USS TOPEKA CLG-8
Reunion Association Newsletter

Volume 10, No. 1 **February, 1999**

Committee:
John Reynolds, President; Dudley E. Cass, Secretary/Treasurer;
Al Jefferis, Assistant Secretary; Dudley Cass, Reunion 99 Chairman;
Jack Connery, Newsletter Editor; Ken Noble, Web Master.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Screwdrivers on the Mess Deck

I remember those nights during the Vietnam War when we were in the Gulf of Tonkin. A night I especially remember was Christmas Eve of 1965. Chief Herring, the Commissary Chief, decided to provided some goodies for the crew in addition to the normal midrats. He sent mess cooks down to the reefers to break out fruit and other delights to make a spread in the mess decks for anyone to help themselves.

Unbeknownst to Chief Herring, some corpsmen had spent a lot of time filling hypodermic needles with vodka, then shooting up a crate of oranges which they had carefully hidden in the back corner of the reefer.

These oranges turned up with other fruit in the spread of fruit on that Christmas Eve.

Needless to say, the sailors on the messdecks that night had a very jolly Christmas.

Jack Connery is collecting Topeka stories like this to include in the revision of Baka Hachi, the history of our ship. Scratch your brain a little and come up with your favorite Topeka story to share with your shipmates, and send it to Jack. See the insert in this newsletter.

And, on a different note, see you in Branson.

John Reynolds

TAPS

James McReynolds, RM3 59-61; Topeka, Kansas, Nov. 28, 1998

LAUGHLIN "MINI" FEB 28-MAR 1

It not too late for Socal Shipmates (and others) to join up with Ruth and Dudley Cass in Laughlin, NV, Sunday, February 28, and Monday, March 1. The Riverside Hotel (phone 800-227-3849) offers a package deal for the Eddy Arnold show (remember "Make the World Go Away," and he can still do the "Cattle Call").

Room for 2 for Sunday and Monday nights, plus 2 tickets to the Sunday 7:00 pm show is $93 (VIP rate) or $83 (regular rate). Reservations for the package must be prepaid with a credit card. If you elect the VIP package, ask for seats at the Ruth Cass table.

Please contact Dudley or Ruth Cass if you are planning to go, if you are interested in golf Monday morning, and/or if you have questions.

NEW MEMBERS (SINCE NOVEMBER)

Welcome aboard. Most of these shipmates found us. They found our new website at www.usstopeka.clg8.org.

Bill Flynn, SH3 (59-62), Cleveland, OH
John Peterson Jr., AGAN (65-67), Aberdeen, WA
Ken Fox RD3, (59-62), Terre Haute, IN
Pat Tempel, GS2 (60-62), Chandler, AZ
Roy Winningham, MR3 (67-68), Niles, MI
George Trzok, QM3 (60-63), Kansas City, KS
Walter Crane, RD3 (63-66), Goleta, CA
Kenneth Myers, MM3 (66-68), Loveland, CO
Gary Baker, FT2 (63-65), Billings, MT
Thomas Young, FT3 (60-62), Amsterdam, NY.

Plankowners, members of the original CLG-8 Commissioning crew, gather for a picture at the quarterdeck of USS Constitution during the 1998 Boston reunion.

1999 DUES ARE DUE

Dues for 1999 are $15.00 and should be sent to Dudley Cass. If you have not paid them, please take care of this matter. Dues are used to pay for printing and mailing of this newsletter four times a year, the annual directory,

and other administrative expenses. A 1999 directory will be sent after dues payment is received.

Should you want to send a little extra, it will be included in a donation to the Navy Home in Pascagoula, Miss., at the end of the year. Should you want, you may also pay ahead. Some have paid through 2000.

This is the only dues reminder you will see in this newsletter. The address label on this newsletter will indicate whether or not you have paid.

SHIP'S STORE REPORT

The following items are available in the ships store. Please add $5.00 for shipping, except if ordering just the Boston group picture. If you are on the internet, there is an order form on the Topeka web site.

The Topeka note pads are great for honeydo lists, telephone notes, and shopping lists. Be the only one in town to have them.

The license plate covers are a great way to let people know you were on Topeka. Not long ago, we found a new shipmate who noticed a cover on someone's car, and left a note.

