



"LEAKY T" News

The Newsletter of the U. S. S. Tolovana AO-64 "WE CARRY THE LOAD"



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Dedicated to the deceased and living members of
the best Fleet Oiler in the U. S. Navy.

ANOTHER SEA STORY -

I can't remember which cruise to WesPac it was (the mind fades with age). We were at sea, it was hot, and it was a Sunday. No one was doing much of anything, except sleeping or tanning on deck. I was down in the aft berthing area and I had enough seniority that I was on the upper bunk. As I swung down to the deck I suddenly found out that we were leaning over to starboard and I promptly ran into the bulkhead.

I sort of staggered up to the aft deck and walk back to the fantail, where there was a fury of activity. Lots of people hanging over the rail, looking as I soon found out at our port screw. They had pumped our fuel load over to starboard to lift the screw as far out of the water as possible. I can assure you it was still under water.

Here's the story as was told to me...We were coming out of (I believe) either Subic Bay or Hong Kong on a very pleasant smooth as silk sea and headed for Sasebo, Japan. Apparently the Tolovana came across a fishing junk that was just floating along with apparently no one on board. The Captain sent an armed boarding party to investigate. They reported back that there wasn't anyone on board or could not find any information on who it belonged to.

The Captain or XO (let's blame it on the Captain) decided that we should take this boat in tow and bring it to Japan with us, try and sell it to the locals and take the money and have a ship's party. Great idea. The boarding party in the liberty boat grabbed a 6 inch manila lines, (one of those ropes the wire woven into it) and hook up the junk.

Back on board the ship the order to get underway was given and the slack that was in the line suddnly tightened and because the juke was so small compared to the Tolovana it jerked the junk with such force that it sank. The line dropped down, got twisted around the port screw and we were not going anywhere. The attempts by some of the guys with underwater torch and only snorkel gear couldn't get the line off the screw.

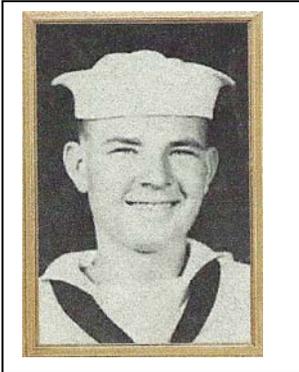
We needed to contact WesPac command of our problem, they were not happy (surprise) and we were order to go to Buckner Bay, Okinawa as they have equipment and underwater folks that can correct this problem. We limp up to Okinawa on one (1) screw and turning about 6-7 knots. I can say it was a long trip. I remember the Captain got in trouble for that deal and I believe he was relieved a short time later. It wasn't unusual on the Tolovana though, in 2 years on board we had 3 Captains.

By the way that might have ended ship's parties for awhile. I don't remember any after that incident.

Gordon Erickson
YN3, Tolovana 1960-1962

Another shipmate has attended his last roster. Keith Anno, 1945-1946, passed away 19 Feb 2011. RIP.

Another shipmate has attended his last muster.



William Thomas "Bill" Ross, Jr. passed away 7 February 2011 at Arbor Oaks Nursing Home. He was born 4 October 1938 in Malvern, AR the son of the late William and Inez (George) Ross. He served in the Navy and was an LPTN. Bill loved the outdoors and especially enjoying hunting and fishing. He

was a member of the Moose Lodge, the VFW, and was of the Baptist faith.

Survivors are his sons, William Ross of Malvern and James Rosss and wife Julie of Judsonia; daughter Darlene Schutz of Malvern; brothers James and Jerry Conklion of Malvern and Craig Ross of Bangor, ME; sister, Pat Wilson of Carlsbad, NM; step-father, J. A. Conklin of Malvern; eight grandchildren, five great grandchildren, and several nieces and nephews.

The family Bill's request that there be no service. Arrangements by Regency Funeral Home, Malvern, AR.

I just noticed in the DAV magazine the USS KASKASKIA AO-27 is holding their 2011 reunion in Nashville, TN in mid-September. This is the oiler I went to from the "T" in 1953.

Fred Boltz sent me three pictures of Crew members who attended the reunion held in Charleston, SC February 24-27, 2005. Fred got the pictures when the new Hotel owners of the reunion site didn't want them in their remodeling.

We are offering the reunion attendees, with email addresses, the opportunity to bid on the pictures to bolster the leaky T reunion Kitty. The kitty is always running short/tight. If none of you aren't interested in bidding on the pictures we will raffle them at the Long Beach reunion September 2011.

Picture # 1 is a black and white Gold framed 19" X

23" picture showing the USS Tolovana refueling the USS Yorktown in 1955. It is signed by the reunion attendees. The picture is notated on the top with: "USS TOLOVANA AO 64 FEBRUARY 24-27, 2005 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF HER COMMISSIONING" and on the bottom with: "USS TOLOVANA AO64 1955 USS YORKTOWN CVA-10 THE USS TOLOVANA REFUELLING THE USS YORKTOWN."

Picture # 2 is a 11" X 14" colored picture in a Gold frame of the attendees. This picture is not signed by the attendees. Standing in the front row is: Cecil Hensley,55-58, in his dress blues; Bob Hensley,57-60, Robert Witt, 61-63, in chief uniform. Seated in the front row left is Herman Weigold, 45-46, & Leon Schmidlap, 45-46. Seated in the front row right is: Edward Ellison, 55-57, & Larry Fogelman, 56-60. Standing in the 2nd row is: Bill Owen, 44-46, Ron Fuelner,57-59, Fred Bolz,65-69, Doug Lundell, 69-71, Bob Caudill, 69-73, and Allan Hibbert, 70-74. Standing in the 3rd row is: Joe Pryor,, 61-64, Don Travis, 51-52, and Don Elj, 69-71.

