

# MILITARY SEA SERVICES MUSEUM, INC.



## SEA SERVICES SCUTTLEBUTT

February 2016



**John Cecil**

### A message from the President

Greetings,

I hope everyone had a wonderful time over the holidays. The Museum had an exceptional financial year in 2015. Income was about \$24,000 thanks to a large donation from the USS WORCESTER Association and several large donations from Museum members and friends. In 2014 our income was about \$10,000. In years prior to that our income and expenses were closely matched in the \$5000 - \$8300 range. By keeping our 2015 expenditures to only mandatory payments such as insurance, alarm system,

and utility bills we were able to add to our savings and accumulated sufficient funds to contract for the Museum's front entrance renovation project.

The renovations were nearly complete in January and we were already seeing an increase in visitors. Only the hand rails on the ramp and steps remained. Then we received very bad news!!! The Sebring building inspector informed us that the ramp did not meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. The contractor started demolishing part of the ramp and we expect the ramp will be rebuilt and pass all inspections by mid-March.

Inside, replacing the paneled wall with a new dry wall on the quarterdeck; new window treatments in the library; new windows in bathrooms and gift shop; new fans in library, gift shop, and office; and updated wiring are completed and paid for. Other improvements such as installing shelving, new smoke detectors, and improving displays are on-going.

I hope everyone has a healthy and prosperous 2016.

John

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**Hours of Operation**  
Open: Wednesday through Saturday  
Noon to 4:00 p.m.  
Web site: <http://milseasvcmuseum.org/>

## **Thank You**

A very big thank you to Robert and Mary Stephens and Coker Fuel. Robert and Mary are the former owners of Stephens Gas Service. Stephens Gas Service supplied propane gas and tanks free of charge to the Museum since the Museum's beginning. Robert and Mary recently retired and turned their business over to Coker Fuel. We deeply appreciate all that Robert and Mary have done for the Museum and wish them many years of wonderful retirement.

Coker Fuel has generously continued the practice of providing the Museum propane gas and tanks free of charge. We appreciate their generous service and support of the Museum. We urge our local members to refill their empty propane tanks at Coker fuel. Coker fuel is conveniently located at 3515 U.S. 27 South, in Sebring. It is always good to patronize local businesses that support us.

## **Did You Know That**

in 1981, with the cold war still going full speed ahead, the Soviet Whiskey Class submarine S-363 ran aground on the coast of Sweden only 2 kilometers from the main Swedish naval base. Aside from the blunder of running aground, the Soviet Navy was further caught violating Swedish territory and suffered the indignity of the sub's captain being taken ashore by the Swedes for questioning and examination of the sub's log and instruments. The situation nearly developed into a shooting conflict until after 10 days Swedish tug boats pulled the sub free and the crisis was over.

## **Stories Wanted**

We would like to publish in the Scuttlebutt short stories of Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard personal experiences, and/or short stories of sea services historical events. We are sure there are plenty of stories out there that would be of interest to Scuttlebutt readers. Please email your stories to [navmargrd@gmail.com](mailto:navmargrd@gmail.com) or mail to the Museum.

## **Welcome Aboard New Members**

On 15 January 2016, Robert White became the Museum's newest member. Robert is a retired Navy radioman, who served during the Vietnam War. Robert lives in Magnolia, Texas. See the article below on the unique item Robert donated to the Museum on the day he became a Museum member and supporter.

A very hearty welcome aboard to our newest member! A sincere thank you to all our members for their continued support. Without member support, the Museum would not be able to pay its bills and would have to close the doors.

## Some Unique Items Donated to the Museum



On 15 Jan 2016, Museum member Robert White donated the first casting of the solid brass plaque commemorating the signing of the documents of the formal surrender of Japan to the Allied Powers. The second, and only other, casting of the plaque is mounted over the spot on the USS Missouri (BB-63) where the documents were signed on 2 Sep 1945. The Missouri is now a museum ship at Pearl Harbor maintained by the USS Missouri Memorial Association. Robert was accompanied by his sister and brother-in-law, Jeanie and Ralph Frye. As can be seen in the picture above, Mr. Frye is also a Navy veteran.



