but other aspects are open to suggestions.

San Diego has many varied places to visit, therefore the idea of an open agenda. The zoo is wonderful place to visit but, although they have tram tours around the zoo, it does require a lot of walking. There is an Agua Caliente Indian Reservation in Palm Springs (about 130 miles away all freeway) for those who may want to see it plus where Bob Hope lived and other Palm Springs attractions. There is a Sea World Adventure Park, San Diego State Historic Park in Old Town, San Diego Maritime Museum, San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego Archaeological Center, the ferry to Coronado, the Belmont Amusement Park and much, much more.

As mentioned above please make your hotel reservations as early as possible so, if there are a significant number of persons attending, I can possibly up the guaranteed room count. As part of the contract we arranged for a one room upgrade to a suite and a one room upgrade to a deluxe bayview room for two lucky attendees. I haven't decided how to allocate these yet and would like suggestions.

If you are attending please let me know your thoughts and suggestions. You can call me at (530)343-3060, email me at [gigandpat@digitalpath.net](mailto:gigandpat@digitalpath.net) or write to me at 14075 Kelsey Drive, Chico, CA 95973-9262.

Charleen and I hope to see a lot of you in San Diego. Hope those of you east of California have unfrozen yourselves by now and that spring brings its usual great weather. We had the most significant rainfall in some time over the past couple of months, but only parts of Southern California were affected. Us Northern Californians sympathized but didn't agonize over it (just kidding).

Thank you to all who have contributed to the USS Caliente Plaque to be posted at the Admiral Nimitz Museum Memorial Courtyard in Fredericksburg, Texas. We are still short of our goal to have the plaque fully funded by donations. For those of you who have forgotten or

delayed sending in a donation I would appreciate receiving them soon. It will be a great lasting memory for the Cal. If you are not in a position to contribute you will be part of the plaque through your annual dues to the Association. Thanks again for those who have so generously contributed.

**Welcome aboard to our new members:**

LaVaughn Baker, who lives with his wife Mary in Roseville, CA. was an MM2 when he served aboard the Cal from 1959 to 1960.

Richard Barr, who lives with his wife Terrie in Redding, CA. was an SA when he served aboard the Cal from 1959 to 1960.

Dillard Givens, who lives with his wife Judy in Stuart, FL. was an EN3 when he served aboard the Cal from 1958 to 1959.

Douglas Hanenburg, who lives in Port Orchard, WA, was an MR2 when he served aboard the Cal from 1958 to 1959.

Don Lalumandler, who lives in St. Louis, MO. was an IC3 when he served aboard the Cal from 1956 to 1958.

Juergen (George) Muelder, who lives with his wife Elke in Cameron Park, CA. was an ET3 when he served aboard the Cal from 1958 to 1959.



USS Caliente Association  
President: Pat Hurton  
Vice President: Norm Street  
Secretary: Red Ward  
Pipeline Editor: Karl Seitz



The Pipeline is the official quarterly newsletter of the USS Caliente Association. It is a place to share your memories. Please send them via e-mail to [seitzao53@gmail.com](mailto:seitzao53@gmail.com) or by regular mail to Karl Seitz, 1212 30th St. South, Birmingham, AL 35205-1910.

Masthead picture of USS Caliente (AO-53) used with permission of Dan Davis.

Association dues are \$10 per year due Jan. 1, payable by Jan. 15. Checks should be made out to The USS Caliente Association and mailed to Pat Hurton, 14075 Kelsey Drive, Chico, CA 95973-9262.

Del Riggelman, who lives with his wife Gwendolyn in Portland, OR, was an FN when he served aboard the Cal during 1962.

Don Wolslagel, who lives with his wife Elke in Belgrade, MT. was an EM2 when he served aboard the Cal from 1956 to 1957.

John Joseph Zwack, who lives in Conway, SC with his wife Gloria, was a BT3 when he served aboard the Cal from 1956 to 1957.

