

# USS Caliente (AO-53) Association



# PIPELINE

December 2009



## Caliente Chantey



By Greg Perett

Well, it's west, toward the setting sun  
Driving hard, churn the seas to foam  
The journey has just begun, with the wind and sea you're one  
And this broad, blue-green empire your home

Faster still, hear your engines whine  
Heave and roll, as the clouds fly by  
Ah, to rest, but there's no time, for they're thirsty out on the line  
They're waiting to drink you dry

So sail on, with your head held high, Sail on with your head held high

Here they come, long and lean and grey  
Born for battle, how they gleam with pride  
So scornful in their way, but without you they'll die today  
Cold iron, slaves to wind and tide

Comes the night, yet ships plunge ahead  
Giant shadows, like some fine-matched pair  
Like Hell's lonely dead, in a black world singed with red  
Men labor in the ghostly glare

So it goes, 'till your veins run dry  
Drained and empty, now it's inward bound  
Rest at last, your engines sigh, but soon your steam whistle's cry  
Calls you out again to plow the restless ground

So sail on, with your head held high, Sail on with your head held high

© W. Gregory Perett

Caliente Chantey was performed Oct. 3 at the USS Caliente Association Reunion in Minneapolis.

## **President's message**

By Pat Hurton

Hello Shipmates,

I want to thank all of you who attended our Minneapolis reunion. I hope it met, or exceeded, your expectations and that you thoroughly enjoyed the time with your fellow shipmates, their wives and families. We had about eighty attendees (the largest attendance of any reunion in the past six or seven years) and know that we can continue to grow the attendance at our reunions.

As I mentioned at the reunion, my father-in-law was a sailor on the USS Salt Lake City (CA-25) during WWII. The Salt Lake City was decommissioned in 1947 and sunk as part of atomic bomb testing in 1948. The Salt Lake City still has an active association that holds annual reunions. They have about the same number of WWII participants as does the Caliente Association, but, due to the 1948 decommissioning date, the vast majority (80 or 90 percent) of present association members are sons, daughters and grandchildren of former Salt Lake City sailors. I find this remarkable and hope we all encourage our future heirs to attend our reunions and so that they could continue the legacy of the USS Caliente and its sailors. For this reason, I am especially grateful to the families of those shipmates who assisted their parent in attending the Minneapolis reunion. It is the most family members I have ever seen attend a reunion and I am very grateful to those who assisted their parents.

While observing their parent renew acquaintances and relive memories, families are able to learn, and understand, more about each other and hopefully understand more about lives that they weren't around to participate in. My wife and I spend fair amount of time doing genealogy and, even though my parents were alive for about 60 years of my life, I wish I had had the foreknowledge to have spent more time learning about their early years and more about my grandparents, whom I was only able to meet about four times in my life.

Enough philosophizing, our next reunion will be held in September or October of 2010 in San Diego. Planning is well underway toward hotel selection and activities. If anyone has any suggestions regarding improvements to our standard reunion format please let me or Norm Street know. Norm has been in contact with Association members in the San Diego area to assist in hotel selection. If you have any suggestions regarding hotels please inform me or Norm. Remember, the reunions are not just for the organizers, they are for you. If you are disgruntled and don't let us know, we can't improve what we are doing. We are always looking for ways to improve the reunion and any suggestions regarding any aspect of our reunions are welcome.

Details regarding the San Diego reunion will be published in the March 2010 Pipeline. By then all of the fundamental planning will be fait accompli. If you want to suggest something, and see it implemented, you must get those suggestions to me or Norm before early January.

**Dues for 2010 are now due. If you haven't paid yet, please send them..**

Checks should be made out to The USS Caliente Association and mailed to Pat Hurton, 14075 Kelsey Drive, Chico, CA 95973-9262.

Also, we need donations for the USS Caliente Plaque and an annual wreath-laying at the

National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, TX, as proposed in the September Pipeline and approved at the business meeting in Minneapolis. Please give what you can, preferably along with your dues for 2010. If you've already paid your dues, a donation can be sent to me separately.

