

# PAWCATUCK PILOT

Volume 13 Issue 2

March 2005

## OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS PAWCATUCK AO-108



### *Special Points of Interest*

- *Find out more details of the planned trip to see the Pawcatuck in Dave Willis's column.*
- *Dave McPherson has more important news about the reunion on page two.*
- *Eight men are welcomed aboard in Welcome Mat on page three. We hope they can attend the reunion.*
- *Great pictures accompany two of the Mail Call letters on page four.*
- *If you remember the collision between the Pawcatuck and a carrier, let us hear your story. See pages 4-6.*

### **WILLIS'S WORDS OF WISDOM**

05 February, 2005

Dear Pawcatuck Family,

It is time again for us to muster in Norfolk, Va. Yes in eighty four days we will be meeting once again where many of us spent a lot of time while stationed on the USS Pawcatuck AO-108 which was our home. I can say as I look back I enjoyed every moment. There were times when I might have asked myself what am I doing here. All in all it was a lot of work and fun. I, like all of you, have many memories of the time we spent on one of the best oilers in

the fleet.

Today our ship still sits out on the James River off of Fort Eustis, Va. Some of you have sent the form that was in the last newsletter informing me you want to take the trip to see the ship. Well, we are going to do just that. Unless there are changes, we will be doing this on Monday the 2nd of May. We are scheduled to leave Hampton at 1100 not 1400. The charter boat will not be making a morning trip. Therefore we will have better daylight. Six years ago when some of us took the trip we left the dock at 1400 and did not get back

until 2000. We had spent time looking for the ship and then took pictures. We then went to another area to see the *Savannah*, which was a nuke ship that is still there waiting to be scrapped. Our ship is in another row which is close to the *Savannah*. The superintendent sent me the location so when we do go we will not have to look for the ship. The ship faces north so it will be good for taking pictures. I am asking all who are planning on going that you share your car so we get everybody in a car. That way we will not have to pay for a bus or

*(Continued on page 2)*

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buses for 8 to 9 hours.

The cost for those who have not signed up is \$45.00. The cost is up from six years ago due to fuel costs going up. We all know that when we fill our car.

As of this date we have reservations for 63 people. The charter boat holds 126 people. We will cut off the figure at 115. This is due to the fact that we may have one or two band members from the Atlantic Fleet Band and possibly a writer from one of the newspapers in the area. Also there are a few other friends who may join us.

If we go over the 115 total the rest will be put on standby. I put them down in the order I receive the form.

On Tuesday morning we will be

holding our memorial service on the USS WISCONSIN BB-64 under gun turret number 3. The cost for this is 0. They furnish 150 chairs, the sound system, the bell, and we are in the process of getting a color guard. I have asked for a brass quintet from the Atlantic Fleet Band also. Unless they have a military function I hope they will be there. If not, we will have music on tape as in the past.

This year we will again have for the banquet a buffet-style dinner. This went over really well last year. Remember we go casual, not dress up, but no shorts or T shirts please.

The cities picked for 2006 will be in this newsletter. We need feedback ref these cities in what they have to offer.

Let's all think about going to places west of the Mississippi. We need to

spread it around.

It makes me feel good as your reunion coordinator to see shipmates see each other after many years.

I would like to see widows of deceased shipmate's come to the reunion. You are always welcome and hope that you see fit to come and join us. I feel this year will be one that many of us will remember. So please come and I look forward to seeing you in Norfolk.

Let's also keep our prayers for all service men and women serving our country.

Yours,

David Willis

Reunion coordinator for the USS PAWCATUCK AO-108

## MCPHERSON'S MESSAGE

### ORDERS HAVE ARRIVED

Fellow Pawcatuck Shipmates and Family,

Our ORDERS are coming, or they have been received. We are to report to the Hilton Inn at the Norfolk Airport, Norfolk, Virginia, to assemble for the 2005 Reunion of the USS PAWCATUCK, commencing on 1 May and ending on 4 May. You are required to report with your memories of our great ship and share them with all in attendance, and enjoy each other's company, and most of all have FUN.