**In memoriam:**

We are sad to note the passing of four former shipmates:

Timothy Dehoff died unexpectedly Feb. 18, 2010. Tim served on the Cal from 1972 to 1973 as an SN. He is survived by his wife Jill, sister Carlie Stein, sons Michael, Keith and Jonathan, daughter Autumn, a granddaughter, a nephew and a niece.

Joe Guthrie died Jan. 29, 2010, at age 64. Joe served on the Cal from 1963 to 1967 as a BM3. A truck driver living in Eufaula, OK, Joe suffered a heart attack or stroke in his truck while in Nebraska. He was cremated and buried at Fort Gibson National Cemetery near Muskogee, OK. He is survived by his wife of about six months, Becky.

Tom Michel died Dec. 4, 2009, in North Bend, OR, 22 days before his 61st birthday. Tom served on the Cal from 1968 to 1970 as a BM3. A career Navy man, mostly with the Seabees, he later worked for the Oregon Department of Corrections. Tom is survived by his wife, Tracy, sons Brandon and Matt, parents Richard and Helen, sister Carla Evans (Joe) and a niece.

Wesley W. Wilson died Oct. 9, 2009, in Sheldon, IA, at age 77. Bud served on the Cal from 1951 to 1955 as an MM2. He owned and operated Wilson Electric in Sheldon until retiring in 1994. Bud is survived by his wife Rose, his children Bill (Vennita), Mike, Lynn (Jaci), Laura Tremmel (Joe) and Chery Bender (Terry), four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

## Editor's message

By Karl Seitz

We've had a good run of Pipelines since I took on the job of editor starting with the December 2008 issue. They've been good issues because so many of you have contributed your stories, pictures and newspaper clippings to go with the official communications from your officers.

Like any editor would, I've really appreciated the fact that I've usually had more material on hand than I could use in the next Pipeline. That backlog gave me the opportunity to plan ahead and spend more time on the items that required extra effort to make them manageable for publication. However, the backlog has now largely disappeared. I have a couple of pictures that I'd like to use with one or more stories about the typhoon that hit the Caliente in the early 1950s if someone would write about it (hint, hint) and some other material from which I should be able to extract some interesting information. But I have no memories awaiting publication. I have no more large newspaper clippings such as the one found in this issue.

I know most of you have stories to tell about your time on the Caliente. I heard bits of some of them at the last reunion. We need to get them into print so even more of your shipmates and

their relatives can know the stories. And if you haven't been able to get to a reunion, the Pipeline is the perfect place for you to share those memories with your shipmates.

So please write down your stories about things that happened during your time on the Caliente and send them to my postal or e-mail address, which are found on page 3. It doesn't matter if they are handwritten or typed, on paper or in an e-mail, the important thing is to share them. Don't worry about grammar or spelling. That's my job. And don't worry that somebody else might send a story about the same event. The more perspectives we can put in the Pipeline, the better your shipmates who weren't there will understand the event.

If you have pictures you want to share, send copies, not the originals. If you want to scan the pictures into digital files for transmission as e-mail attachments, please use a resolution of 300 dpi and jpeg format. If you already have a png format picture, it is not necessary to convert it. However, tiff-format files should be converted to jpeg format because of their size. Also, please include identifications of the people in the picture and information on when and where it was taken. If you don't know some of the people or the place and time, provide what you do know.

For newspaper or magazine clippings, please send only photocopies or scanned digital files. Originals are likely to be too brittle to survive transit.

The Pipeline can only be as good as the memories, pictures and clippings that you provide. Please share your stories now.

### **Snippets of memory**

These snippets were collected by Pat Hurton from our shipmates original membership forms:

John Breon (YN2, 1962-1963) remembers being the port side bridge-to-bridge telephone talker while refueling a destroyer on the port side and the USS St. Paul on the starboard side. the skipper of the Cal directed an 8-degree turn to starboard to be completed at 2-degree intervals. At the Cal's command the three ships started the maneuver but the St. Paul made a full 8-degree turn. Needless to say this pulled the fuel lines from the St. Paul and sprayed her with black oil all over her wooden deck and the sides of the ship. It took two weeks of holystoning the wooden decks to try and get the oil out.

