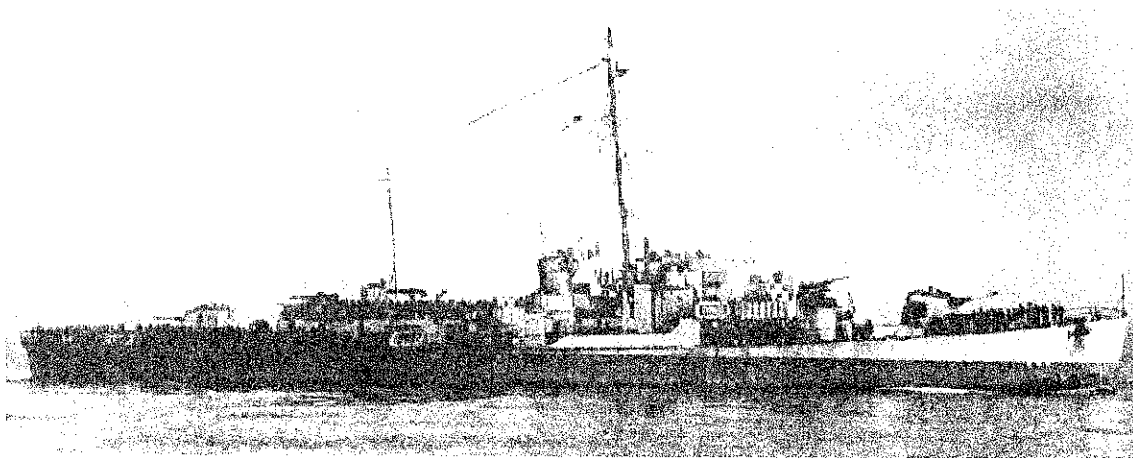


"HOLT HAPPENINGS"

A NEWSLETTER FOR AND ABOUT THE CREW, THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS

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THE HOLT (DE 706) REUNION - SAN ANTONIO, TX MAY 12 - 15 2004

The hotel reports that 18 rooms have been reserved to date. This is great considering we have four months to go! If you have not made your room reservation yet, you should do so at the earliest to insure getting the negotiated [REDACTED] night (plus taxes). Our room bloc will expire 30 days prior to the reunion and after that date, reservations will be on availability only. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The hotel's address is 110 Lexington Avenue, San Antonio, TX 78205. In either case, a one night deposit is required to hold the reservation. For those who may want to come a day or two early or stay a day or two after the reunion, the hotel will honor the special room rate. However, you must inform the hotel at the time you make your reservations.

Included with this newsletter is a form to register for the reunion. Please complete this and send to Paul Pickett while you're thinking of it. Then you will be all set for the reunion.

The last newsletter (September 2003) gave the details of the reunion activities. Briefly, Wednesday, May 12th is the day of arrival, with Thursday, May 13th open for activities in the hospitality room. On Friday, May 14th, we will take a side trip to Fredericksburg, TX to visit the Admiral Nimitz Museum of the War in the Pacific.

Saturday evening, we will visit the 7A cattle ranch which is west of San Antonio for dinner and a relaxed evening of fun. Very casual attire for this event - boots and jeans or whatever.

The motor coaches used for these excursions are equipped with a head (rest room to the ladies).

BINNACLE LIST

The list of sick or ailing shipmates and their spouses is quite lengthy. Included are Phil Corriher (in and out of hospital with breathing problems), Phil DeFosses (Alzheimers) and Marshall Gebert (cancer and heart problems). In a conversation with Ralph Parks over the holidays, he seems to be getting along somewhat better. He asked that we pass on his best regards to you and would sure like to hear from his old shipmates. He can be reached at [REDACTED] or his address is [REDACTED]

Also, over the holidays, we had a conversation with Harry Helgeson (Radarman). He is in the hospital for medical evaluation (has had some heart problems in the past). Harry said to tell everyone hello for him and that he misses the old crew.

George Burke has had some back problems and may yet have to have some surgery. Russ Coates keeps a stiff upper lip despite his extensive breathing problems. Francis Clearo (Radarman) and Bob Swartz (Fire Controlman) continue to have severe arthritis problems.

