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Please

BRIGHT PENNY

January - March 2021

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS OF THE USS BERKELEY (DDG-15)

Welcome to 2021, Hopefully a Healthy Year!

Director's Update

Welcome to 2021, and hope that it is healthier and more normal than 2020!



Hope you all had a happy Holiday Season!

Our next reunion is now planned for October 13 - 16, 2021 at the Best Western Merry Manor Inn in Portland, Maine. Please see the "Portland Reunion" article in this edition of the newsletter, and our website has all our reunion information available as well. We have to wait three years between reunions, and we aim to make this one of the best yet!

As we enter 2021, the Association is financially sound, and we have maintained a master roster count in excess of 1,200 former crew members. One of the goals we have for the new year is to increase our active membership which has slipped over the past 10 years. Although some of our active members have passed away, we still have many sailors from the 1980 - 1992 crews that have not yet become involved as active members or reunion attendees. We hope to stimulate the interest of these former shipmates in 2021.

As always, our association depends on the support of former shipmates through "Active Membership" to help cover operating expenses. If you have not already paid association dues for 2021, won't you please do so today. To pay dues, please visit the "Quarterdeck" page on the website, and a membership application is at the bottom of the page, or send a check or money order for \$40 to the USS Berkeley Association, 6318 S. 20th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53221. Your membership includes an annual copy of the master roster, four quarterly Bright Penny newsletters, and a \$10 per person reunion discount for you and a guest.

We are preparing the 2021 master roster for delivery to all active members in late-April. Please ensure you have advised the association of any updates to your contact information including your email address. There are a number of shipmates on the roster that we need inputs from regarding rate/rank and years on board the Berkeley. If you need to provide any updates, this too can be done by visiting the "Quarterdeck" page on the website.

Portland Reunion

With recent developments regarding the fight against the corona virus, it is likely that we are near a return to a more normal world by this Summer. Based on this assumption, we are confident that we can hold our reunion this Fall. A "Reunion Reservation Form" will be included with the April newsletter, and will be available on the website in the May time frame.

October 13 - 16, 2021 are the reunion dates, and the Best Western Merry Manor Inn is our host hotel. The Merry Manor Inn has hosted over 125 military reunions since 1998, and they have an impressive list of reviews from these groups.

The Merry Manor Inn offers great room rates (\$119 + taxes per night) including a free full American buffet in our hospitality suite each morning, and free transportation to and from the Portland International Jetport, bus stations, and the Amtrak station. Free parking is also included. Their location is minutes from the Maine mall (shopping & dining), close to Portland's Downtown District and Old Port, and minutes from area beaches and lighthouses. We will post a list of the hotel's amenities on the website.

There is a "Maine Maritime Mus-
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Asst Director: Dale Johnson

Secretary: Pat Clark & Tammy Meier

Treasurer: Gerald Hansen

Membership Committee Chairman: Al Meier

Regional Chairmen:

Northeast: Francis Almeida

Southeast: Francis Sholly

North Central: Larry Norris

South Central: Vacant

Northwest: Vacant

Southwest: Todd Frazier

Ship's Store Mgr: Gerald Hansen

Bright Penny Editor & Publisher: Al Meier

Webmaster: Gerald Hansen



Newsletter Distribution: to current (paid)
dues members e-mail in pdf form and to non-
e-mail members via U.S. Mail.

Ship's History: Jan 2021

50 Years Ago, 1971

- 01-11 Upkeep Long Beach
- 11-14 Type Training
- 12 Op. Readiness Inspection
- 14-25 Upkeep Long Beach
- 25-28 COMPUTEX 1-71
- 29-31 Tender Availability (TAV)

40 Years Ago, 1981

- 01-11 Holiday Upkeep
- 12-23 READIEX 2-81
- 24-29 Inport San Diego
- 30 CDR Lockett relieves CDR
Sydow as CO
- 31 Inport San Diego

30 Years Ago, 1991

- 01-06 Inport San Diego: Supships
Restricted Availability
- 07 Inport San Diego: Fast Cruise
- 08 Inport San Diego: Combat
Systems Observed OCSOT
- 09-23 Underway SOCAL Op Area:
Damage Ctrl Training Assist,
All Comers at Sea Exer., Battle
Group Evaluation Exercise
- 24-31 In Port San Diego: Ship's Inter-
mediate Maint. Activity

20 Years Ago, 2001

In Service with the Hellenic Navy of
Greece as H.S. Themistokles

Portland Reunion Cont'd
eum and LL Bean Tour" which goes to Bath, Maine and covers much of the ship-building history in that city. The tour includes a narrated boat trip on the Kennebec River where you can learn about Bath Iron Works, and see destroyers being built up close. This tour was selected for the original reunion dates in 2020, and we will confirm whether it is still available for this year's reunion. Hopefully, we will have this information by early summer. There are other tour options in the event that the Maritime Museum Tour is not available.