Soon, it will be time for mowing again. You'll need one of those insulated holders to keep the beer cold.

• Adult shirts	
Navy and Green, L, XL, 2XL	$22.00
White (on sale)	15.00
• Ball caps	8.00
• Key Chains	3.00
• Wine glasses/tumblers 4/a	12.00
• Topeka Jackets, size L, XL, XXL	35.00
• Ship's Plaque (new design, w/name)	30.00
• Cold drink holders	5.00
• Topeka note pads (5 pack)	5.00
• License Plate Holders	4.00
• Group picture at the Constitution (includes shipping)	8.00

BRANSON REUNION REPORT

The '99 Reunion, our tenth, will be held at the Branson Grand Ramada, 245 Wildwood Drive, Branson MO 65616, Wednesday, August 11 until Sunday, August 15. The phone number: (417) 336-6646, or (800) 850-6646. The room rate is $60 (plus 11% tax) per night. This rate is good 3 days before/after the reunion dates for those who want to come early and/or stay later. Rooms with double or a king-size beds are available.

For those familiar with Branson, the hotel is near the Grand Palace, and the Bobby Vinton theater. The hotel offers handicap rooms, non-smoking rooms, indoor pool/spa, guest laundry, and provides a complimentary continental breakfast each morning. A gourmet restaurant, and a top-floor lounge are available for guests. The reunion coordinator(s) will visit Branson in late March to make further detailed arrangements with the hotel, transportation companies, and shows.

Much of the Branson "action" is seeing the shows available. There are more than 30 shows/theaters to suit any taste in music, and the shows are all "G" rated. We will have two 29-passenger vans at our service from 6 a.m. to midnight Wednesday thru Saturday to transport our group anywhere in Branson they want to go, and then pick them up when they are ready to return. We need your inputs on what shows you want to see. Please complete the form included elsewhere in this newsletter and return to Dudley Cass. Block reservations have been made at what we consider the more popular shows, some of which are sold out months in advance. Many shows will have seats available for walk-ins and day-ahead reservations for those not making advance reservations. For those on the internet, our web site <www.usstopeka.clg8.org> offers links to Branson show information sites (we found the schedule dates presented are not 100% accurate).

Branson also offers the Silver Dollar City theme park, with rides, entertainment, etc., and the White Water water slide park. Branson is surrounded by lakes, so swimming, boating, and fishing is there for those interested. For fishermen/sportsmen, the Bass Pro store in Springfield is one of the country's largest sporting goods store.

Other unique Branson attractions include a train ride through the Ozark countryside, and Marvel Cave, with all it's bats, stalagtites and stalagmites, in a cool 60 degree cavern.

For shoppers, 3 large shopping malls are available, and van transportation will be provided.

Golfers, bring your clubs. Several golf courses are nearby, and we will set up tee times for Thursday and/or Friday morning.

The reunion event schedule includes a Friday evening Mixer, with no-host bar and a buffet, from 5-7 p.m. (moved up an hour to allow people to catch an 8 p.m. show if they like), a Saturday morning business meeting (8:30 - 10:30 a.m.) followed by group pictures, and the Banquet Saturday evening (6 p.m. - 9 p.m.).

The Hospitality Room will be open 7 a.m. to Midnight (except during the Business meeting, the Friday night mixer, and the Saturday night banquet). We plan to recruit "volunteers" to man the hospitality room, and help with dispatching the vans.

More details, and the full Reunion Registration Form, will be in the next newsletter (May). See you in Branson!

BRANSON RV FACILITIES

Following is a list of six RV facilities in the Branson area compiled by Jerry Pennington (63-64) from the 1999 edition of the "Good Sam - - Trailer Life Directory." These selections are based on "Good Sam" ratings and accessibility to entertainment areas and services. Most accept Visa, MC and Discover credit cards.