Spouses who are on the binnacle list include Jerri Pickett (wife of Paul Pickett) and Sue Eazer (wife of Ted Eazer). **Please keep all these folks in your prayers.** (Note: Please let us know of others who may be ill.)

IN MEMORIAM

We recently learned of the death of Mrs. Hugh Smith (wife of HOLT's Engineering Officer). She passed away over a year ago.

Ed Bouchard (LTjg) passed away on 21 November 2003. Ed had been in failing health for several years. We enjoyed having Ed's son, Dick, attend our Jacksonville reunion, standing in for his father. George Peters (Machinist's Mate) passed away 23 August 2003 and Kenneth S. Hogg (Lieutenant) passed away 22 May 2000.

Our sincerest sympathy to the families of these shipmates.



Remember this photo of the neat lady from the September 2003 issue? You are correct if you guessed Charlotte West (wife of Holt's Gunnery Officer, Arch West). She was made up especially for this occasion with oversize glasses, false nose and big hat. It was taken at our 1991 reunion in Galveston, TX

HONORING SHIPMATES

VERGIL R. GRACEY

From time to time, we write about a shipmate. This edition, it is about Vergil R. Gracey, Carpenters Mate 2/c who served aboard HOLT from commissioning on 9 June 1944 until decommissioning on 2 July 1946, one of only five of the crew who were aboard during the entire

life of the ship. Do you remember the boat he built?. It was small, probably not more than 15' in length. What was unusual about it was the engine that was picked up on the beach and originally belonged in a small vehicle, probably a Jeep. When the boat was first launched, the engine was too far aft causing the bow to rise vertically, but with a little modification, placing the engine farther toward the bow, the boat worked pretty well, although it tended to ride with the bow at a high angle. We understand the Captain went ashore in it on more than one occasion.

Vergil had enlisted in the Navy prior to the beginning of the War and was aboard the USS ASTORIA (CA 34), just a day out of Pearl, when the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor occurred. During the ensuing months, he participated in the battle of Coral Sea in May 1942, followed by the battle of Midway in June, and the landings on Guadalcanal in August 1942. It was just two days into the Guadalcanal campaign when the ASTORIA was sunk by Japanese cruisers in the night battle off Savo Island. Vergil, along with several hundred other survivors, was picked up by a destroyer and taken to New Caledonia. He later was transferred to the Navy Boat Pool in Wellington, New Zealand where he spent seven months training with the troops for the next campaign. In May 1943, he was transferred back to the Guadalcanal area where he spent another seven months in a Boat Pool operating out of Florida Island moving troops and equipment wherever needed. In January 1944 he embarked on the former luxury liner S. S. MATSONIA, in Esprito Santos for the trip back to the States. He arrived San Francisco in mid-January, having been gone for more than 2 ½ years.

After a well deserved leave, he was re-assigned to Naval Station, Norfolk, VA where he became part of the HOLT pre-commissioning crew that was sent to Bay City. He was on leave while in Bay City, so missed riding the ship down the river to New Orleans.

After the war, Vergil returned to his native Kansas where he worked in construction, specializing in building water treatment plants.

We had the pleasure of getting re-acquainted with Vergil briefly a few years ago when he and his wife, Ruth, stopped by en route from their winter retreat in deep South Texas to their home in Kansas. It was a short visit. We had lunch and talked, and then they were on the road again. Sometime later, Vergil sent me the last ensign that flew aboard the HOLT. He hauled it down when the ship was placed out of commission and took it home with him. It now rests in a walnut case where those who attend the ship's reunions can view it. Vergil passed away on 19 May 2003. His engraved nameplate is being prepared and will be affixed to our Honor Roll of Deceased Shipmates. He was a fine shipmate who is missed by all who knew him.

OTHER

In scanning the HOLT web site, we spotted a message in the Guest comment section from John F. Meenan. He was aboard HOLT from January through May 1946. John was a LT(jg) and was the ship's Executive Officer, relieving Ed Bouchard who was being separated from active duty. Please add his address to your list of crew. It is [REDACTED]. Please welcome John to the HOLT family. We hope he will come to the reunion.