

SIGHTINGS

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Roster for the September Public Affairs Reunion Swells; Still Room at the Inn But, Discounted Rates Expire Soon

We are still almost two months away from the USNPAAA *Reunion XII* in Alexandria, Virginia, and nearly 90 of our public affairs shipmates, spouses and guests have registered for the big event. And, more than 100 have signed up for Sunday night's dinner saluting RADM Bill and Dorothy Thompson at the U.S. Navy Memorial.

Of course, there is still time to register and secure lodging for the September 27-29 event. But, you are strongly encouraged to make your reservations at the *Alexandria Old Town Hilton* before discounted room rates expire on August 28. The special rate of \$159 per night is available for Saturday and Sunday by calling the hotel directly at (703) 837-0440 and asking for the Navy Public Affairs Reunion discount. If you act fast, and call the hotel, you also can get the special room rate for Friday and Monday nights for an extended stay in Old Town. After August 28, our reunion discount expires and the cost per night at the Hilton will increase to \$206 or higher, depending on the availability of rooms.

Registration for the reunion itself is only \$199 per person for all events. This includes drinks, snacks and socializing in the private USNPAAA hospitality suite at the Hilton, the "Welcome Aboard" reception on Saturday evening, and the Sunday evening reception and dinner at the Navy Memorial in Washington.

Registration also includes Monday's

breakfast, business meeting, a mid-morning coffee and snack break, guest speakers and panel sessions, and the luncheon concluding the reunion.

If you or your guest only wish to attend certain events, we've made that possible. Saturday's "Welcome Aboard" reception is \$49 per person; Sunday's dinner salute to the Thompsons is \$100 per person, and Monday's breakfast, program and lunch are \$75 per person. We will offer a discounted price for active duty, reserve and civilian public affairs specialists to participate in the professional program and lunch Monday.

Registration for all or selected reunion events must include the member's name and guest names. Checks should be made out to USNPAAA and be mailed to USNPAAA, 6119 Larstan Drive, Alexandria, VA. 22312. If members have any special needs, please let us know at registration.

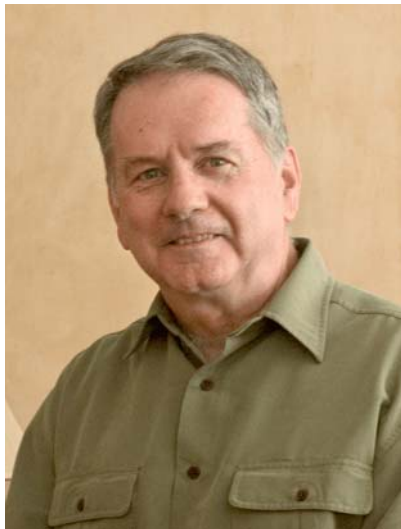
September is a great time of year to be in the Washington area, as temperatures and tourist counts moderate from summer levels. There is much to see and do in Old Town, with free trolley service between the Hilton and the waterfront from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. to access some of the best boutiques, galleries, antique stores and restaurants in the D.C. area. The May 2008 *Sightings* highlighted some of the great entertainment and dining options – such as dinner at Gadsby's Tavern, where George Washington and Thomas Jefferson hung out with seafaring captains... *Page 2*

from the Port of Alexandria.

Accessing Arlington and downtown Washington from the Hilton is equally easy using the King Street Metro stop directly across the street from the hotel. Reagan-National Airport, the Pentagon, Arlington Cemetery and the Washington Mall are only a few stops from Alexandria. Metro offers special rates on visitor passes.

View from the Bridge

We are excited about the final stages of planning for the upcoming Reunion XII at the Hilton Old Town Alexandria, September 27 – 29, 2008. We have more than 100 people registered, and I know that there are more of you out there, who want to come, but just haven't got around to registering. Now is the time!



Honor the Thompsons

The highlight of this Reunion XII is the Sunday evening, September 28, “Salute to Rear Adm. Bill and Dorothy Thompson,” at the U.S. Navy Memorial. Bill is our first 1650 CHINFO and our “Godfather.” He set the course for the great Navy Public Affairs Team of today.

Dorothy was our first public affairs community “First Lady.” She did so much to make new PA arrivals and their families feel welcome and comfortable. Dorothy, like all Navy wives, (excuse me the correct term now is Navy spouse) kept their PAOs on a proper reality track.

A wonderful example of the “reality check” was on the first day that Bill Thompson was going to the Pentagon as an Admiral. As he was leaving their house after breakfast, Dorothy said to Bill, “Oh Admiral, on your way please take out the trash!” Bill will be 86 years young this September, when we honor this wonderful couple.

Jim Finkelstein, his son John, Dick Busby, Tom

This is definitely a reunion not to miss. The Washington-area hospitality committee is making sure that there are plenty of activities to please every interest and taste – during reunion events and free time. If you haven’t done so already, make plans now to join your former shipmates and colleagues in Old Town by registering for the reunion and reserving your hotel room today.

Coldwell, Larry Hamilton, Brayton Harris have been busy making sure that Sunday’s salute to the Thompsons will be a very special and possibly humorous evening for all of us.

Association Business

A new slate of USNPAAA officers has been nominated for 2009. President, Jim Noone; Vice President, Steve Clawson; Vice President Jim McCain; Secretary, George Kolbenschlager; Treasurer, Jeff Zakem, and Chaplain, Chris Baumann. These new officers will be officially voted on by the membership at the reunion business meeting to take



Bill and Dorothy Thompson at Florida reunion

office on January 1, 2009.

We are looking for a Washington area resident member, who can work with Jeff Zakem as his “understudy” with the idea that the member will then take over as Treasurer at a future point, as mutually agreed on. Please consider this “call to service” and any member can nominate a potential Treasurer to Jeff or me. **THIS IS IMPORTANT.**

At our July board meeting, we recommended seven new board members, including: Bruce Cole, Chuck Connor, Mike Doubleday, Sheila Graham, Bill Gengler, Evelyn Moy, and Kevin Wensing. If they all accept the nominations, members will vote on these new board nominations at the Reunion XII business meeting on Monday morning. Also, at the business meeting, members will vote on the amendments to the USNPAA Bylaws, as published on page 9 of the May issue of *Sightings*.

Some Closing Thoughts

George Gillett is fighting leukemia and is undergoing chemo. He reports he is unable to come to the Reunion, but sends his best wishes to all. Bob Jones is doing well after an operation for an ulcer. Bob says he is slowly regaining his strength and wants to thank all who sent him cards. He and Ellen will be thinking about the Reunion and especially about the Sunday evening salute to Bill and Dorothy.

Finally, we will all miss our two long time public affairs colleagues, CDR Frank Maher who died on June 8 and Journalist Master Chief Leo Loftus, who died April 4. They both were devoted to the Navy and their country.

That’s all for now. Malinda and I are off to China. See you at the Reunion in Old Town Alexandria.

All the best, ***Brent Baker***

Mustering on Station—Thus Far

Here are the USNPAAA members and guests signed up for Reunion XII.

Brent & Malinda Baker
Charlie & Grace Battaglia
Ken Beachler
Dick & Joan Bennett
Russ Bufkins & Joan Ingoldsby
Deborah Burnette
Joseph Callo & Sally McElwreath
Steve Clawson
Jerome Cleveland
Tom & Mary Ann Coldwell
Chuck Connor
John & Sandy Dewey
Donald & Susan Dvornik
Jim & Kay Finkelstein
Jack Garrow
Bill & Anne Gengler
John Georg
Joe Gradisher
Sheila Graham & Steve Epstein
Bill Graves
Brian & Nancy Gray
Larry & Barbara Hamilton
Paul & Priscilla Hanley
Mary Hanson
Bill & Rene Harlow
Brayton Harris & Kathleen Kelley
John & Ann Hoshko
Karen Jeffries

Nancy Jenkins
Tom & Sally Jurkowsky
Denny Klauer
George & Vonnie Kolbensschlag
Fred & Nancy Leeder
Bobby & Carolyn Lincoln
Howard & Elisabeth Loving
Jim & Lucretia McCain
Jim & Sharon Mitchell
Jim & Marcia Nemer
Bruce & Theresa Newell
Jim & Alice Noone
Tom & Liz Oxendine
Linda Padgett
Jerry & Carolyn Pape
Kendell & Karon Pease
Gordon & Diana Peterson
Steve and Dawn Pietropaoli
Craig Quigley
Bob & Micki Ravitz
Ray and Barbara Robinson
Donna-Grace Schwenter
Edward & Rhonda Shackelford
Michael & Kathy Sherman
Tim & Penny Siggia
Ralph & Golden Slawson
Bill & Dorothy Thompson
Jeff & Susan Zakem



RADM Frank Thorp (left), RADM Nathan Jones, CAPT Tom Van Leunen at ceremonies held for Jones and Van Leunen

Our public affairs community has wished “fair winds and following seas” to two officers who have meant a great deal to our community during their Navy careers. They are RADM Nathan Jones and CAPT Tom Van Leunen.

Following RADM Smith’s unexpected deployment to the Iraq Multi-National Force, RADM Jones was the steady hand on the tiller, providing great leadership to our community and wise counsel to the Secretary and the CNO. He also provided counsel to three Chiefs of Information on Reserve matters, and helped his units achieve unprecedented Active-Reserve integration, thus providing exceptional support to active units around the world.

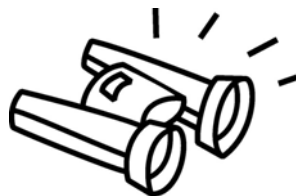
As Deputy CHINFO for the past two years, CAPT Van Leunen led our efforts to increase our resources

and grow the community.

His leadership and direct involvement in our landmark Flag Pole study resulted in changes that will make the Navy Public Affairs Community bigger and better. We’ve also benefited enormously from his expertise in all facets of the acquisition and shipbuilding world. His insights and wisdom have been central to our communication efforts on all of the key issues the Navy has faced over the last five years.

On behalf of the entire Public Affairs Community, I thank these two exceptional Naval Officers for their lasting contribution to the Navy and our country. We are grateful for their service, the service of their families, and extend our most sincere wishes for “fair winds and following seas!”

VR – Frank Thorp



Recently Sighted

Cragin Chairs Vets Committee

USNPAAA member, retired CAPT Charles L. Cragin, of Raymond, Maine, has been appointed by the Department of Veterans Affairs to chair the Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans.

"It is a great honor to join this distinguished group of Americans in evaluating how America has responded, and how it should respond in the future, to the unique issues presented by the dedicated men and women who went in harms way during the Gulf War of 1990-1991," said Cragin.

He will serve on this committee with 13 other distinguished members from throughout the United States. He is a former senior U.S. Department of Defense official, Chairman of the Board of Veterans' Appeals of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and the 1982 Republican nominee for governor of Maine. He retired from the U.S. Navy in 1998 at the rank of Captain following more than 36 years of service in both the enlisted and officer ranks.

The committee will examine the health care and benefits needs of those who served in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the 1990 - 1991 period of the Gulf War and to advise the Secretary on the issues that are unique to these veterans and how these issues can best be addressed by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Committee will submit a report to the Secretary not later than 18 months after the date of its first meeting.

"I am so pleased that such a fine public servant from Maine has been selected by the Veterans Affairs Secretary to chair this important Advisory Committee," said Congressman Mike Michaud, Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health.

Ahoy, `Net Surfers

For those of you who spend too much time on the Internet and don't want to stop USNPAAA member Mervin Block has a very interesting Communication website. It contains a television newswriting workshop among other interesting material. No commitment, just enter www.mervinblock.com and go from there.

Front Line News Challenge

CDR William Tucker, USNR (Ret.), remembers his Desert Storm recall and the challenges he faced to get the front line news to the public.

Well, as every PAO knows, we usually don't have much front line experience to share with our young ones. But, Hey! All of us in uniform contribute to the overall effort in our own special way.

I was recalled to active duty as Deputy Director of NAVINFO Midwest during Operation Desert Storm in 1991. My job was to get news stories from the front lines disseminated to the media throughout our 10 Midwest States as soon as possible.

We could only provide news stories to those media who asked for them. The problem was, they didn't know to ask. So, first we had to call the media and inform them that we had a such-and-such story. The second challenge was, of course, to get the news from the front in a timely manner. Releases coming from the front to our Chicago office were delayed by an average of three days. Meanwhile, all the major news services had reporters on scene. By the time we got the information the local newspaper's response was, "That's yesterday's fish wrap!"

I needed to correct the problem of getting timely news releases from Riyadh. So, I called my Reserve counterpart at the Pentagon and suggested that he see to it that I got the releases the instant he did, and I would hold them until they were chopped, and then he would phone me with the release authorization. That cut the timeline down by 2 days, and we were back in business. NOW, the media sat up when we called, as we had the information first.

But, we weren't getting a lot of press. After some research, I determined that 85% of all Americans don't read the Chicago Tribune, the Detroit Free Press or the Milwaukee Journal. They read their little hometown weekly newspaper. However, it turned out that they were not interested in "war news" unless the story carried the name of one of their local townsfolk. Working backward through my Pentagon Reservist, we got the word back to the front line ships that every story they sent us carry as many names and home towns of Sailors or Marines that they could logically fit in the article.

Soon, our small office was releasing 900 articles a month, and they were all making ink. The small town newspapers would give our "war stories" front-page coverage just so long as a local guy or gal's name appeared in the story! Mission accomplished.



Ensign Sue Istak is surrounded by men most of the time. At the moment it's Lt. William Gengler (seated), Lt. Commander Dick Busby, Lt. Dave Cullen (in uniform) and Ltjg G. E. Somers (seated at right) and Lcdr. Clark Gammell (background) in the Navy Information Office in the Pentagon. Note: All PIO's were married, but still were able to surround Ens. Istak. Photo and Caption - Cosmopolitan Magazine, July 1966.

The Bosun and the Boot

by CAPT Mike Sherman

Seeing the article in *Sightings* regarding the passing of Admiral Moorer awhile back stirred a wonderful story from my Seventh Fleet flagship days. As a young Ensign onboard the flagship USS PROVIDENCE (Prov-Maru to all of us based in Yokosuka) we were excited to hear that the CNO (Admiral Thomas Moorer) would be visiting us on Yankee Station!

Preparations were underway as the ship was titivated to ensure it looked it's best, even after many long days on the gunline. Our ship's bosun, "Bosun Craft", possibly the most senior warrant in the Navy, and certainly a character not to be reckoned with by any Ensign, was in charge of ensuring the ship was

spotless.

Bosun Craft had already been certified by our skipper as more senior than any ENS or LTJG. "Don't any of you 'boots' ever think you outrank Bosun Craft," he once admonished us. And, we never did...the Bosun ran the ship and we were there merely to watch and learn. The day finally came when Admiral Moorer's helo set down on PROVIDENCE.

Bongs blasted, pennants fluttered, and the Admiral was piped on board. After the appropriate salutes, Admiral Moorer looked about, stared directly at Bosun Craft and with a resounding yell, called out "Boats!" To which Bosun Craft, to our amazement and the shock of our skipper, yelled back, "Tommy!" And then they hugged. I'll never forget the stunned silence – even the helo was quiet. What we found out

later was that Bosun Craft and “Tommy” had been “boots” together on their first ship and had never lost sight of each other’s careers. The two, as the story unfolded, communicated continuously throughout the years and Bosun Craft became the eyes and ears of the fleet for “Tommy.” It was a marvelous sight and

a story that circulated throughout the TG for days.

That reunion may have been one reason, just one of many, that I love the Navy and stayed in long after I lost the name “boot”...although I suspect to Bosun Craft, I never lost that label.

Farewells...

CDR Frank Maher

CDR Frank Maher, longtime USNPAAA member and World War II veteran, died June 8 in his hometown of Scranton, PA, at age 92. He was one of USNPAAA’s oldest members.

He served aboard the USS Anzio (CVE 13) in the Pacific Theater, and then remained in the Naval Reserve following the war. CDRF Maher served in various billets in Northeastern Pennsylvania, including those of Group Commander at the Naval Reserve Training Centers at Dunmore and Avoca.

A graduate of the University of Scranton, he was general manager of the Diocesan Guild Studios on Scranton for 50 years. He was prominent in civic and social organizations in Scranton over the years.

CDR Maher is survived by a son, two daughters, and four grandchildren. Two brothers who were flag officers, RADM James Maher and VADM Arthur Maher, preceded him in death. Memorial contributions may be made to St. Joseph’s Center, 2010 Adams Ave., Scranton, PA 18510.

Master Chief Journalist Leo Loftus

A native of Boston, **JOCM Leo Loftus** was born on November 22, 1923, he was called to active duty in the Naval Reserve in 1942. He participated in four naval battles in the Solomon Islands including the battle for Guadalcanal and the invasion of Bougainville. Following the war, Loftus enrolled at Indiana University where he graduated with a degree in journalism in 1951.

Chief Loftus left Indiana for another tour of active duty in the naval reserve in 1954 and was assigned to the Chief of Naval Air Reserve Training. During this tour he transferred to the regular Navy as a Chief Journalist, and was assigned to the staff of the

old Military Transport Service. As a member of the MATS information team he played a prominent role in the media planning of Operation BIG SLAM—the largest airlift exercise ever conducted by the United States up to that time.

In July 1960, he was ordered to the staff of Commander, USN Support Force, Antarctica. During three deployments to the ice, he was responsible for the direct supervision and implementation of the extensive media representative program.

In 1966, Loftus Glacier, located in the Taylor Dry Valley section of the McMurdo Sound area, was named in his honor. He was included on a list of 25 scientists and Navy men who had geological features named in their honor “for making a significant contribution to the exploration of Antarctica”.

Chief Loftus’ last tour of active duty was at Chinfo, as Assistant for Field Services with the Navy Dept. Speech Bureau. He retired from active military service as a Master Chief Journalist in August 1969. Loftus was named Director of Media Relations at the Naval Academy in 1970. He served as the Academy spokesman for almost five years.

In 1975, he returned to Washington, D.C. as Chief, Media Relations branch at Headquarters, U.S. Coast Guard. During six years with the Coast Guard he was prominently involved in such major projects as oil pollution clean up and the opening of the Alaskan pipeline in Prince William Sound. He retired from the Civil Service in August 1981.

Antarctica was his favorite duty station, according to his wife of 59 years, Mary Louise Buswell Loftus. And, a fact that gave him great pride was that he was the Navy’s first Master Chief Journalist. Another great source of pride were his four children and four grandchildren.

Sticking It To MacKercher

Occasionally, PAOs are called upon to demonstrate their versatility. Many moons ago, Captain **Jack MacKercher**, then a lieutenant, got such a call at a dinner hosted by the Republic of China's Minister of National Defense - the senior son of Chiang Kai Shek. His memories (or lack of) follow:

The food was outstanding and much of the entertainment was characteristically Chinese with a notable exception. It was a demonstration of Chi Gung. Many of you are aware of Kung Fu and/or Tai Chi, both of which derive from Chi Gung. Concentration and will power enable a CG master to exert paranormal, even some claim supernatural powers.

Our entertainer was THE Chi Gung master of 'free' China. He went through a routine that was incredible until compared to what he did next.

He asked for a volunteer from the guests. He selected a young army officer who rose and walked toward the master who stopped him several feet away. The Chi Gunger went through his protocol of concentration, pronounced breathing and whatever. Then he raised his arm. The officer spun around and crashed to the floor. He was totally unconscious. To prove this, the master inserted several extra long needles into various portions of the officer's body. There wasn't so much as a quiver. The master brought him back with a command and the young chap seemed totally unaware of what had happened.

Next the master came to my table, nodded to me and put up two fingers. It was the peace sign. He wanted ME and someone else. I looked over at Andrew Headland, a friend as well as news rep for Pacific Stars and Stripes and nodded. Andy nodded back. We approached the master and he made us stop where we were. He sat us down with our legs crossed,



*A young Jack MacKercher (left) and his friend Andrew Headland, sit on the floor waiting for a blow from the Chi Gung master. The lack of expression on their faces as the master swings down at the stick resting on their heads says something. The **inserted picture** of MacKercher, Headland and the Chi Gung master, says even more. It was taken moments after they took the major hit that he describes. The broken stick lies on the floor. No pain, no change of expression. Wow! (Photos Jack MacKercher)*

and approached us with a menacing bamboo stick.

He seemed to be studying our heads by tapping them with his bamboo stick. Next, he placed a piece of bamboo about the length of his on our heads. He disappeared from our sight for at least a minute. We never saw what happened next nor did either of us feel anything.

Our hosts were very appreciative that we Mei Guos had played their game. So much so that years later when Ching Quo came to D. C., I was invited to the Chinese Embassy to a dinner for him. Would I do it again? Well, perhaps, but not with the same master. He's much too old for that kind of showboating.

(Editor's note: Don't try this at home, this doesn't work well unless you're flat headed.)



So, What's Your Story? Here's the Editor's

CAPT Bill Gengler reports two items from his past service. First, I recall the "oh no!" when I was a lieutenant, and the PIO at the 6th Naval District in Charleston. I was holding a press conference for an admiral and a senator. The conference had gone on for quite awhile when the District Commandant gave me the sign to cut off the conference. I got up and told the reporters "thanks for coming, the conference is over." "Wait a minute, Lt. Gengler," said Admiral Hyman Rickover, "Senator Strom Thurman isn't finished yet." Nothing more to say on this subject.

However, I remember when I was an Ensign and newly assigned to VR-6 at McGuire Air Force Base. On my first day I drove over to the commissary, parked my car and went in to buy some food. When I came out, a senior Air Force officer asked why I was parked where I was. I said, sir, it says general officer parking and I am an officer. Nothing more to say on this subject either. I need stories and photographs to keep you informed and entertained. Please email them to me at mctravel@mindspring.com or mail to 15023 Rio Circle, Rancho Murieta, CA, 95683.