- America's Best Campground (Private), 499 Buena Vista Rd. Branson 65616. Paved and gravel roads; 167 full hook-ups, 136 pull-throughs, laundry, grocery, pool. 1998 rates: $18-26.00. Reservations 800-671-4339. Information 417-336-43339
- Blue Mountain Campground (Private). Box 8410, Branson, 65616. Paved and gravel roads. 65 full hook-ups. Laundry, grocery, pool. 1998 rates $12-19.75. Reservations 800-779-2114; Information 417-338-2114.
- Branson City Park (Public). 300 S. Box Car Willie Dr. Branson 65616. Adjacent to Lake Taneycomo. Paved roads. 350 sites, most full hook-ups. Fishing. 1998 rates: $15.00. Reservations/information 417-334-2915.
- Branson KOA (Private). 1025 Headwaters Road. Branson, 65616. Paved and gravel roads. 165 sites, most full hook-ups, laundry, grocery, pool, fishing. Quiet and secluded. 1998 rates $23-27.00. Reservations 800-562-4177, information 417-334-7450
- Musicland Kampground (Private). 116 N. Gretna Road, Branson, 65616. Centrally located, walking distance to shows, outlet malls and restaurants. Paved roads; 107 sites, most full hook-ups, laundry, pool. 1998 rates $22.50-30.00. Reservations 888-248-9080; information 417-334-0848.
- Tall Pines Campground (Private). HCR 9, Box 1175, Branson, 65616. Located on Hwy 265 one block south of Hwy 76. Paved roads. 82 sites, most full hook-ups, laundry, grocery, pool. 1998 rates $15-24.00 Reservations 800-323-8899; information 417-3387-2445; Fax 417-338-8991.

LETTERS

Dear Ed:

I am sure looking forward to the big reunion in Branson, Missouri. Please tell everyone I said "Hi" and will be looking forward to seeing them all in Branson. My health is improving and will continue to do so if I behave.

I am still riding shotgun with the Bullhead City Police, but not too much longer. Wishing everyone a very happy and prosperous new year.

John Hojaboom (60-68)

Dear Ed:

My wife had surgery on Jan. 4th. She will be out of work for 4-6 weeks. She will be returning to work (and good health) at that point.

We had a great time in Boston at the '98 reunion. Wanted to pass on what a wonderful job Jack and Eva Kehoe did. We heard only praise from everyone the whole weekend. Thanks also to all the people who keep the association running for us.

Larry Patriquin (61-64)

Dear Ed:

Just passing through and found your website. It is a very nice site, gentlemen. I still keep in touch with some

friends from Topeka (SSN-754). Got out of the navy before she came out of new construction. I was the first guy in the water during the launching.

Keep up the good work.

Blaine Burns
Former crewmember, USS Topeka (SSN 754)

Dear Ed:

I recently spent the holidays with my parents and read the latest newsletter. I have also found your website and I think it is great. They both bring back lots of memories. Even though I was only a dependent, I have fond memories of our dependents' cruises on Topeka. I never really stopped to ask what my Dad did in the Navy, but I knew it was important. On the cruise, we were running through the ship and someone went to stop us and I heard someone else say, "Those are the Chief's kids." From then on I knew two things: 1) we were the Chief's kids and could get away with a lot. 2) We were the Chief's kids and would get our hides tanned but good if we destroyed anything or embarrassed my folks.

My memory of the Topeka and the people we knew are good memories. It was a trying time in our lives with Dad and many of you over in Vietnam. It was always exciting to get a letter from him. Nothing replaced our Dad being gone, but people were so good to us. When Dad came home, it was Christmas! He would be home a day then get out his sea chest and we would have cool stuff from places no one else had.

The Topeka years were difficult as a kid. I can't imagine the pressures of the war and separation my parents felt, or the rest of you for that matter. I appreciate the opportunity to share some of my memories with you.

Cynthia Lohr Crothers
daughter of BMC Ralph D. Lohr (64-66)

Dear Ed:

I have been looking for info on the good ship Topeka for some time now, and finally found the web page. I can be reached at email <eaglesnest@olynet.com> and would like to hear from other shipmates.

I would appreciate any information on AG2 Donald Cusson. I lost track of him the year he left the ship for a new assignment in 1966. I believe he was reassigned right after we returned from Vietnam in '66.

I hope to get to reunion 99. My work schedule is not yet known but I will know in March. Thanks for all the good work, and I will be sending in my membership dues soon.

John R. Peterson, Jr. (65-67)

MOVING? MOVED?
WAS YOUR NEWSLETTER FORWARDED?

