

USS Caliente (AO-53) Association



PIPELINE

Sep 2018

Chairman's message

By Jeff Sturgis

As you read this it will be only a few days before the St. Louis Reunion. For those of you attending, we will see you soon. For those not attending, we will have a full report and pictures in the next issue of the Pipeline.

As of this date, we have 45 shipmates and guests signed up. With the inevitable late registrants, we may hit 50. As I have said before, if we can continue to get in the 40-50 range for our reunions, we'll be able to keep them going.

For those of you who can't make the reunions, it is the Pipeline that binds us together. We are so fortunate to have a wonderful former newspaper man, Karl Seitz, as editor. I will put the Pipeline up against any other veterans group newsletter as one of the best. We can't thank Karl enough for all the work and expertise he puts into the Pipeline.

However, don't forget two things. He needs stories, articles and pictures for the Pipeline and most of them come from you. He needs your input to make the issues a success.

There are also expenses involved including postage costs for those shipmates who don't have email. So, it is important that you pay your dues so that you can continue to receive future issues. Please send your \$10.00 to Pat Hurton at 156 Greenfield Drive, Chico, CA 95973-0185, and send your articles and pictures to Karl at <seitzao53@gmail.com> or 1212 30th St. South, Birmingham, AL 35205-1910. When you do send anything to Karl, be sure to thank him for a job well done. He supplies the glue that continues to bind the crews of the Caliente together.



**St. Louis Reunion
Sept. 6-9, 2018**

**A special report on
Agent Orange
legislation pending
in Congress starts
on page 5**



Bob Howard saved the Association

By Pat Hurton

Past President

As you will read in the obituaries in this issue of the Pipeline, Bob Howard recently passed away. I have known Bob for more than 20 years through our membership in the USS Caliente Association.

In the late 1990s the Association membership was dwindling, attendance at our reunions was dropping and the Pipeline needed new breath. It seemed no one wanted to lead the Association. At the 2002 Las Vegas reunion, when Ron Hengl was ready to pass the baton, Bob stepped up to be the president. He jumped in with both feet, revived the Pipeline, and set up a Cal website.

Bob had never put together a newsletter and had no idea how to set up a website but believed the Association needed both the Pipeline and a website to grow its membership. Bob, almost single-handedly, organized and ran our reunions from the 2003 San Francisco reunion through the 2008 one in San Antonio as well as publishing the quarterly Pipeline. A team of people headed by Norm Street, Bob's vice-president, more than doubled the membership during Bob's presidency. Norm also took over the website and further improved it.

Always at Bob's side was his wonderful wife Sherris. Sherris always had favors on the tables at our banquets and ensured that each banquet was a tremendous success. I'll never forget the first of Bob's reunions held in San Francisco, where each table had a model Golden Gate Bridge that was surrounded by flowers. Sherris set a standard that she never failed to uphold at every reunion including Bob's last as president in San Antonio.

Due to health issues Bob was unable to attend several of the more recent Association reunions. When I told him that our 2017 reunion would be in Portland, Bob immediately started to make plans for him and Sherris to attend. Unfortunately, his doctor had put further restrictions on his travel and they couldn't make it to Portland.

Bob stepped in at a time of need for the Association and served as president performing to the extremely high standard he set for himself. Without Bob stepping forward, the Association membership might have diminished even further and reunions might have gone away altogether. Now we stand in great shape as an Association thanks a great deal to Bob and his efforts.

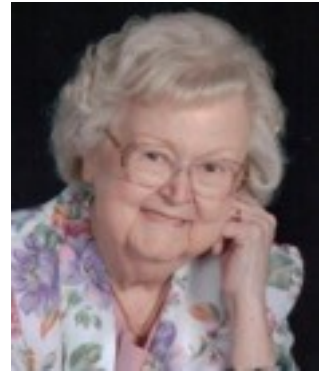
It was my pleasure to work with Bob during his tenure as president and to have known him and Sherris for more than 20 years. I will forever be grateful for his efforts.