Your Coordinators have been working to arrange a grand time for all, especially the trip to the ship. We have planned a Flower Laying Memorial Ceremony to be held while we are visiting our home away from home, while we were all stationed aboard her.

As a reminder, we will need to share the ride to the tour boat with each other, as our means of transportation will be car pooling. Also **the payment to be made Sunday, 1 May, will need to be in cash and given to Dave**, as this is something we as a group will be handling.

Our annual Reunion Memorial Service, for this year, will be held aboard the USS WISCONSIN BB64, if the weather permits. We will hold the service at the Gun Turret 3, on the aft part of the ship. The Service will start at 1030 on Tuesday, 3 May.

Looking back at the past reunions, we have held the majority of them on the eastern side of the Mississippi. I know that the biggest group of our shipmates lives in this area, however, we should think of visiting different parts of our great nation ever so often. We have shipmates on the western side of the

Mississippi that would be grateful to have us visit their area. Please think about this when we discuss this matter in our business meeting.

It is great to receive word of all the new shipmates that will be attending this year. I am sure that all will have a great time. Seeing our old buddies, is the best part of the reunion and the making of new buddies is the added bonus that we benefit from attending. If you know of any shipmates who has not found out about our group, contact them and get them to provide the info so we can include them on our mailings.

Looking forward to seeing all in Norfolk.

Mark McPherson

Assistant Reunion Coordinator

**2005 USS PAWCATUCK REUNION      MAY 1-4      NORFOLK, VA**  
**COME SEE YOUR SHIP FOR THE LAST TIME!**  
**EXPERIENCE A PART OF YOUR PAST.**

## STATEMENT OF PUBLICATION

The PAWCAUCK PILOT is the official publication of the USS PAWCATUCK AO-108 Association. It will be published quarterly in March, June, September, and December, *subject to receiving sufficient funding*. The Newsletter is funded by voluntary contributions from the membership. All members are encouraged to support the voice of the PAWCATUCK. A financial statement appears in each issue of the newsletter.

The newsletter is intended to be a vehicle for the members to express opinions, make suggestions and especially share experiences.

Unless otherwise stated, the views and opinions printed in the newsletter are those of the article's writer, and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Association leadership or the Editor of the Newsletter.

All letters and stories submitted will be considered for publication, except unsigned letters will not be published. Letters requesting the writer's name be withheld will be honored, but published on a space available basis. Signed letters with no restrictions will be given priority.

Letters demeaning to another shipmate will not be printed; letters espousing a political position will not be printed.

The editor reserves the right to edit letters to conform to space limitations and grammar.

You are encouraged to actively participate in the newsletter family by submitting your stories and suggestions.

### WORDS OF WISDOM

- Bills travel through the mail at twice the speed of checks.
- A conscience is what hurts when all your other parts feel good.
- A balanced diet is a cookie in each hand.

## WELCOME MAT



The following shipmates have been located recently. Welcome aboard. We hope to see you at the reunion and that you will take an active part in the association. We welcome:

*Rollin Brown, Jr.*  
7730 Doris Dr Apt 8  
Norfolk, VA 23505  
757-451-4439

*Ronald Fry (1960-62) QM3*  
P O Box 262  
Lavalette, WV 25536  
304-523-1107

*Stephen Clayton (1974) FN*  
P.O. Box 548  
Lake Panasoffk, FL 33538  
352-793-4086

*Karl Sick*  
P.O. Box 49  
York, NY 14592  
585-243-2199

*Joe Chiasson (1946-47) BM2*  
3008 43rd St  
Metairie, LA 70001  
504-828-2641

*Ted Szewczak (1966-69) DC3 R Div*  
404 Hartel Ave  
Philadelphia, PA 19111  
215-725-3009

*David Cowan (1957-60) SN-CS3*  
15325 Miners Ave SW  
Frostburg, MD 21532  
301-463-4082

*John "Sam" Kritschgan*  
(1959-62) MM2 Eng  
3293 Johnson Ct SW  
Grandville, MI 49418  
616-530-7050  
omajeanrn@aol.com

## TAPS



The Pawcatuck Pilot has learned of the following deaths since the last newsletter. Our deepest sympathy goes to the widows, families and friends of the deceased. Anyone who knows or learns of a shipmate's death, you are requested to notify the newsletter so that person can be listed in TAPS and also on the Honor Roll at the next reunion.