Then drop a card to Dudley Cass and let him know your new address.

NAMES/TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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USS TOPEKA (CLG–8)
Reunion Association Newsletter
c/o Jack Connery
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PICK THE SHOWS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN BRANSON

These are selected shows in Branson, date and time, and the price (individual/group). There are others, but we picked those we thought would be popular. Ticketing and reservations for other shows will be the responsibility of the individual. Many of the shows are booked months ahead. Block reservations have been made for four shows: Mickey Gilly, Bobby Vinton, Shoji Tabuchi, and the Roy Clark Show. Some shows are sold out months in advance so we have made these reservations.

Please indicate your show preferences and the number of seats you would like. We need your input to determine if we can qualify for group rates at more of the shows. When you have made your choices, mail the sheet to Dudley Cass.

VAN TRANSPORTATION FOR BRANSON

We are planning on having two 29-passenger vans available for transporting our members between the hotel and the theaters and other activities in Branson. Also, we are considering making airport runs between the hotel and the Springfield Airport. Indicate below whether or not you plan on flying into the Springfield (MO) airport.

No. Seats	Show	Day/Time	Price SInd/Gp
		Tue. Aug 10	
	Sons of the Pioneers	1400	19/16
	Andy Williams	1900	29/24
	Bobby Vinton	1900	25/21
	Box Car Willie	1400	20/15
	Jim Stafford	2000	22/16
	Mel Tillis	2000	27/24
	Mickey Gilly	2000	21/16
	Moe Bandy	2000	21/17
	Shoji Tabuchi	2000	29/27
		Wed. Aug. 11	
	Buck Trent Breakfast Show	0800	19/17
	Ferlin Husky Breakfast Show	0800	20/16
	Jim Owen	1000	16/14
	Sons of the Pioneers	1400	10/16
	Oak Ridge Boys	1500	
	Andy Williams	1900	29/24
	Bobby Vinton	1900	25/21
	Box Car Willie	2000	20/15
	Jim Stafford	2000	22/16
	Mel Tillis	2000	27/24
	Mickey Gilly (Block 55)	2000	21/16
	Moe Bandy	2000	21/17
	Oak Ridge boys	2000	
	Shoji Tabuchi	2000	29/27
	Welk Show (J.Lennon/J.Castle)	2000	
		Thurs. Aug. 12	
	Buck Trent Breakfast Show	0800	19/17
	Ferlin Husky Breakfast Show	0800	
	Jim Owen	1000	16/14
	Sons of the Pioneers	1400	19/16
	Bobby Vinton (Block 65)	1500	23/21
	Andy Williams	1900	29/24
	Bobby Vinton	1900	25/21
	Mel Tillis	2000	27/24
	Moe Bandy	2000	21/17
	Shoji Tabuchi (Block 75)	2000	29/27
	Welk Show (J.Lennon/J. Castle)	2000	
		Fri. Aug. 13	
	Buck Trent Breakfast Show	0800	19/17
	Ferlin Husky Breakfast Show	0800	20/16
	Roy Clark Show (Block 55)	1100	35/33
	Shoji Tabuchi	1500	29/27
	Shoji Tabuchi	2000	29/27

Notes: 1. Group is 20 or more people.
2. Shows followed by "Block ##" indicates block reservations.

I (will) (will not) be flying into Springfield, Mo. How Many? _____

The Baka Hachi (1960-1969) (Revision 2000)

Introduction

Most of you have read *The Baka Hachi (1960-1969).* This was published for our second reunion in Long Beach in 1991. It's contents included the official U.S. Navy history of Topeka, interspersed with stories of sailors who sailed on her, stories that make the history come alive. Also included are the official histories of other ships bearing the name Topeka, and the history of Topeka, Kansas. We want to revise and republish it, and have it available for our 10th anniversary reunion in 2000.

The Need

When *Baka Hachi* was compiled, edited and published, we had about 150 former sailors on our mailing list. Not all contributed their personal stories but many did. And, it turned out to be a pretty good book. **There is not another ship out there that has put together a history like this.** Our newsletter today goes to more than 700 former sailors and marines who served aboard Topeka. **What if 700 contributed their best memory of Topeka to the revision? What if 500 contributed? Think about what *Baka Hachi* could look like. Something you could really leave to your kids and grandkids about your part in Naval history**

All of us have a story to tell. Why not tell it?