Source of caps and t-shirts is gone

Unfortunately, the source for the Caliente caps and t-shirts that Herb Dorsey announced in the March Pipeline has gone out of business. Herb regrets that he cannot take any more orders.

Taps

Minnie “Ellen” Bennett Arbogast, widow of LCDR James B. Arbogast, died 20 May 2018 in Phoenix, AZ, at age 87. Her husband served on the Caliente from 1965 to 1968 as a LT. Ellen was born and raised in the Landmark community near Little Rock, AR. She was a U.S. Navy veteran and nurse. She met and married James in 1956. They eventually made their home in Little Rock in 1965 until they retired to Phoenix in 1996. She is survived by son Robin (Teresa) Arbogast, daughter Zola “Sissy” Arbogast, grandson Sean (Amanda) Arbogast, five brothers, two sisters and numerous nieces, nephews and lifelong friends.



Robert C. Howard III died 7 July 2018 at the VA Hospital in Martinez, CA. Bob served on the Cal from 1968 to 1971 as a MMC. Born 12 Oct. 1936 in Portland, OR, he graduated from high school in Seattle, WA, before joining the Navy in 1954. In 21 years of service, Bob served on surface ships and submarines. He was part of the team that commissioned the USS Lafayette nuclear submarine in 1964. He later ran the Navy’s submarine repair facility in Yokosuka, Japan. During his last years of naval service, Bob was among the first sailors trained as alcoholic



USS Caliente Association
 Chairman: Jeff Sturgis
 Executive Committee: Mike Copeland, Dave Ludemann, Greg Perett, Tom Rawlinson and Steve Selzer
 Treasurer: Pat Hurton
 Pipeline Editor: Karl Seitz



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

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 treasurer Pat Hurton, 156 Greenfield Drive, Chico, CA 95973-0185.

Chairman Jeff Sturgis can be reached via email at jeffreysturgis54@gmail.com or by mail at 84 Old Woodman Hill Rd, Minot, ME 04258

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

treatment counselors and set up the Oak Knoll Alcohol Rehab Center in Oakland, CA. His biggest accomplishments were to serve his country for 21 years and remain sober for exactly 48¹/₂ years. After retiring from the Navy, Bob worked at Mare Island Shipyard for seven years with Bechtel and Fluor



Daniels starting up power plants, copper smelters and mines. When Desert Storm need crews for ships carrying military equipment from Germany to the Far East he joined and made three trips. He worked one summer as chief engineer on research vessels in the South Pacific and another summer as chief engineer on a factory fishing ship in the Gulf of Alaska. Bob was active in reunions for both Lafayette and Caliente veterans and served several years as president of the USS Caliente Association. Bob was predeceased by his parents, Robert C. Howard II and Dorothy Howard, brother John Kindberg and son Dean Howard. He is survived by wife Sherris Howard of Walnut Creek, OR; sons Robert Howard of Salem, OR, and Randy Howard of Wichita, KS; grandchildren and great grandchildren and sister Rosie Morthole of Palmer, NE.

Richard George Ivansek died 9 July 2018 at age 90 at home in Phoenix, AZ. Rich served on the Cal from 1945 to 1946 as a SN¹/c. He was born 5 Aug. 1927 to the late Thomas and Victoria (Kozlowski) Ivansek in Joliet, IL. Rich married Betty Jean Luksic in Joliet. She predeceased him in 1996. Rich was a property manager for WestCor. He enjoyed building antique airplanes, general construction and spending time with family and friends. Rich is survived by children Rick (Alison) Ivansek II and Valerie (Sheldon) Scrivner; grandson Marcel Scrivner and many other family members and friends. He was predeceased by siblings Bud and Dow.