The holidays are a great time to enjoy family and spend as much time together as possible. Charleen and I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving, we wish you all a continued great holiday season and that 2010 brings with it an improvement in your and your family's lives.

**2009 Minneapolis Reunion Income/Expenses**

	Event	Dollars
Receipts		\$12,270.00
Expenses		
	DJ Productions (disk jockey)	\$525.00
	Metro Connections (tours)	\$5,140.00
	Heritage Photography (photo album)	\$1,971.84
	Hilton Hotel (banquet/hors d'oeuvres)	\$5,123.35
	Total expenses	\$12,760.19
Expenses (Over)/Under Receipts		(\$490.19)



USS Caliente Association  
 President: Pat Hurton  
 Vice President: Norm Street  
 Secretary: Red Ward  
 Pipeline Editor: Karl Seitz



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

Masthead picture of USS Caliente (AO-53) used with permission of Dan Davis. 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 Pat Hurton, 14075 Kelsey Drive, Chico, CA 95973-9262.

**Welcome aboard to our new members:**

Kenneth Fronk, who lives with his wife Stacie in Worland, WY, was an FN3 when he served aboard the Cal from 1968 until 1970

Robert Goodreau, who lives with his wife Carol in Attleboro, MA, was a DK2 when he served aboard the Cal from 1960 until 1961

Mike Lewis, who lives with his wife Christina in Nunn, CO, was an MM2 when he served aboard the Cal from 1968 until 1971

Marv Munyon, who lives with his wife Sandra in St. Maries, ID, was and RD3 when he served aboard the Cal from 1958 until 1959

Robert Prelipp, who lives with his wife Vickie in Birnamwood WI, was an E4 when he served aboard the Cal from 1965 until 1967

George Rawls, who lives with his wife Helen in San Bernadino, CA was an EM3 when he served aboard the Cal from 1962 until 1965

Dan Ryan, who lives with his wife Karen in Carlsbad, CA was a LTJG when he served aboard the Cal from 1964 until 1966

Ed Seibel, who lives with his wife Rosita in McMinnville, OR, was an SA when he served aboard the Cal from 1969 until 1971

Frank Solchaga, who live in Lakeland, MN, was a BM3 when he served aboard the Cal from 1952 until 1956

William Stempel, who lives with his wife Elaine in Excelsior, MN was a LT when he served aboard the Cal from 1958 until 1960

Paul Tague, who lives in Tama, IA, was an SN when he served aboard the Cal from 1958 until 1960

Gilbert Valdez, who lives with his wife Mary in Austin, TX was a BT3 when he served aboard the Cal from 1958 until 1961

**In memoriam:**

We are sad to note the passing of three former shipmates and a spouse.

Alvin Markey, Jr. died Oct. 18, 2009, at home in Stockbridge, MA. Alvin served on the Cal from 1943 until 1946 in 1st Division. Alvin served as a district manager for Miami Tobacco Co. for many years before retiring as a sales rep after 28 years at Bland Electronics. Alvin is survived by his wife of 52 years, Stella, daughter and son-in-law Cheri and James Allison, son Bruce and his wife Margaret and three grandchildren. Al is especially remembered by Bob LeGacy who served with him.

Paul H. Roethmeyer died Aug. 3, 2009, at his home in Bolingbrook, IL. Paul served on the Cal from 1963 until 1964 as a BT1. Paul retired after 20 years in the Navy and worked at Winchester, MA, Hospital before moving to a 20-year stint at St. Mary's Good Samaritan Hospital in Centralia, IL. Paul is survived by his wife of 39 years, Jeanne, 6 children and 16 grandchildren.

Richard Kunkel died Oct. 15, 2009, at age 65 after emergency surgery. Richard served on the

Cal from 1963 to 1966 as an EN3. Richard is survived by his wife Joanne of Miriden, NV.