In the Beginning: 1962-63

This is the first in a series of quarterly articles that will highlight each year that the ship was in service. Since the ship was commissioned in December of 1962, the years 1962 and 1963 will be combined for the first article in the series.

The USS Berkeley was commissioned on December 15, 1962. The ship was named in honor of Major General Randolph C. Berkeley, USMC, and was built by the New York Shipbuilding Corporation in Camden, New Jersey.

During its first year in service, the Berkeley steamed many miles and visited various ports. In early 1963, the ship departed Mayport, Florida bound for the Panama Canal, with a brief stay in Kingston, Jamaica. After transiting the Panama Canal on March 3, 1963, the ship reported for duty with the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

The Pacific leg of the transit to her new port of Long Beach was broken up with a four day visit to Acapulco where the hospitality was fabulous! One small problem during the visit was explaining where and how General Berkeley earned his Medal of Honor (during the Battle of Veracruz in 1914). Fortunately, the interpreters mumbled at the right places.

On March 16, 1963, the ship steamed into Long Beach Harbor to be met by representatives of the various commands concerned, and by a large contingent of families and friends lining the pier. The Berkeley was finally home!

The next two months were taken up with the ship's qualification trials. Early in May, the ship was called upon to show her capabilities. The late President Kennedy desired to see a demonstration of the fleet's capabilities, and Berkeley was chosen as the primary Tartar firing ship. On cue, the first missile went off hot, straight and normal to score the initial hit. The second went the same route to chase the falling drone seaward, scoring a second hit before it reached the water. Upon returning to port, it was learned that Admiral Groverman (the new Flotilla Commander) was so favorably impressed with the Berkeley that he chose her to fly his flag during his visit to Portland, Oregon for the Rose Festival.

The Berkeley led a task group of nine U.S. ships and five Canadian frigates up the Columbia River into Portland. Five exciting days of visits
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In the Beginning cont'd

were made including the Rose Queen and her entire court. After all had been thoroughly wined, dined and entertained by the city and the Navy League, the ship reluctantly took leave, again to lead the departing parade down the river.

After a few days at home, the ship was off again, this time to San Francisco to enter the shipyard for a quick going over. Then after a few days back in Long Beach, the ship was off to San Diego to commence a seven week period of underway training. During this period the ship took time out to fire two missiles witnessed by Rear Admiral Reich and the Steering Group for the Special Navy Task Force for Surface Missile Systems. The Berkeley wound up fleet training with a new record score for all the fleet to aim for, having achieved the highest mark of any ship on record.

After Thanksgiving, the ship was called upon again to demonstrate her missile capability, this time for Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable Mr. Paul Nitze. Back on line again, the Berkeley demonstrated she can always get in a shot when called upon, and yet earn another hash mark. In the meantime, the Berkeley received the Missilry "E" for excellence and outstanding performance, awarded by Commander Cruiser-Destroyer Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

The remainder of the year was spent in Long Beach for rest and upkeep, and yet another visit to the shipyard.

How To Fix the Broken VA

Brian Reese is a leading expert on and advocate for U.S. veteran's benefits. As a disabled veteran he supports the President's announced intention to nominate Denis McDonough as the next secretary of the Department of Veteran Affairs, but only if he promises to bring about radical change and innovation at the department.

Reese is sick and tired of the impersonal nature and impossible hoops veterans must jump through to obtain the VA care and benefits they have earned for their service, and he is sure that millions of other veterans feel this way too.

There are three things the next secretary must do:

First, be wary of the deeply entrenched and bureaucratic "advice" you will hear from your leaders. In Reese's humble opinion, the main problem plaguing the VA is that its leaders have failed to imagine new solutions to old problems, primarily because they lack the ability to ask the right questions. They might not even realize there are problems. Albert Einstein once remarked "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

It is time for leaders to think differently about the VA. Challenge all assumptions, ask better questions of those around you and listen closely to what veterans tell you. Follow your heart, your gut and your intuition, and always do what is best for vets.