Ground Rules

- Stories should be between 50 and 500 words. An exceptional good story may deserve 750. But don't worry about word count. This is only a guideline. Just write it. The editor reserves the right to edit, cut, etc etc., but when more information needed, I will call you.
- It was a long time ago, and we are becoming forgetful. All the more reason to document that period of time now. Tell the story as best as you can remember it. Don't embellish it intentionally. Time lapsed will take care of that. And don't start out by saying "This is a N.S."
- It can be about anything involving the ship or shipmates: operations at sea, liberty, life aboard ship, life on the home front while the ship is gone, etc. etc.
- Involve another or more shipmates, by name. The more names you can use, the easier it will be for your shipmates to identify with the story, or say, "Yea, I remember that."
- Don't be critical of shipmates by name. Don't criticize your leading P.O., your division CPO, division officer, department head, and especially the CO. And I won't let them criticize you, either. Within limits, the Admiral and embarked staff are fair game.
- Include, as closely as possible, the month and year the story took place. At the least, the cruise, or the port, etc. This will help me keep things in chronological order, which is very important to a history.
- Would like to have every story signed. However, I understand that some things may better be said anonymously. We have a few of those now. If you would rather not have your name published, let me know. You and I will talk about it.
- If you have any pictures that will support the story, please send them. I will return them, whether used or not.
- Stories contained in the present *Baka Hachi* will be used in the revision, for the most part. If you have a problem with one you submitted, want to add to it, feel that it should be deleted, contact me and we'll talk. And if you have one in the present edition, don't let that stop you from submitting another.

Publication

Worst case scenario: Will publish the revision in a format similar to the present format, and pay for it through sales to the membership.

We are looking for assistance in defraying the costs of publishing. Corresponding with the Naval Institute, the Naval Historical Society, the Chief of Naval Information, and the Chief of Naval Recruiting. Since we presently include the history of the city of Topeka, Kansas, there may be some help there. Another possibility is a book publisher. There are all sorts of sources of funding that may help us. I just have to find them.

Publication Schedule

I am committed to having the revised edition ready for distribution at Reunion 2000, the 10th anniversary of our association's founding, wherever that may be. Assuming that the reunion will be in August, I should have the final draft to the printer by May 1, of 2000. **This means that all inputs have to be in to me by February 1, 2000.** However, I will work on this continually until publication as long as I have material to work with. Would like to have an even flow of material throughout 1999 **so get it to me as soon as possible.**

Don't worry about your ability (or lack of) to write. Just tell me a story. I will edit it and put it in the proper format. If I need more information, I will call you. If I need to cut it down, I will do that.

You have a little less than a year to submit your favorite story. But don't wait, **DO IT NOW.**

The following pages list a number of topics that come to mind, from sources including the present *Baka Hachi;* "Remember When's" in newsletters; the Ship's Deck Log, and stories I have picked up here and there at reunions, and in correspondence. The list is not all inclusive. There must be other things also, so please use this to jog your memory and send a story. Send it by mail, or if your are on the net, by email.

Thanks in advance for your assistance.

Jack Connery

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Possible Topics for Baka Hachi Revised

The following is a list of possible topics that may add to the history of USS Topeka. They are not necessarily in chronological order. There will be many others. This list has been put together from my memory, letters received, CruiseBooks, portions of the Deck Log, the present edition of Baka Hachi and stories heard at reunions. Make sure you give it a month, year and location (WestPac, Long Beach, at sea, etc.)

Pre Commissioning

- Life in the Pre Com Detail in New York, 1959
- PreCom Detail work on the ship. There must be some good cumshaw stories, yard work getting done on time, not getting done on time, etc etc.
- Life in the Pre Com Detail in Norfolk, 1959
- The inviting of Joan Crawford to Commissioning, 1960

Commissioning

The transit to the West Coast

- Visit to El Salvador
- Crossing the Equator
- First arrival in Long Beach

Change of Command, Captain Janney relieving Captain Pinney, October, 1960

First WestPac Cruise, Feb. - September 61

- Using the target drone
- Sinking an oil barge in Sasebo
- MarDet Flag passing in review for General MacArthur in the Philippines
- Life on the home front
- Black Ship Festival in Shimoda, Japan
- Port Festival in Nagasaki
- Typhoon Nancy
- Did we get the name Baka Hachi this cruise? If so, when and why?