Also on 16 Feb, 86-year-old Lemoyne Ezell visited the Museum. Mr. Ezell visited a couple of months ago when his friends took him from a Hospice facility in Okeechobee to fulfill his desire to visit the Museum. (See story in Dec 2015 issue of Scuttlebutt--[www.milseasvcmuseum.org](http://www.milseasvcmuseum.org)). Mr. Ezell served as a gunner and marksman on four U.S. Navy ships during WW II. During his recent visit to the Museum, Mr. Ezell removed and donated his prized Navy dungaree shirt with his WWII medals and the Navy white hat he wore on his way home from WW II.

## Some Unique Items Donated to the Museum

**USS WISCONSIN BB-64**  
Commissioned April 16, 1944



Official US Navy Photo (Released) by Lt. Cmdr. Lynn Howell, (USNR-R) Pascagoula, Mississippi 30-Aug-1988

On 16 Feb 2016, 90-year-old Museum member Charlie Wiggins visited the Museum for the first time. Mr. Wiggins served in USS Wisconsin (BB-64) as a zenith lookout during WW II. He donated his prized possession, a memorial etched into a piece of the Wisconsin's original teak wood deck salvaged during Wisconsin's 1987-88 reactivation. He also donated a plaque outlining the USS Wisconsin's history. Mr. Wiggins also donated short stories he wrote of his experiences with Kamikaze attacks and a severe typhoon while serving in USS Wisconsin.



This teak removed from the original deck during 1987-88 reactivation.



Our 250 plus military sea services hat collection now has a hat from our great allied Canadian Navy. Retired Canadian LCol Robert Farrell visited the Museum in mid-January and noticed our collection did not include a single hat from a Canadian ship. On his return to Canada, LCol Farrell sent us a hat from HMCS Fredericton (FFH-337), one of Canada's most modern city class frigates.

LCol Farrell was given the hat when he served as the Canadian Consul in Dubai, UAE. He had the privilege of sailing from Dubai through the straits of Hormuz to Oman aboard HMCS Fredericton, in the splendor of the Commodore's cabin.



**Our sincere thank you to Robert White, Charlie Wiggins, Lemoyne Ezell, and Robert Farrell for your generous donations of your unique artifacts. We are honored to display them in our Museum.**

## A Sailor's Story-- Vietnam

From a two-year tour in a helicopter assault ship 1965-67:

In 1964, I changed insignia on my CPO uniform to that of a newly minted junior officer. I had been a white hat for thirteen years before making CPO, and was later selected as an LDO (Limited Duty Officer). Almost immediately, I was on my way to USS IWO JIMA (LPH-2), home ported out of San Diego. She had left on deployment in April 65 and I reported aboard in early June at Chu Lai, South Vietnam. Once aboard, I became V6 Division Officer, responsible for the ship's H-34 helo, providing maintenance support to the embarked Marine helicopter squadron, multiple pieces of yellow gear, all ship's calibration, the CO's private car and two pick-ups and vans. There were also six collateral jobs, ranging from serving on Special Courts Martial, standing CIC and bridge watches, and qualifying as OOD underway. Man it was a different world indeed for this former jet mechanic! After a year, the Air Boss chose me to replace the departing Assistant Flight Deck Officer and I changed my green shirt for a yellow one.