Mitsura Murphy, wife of Ken Murphy, died Nov. 27, 2009, in San Diego, CA. Ken served on the Cal from 1968 to 1970 as an EMC. Ken and Mitsura were married for nearly 51 years.

**USS Caliente (AO- 53)  
Annual Business Meeting  
St. Paul/Minneapolis Hilton Airport Hotel  
October 3, 2009**

The meeting was called to order by President Pat Hurton at 9:00 AM. 42 members were present. Some wives and family members also attended.

**Old Business:** No old business to discuss

Treasurer's Report: Pat Hurton gave the treasurer's report (attached). There is a balance of \$12,523.24 in the Association's checking account.

**New Business:**

Pat Hurton made a motion that the Association sponsor a plaque and an annual wreath laying at the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. The cost of a 20" x 20" plaque is \$2,500 and for an additional \$1,000 the Admiral Nimitz Foundation will lay a wreath at the plaque each Memorial Day.

Pat asked that the plaque be funded by donations from the Association members and any shortfall be funded by the Association General Fund.

The motion was seconded by John Creedon. There was no dissenting opinion. A vote was held, by show of hands, and the motion was passed.

Pat will contact the Admiral Nimitz Foundation and proceed with the getting the plaque in place.

No other new business was discussed.

**Site of the next reunion:**

Pat Hurton introduced the concept of planning reunions more than one year ahead. Norm Street supported the idea and suggested that at this business meeting we select the next two sites.

Discussion was held regarding the pros and cons of such an approach. The pros are predominately as discussed at previous meetings; the ability for our members to plan ahead and see when they may be able to attend a reunion as it comes close to their location. The con was that, as in the past, we should select just one site ahead at the business meeting as we have done in the past.

General consensus was that target locations for future reunions should be identified as far ahead as practical (three or four years) and that, within the target areas, the specific location be solidified at the preceding business meeting. This will allow for longer planning times resulting in

improved reunions.

Norm Street suggested San Diego, CA as the location of the 2010 reunion and Norfolk/Virginia Beach, VA area for the 2011 reunion. After a general discussion Norm made a motion that the 2010 reunion be held in San Diego, CA and that the 2011 reunion be held in the Norfolk/Virginia Beach, VA area. The motion was seconded by Pat Hurton and a vote was held. The vote was held, by show of hands, and the motion was passed.

**Election of Officers:**

Pat Hurton asked if any member wanted to run for any office. There being no takers, Pat Hurton volunteered to retain the presidency and treasurer’s position for another year. Norm Street volunteered to retain the vice-presidency for another year. There was no person who volunteered to take the secretary’s position. Pat Hurton agreed to contact our present secretary and secure his services for another year.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the above. A vote was held, by show of hands, and the motion was passed.

Although not an elected position, a very important (key!) part of the Association is the Pipeline editor. Karl Seitz has been our editor for the past year and was present at the reunion. Karl has agreed to continue being our Pipeline editor for another year. All hands expressed their appreciation for the job Karl has done over the past year and look forward to another year of great Pipelines.

**Other Business:**

There being no other business to discuss a motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded. A vote was held, by show of hands, and passed.

The meeting was adjourned.

**Treasurer’s Report  
10/25/2009**

Category	Income	Expenses	Balance
Opening balance 10/11/2009			<b>\$11,190.38</b>
<u>Income</u>			
Renewals	\$1,885.00		
New members	\$1,000.00		
<u>Donations</u>			
Navy Memorial	\$125.00		
General Fund	\$527.00		
Subtotal donations	\$652.00		
From 2008 Reunion	\$482.49		
Sale of hats	\$80.00		
Interest on CD	\$75.40		

USS Caliente Plaque	\$280.00	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$4,454.89</b>	<b>\$15,645.27</b>
<b><u>Expenses</u></b>		
Pipeline	\$1,548.99	
Ship's Rosters	\$585.00	
IRS - Tax Free Organization Request	\$300.00	
USS Caliente Patches/Rockers	\$431.54	
Reunion Awards	\$256.50	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$3,122.03</b>	<b>\$12,523.24</b>
<b>Total Balance on Hand 9/25/2009</b>		<b>\$12,523.24</b>
CD	\$4,668.42	
Cash	\$7,854.82	
<b>Total Balance 9/25/2009</b>	<b>\$12,523.24</b>	

## Editor's message

By Karl Seitz

As a first-time attendee of a Caliente Reunion, I had a great time in Minneapolis. I would encourage anybody who hasn't yet been to a reunion to go when you have the chance.