Jim Arbogast (LT, 1965-1968) remembers the creation of a new drink in Auckland, New Zealand — the "Caliente on the rocks." When following a line of destroyers into Auckland Harbor, the Cal was unable to complete a 90 degree turn and slid up onto a mudbank. (For more on that incident, see the next item)

## **Memories**

### **One "Caliente on the rocks" coming up**

In 1968, the USS Caliente participated in a four-nation naval exercise off New Zealand. The exercise had a few problems. Two frigates, one from New Zealand and one from Australia, were sprayed with oil by the Caliente during an unrep. Another New Zealand frigate collided with an American guided-missile destroyer. But the greatest embarrassment came when the Cal ran aground. All of which made front page news in the Auckland Star, reproduced on the next page.

**CITY FORECAST**  
(to midnight tomorrow)  
Moderate to fresh westerlies. Cloudy with showers, and fine intervals. Cool.  
Outlook: Changeable.  
Further Details on Page 9  
Phone forecast: 36-000

Friday, August 2, 1968

# The Auckland Star

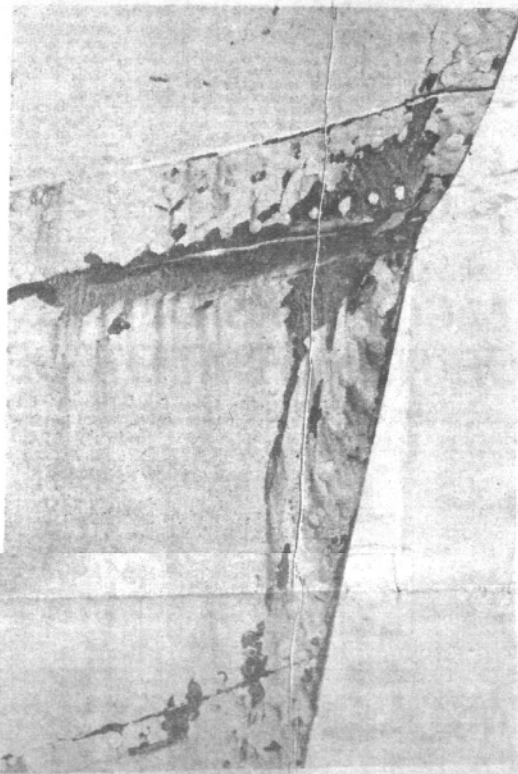
## U.S. NAVY TANKER GROUNDS ON MUDBANK NEAR HARBOUR ENTRANCE

**Taking strain**

The American Navy tanker Caliente, returning from exercise Longex, ran aground at the entrance to Auckland Harbour today.

The Caliente nosed into a bank about a mile north of Bean Rock and off Mission Bay as the New Zealand minesweeper Inverell was steaming into the harbour, her bow plates sprung above the waterline in a collision yesterday with the American destroyer Henry B. Wilson.

### Inverell bow damage



be buckled starboard bow plates of the Inverell.

About 11 a.m., two hours before high tide, the Caliente was pulled free of the mud by the Auckland Harbour Board tugs, Te Awahina and Aucklander.

The Caliente, of 12,500 tons when empty and 25,425 tons fully laden, was threequarters full of fuel when she hit about 7.45 a.m.

The grounding and efforts to get the Caliente off the bank stirred up mud from the seabed which discoloured the sea for an area of about two miles radius.

The tanker berthed later at Bledisloe Wharf. She was reported undamaged.

This afternoon Navy divers inspected the Caliente's hull. Earlier this week while at sea on the four-nation maritime exercises, the Caliente was involved in another incident while refuelling the New Zealand frigate Blackpool.

Manoeuvres to counter a submarine "attack" during refuelling caused the fuel pipe between the tanker and Blackpool to loosen and oil gushed out over the frigate's deck, showering a gun turret. Seamen were sprayed with a black mist of oil.

The Australian frigate Yarra, which was also refuelling, was sprayed with black sludge.

### Not serious

The Inverell's damage is not serious.

She has a 2ft-long tear in her bow on the starboard side 6ft above the waterline.