Life on the flight deck was very different and I spent the next year waving at helicopters. During the next cruise, we made 12,000 accident-free landings on that deck and the troops ended up calling me "Mr. V-1," a moniker I treasured. This was a helicopter assault ship, part of the amphibious forces, and our primary mission was to rapidly deploy troops ashore in combat to carry out their tasks. The fighting arm of the ship was the Battalion Landing Team (BLT) and a Marine helicopter squadron. The BLT had about 40 officers and some 900 troops and were self-contained with all their equipment. They came ready to go ashore and stay. The helo squadron had some 60 officers and 180 enlisted men, along with their equipment and supplies. Landings were made by helo rather than the traditional assault craft. The Amphibious Ready Group usually consisted of three units, two of which carried landing craft for sea-borne assault, and both had well-decks from which the landing craft sallied forth fully loaded with troops, enroute to a landing on the beaches. USS THOMASTON (LPD-28) and USS SPIEGEL GROVE (LSD-35) were the other two units operating with us. The group could launch simultaneous assaults from the sea and air, although real world operations almost exclusively utilized the air assault component. During this cruise and the following one, we made multiple Landings and placed troops in harm's way. One of these was Operation Starlight, which occurred 16-18 August 1965 on the Van Tuong peninsula, the largest amphibious operation since the Korean war. It was a major effort and was very successful, resulting in a large number of Viet Cong casualties. And we continued these operations for the duration of my tour.

On deployment, I used to make 8mm movies and send them off for developing, with delivery to my wife at home. She saw them before I did and at times that was not smart. I had been writing and telling her that we were in the Philippines and were not in 'Nam. This fib could be told with no trouble for the postmarks on my mail were always FPO San Francisco, no matter where we were, and I could tell any locational lie desired without contradiction. One film, however, was taken in the helo while airborne and later on the ground in Vung Tau and Nha Trang. She wrote and questioned the flight gear, the armament all over the place, and the mountains and such around us. At an Army base, I was tinkling into a canal while the pilot continued to shoot my camera. We were in flight gear with .38 pistols strapped across our chests, and I forgot the weapons until she made a few comments about it in a letter. She asked, "What are you doing in that canal, why are you in flight gear, and why do you have a gun if you're in the P.I. like you keep telling me?"

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## A Sailor's Story-- Vietnam

There were many things which raised the same question, and I later learned that she was letting me believe that she believed what I said and wanted her to believe. She was good at that but at the time, I had to fess up. The fabrication was because this was the great build-up time of the war and fighting was exploding all over the place. It was a time of death, of body bags and body counts. Young men went off to battle and those who returned standing were old, old men. And the war hit home, across the street from her, for one of the neighborhood kids had joined the Marines and gone off to war. His father had asked me about it before he enlisted and I suggested the Marines would do him good, for he was drifting along aimlessly. He returned in a coffin while I was away, within eight months.

The cruise was to end in November and to even out the workload, some folks were sent back to the states early, to meet the ship on return to let others go on leave. Since the helos and Marines were gone, the boss let me go early and I caught a helo to Kadena AFB in Okinawa to begin the trip. As my H-34 approached the field a C-141 was taxing out and we asked the tower to check for room and request they hold short until I could get there. They did and we landed right alongside the big bird, so I got an early start on the long trip home. We stopped in Guam for refueling and when arriving in Honolulu at Hickam Field, discovered the crew was to remain overnight for crew rest. They would not resume until the next morning so I called an old friend from Pensacola days out at Barber's Point Naval Air Station. Since the C-141 was going to Minot, North Dakota, it mattered a little for it would have been very difficult getting out of there. He found a C-118 departing for San Diego, picked me up and kept the trip moving for me. I simply could not just sit still as long as there was an alternative. That flight took over ten long hours, filled with the moaning and groaning roar of those four reciprocating engines and props and it was a tired sailor who crawled off at NAS North Island late that night. I bummed a ride to the ferry and rode the "nickel-snatcher" across the bay, caught a cab to the airport just in time to see the last plane of the day departing. The next was not until 0630 the next morning. I made that and arrived in Memphis some hours later, to begin three wonderful weeks becoming reacquainted with my bride and kids, one who was born while I was away.