James Arthur La Dieu Jr. died 24 March, 2018 at age 94 in Clearlake, CA. Jim served on the Cal from 1968 to 1969 as ENC. He was born 31 August 1923 in Berkeley, CA. Jim married



A reminder if you are on Facebook, the association has a Facebook group for former crew members of the USS Caliente (AO-53) and their families.

Lewellyn Walston in 1946. He first enlisted in the Navy for World War 2. After the war, he worked for various companies in the trucking and auto industry and for his father at the Advocate Press in Oakland. He enlisted again for the Korean War. After that war he worked for Owens-Illinois Glass Co. and a few printing companies before returning to the Navy to stay. Jim served two tours in Vietnam. After retiring from the Navy,



he was head of maintenance at two Sears locations and for the Lake County Office of Education. He was a man of many interests. Jim is survived by his wife, children Nancy La Dieu, Dustin La Dieu and Carol La Dieu Clopton; five grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

Ramon Lloyd McLuen, 85, died 15 Dec 2017 at the Perry Lutheran Home in Perry, Iowa. Ramon served on the Cal from 1953 to 1954 as a BM3. He joined the Navy after graduating from high school in 1949. Returning to Perry after his Navy service, Ramon met his future wife, Millie Hines, at Le Gourmet Restaurant where she was a waitress. They married 14 Dec 1957 in Pipestone, MN and made their home in Perry. Ramon initially owned a gravel truck and was once the co-owner of the Berkeley Tavern in Berkeley, Iowa, and McLuen Whiteway Service Station in Perry. He spent many of his working years as a millwright for the Thornton Co. in Kansas City and retired as a supervisor for Neumann Brothers Construction in 1987. He was a member of Carpenter's Union Local 106 in Des Moines. Ramon was a prolific collector. He was predeceased by his parents, wife, two sons Pat McLuen and Craig Gimpel; sister-in-law Judy (Payton) McLuen and brother-in-law Bob Spencer. Ramon is survived by sister Charlotte Spencer; brother Don McLuen; sons Roy (Kathy) McLuen and Duane (Alyssa) Davis; daughters Peggy (Ed) Coleman and Sally McLuen-Feldhacker; daughter-in-law Dora Gimpel 18 grandchildren and many great grandchildren and other relatives.



Blue Water Agent Orange bill has moved to Senate

By Karl Seitz
Pipeline Editor

Since the last Pipeline, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2018 zipped through the U.S. House of Representatives without a dissenting vote only to hit what may yet prove to be a minor delay in the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. There are indications that a majority of the

committee supports the legislation, but until they actually vote we can't be sure. The same can be said for the Senate as a whole.

The bill does have opposition from bureaucrats in the Department of Veterans Affairs, including Under Secretary for Benefits Paul Lawrence, who testified against it before the Senate committee using faulty interpretations of the existing science about dioxins in and around Vietnam. His testimony was a reversal of the position of former VA Secretary David Shulkin, who had supported the bill earlier this year before his departure. Coming only two days after the new VA secretary, Robert Wilkie, took office, it is not clear if the testimony reflects Wilkie's views.

The testimony has apparently had some impact on senators who are not deeply immersed in the topic and is part of the reason the committee has not yet acted. Spearheaded by John Wells, executive director of Military-Veterans Advocacy, Inc. and chief lobbyist for the Blue Water Navy Association, an effort is being to educate such senators and also bring political pressure to bear. However, committee action is unlikely before Labor Day and may be as late as October.

The opposition to extending Agent Orange benefits to veterans who served in the Blue Water Navy off the coast of Vietnam has had the upper hand for the past 16 years, but my political instincts tell me that a majority in Congress is ready to overrule the VA if it gets the chance.

With that in mind, let's look at a couple provisions of the House bill, which are almost certain to be part of any final law. Then I'll provide some tips for applying for benefits.

The legislation would take effective 1 Jan. 2019. However, it also has some retroactive provisions. If somebody applied for benefits between 25 Sep 1985 and 1 Jan 2019 and was turned down because he was not in Vietnam but reapplies after 1 Jan 2019 and is awarded compensation for the same claim, the compensation is effective from the date of the first claim.