Second, it is time for fewer pills and more community. The VA's answer to the veteran mental health crisis and suicide epid-

emic is more pills. Wrong. The answer is more community. It is time for the VA to unite the local communities, including creating and leading in-person and virtual events for veterans worldwide. Depression, anxiety and mental health issues are often underlying symptoms of loneliness and isolation, not necessarily the cause. Many veterans crave a sense of identity, belonging and purpose they have long lost since leaving the military. They want to feel important.

Third, it is time for the VA to create a free basic education and training course for all things VA benefits. It must be simple and easy to understand for all veterans. It took Reese seven years of seemingly endless battles and multiple rounds of denials to finally get the VA benefits he deserved for his honorable service, and he considers himself lucky.

Many millions of veterans have it far worse: 75% of veterans alive today do not have any VA benefits at all. The most recent Veteran Benefits Administration annual report to Congress showed just one in four veterans receive anything from the VA.

From Reese's experience, this is due primarily to the lack of basic education and training on the subject. It should not take an advanced degree and thousands of hours in the trenches to obtain VA benefits.

The time for radical change and innovation is right now, and it all starts with the new secretary.

Source of article is Military.com

USS Gabrielle Giffords

It can travel more than 100 nautical miles, passively detect an enemy through imaging stored in its computer brain and can kill a target so precisely that an operator can tell it to aim for a specific point on the ship - the engine room or the bridge, for example. And its headed to China's stomping grounds.

The U.S. Navy littoral combat ship USS Gabrielle Giffords deployed last September from San Diego, packing the service's new Naval Strike Missile, transforming the LCS from an under-gunned concept ship gone awry to a legitimate threat to Chinese warships at significant ranges.

Giffords is the second LCS to deploy this year. The LCS USS Montgomery deployed from San Diego in June 2020 after a 19-month lapse in LCS deployments as the Navy reworked the way it mans and trains crews for the ships.

Pacific Fleet spokesman Capt. John Gay confirmed Giffords' deployment, saying the ship got underway September 3rd, equipped with the Naval Strike missile and the newly mission-capable MQ-8C Fire Scout drone.

Information for this article was found on Youtube.com

Gordon Soniak Obit

Gordon Soniak, IC2, 1968-71 passed away on June 21, 2020 at Vanderbilt-Wilson Hospital in Lebanon. He was born February 6, 1948 in Chicago, IL.

Gordon was a police officer for over 20 years, and served with the U.S. Navy in Vietnam. Gordon is survived by his wife Artie, and son George.

SWCC

An indispensable element of the Naval Special Warfare Command that has received relatively little attention has been the Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewman, otherwise known as the SWCC. Numbering between 700 and 850 active duty personnel in recent years. SWCCs are carefully selected and rigorously trained special forces who own and operate special warfare combatant and other craft. They take responsibility for the insertion and extraction of SEALs and other special operations forces. The SWCCs conduct special operations in maritime, coastal and riverine environments to include maritime interception operations; board, search and seizure operations; coastal patrol; and special reconnaissance.

The origins of the SWCC date back to the "brown-water Navy" that plied the Mississippi River in the American Civil War as a joint effort between the Union's Navy and Army. While the Union Navy blockaded Southern coastal cities, a new riverine fleet worked hand-in-hand with land forces to capture cities along the Mississippi River. Using innovative tactics and new weapons platforms, the strategy proved to be a success.

The Navy continued to deploy riverine watercraft in conflicts throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. During World War II, innovative American tactics and equipment were combined to form maritime commando units that presaged the flexible, lethal force we know today as Naval Special Warfare

Joint Scout and Raider teams.

During the Vietnam War, the special boat teams were reformed in their next evolution in the Mekong Delta's coastal zones. The shallow, interlacing tidal waters served as a vast network of supply routes along which millions of pounds of VC arms and munitions were distributed. The environment - unpassable to deep-water Navy and hostile and inefficient for ground forces - required the fast-strike capability of the SWCC.

From 1965 to 1968, these task forces earned their reputations in major operations known as Market Time, Game Warden and Sea Lord. In between significant operations, the special warfare boat operators provided maritime insertion, extraction and supporting fire for special operations forces and Army infantry and artillery battalions. After the war, the Navy's coastal river squadrons and divisions were consolidated into seven permanent special boat units across California, Virginia, Louisiana, and Panama.

Condensed version of article in the Jan. 2021 FRA Today

Richard Karpinski Obit

Richard Karpinski, ETR2, 1968-69 passed away in January 2021. The exact date is not known.

2021 Master Rosters

Master rosters will be sent to active members in April. If any of your contact info has changed, please provide an update on the website using the "Quarter-deck" page. Thank you in advance for your updates.