One of the best things about the reunion is hearing the stories of men who served on the Caliente over the years. I would encourage all of you who told those stories to write them down and send them to me at one of my addresses on page 3. Don't worry about grammar, etc. Just write it the best you can and send it along. It's my job to do the final polishing.

The Pipeline needs pictures, too. Check your drawers and closets for old snapshots and send copies (not originals) or electronic versions of the ones you would like to share. Include as much information as you can, particularly identifications. For electronic versions, please create jpeg files with a resolution of at least 300 dpi.

Remember, without your help, the Pipeline cannot provide the enjoyment of reading about and seeing pictures of the events in which Caliente crewmembers were involved.

## Memories

### A father's memory of a burning fleet oiler

By Glenn Birtwell

son of William Birtwell, SM3

1944-1946

Recently, my father told me the following story:

On Nov, 19, 1944, the Caliente pulled into the safe harbor of Ulithi Lagoon near Mangejang Island. My father, a signalman 3rd class, was on the bridge as the USS Mississinewa (AO-59) pulled into the lagoon an hour or so after the Caliente was berthed.

The signalman from the AO59 sent my father a request to move to their assigned berth. My father went to his commander and told him of the request. His response to the AO59 was to please take the berth next to theirs as they were all settled in.

My father finished his watch and retired for the evening when he was awakened by a large explosion. As everyone rushed to the deck, they discovered that the AO59 was ablaze and had apparently been struck by a Japanese submarine.

To this day, my father remembers the remorse everyone aboard the Caliente felt for the sailors and family members of the USS Mississinewa.

## **Two years delivering the fuel**

*The following history was given to William Birtwell when he left the Caliente. It appears to have been written about 1945 for distribution to newspapers and other news organizations.*

The USS Caliente (AO-53), a fleet oiler, is attached to the service force based in Tokyo Bay. Baltimore built, the Caliente has spent almost two years delivering fuel to the fleet. In that time, she has given oil to more than 500 combatant vessels. Her specialty is Task Force 38 and she has traveled with that group from the Marshalls to Tokyo. It was October 1943 when she was commissioned at Bethlehem Steel's Sparrows Point Yard. After her shakedown in the Chesapeake, she sailed past the Nazi wolf packs and through the Panama Canal into the Pacific. Pearl Harbor was a brief stopover before an almost unbroken series of fueling rendezvous.

Among the first ships to enter Majuro Major Fleet Base for the early Central Pacific campaigns, she was selected to serve as flagship of the tanker fleet and under the able direction of Capt. E.E. Pare, USN, commander of the Logistic Support Group, the Caliente's bridge was the focal point for all supply and replenishment operations afloat.

When the Marshalls were secured and plans were afoot for further American offensives, the big twin-screw tanker was almost invariably to be found steaming close by or in company with the fast striking forces as they ranged from Hollandia to the Marianas and from Truk to the Bonins.

The Japs had hardly been cleared from the airstrips and jungles of Manus Island when the Caliente reached that equatorial harbor. This event made the distinct impression on those who had never crossed the "line" before. When the hook was dropped in the waters of Seeadler Harbor at Manus, not a pollywog could be found aboard. But there were many shaven heads and blistered bottoms. The hair grew back and the wounds healed in time to let all hands enjoy a brief return visit to Pearl Harbor where the logistic command left the ship. But hardly had the Caliente made a landfall when she was outward bound again.