Navy sources indicated today that there would be no official inquiry into yesterday's collision, which happened about 1 1/2 miles north-east of Great Barrier Island.

An inquiry is generally held only if there is insufficient evidence on such an incident.

The Navy said both captains would submit full reports.

The Henry B. Wilson, a guided missile destroyer, is understood to have been overtaking the Inverell when the collision occurred.

The glancing blow damaged two boat davits on the American vessel's port side.

The impact was described as slight.

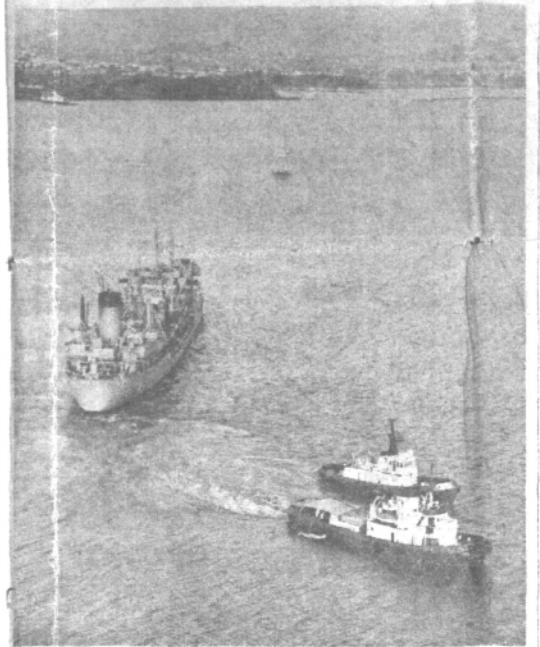
The seas at the time were not rough and on her return to Auckland the Inverell took water only occasionally when she dipped into a trough.

### Spy role

The Inverell had been shadowing the convoy since the start of the five-day exercise, acting in the role of an "electronic spy vessel, intercepting radio messages among the eight destroyers and frigates and passing them on to the "enemy" submarines HMS Trump, HMS Oxley and USS Medagal.

Part of the Inverell's role involved close manoeuvring, keeping on a steady bearing, and generally embarrassing the surface ships with her presence.

Despite her damage, the Inverell neared maximum speed—sometimes up to 11



The tugs Aucklander and Te Awahina churn up mud from the harbour bed as they take the strain before freeing the American tanker.

### Mishaps mar exercise



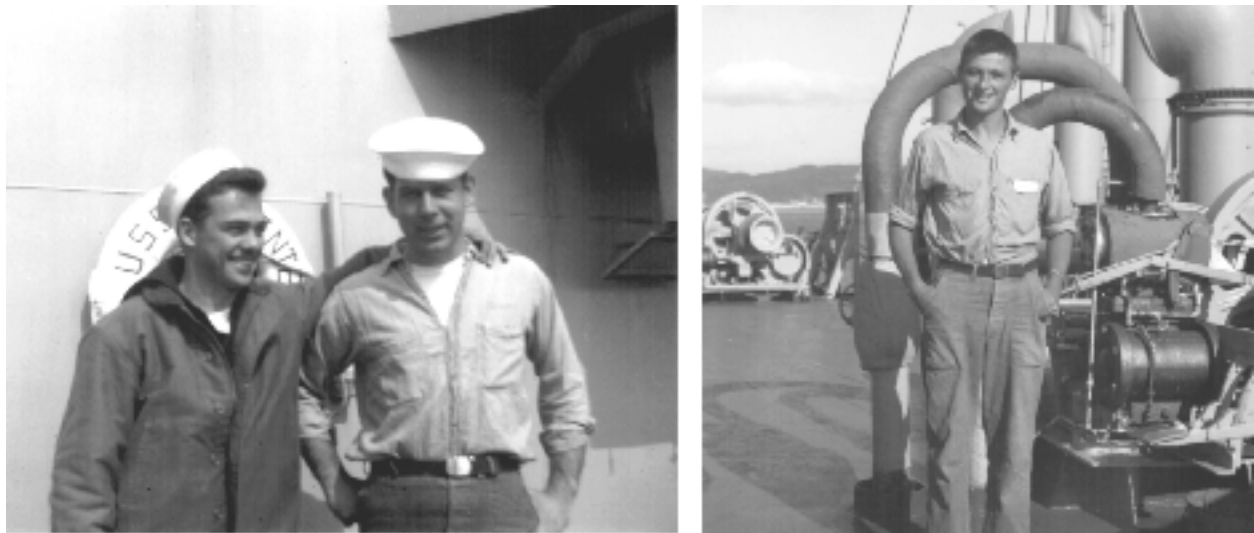
"Frankly, I'll be glad to get back to Vietnam!"