Change of command from Captain Janney to Captain Paine, October 1961

Missile shoots for the Naval War College, 1961

Second WestPac Deployment, 1962

- International Machine Tool Fair, Osaka
- Did we get the name Baka Hachi this cruise? Tell the story
- Death of Ensign Robert Nielsen in a hiking accident in Kagoshima
- Life on the home front
- Visits to ports such as Beppu, Sasebo, Yokuska, Buckner Bay
- Where did the MARDET Flag get transferred to and why?
- Change of Command at Sea, October, 1962, Captain Mansfield relieving Captain Paine
- Turning three days of liberty into six weeks when the ship left Hong Kong because of the Cuban Missile crisis.
- What was the ship doing when you heard President Kennedy had been killed.
- Running through a typhoon
- Did we get the name Baka Hachi this cruise? If so, when and why?

Hunters Point Shipyard Overhaul, March 1963

- Moving families to Hunters Point
- Stories about yard work

Topeka in Pearl as Flag Ship for CINCPACFLT change of command, 1963

Captain Ruhe relieves Captain Mansfield as Commanding Officer, December, 1963

Pilot rescue at sea

John Reynolds saves a life

Third WestPac deployment, March, 1964

- Fantail and Foc'sul Frolics, Waterfalls, athletics and the Topeka Ambassadors

- Did we get the name Baka Hachi this cruise? Tell the story
- The real story about the focsul waterfall
- Life on the home front
- Climbing Mount Fuji The
- Maddox and Turner Joy incidents
- The 1964 Tokyo Olympics
- Homecoming, November 1963

Captain Buell relieves Captain Ruhe November 13, 1964

The Watts Riots

Visit to Vancouver Wash/Portland Oregon, 1965
- Transit of the Columbia River
- Man overboard
- Burial at sea

Fourth Westpac (Vietnam) deployment November 29, 1965
- Our own Helo
- Remember the Naval Security Group "spook unit."
- In flight helo refueling
- Charts (Captain Buell liked charts)
- Keeping the Admiral's Air Conditioning System running
- PIRAZ: On station in the northern gulf
- Double Eagle First shots in anger
- Pilot rescue
- Life on the home front
- The Tonkin Gulf Yacht Club
- The Holy Helo
- Stolen Utility Boat—was this in Davao?—and the search
- Homecoming, May 28, 1966

Captain Montgomery relieves Captain Buell June 3, 1966

Back to Hunters Point October 31, 1966-March, 1967
- Electrical fire on board
- Family living at Hunters Point
- Dining In (the rest of the story)
- Accidental death in the missile house

Portland Rose Festival: Cabin cruiser catching fire off starboard side while the Mayor is being received from the port side.

First Med Deployment August, 1967
- Transit of the Panama Canal
- Being designated "Best Large Mess."
- Collapse of the brow at Palma Majorca
- Life on the home front
- The Flying Dutchman Sailboat
- The Volkswagen Van
- Captain Halvorson relieves Captain Montgomery in Villefranche
- Christmas in Naples
- Homecoming, 1968

February, 1968 Change of Home Port to Mayport, Fla.

Second Med Deployment, June 29, 1968
- Operations in the Aegean and Ionian seas
- Life on the home front
- Visits to ports in Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey, France, Crete, Malta and Majorca.
- Visit to Trieste Italy. First U.S. Ship since WWII
- Headed home to Mayport December 9

Deactivation-Decommissioning January 30, 1969
- Offloading ammo at Yortown
- Enroute Boston
- Life in a Barracks ship
- Crew getting smaller and smaller. Would like to have a story about the phase down in the crew—perhaps from somebody in the ship's office.
- Taking of souvenirs
- Decommissioning June 5:
- Did everybody leave June 5?
- Who got the last commissioning pennant
- Last one to leave turn out the lights