In late June, the first large scale land push against the Japanese saw the ship lying a few miles off Saipan as D-Day dawned. The Caliente was scouted by the Nips but they kept their distance and though three tankers nearby were dive-bombed, she was unmolested. She sailed between battle-wracked Tinian and enemy-held Rota giving vital fuel and supplies to the Essex class carriers and big battlewagons that were the backbone of the Central Pacific forces.

Now the fleet worked out of Eniwetok and from hot, steaming Manus. Palau was invaded and

the Caliente steamed up to Kossol Roads and fueled every species of naval vessel afloat while ashore, a scant ten miles away, the Japanese garrison on Babelthuap sat and watched.

By the time the Caliente had rounded out her first year in full commission, the fleet base was at Ulithi and there it remained until Jap capitulation moved the fleet to Tokyo Bay. It was at Ulithi that the Caliente saw her sister ship, the Mississinewa, go down, victim of a Japanese midget submarine attack.

Caliente oil was in the bunkers of many of Admiral Halsey's ships when they smashed the Japanese Navy in the Philippines. And Caliente oil flamed and went down with the Princeton off Leyte.

Typhoon weather struck with full fury but the broad-beamed ship plowed through the mountainous waves and was delivering cargo again when the sea had scarcely calmed and while the search for survivors of capsized destroyers went on.

The Philippines were still largely in the hands of the enemy when the Surgao Strait and the Inland Sea were entered by the tanker forces. A rendezvous was ordered in the South China Sea and the schedule was met and the fleet replenished despite the proximity of the Japanese and the savagery of another typhoon, which swept over the assembled vessels.

More rendezvous and then back to Ulithi with movies on the cargo deck and beer parties at Mogmog Island and the natural loneliness of men far from home. Finally in February 1945 came the word. The ship was going back to the states. The naval drydocks at San Pedro were a welcome sight after the coral atolls and low-lying tropical coast that were the only horizon besides the sea that the ship had seen for thirteen months. Seventeen days leave for all hands and liberty on the West Coast raced by and shortly after V-E Day, the Caliente was once again anchored "home" in Ulithi.

Tokyo was now the daily target and despite continuous typhoons and suicide attacks, the task force steamed up and down the Japanese coast bombing and bombarding. Still in the now mammoth floating supply base that followed the fleet was the Caliente, rigged for whatever customers were directed her way.

## **Patient went ashore, needed help returning**

By Pete Stafford, HM2

1955-1956

I served aboard the Caliente in 1955 and 1956. I was an HM2 at the time. We were in the South China Sea on the fringes of a typhoon. Some ships needed fuel and it was decided to attempt a refueling operation in spite of the rough weather.

My fueling station was on the cargo deck and I had a close up of all the activity. It was complete chaos. Lines were parting, people were falling, cussing, yelling and, unfortunately, being injured. We had a six-bed ward in sick bay, and it was filled in no time with injured crewmen. One of the injured was a seaman from the First Division named Boozer. Boozer was from Chicago and a really nice guy.

We proceeded to Kaohsiung and tied up to a buoy as station ship. We had port and starboard

liberty, so the chief corpsman and I could rotate. Now, the Chinese are nothing, if not enterprising. They figured that if half the crew was ashore, the other half was aboard and had just as much money to spend. So sampans or "bum" boats would come out to the ship at night with a cargo of girls.

Boozer may have been injured, but there was nothing wrong with his hormones. So, one night unbeknownst to me, Boozer went down the stern line like Tarzan to the waiting bum boat. After he had conducted his business with the ladies, unlike Tarzan, he could not climb back up that stern line.

He couldn't swim around the ship to the quarterdeck, since he was technically AWOL. So his friends from the deck force, being good seamen, rigged up a harness and dragged him up that stern line. I didn't find out about this for some time. It was sort of embarrassing to find that a man I was in charge of had jumped ship and cavorted all evening with the ladies and I didn't even know he was gone.

Oh well! It's hard to get ahead of a bunch of sailors.