## **When did it happen?**

Paul Jacob, who served on the Cal from July 1964 to April 1967, would like some help in figuring out a date. During either the 65-66 or 66-67 cruise, the Caliente had to wait hours for a carrier to reach a rendezvous point for an unrep. The captain ordered the anchor dropped and crew members spent a few hours ashore on Con Son Island off the coast of Vietnam.

If any of his shipmates at the time can tell him the date or approximate date this event took place, Paul would like to hear from them. His phone number is 201-666-7810 or he can be e-mailed at [midwatch@verizon.net](mailto:midwatch@verizon.net)

## **Pictures from the 1950s**



These pictures were made by or for Jack Hanrahan. From the left are Bob Taylor, SN, who served on the Caliente in 1952 and 1953, Bill Beard, a radarman on the Cal from 1951 to 1953 and Jack Hanrahan, RM3, who served on the Cal from 1951 to 1954.

## **Carrier's fantail took out a boom, he took off...**

By Dillard R. Givens, EN3

Jan. 1958 - Oct. 1959

While fueling at sea in the South China Sea with a destroyer hooked up on our starboard side, the aircraft carrier came along port side too close. The captain told them to pull out and come around again. The USS Bon Homme Richard (CVA-31) turned hard to port and the fantail hit our ship. It hit the bridge and port side. The overhang hit the forward boom and broke it off. We had their life rafts on our ship and my refueling station was the AVGAS pump. Lucky for us the carrier didn't want AVGAS that day. The AVGAS pump would have been primed and we would of had a fire or worse.

I was laying on a large rope and watching this big ship coming over the top of us. I jumped up and ran to the fantail. They thought I was lost over the side and were calling over the PA to

report to the bridge. When I got to the bridge, the captain said, "Son, I thought you was a goner." I said, "No, I seen we were going to be hit, so I hit the deck running."

We limped into Sasabo, Japan, and were in the yards for three months. Not bad!

That's my sea story.

We live in Stuart, FL, six months and Crossville, TN, six months. I am retired. I fish and boat off shore in Florida and the Bahamas. I had a marine diesel shop in Stuart.

I have been married 50 years. I have six children, 15 grandchildren and five great grandchildren. One son got out of the Navy last year, QM3. One grandson got out of the Navy last year. He was a Seal and QM3.

### **... while he climbed to see**

By George Muelder, IC3/ETN3

1958-1959

We on the *Caliente* escaped a potentially big catastrophe during a "Red Lite" night refueling of the USS *Bon Homme Richard* (CVA-31). The carrier apparently did not maintain its heading and was on a collision course with us. Our captain warned the carrier repeatedly to maintain course and the distance between us. As a last resort, I remember the bullhorn command, "Cap all lines" and told the carrier to "take off."

With a collision no longer avoidable, I climbed the ladder to the signal bridge. I perceived the aft aircraft carrier elevator deck right over the signal bridge — a sight I will never forget. In very short order, our booms damaged several AD-4s. One boom had a 10- to 15-foot section broken and dangling. Another boom caused the deployment of five or six automatically inflating life rafts in front of our bridge.

The carrier scrapped our railing very hard with sparks flying. We were very fortunate in that the high octane AVGAS and jet fuel lines were only in place for exercise purposes. The carrier then continued to rip a forward 3"50 gun mount out of its foundation. Anyway it was scary situation. Heard later our captain was cleared of any wrongdoing at an "admiral's mast" in Yokosuka.