With no flight 'til morning, I caught a cab and left the airport for the nearest bar. I was wearing summer whites and when opening the door and walking into the place, I was simply stunned. The first thing that hit my eyes was a beautiful girl with a skirt about as long as my little finger. She was almost "nekked" and I just stood there looking at her. A young Marine captain sitting in a booth hollered, "Hey, sailor, come on over and sit down before you bleed to death," and I did. And that's when I saw my first miniskirt---and brother, that sucker was really mini! It was a wide grin on my face the next hour or so as I watched the many young women cavort around the place. Hmmm, that was nice! And in the bloody scheme of things, I guess one could say that that was some of the things we were fighting for in 'Nam...it made an impression but I wondered just how far our society was going with it's sense of liberalism, for to these old country boy eyes, it seemed that nothing was off-limits any more. But, boy, they were gorgeous girls with legs all the way up...Later that morning, I hopped the PSA shuttle to LA and caught an American Airlines plane to Memphis and my bride. Now the real world came alive once more...

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## **A Sailor's Story--** **Vietnam**

It was a delightful and warm homecoming, filled with the joys and happiness we all share in those circumstances. Every sailor knows of which I speak for the sight and sound and feel and smell of your lady is beyond belief. Be it a raucous reunion of jumping and hollering or a quiet moment shared gently, the moments are precious and magnificent. And after a day or so, you allow yourself to get back into the world you left so long ago, to share the smiles and grins, the softness and sweetness of children, the enduring glances from a child's eyes, and the wonders of a senseless and silly word. My four kids ranged from age 3 months to 6...and that was a full house for me. The little ones weren't too sure who I was for my presence interfered with their daily routing but the two older ones welcomed me back with happy hearts and outstretched arms. We were fortunate because we had their Grandma to keep them while Celeste and I found time alone, to go off and become reacquainted and to enjoy some quiet time together. But sooner than seemed possible, I had to leave and return to California and find us a place to live with a school in the area, and not too far from work.

Five months later I left for another cruise to the South China Sea and the shores of Vietnam. And Navy life continued as before...

Contributed by CDR Eugene "Doc" Savage, USN (Ret). Thank you Commander for the great story.

## **Quotable Quotes**

We maintain the peace through strength; weakness only invites aggression.---Ronald Regan

You must do the things you think you cannot do.---Eleanor Roosevelt

God grant me the courage not to give up what I think is right even though I think it is hopeless.  
---Chester W. Nimitz

There are two ways to conquer and enslave a country. One is by the sword. The other is by debt.  
---John Adams

If ever time should come, when vain and aspiring men shall possess the highest seats in Government, our country will stand in need of its experienced patriots to prevent its ruin.  
---Samuel Adams

## Anniversaries

22 Feb 1732. George Washington born near the mouth of Pope's Creek in Westmoreland County, Virginia.

23 Feb 1795. U.S. Navy Supply Corps established.

12 Feb 1809. Abraham Lincoln born in Hodgenville, Kentucky.

15 Feb 1898. USS MAINE sunk in Havana Harbor.

04 Feb 1941. USO founded.

19 Feb 1941. U.S. Coast Guard Reserves founded.

13 Feb 1943. U.S. Women Marines founded.

19 Feb 1945. U.S. Navy lands Marines on Iwo Jima.

23 Feb 1945. U.S. Marines take Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima.

27 Feb 1991. Desert Storm ground war ends after 100 hours.

31 Mar 1854. Commodore Matthew Perry negotiated the Treaty of Kanagawa to open relations between the U.S. and Japan.

09 Mar 1862. First battle of ironclads, USS MONITOR verses CSS VIRGINIA. Both ships survived the four hour battle.

02 Mar 1867. U.S. Navy Civil Engineer Corps established.

03 Mar 1871. U.S. Navy Medial Corps established.

03 Mar 1915. U.S. Naval Reserve established. .

04 Mar 1925. U.S. Navy Band established.

03 Mar 1931. "Star-Spangled Banner" made U.S. National Anthem.

05 Mar 1942. U.S. Navy Seabees founded.

11 Mar 1942. General MacArthur left Corregidor for Australia.

24 Mar 1942. Admiral Nimitz appointed Commander in Chief of the Pacific Ocean Areas.

20 Mar 2003. U.S. begins Operation Iraqi Freedom by launching cruise missiles from Navy ships in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf.