

USS McKean DD 784 / DDR 784 SCUTTLEBUTT

January, 2010

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(J'aibon Esperance)
"I Have Good Hope"
Courtesy of George Lyons

USS McKEAN REUNION - CHARLESTON 2009

By John Thomson

The USS McKEAN reunion was held Sept. 25th - 28th in the beautiful coastal city of Charleston, SC. There were 56 shipmates and guests in attendance. The hotel was conveniently located at the foot of the new cable-stayed Arthur Ravenel Bridge in Mt. Pleasant, SC overlooking the Charleston harbor. From this point you could see the old City, the USS Yorktown CV-10, Fort Johnson, and Fort Moultrie. Fort Moultrie was the site of the first victory of the American Revolution. Fort Johnson is the site of the first shot of the civil war (or the war of northern aggression).

What this group of shipmates may have lacked in physical stamina they made up in enthusiasm. It is amazing how their memories are so keen of incidences of embarrassing moments of other shipmates 60 years ago but cannot remember a grocery list of one item the wife needs from the store.

Our reunion started with an enthusiastic gathering on Friday night in the hospitality room. Needless to say the stories told were many and varied and all were the absolute truth.

We boarded three buses on Saturday morning at 8:30 AM for a historic, guided tour of the old city of

Charleston. At 11:00 AM we arrived at the USS Yorktown and a memorable lunch in the Chief Petty Officers Galley. The metal trays were familiar but the pretty young female mess cooks were a little strange for us old tin can sailors. We held our memorial service onboard in the hanger bay for those of our known deceased. I'm sure we remembered some of our other shipmates who were ill or have other problems. The memorial service is always a very moving event for me. As I surveyed our group I did not see anyone who was getting younger. I hope that we can encourage some of our later generation to keep this tradition going. After the service we had until 4:00 PM to tour the Yorktown. The Medal O Honor exhibit was a sobering experience, to read each presentation of the sacrifices of those who gave their all for our nation's freedom.

Sunday was an opportunity for visiting some of our many churches, shopping at the old market in Charleston; some also visited the Confederate submarine Hanley and Fort Moultrie. It was also a time to rest for others. The banquet followed the group picture taking event at 5:00 PM. From all accounts the food was delicious, the room was spacious, and the hotel staff did an excellent job in setting the theme with the decorations.

Afterwards came our auction and we had a large number of donated treasures that were auctioned off professionally by our own Don Kessler. This

raised much needed funds to help with our reunion expenses. Last came our business meeting at which time Charles Horvath our fearless leader resigned but volunteered to coordinate our next reunion to be held in Branson, MO in 2011. Joe Winkel agreed to replace Charles as our new leader.

I would like to thank Charles, Joe, and Don for their leadership and also for their help in assisting me in the planning for this year's reunion. I, also, want to thank those who attended and made it a very successful and enjoyable experience.

Happy sailing, may God bless you and hope to see you all again in Branson.

CHANGE OF COMMAND

By Chuck Horvath

There was a change of command at the last reunion in Charleston. Joe Winkel was elected as the new McKean Reunion Association Chairman after I requested to be relieved from the Chairmanship. I become the Association Treasurer and Reunion Planner for the next reunion in Branson, Mo in 2011. Continue to send your membership dues to me at P.O. 509 Nevada, MO 64772.

I have really enjoyed being Chairman. I have received dozens of phone calls not only from McKean shipmates but as well as from sailors from other ships. I also have gotten hundreds of letters and e-mails from just about everyone including shipmate family members. I have been Chairman for five years and this has been a special time in my life that I will always remember. I appreciate all the help that I have received during my Chairmanship and thank everyone who made my job a pleasure.

USS McKEAN REUNION ASSOCIATION

By Joe Winkel - Chairman

I want to take this opportunity to thank Charles (Chuck) Horvath for his leadership and dedication to our association. Chuck has been at our helm since 2004 when he took over the chairmanship

from Don Kessler. Under his leadership, we have had very successful reunions in Buffalo, Milwaukee, and Charleston.

It is my hope and desire to continue in the wake of Chuck, Don, and their predecessors as your chairman with continued successful reunions.

In Memorial

A TRIBUTE TO DON KESSLER

By Chuck Horvath

It is with much sadness that I report the loss of a fellow shipmate and a good friend of mine for more than 50 years. Donald Warren Kessler lost his battle with cancer on November 6, 2009. The USS McKean Association expresses its condolences to Don's wife and to his children.

Don has been a consistent fixture at our reunions. I always asked Don to do the reunion auctions because he was not only entertaining but seem to get the highest price from each item bid. He was quite a showman. Some shipmates may not know this, but Don was the person who established the USS McKean Reunion Association. The success of our reunions can be attributed either directly or indirectly to Don's wisdom in setting up the criteria for both the Association and the reunions. Don also, with his law degree background, reviewed all of our contracts to make sure that everything we needed was clearly specified for a successful reunion and to make sure that we didn't incur any undesirable liability. Don served as the Association Chairman from its inception until I took that position five years ago. He also served as the Association Treasurer until his passing. He has done an excellent job in both of these tasks. When I took over the Chairmanship, I spent quite a bit of time picking his brain so that I could gain the knowledge he possessed to assure the Association's continued success. After he imparted this knowledge to me, I felt that I could do the job with ease and had no anxiety about doing it. Don has contributed much to our Association and will be greatly missed by all.

When I first come aboard the USS McKean, Don took me under his wing and showed me all the fire

control equipment locations on the ship. I was quite impressed about his knowledge and thought that he was an "Old Salt". I later learned that he had only been aboard the ship two months before I got there. Then I was really impressed. Don was proficient in operating and maintaining all of our fire control systems. He was the most accurate of all us Fire Control Technicians in operating the rangefinder on the MK 37 Director. Don and I spent many liberties together in many ports. For some strange reason, we both liked to drink Catty Shark Scotch and emptied many a bottle, as well as numerous cans of beer. I don't why Don drank beer because he said it always gave him a headache if he drank more than one. It must have been the cheap price that made the pain acceptable. Not only did we spend a lot of time doing activities together in the Navy, but continued to be good friends and did activities after we got out.

Don loved the Navy and at one time considered becoming an officer but opted out. Later in life he did become that officer when he became a part of the Sea Cadets Organization. He joked that he was the oldest Ensign in the Navy. He eventually became the Commanding Officer in charge of many Sea Cadet units. The time Don spent in Navy and the time he spent with the Sea Cadets appear to have formed the book ends that enclosed the other parts of his life. Rest in peace good friend until you are among the Angels.

SHIPMATE CONTRIBUTIONS

From Dick Shaw

This update is regarding an ongoing effort by Ken Sewell and others to tell the story of the USS McKean / Russian submarine incident during the Korean War.

DIVE EXPEDITION

Last Wednesday evening I traveled to Columbia SC to meet with Joe Porter, editor and publisher of Wreck Diving Magazine. Wreck Diving Magazine is an award winning, high quality, quarterly publication with professional writing and fantastic content. Joe is a veteran of numerous dive expeditions, including expeditions that include numerous submarines and surface vessels,

including the Titanic. I spent several hours reviewing our research with Joe. He was highly impressed, especially after reviewing the log entries from the ASR rescue vessel that sent divers down to the Russian submarine. After studying the charts and identifying the navigational lights listed in the log as well as verifying location using depth and chart structures, he believes we have an excellent chance of finding the Russian sub. He's very excited about the project and has agreed to work with us, serving as the organizer of the first expedition that will go to Japan to find and photograph the Russian submarine.....but it gets better.

SPONSORS

Joe told me that several of his advertisers are interested in sponsoring expeditions such as ours, expeditions that will feature their equipment, towed side scan sonar, ROV's (Remote Operated Vehicles), towed magnetometers and dive equipment such as re-breathers. In short, they understand the publicity an expedition like this will generate. He believes that he can get us a sponsor for the first expedition, which will locate and photograph the submarine, giving us proof that it exists.

The first trip would consist of three men, Joe, a representative from the equipment company and me. Since Wreck Diver magazine is an international publication, he believes he can arrange for a small boat (the mother ship) using his contacts in Japan. The second expedition would take place later and consist of a larger group consisting of qualified technical divers who will descend to the wreck to investigate, map and recover items that might assist in the identification of the submarine. We both agreed that we should invite divers from Russia to participate in the second expedition. Dirk Pohlman has offered to assist us in making contacts in Russia.

I will be working with Joe to brief potential investors. Everybody will be required to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement. We should know by early next year if we have a sponsor. We might be able to do the first expedition in the spring of 2010.

TWO BOOKS, TWO DOCUMENTARIES

We should start thinking about the possibility of two books and two documentaries. There is enough material. The first segment could include; the battle between the American destroyers and the Russian subs, the personal stories of the

destroyer captain and crew, the history of the Korean War up to Dec 1950, why Stalin decided to commit his subs to the battle and the search and discovery of the Russian submarine.

A second story can revolve around the actual dive operation, a Shadow Diver type book featuring the geopolitical aspects of the Korean War including; Mao's attempt to destroy the 1st Marines at Chosin and Truman's willingness to drop 30 nuclear bombs on the Chinese in North Korea and China to prevent devastating defeat at the hands of the Chinese (and risk WWII with the Soviets) and the overall account of the 8 month war between the Destroyers of the American Navy and the Russian submarine fleet, including detailed stories of the three battles where Russian submarines were sunk and the USS Walke was torpedoed (with the loss of 26 sailors and the wounding of 40 others). If the dive team is able to identify the Russian submarine we can include some of the submarines history and locate some of the crew's families. There is a good possibility of a few new discoveries—which I'm not ready to expand on at this time—that could add to the drama of this story.

PRODUCTION COMPANIES

Joe has also worked with Lone Wolf, a production company that conducted a number of ROV and mini-sub dives on the Titanic. This expedition discovered additional pieces of the ship, new evidence that might change the conventional belief on how the ship broke up and sank. The documentary was sold to the History Channel. Lone Wolf is highly experienced in deep, underwater photography. In addition, I've talked with Rebecca at Atlantic Productions and they are still very interested in the Korean documentary. Atlantic would be my first choice due to their ability to distribute the film in a larger international market (over 30 countries). Atlantic also has experience working with foreign publishers to get accompanying books published. We still have some domestic production

companies that are interested in the project, if we locate the submarine and get a few photos.

McKEAN ITEMS FOR SALE BY MAIL

All items include shipping cost:

McKean 60th Anniversary Mug - \$8.00 each

McKean Cap (Pre-FRAM, Post-FRAM or DDR) - \$19.00 each

McKean Leather Coaster - \$4.00 each or 4 for - \$10.00

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO:

USS McKean REUNION ASSOCIATION
NOT TO CHUCK HORVATH

MAIL CHECK TO:
CHUCK HORVATH

Not To "USS McKean Reunion Association"

P.O. Box 509
Nevada, MO 64772

2010 Membership Dues Notice

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES OF \$25 ARE DUE EACH JANUARY.

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DO YOU HAVE WEB SITE MAINTENANCE SKILLS AND A LITTLE TIME FOR YOUR SHIPMATES? WE NEED A WEB MASTER FOR OUR WEB SITE. CONTACT JOE WINKEL FOR MORE INFORMATION

IF YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS HAS CHANGED IN THE PAST YEAR, PLEASE SEND IT TO JOE WINKEL AT joe.winkel@comcast.net.