## **New Members write**

By Daniel F. Ryan, LTJG

1964-1966

I remember being stuck in "Subic Bay" for four months with two main generators not working. Being transferred by bosun chair after landing on a COD flight on carrier. Being OOD at night time refueling of a carrier when forward boom transferring AVGAS broke, resulting in emergency breakaway.

By Paul M Tague, SN

1958-1960

I will never forget going overseas — going ashore with the greatest bunch of guys, refueling ships, busted fuel hoses, the clean up. We were on a floating bomb — should have been paid more! All you shipmates were The Greatest!. God Bless you all. Maybe some day we all can go on liberty again.

By Gilbert Valdez, BT3

1958-1961

My whole time living and serving aboard the USS Caliente is a memory.

## **2009 Reunion attendees**

The following people attended the Reunion in Minneapolis:

Douglas Budrow (EM2, 1951-1955) and daughter Dawn.  
Wesley All (BMSN, 1961-1965)  
Morris and Joanne Banks (SM1, 1967-1970)  
Dave Bentson (ENS, 1968-1971)  
Joe and Jo Benziger (PHM2, 1945-1948)  
Gerald and Nan Brady (MM2, 1952-1956)

Bill and Nancy Jane Bushyhead (QM3, 1959-1962)  
Don and Joyce Chamley (RM3, 1959-1963)  
John and Diane Creedon (QM1, 1943-1945)  
Jim Culhane (RM3, 1959-1960)  
James and Joyce Davis (SN, 1956-1958)  
Marv Doschadis (ENS, 1945-1946) and family: son Mark, daughter-in-law Dede, daughter Judy Weber and granddaughter Janet Doschadis.  
Lou and Mary Erickson (EM1, 1952-1956)  
Ed and Karen Fordyce (PN3, 1960-1962)  
Ron and Barbara Hengi (MM3, 1954-1957)  
Robert and Sherris Howard (MMC, 1968-1971)  
Pat and Charleen Hurton (SK2, 1964-1966)  
Jake and Lillie Kanzelmeyer (SFM2, 1956-1959)  
Merle and Billie Kersten (LT, 1951-1952)  
Robert and Nancy LeGacy (BM2, 1943-1945)  
Mike and Christina Lewis (MM2, 1968-1971) and daughter  
Dave Ludeman (SK3, 1969-1973)  
Brady and Irene Martin (RD3, 1958-1962)  
Robert Matyas (EM3, 1962-1965) and Lois Leilko  
Robert and Linda Monroe (SFP2, 1966-1968)  
Steve and Linda Muras (RM3, 1965-1966)  
Robert and Lou Murray (MM2, 1960-1962)  
John and Sharon Nelson (EM1, 1973)  
Jim and June Niquette (BM3, 1950-1954)  
Ray Otemba (BM3, 1969-1971)  
Vivian Pennington, widow of R.C. (BM1, 1943-1945) and son Daniel, daughter-in-law Angela  
Greg Peret (LTJG, 1969-1972)  
Ray Charles (MM2, 1958-1961)  
Karl Seitz (PN2, 1961-1964)  
Joe Strang (MM2, 1968-1970)  
Norm and Susan Street (RD2, 1960-1962)  
Frank Solchaga (BM3, 1952-1956)  
Russell Stromberg (MMFN, 1972-1973)  
Jeffrey and Susan Sturgis (LTJG, 1970-1972)  
John and Sara Treiber (BMSN, 1958-1961)  
Carlos and Norma Vallejo (SN, 1951-1955)  
JC and Betty Van Deusen (SFC, 1961-1965)  
Lyle Winn (BM3, 1952-1955) and son Jeffrey  
Ann Murphy, widow of Frances X. Murphy (GM2, 1943-1945) and Bill Schmidtke (MM3, 1959-1962) had planned to attend but were unable to do so because of last-minute conflicts.

On the following page is a group picture of those who attended the Reunion in Minneapolis. Readers of the electronic version are reminded that Acrobat Reader allows you to rotate a page on your computer screen for better viewing.



USS Caliente Association Reunion 2009