*Edsel Jones*  
(1948-52) SA-BM2 Div 1&2  
Date of death not reported

*Vernon Wunsch (1950-54)*  
Date of death not reported

*Thomas Stephens (1950)*  
Died August 24, 1992

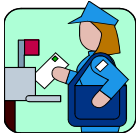
**The Pawcatuck Pilot is Published by:**  
Military Locator & Reunion Service, Inc  
3330 Springs Rd NE  
Hickory, NC 28601  
828-256-6008 (voice)  
828-256-6559 (fax)  
E-mail addresses:  
**Dinamlrs@charterinternet.com**  
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www.mlrsinc.com (web site)

*"Our Reunions Work So You Don't Have To"*

## Financial Statement

Balance after 12/04 issue **\$805.30**  
Funds received since 12/04 **\$185**  
Funds available for 12/04 **\$990.30**  
Funds used for 03/05 issue  
**\$396.30**  
Balance remaining for 06/05 issue  
**\$594.00**

**PLEASE CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE \$5.00 TO THE NEWSLETTER. YOUR \$5.00 CAN KEEP IT COMING EACH QUARTER.**



# MAIL CALL

Shipmates,

It is time to think about the reunion!! I didn't know about the Pawcatuck reunions until a few years ago. My daughter found it on the internet and e-mailed Dave Willis. I began to receive the newsletter, which I enjoyed, but never acted on planning to attend. Last year my wife made the reservations and then gave me the paperwork. We didn't attend the full three days. We vacationed on an island the first 2 days, then headed to Pensacola. I was kind of excited, but mostly nervous. I felt like it would be a bunch of "old men" that I didn't remember and who would not remember me. From the moment I registered, I felt right at home. There was a table full of men I had served with. WE were a bunch of "old men" enjoying each other's company. The memorial service was very touching. I was very glad I went and am looking forward to this year. I hope you who have never attended will join us. Even if we don't get to see the

ship—we will have a good time. My son wants to come with me in hopes of seeing the Pawcatuck.

See you in May,  
Ted Van Dyke

ML&RS,

Santa Ralph spent a Sunday afternoon during Christmas at a local nursing home. He passed out candy canes and visited all the residents and their visitors. His comments were, "In my younger days I was never much of a lady's man. Now I have made a bunch of ladies happy even if I had to get in a disguise to do it." The attached picture is of Santa and one of his lady friends. Someone said that she was looking for a man. Does it look like she likes Santa Ralph?

Elizabeth & Ralph Jordan

Pawcatuck Pilot,

We dug the dress blues out of mothballs for our granddaughter to wear to a costume party at school. She won the award for the most original costume.

Ted & Ruby Van Dyke

**The following e-mails were forwarded to us by Ralph Jordan.**

Pawcatuck Sailors,

I would like to hear some USS Pawcatuck stories from the 66-68 years. We all tend to forward stuff to our email list about current events. That is OK-but wouldn't we all like to hear some personal stories the way shipmates remember things that happened while we were aboard the ship? I have talked to different ones about the collision the Pawcatuck had with the air craft carrier while we were refueling that ship. Several shipmates have remembered it being one carrier and some remember it being another...I have heard three different names of carriers that we had the emergency break away while refueling. Some say that some people on the carrier got killed, and some say the ones that went into the water were all rescued and saved. I'd like to hear what you remember about that or some other "Do You Remember" stories. Let us start early. Start reminiscing before the reunion.