Another memory involves us being in heavy seas off northern Japan when 100-gallon barrels were in danger of going overboard. I helped several deckhands securing the loose barrels. When the job was done, we were wet and cold. After cleanup, we stood in the chowline when someone from the bridge summoned us to the captain's cabin. Here something happened that I thought not possible on a Navy ship.

Six of us stood side by side with the captain ordering the chief pharmacist's mate to open the "medicine safe." Out came six small bottles with double shots of brandy. We had to drink "bottoms up." This wonderful captain of ours was concerned that we might catch cold.

Editor's note: Because George Muelder and Dillard Givens wrote about the same incident from perspectives that were a few decks apart, George's memories of his time on the *Caliente* were placed following Dillard's. More from George's letter to Norm Street can be found under "New members write."



## **New members write An ET in all but name**

By George Muelder, IC3/ETN3  
1958-1959

I enlisted on Jan 31, 1956, and after boot camp in San Diego was assigned to Naha, Okinawa AFB where the Navy had an aviation and communications center. I served 14 months there, requested ET school and after graduation was assigned to the USS Chemung AO-30 as IC3.

Here I have to interject something that to this day is not entirely clear to me. After passing the exam for ET3, I was told that the ET rate is classified and not open to non-U.S. citizens. My rate was changed to the nearest nonclassified rate, IC. The irony is that I was assigned the ET job on the Chemung, responsible for all electronic equipment normally handled by ETs, including highly classified equipment. Prior to a Far East departure from San Pedro I received orders for the USS Kermit Roosevelt, a repair ship stationed in Long Beach. I was told to take part in an SPS-10 course. Shortly after that I received orders for the Caliente — you guessed it — as an IC working as an ET. After I became a U.S. citizen I requested a rate change to ET, which was granted.

I was also granted a 30-day early discharge request in November 1959 to attend college.

Looking back., I am thankful for the opportunity to serve in the U.S. Navy. The Navy was good for me and to me and gave me the start for a professional career as an electrical engineer. I worked for Lafton Industries, RCA in Europe and for Kaiser Electronics. I retired in 1996. Enjoying every minute of it.

I have two children, both of whom have attained degrees in computer sciences and teaching. Four grandchildren, ages 6 to 17, keep me busy. I'm also involved with all kinds of projects in and around the house. We try to make it over to Europe once a year or go on a cruise to Alaska or Mexico. For recreation, I like to hit that little white ball.

## **A gift that didn't last**

By Don Wolslagel, EM2  
Jan. 1956-Dec. 1957

One spring before we left our winter port of Long Beach for WesPac summer exercises, we went south to the coast of Peru for refueling exercises. The United States had given Peru several obsolete destroyers and its Navy was learning how to operate them. For about a week, we worked with them, doing all kinds of refueling and transfer exercises. After it was over, they sent a box (or two) of gifts for our crew. When we got the boxes unpacked, we discovered that it was two cases of rum — to be shared — as was the protocol in the Peruvian Navy.

Of course, the U.S. Navy doesn't allow any alcoholic beverages on board (except the raisin jack we engineers brewed in the smokestack). Consequently, the rum was confiscated by the officers to be destroyed.

All of the crew believed, rightly or wrongly, that the officers destroyed the rum by drinking it.

## He saw the atomic tests

By Donald Lalumandier, IC3  
1956-1958

I was on board the Caliente for the atomic tests at Bikini Atoll in 1956 and the Red China-Formosa “war” at Kowshung. I left the USS Hooper Island (ARG-17), a repair ship for DEs and Minesweepers. After I left AO53, the ship went to Lebanon and Egypt. I went to Great Lakes for school. I was discharged in 1960. I worked as an electrician at Washington University in St. Louis from 1969 to 2000. I’m now retired in St. Louis and a member of VFW 3500 and American Legion Posts 101 and 103. I’m quartermaster at 3500 and financial officer at 103.

## He did, too



John Joseph Zwack was at Bikini Atoll with Donald Lalumandier in 1956 and he still has the certificates that were given to the crew of AO-53 for their participation in the test explosion of the H-bomb.