The legislation defines the area offshore of the former South Vietnam in which it is presumed that U.S. sailors were exposed to toxic herbicides between 9 Mar 1962 and 7 May 1975. If you were on a ship that sailed through this zone and you have acquired one of the conditions presumed caused by the Agent Orange group of chemicals, you are entitled to benefits.

The zone is divided into two parts by a baseline that matches the boundary Vietnam claims for its territorial waters. The second part of the zone reaches 12 nautical miles seaward from that baseline. The baseline is further from the mainland coast to the southeast because of islands that are part of Vietnam.

There are provisions for servicemen who served in Thailand and Korea, but we're concentrating on Blue Water sailors, which includes Caliente crew members.

Remember, this bill amends the original 1991 law, which remains in effect as originally written unless changed by the new legislation. The diseases and conditions already presumed to be caused by exposure to Agent Orange are the same, as is the proof that will be required.

What is different is the expansion of the territory in which exposure to Agent Orange and related herbicides is presumed. Eventually, the VA may compile the names of ships and the dates they were in the exposure zone. And even before then, the VA will create rules for applications. But initially and for an unknown number of years, applicants will probably have to do the work to prove they were in the zone. Advice for obtaining that proof follows in separate articles.



Computer screen shot of Google Earth file created by James Pobog to show the zone of presumed exposure to Agent Orange. It is posted to the Facebook group Blue Water Navy Association. The group's postings can be viewed by any Facebook member and files downloaded. Search the group for "hr299 zone defined best 7-7-18.kmz". You will need Google Earth to see and use the file. You can zoom in to see more details. The zone does not include seas off the former North Vietnam because there is no evidence Agent Orange was sprayed that far north.

Dates that may qualify for Agent Orange benefits

The following dates are when the Cal qualified for either the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal or the Vietnam Service Medal during the period for which exposure to Agent Orange is presumed in the zone defined by the bill before Congress. However, eligibility for either medal does not mean you were in the zone for presumed Agent Orange exposure. That eligibility is determined by the Caliente's position on the dates on which you were aboard.

For example, I have the Caliente Deck logs for the 19 days in 1962. Of the 19 dates, 14 are clearly outside the zone when I plot them on Google Earth. Two days may or may not be in the zone. I have not done the dead reckoning needed to make that determination. Only three days' logs clearly place the Cal in the presumption zone. But one date in the zone is all you need.

Note: the VA has all ready declared crew members of the Caliente eligible for Agent Orange benefits if they were aboard when the Cal docked for in-port replenishment at An Thoi and Vung Tau during June 1970.

1962: 16 Mar, 20 Mar-23 Mar, 14 Apr-17 Apr, 27 Apr-30 Apr, 8 May-12 May, 18 May
(The editor has determined that the Cal was in the Agent Orange presumption zone on 24 March, 9 May and 10 May. These logs have been posted to the public Facebook page Navy Deck Ship Logs, which is administered by the Blue Water Navy Association, from which they may be downloaded. Note the explanations of the entries that show the Cal was in the zone.)

1964: 22 Nov-24 Nov

1965: 4 Jul-11 Jul, 17 Jul-1 Aug, 8 Aug-19 Aug, 25 Aug-3 Sep, 12 Sep-23 Sep, 1 Oct-19 Oct, 1 Nov-10 Nov, 23 Nov-29 Nov, 11 Dec-21 Dec

1968: 1 Mar-10 Mar, 23 Apr-1 May; 10 May-12 May, 19 May-6 Jun, 2 Jul

1969: 7 Mar-16 Mar; 22 Mar-30 Mar; 3 Apr-11 Apr; 17 Apr-24 Apr; 3 May-11 May; 15 May-23 May; 2 Jun-11 Jun; 30 Jun-9 Jul