Ralph Jordan SHB (The barber)

PS. Hey, I have helped find all those engineer and deck people, and now it's time we found some more Supply people—like Mike Bolden, SH, Texas—Pope SH, N. Carolina—Cooper SH (was a barber), Kentucky—Weivac (sp) SH (was a barber) I think PA. And I know everyone wants to find Mr. Hilton and Sims that were the strong arm men in Supply.

Ralph,

I remember the collision with the FDR in '68. I was in my rack when the alarm went off. Of course, I was out of there and up on deck. I remember the aft port side gun tub was hit. There was a break away. I do remember the tug sinking in Mayport also.

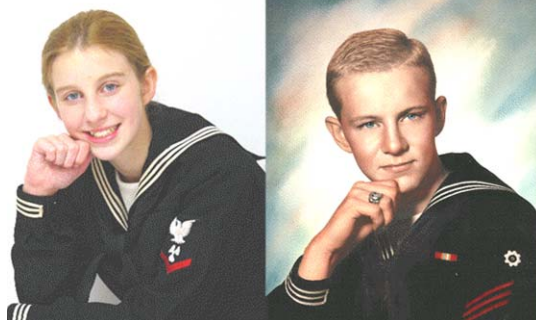
Tim Mills MM3  
1965-69

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**Ralph Jordan seems to be a big hit with this lady!**

**Ted Van Dyke and granddaughter Chelsea in similar poses, but she's much prettier!**



*(Continued from page 4)*

Ralph,

I think the carrier collision was before my time on Pawcatuck (1965-67, I think). But I seem to remember a Mr. Hilton, who maybe replaced Bob Crates or me, probably me, in March 1967, and the name Sims rings a bell, but I'm not sure which bell.

I appreciate your bringing back old memories!

Ted Guy

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In '68 Mr. Hilton was the Supply Officer and Mr. Ott was the Assistant Supply Officer. Mr. Ott could smile and I don't remember ever seeing Mr. Hilton smile. He was serious. Sims was 1st class somewhere down the chain under them and above me. I think he walked alone. He seemed to love to roll you out of the rack in the morning. So, you might say he rang a lot of sailors' bells. Mr. Vick (sp) was the Supply Officer in 66-67. When did Mr. Vick leave...? Was that his name?

R. Jordan

---

Ralph,

I think Lt. Vick's first name is Jerry.

Jim

---

Ralph,

Lt. Vick SC USN left the ship in late 1967. He left just before I retired in Jan. of '68. Most of the people you mention were after me except for Pope, Cooper and Bolden.

McRae

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Ralph,

I remember the emergency break away with the carrier being the FDR. I don't remember anyone getting hurt on our ship or the carrier, though I do remember having to go to Capt Honour that night with the message board to get him to look at a mes-

sage. And I had to wake him up. He was talking in his sleep and it seemed to be about the break away. I know I was nervous about having to wake him, but I had to get his signature on the message. I don't know if he remembers that or not, but that has always been stuck in my mind.

Thappy

---

Ralph,

Thinking back to the collision the Pawcatuck had, I believe it happened in 1968 in the Med. My refueling station was the High Line Station. As I remember we were trying to refuel the USS Saratoga CVA-60 for a number of days, but were unable due to bad weather. Then it got to the point where she needed the fuel and the weather and sea conditions were still not good. She came up along the port side and we began refueling Ops. I remember seeing a very large wave heading towards us and when our bow cut into it and the ship shuttered. It was at that point when things went wrong. The Carrier's bow turned to starboard and our collision alarm sounded. I remember looking up at the Carrier and made it to the starboard side to hold on. Our ships hit and both ships pulled away from each other and the emergency break away pelican hooks were hit with sludge hammers. The gear fell in the water and I could see a number of men in orange life jackets off the stern who had been knocked overboard. The sailors in the water were off the Carrier and they dispatched a helicopter for rescue. That evening a 1MC announcement said the sailors were rescued and I'm not sure if there was a fatality.

Do you remember the fire we had on board in Crete?

Dan Emmons SH2 66-68

---

I was on the port bridge wing as

a talker when the break-away happened. The Paw made a turn to starboard very quickly. All except the most aft fuel line was disconnected. The last one snapped, and the hydraulic tension cylinder came out of its housing. No one was hurt on the Paw.

Sal said: I believe it was the Enterprise. I know at least 1 of their men was caught and killed when the line broke. I think it cut him in half. I also remember that we lost all our mail that day, as it was about half way between both ships when we had the break away. It floated for a while, but sank before they could get it.

---

I was on the port throttle in the engine room when we collided with, I believe, the FDR, at that time of my engine room life, my fueling station was the port throttle. To the best of my fading memory we had been in position for a period of time and maintaining speed. There was a loud bang to the port side and all hell broke loose. We made numerous speed changes in a very short period. Our messenger of the watch told the Engineering Officer and the rest what had taken place. It was hours before we were relieved and went on deck. I thought that a number of guys off the FDR went in the water.

Jim Young MM3  
64-67

---

It was the FDR. Only two fell over—helo picked them up quickly. None died. A lot of life jackets went over that they had left out of the jacket box, which made it look worse than it was.

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Ralph,

I remember it to be the FDR. Below in our world, all we ever got was second-hand news. I do remember someone telling us one person on an elevator got struck by a cable that

*(Continued on page 6)*

broke. I believe they said he got cut in half, but I didn't see it. I think the only trouble we had was a gun tube got pushed in. I also thought it all happened because the FDR lost their steering.

In the summer of 1967 there was an incident with a carrier off Norfolk. The carrier got too close to us, but never hit, then when it started to open the gap, took a rather sharp turn and departed without breaking away much of anything. I think two fuel hoses

were ruptured and possibly one of the wire fuel hose support cables was lost. That was the time that the cylinder rose out of the hydraulic tensioning ram and fell on deck. No one on the Pawcatuck was hurt.

Lt Reggie Westberry was the officer of the deck. Captain Honour and I were on the bridge at the time. I was XO from Jan. through Aug. 1967, relieved by LCDR Don Hanson.

Ray Evans, LCDR, USN, Ret.

## CITIES TO CONSIDER FOR 2006 REUNION

BALTIMORE, MD  
CHATTANOOGA, TN  
MYSTIC, CT  
BILOXI, MS  
DULUTH, MN  
COLUMBUS, OH  
NASHVILLE, TN  
FREDERICKSBURG, VA

### U.S.S. PAWCATUCK AO-108 REUNION MAY 1ST TO TH 4TH 2005 REF. TRIP TO THE SHIP.

Dear Shipmates.

The last newsletter mentioned that when we have our reunion we might be able to go out and see the ship which is off of Fort Eustis, Va. We will not know if we will be able to see the ship until at least the 15th of April. At this time according to the Supt. of JRRF the ship will still be off of Fort Eustis.

I need to know those of you who are planning to come to the reunion are you planning on taking the charter boat out to the ship. I would appreciate if you would please send this letter back to me with you intentions. We will need at least 50/60 people to take the trip.

We will take cash only so we will be able to give the charter company cash. That way they will not have to take credit cards and we can go to the office and give them cash and this way will save time.

We will leave the dock from Hampton, Va. at 1100. They are not going to have a morning trip. Weather will be a factor also. So I would like you to send this back to me by April 15th here in Phoenix so we can get a feel of how many want to go. So get your reservations in by the 15th of April.

Yours,

David Willis Reunion coordinator for the USS PAWCATUCK AO-108

YOUR NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY, STATE ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
HOW MANY WILL TAKE THE TRIP \_\_\_\_\_

SEND TO:  
DAVID WILLIS  
15807 W. CIMARRON DR.  
SURPRISE, ARIZONA 85374-6153

**REMEMBER THE SHIP MIGHT NOT BE THERE.**