1970: 3 Jun-12 Jun; 18 Jun-26 Jun; 1 Jul-8 Jul; 27 Jul-3 Aug; 11 Aug-20 Aug; 27 Aug-30 Aug; 5 Sep-14 Sep; 29 Sep-3 Oct

1972: 1 Jul-3 Jul; 13 Jul-22 Jul

1973: 18 Feb-23 Feb; 2 Mar-10 Mar

Determining whether you were in the presumption zone

When your service record says you earned either the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal or the Vietnam Service Medal for service between 9 Mar 1962 and 7 May 1975 on the Caliente that does not mean you are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange. You must also prove the Caliente was in the zone defined by Congress while you were on board.

That is going to require a search of the Caliente's deck logs. Unfortunately, the National Archives has not yet digitized those logs so you cannot download them for free. You will have to order them, which will cost money in most cases. The cost is 80 cents per page with a minimum fee of \$20. It is also possible to obtain up to 20 complimentary copies if your request is limited enough.

When I ordered the logs for 19 dates, most of the logs were one page with a few being two pages. However, in many cases you will also need to request the weather slips for each date to see the Cal's position at three times per day. Apparently there was a change in log formats during the period in question.

Inquiries can be sent by e-mail to archives2reference@nara.gov. They should include the information that you are looking for the Caliente's position on the dates in question. It might be a good idea to mention you might need the weather slips in case the staffer who answers your inquiry is less knowledgeable than the one who responded to my request. Also mention what format you want them in. I got mine as electronic copies on a CD for flexibility, but you can also get paper or even microfilm copies.

The response from the archives will tell you if the logs you requested have been found and the cost of getting them. Then you arrange payment.

When you receive the logs, familiarize yourself with the language and abbreviations. Then download Google Earth and install it on your computer. Next find and save the file "hr 299 zone defined best 7-7-18.kmz" posted by James Pobog in the public Facebook group Blue Water Navy Association.

You can do some of what follows on paper, but doing it on the computer is much simpler so if you don't have a computer or don't think you're capable of using it for this, find a relative or friend to help you.

Pobog created his kmz file to help him plot courses and positions. If you have to do that to prove you were in the zone, download his file, "How to Mine and Plot Deck Logs" also found in the Blue Water Navy group. But there are other ways to use his kmz file as a starting point.

The weather slips contain the Caliente's position at 0800, 1200 and 2000 hours, unless the Cal is anchored or tied to a pier. You can locate those positions on the kmz file to see if you were in the zone. If so, you have your proof. Be sure to zoom in for clarity.

The logs will note when the Cal sights or passes abeam of certain geographical points such as islands or navigational lights and provide the bearing and distance. They will also give such information when anchored. Find those reference points on the kmz file or a map, which may require research to find their current names since the Hanoi government changed many such names after its victory. If the reference point is on or inside the baseline and the given distance is less than 12 nautical miles to the seaward side, you were inside the zone.

If you have a location that is outside but close to the zone, and the Cal is on a course that appears to be headed into the zone, you need to use Pobog's instructions for plotting a course to see if you entered the zone.

It is not known how much information the VA will want the applicant to provide with his initial application. If you have assistance from a Veteran Service Officer in preparing the application, he or she may be able to give advice. It would probably be a good idea to write your own narrative of how the deck log or logs show that you were in the presumption zone.

Miscellaneous tips

The VA is not geared up to deal with Blue Water Agent Orange claims. Don't file a claim before the effective date of 1 Jan. 2019, assuming the legislation becomes law. As an alternative, consider filing an Intention to File form this year. You have one year from the date of that action to file the actual claim with benefits backdated to the filing of the intention.

If you have already filed a claim and have either already been rejected or are rejected in the next few months, keep that case alive by appealing and, if necessary, appealing again.

Ron Hengl, 1954-57, MM3, sent these souvenirs of another era when Cal sailors were exposed to unusually dangerous substances in the course of their duties.