I am sorry to say that Herman Weigold, Bill Owen and Norm Cooper* are no longer with us. Norm Cooper isn't in the picture but he signed the pictures (one twice) Does anyone know ???

Picture # 3 is a 11"X14" colored picture in a Gold frame of the USS Tolovana steaming out to sea from San Diego with Point Loma in the background. The attendees signed in the white cardboard margin (i.e. signatures could be removed if desired).

When bidding please "reply all," so that everyone knows which picture(s) you are bidding on and your bid amount. Thank you, Howard Hensley RD1 1952-56

Another shipmate has attended his last muster.

This morning at 5 AM, 1 April 2011, Don LaTorra quietly and gently left for heaven. Though his health had been slipping for the past few months we all attended a wedding last Friday at which, with the help of a cane, he walked down the aisle. Thankfully, his decline this week was clear and he was still alert enough that he had a chance to say what needed to be said to everyone. His son, Kevin, and daughter, Ruth, were holding his hands as his breathing slowed and stopped. He left as peacefully as you could hope and I know he looks forward to seeing you all again. He died well. Don would have been 80 years old next Friday and we would have been married 55 years on May 5th.

We miss him but are happy for him. No more pain, or sorrow or tears or darkness. With fond memories, Lois, Kevin and Ruth.

It is with an extremely sad heart that I pass this e-mail on to you shipmates. Joe is also very sad. Joe, Laurie and I visited with Don and Lois. Joe did not know that Don was a Lt. Cmdr in Supply Corps on retirement. Don spent 8 years, maybe all on the T, and left the Navy. Before 90 days were up he had reenlisted and the rest became history, Joe and Don sat with arms around each other the entire three hour visit on one side of the table telling stories that I had never heard. We were all in stitches when one or the other would come up with something that happened in the Supply Office. When the first class SK moved onto shore duty Joe was the lead honcho and promoted to SK1. I remember Joe writing home how bad the Supply Office was when he arrived on board and how much he and the crew were doing to get things righted. When we left the restaurant Joe hated to part with Don's hand, that I can remember. We will certainly miss the e-mails. God Bless. I am asking Dave to pass this along to other shipmates. Alice

Man oh man! Just in the past week or so I have received notices of several shipmates and at least four members of our Council and Church and one family member (youngest son's father-in-law) passing away. Sort of gets you to thinking, doesn't it?

It doesn't balance it out, but I have received a notice that my youngest niece is getting married again. The kicker here is that he is a circuit judge in about nine Mississippi counties and is a MajGen in the MS Natl. Guard. Now, when I enter the room I want everyone to come to ramrod attention. My brother (who is pickier than me) says he is a very nice guy and his daughter is lucky to get him.

The following sent in by Cris Criscola, BM2c, 1964-66: For those who don't know the term, Westpac is a Western Pacific Cruise on a United States ship to the Philippines, Japan, Hong Kong and points way out there. I don't think a fun cruise to the Hawaiian islands and back qualifies.

As the shipmate who sent this to me said, "Never been to any, but, I did hear folks talking about them."

Our favorite liberty bars were unlike no other watering holes or dens of iniquity inhabited by seagoing men. They had to meet strict standards to be in compliance with the acceptable requirement for a sailor's "beer-swilling" place ashore.

The first and foremost requirement was a crusty old gal serving suds. She had to be able to wrestle King Kong to parade rest. Be able to balance a tray with one hand, knock sailors out of the way with the other hand and skillfully navigate through a roomful of

milling around drunks. On slow nights, she had to be the kind of gal who would give you a back scratch or put her foot on the table so you could admire her new ankle bracelet some "mook" brought her back from a Hong Kong liberty. A good barmaid had to be able to whisper sweet nothings in your young sailor ear like, "I love you no s..., you buy me Honda??."

"Buy a pack of Clorets and chew up the whole thing before you get within heaving range of any gal you ever want to see again." And, from the crusty old gal behind the bar "Hey animals, I know we have a crowd tonight, but if any of you guys find the head facilities fully occupied and start p...ing down the floor drain, you're gonna find yourself scrubbing the deck with your white hats!"

The barmaids had to be able to admire great tattoos, look at pictures of ugly bucktooth kids and smile. Be able to help haul drunks to cabs and comfort 19 year-olds who had lost someone he thought loved him in a dark corner booth. They could look at your ship's identification shoulder tab and tell you the names of the Skippers back to the time you were a Cub Scout. If you came in after a late night maintenance problem and fell asleep with a half eaten Slim-Jim in your hand, they tucked your peacoat around you, put out the cigarette you left burning in the ashtray and replaced the warm draft you left sitting on the table with a cold one when you woke up. Why? Simply because they were one of the few people on the face of the earth that knew what you did, and appreciated what you were doing. And if you treated them like a decent human being and didn't drive 'em nuts by playing songs they hated on the juke box, they would lean over the back of the booth and park their soft warm tits on your neck when they sat two San Miguel beers in front of you.

And the Imported table wipe down guy and glass washer, trash dumper, deck swabber and paper towel replacer; the guy had to have baggy tweed pants and a gold tooth and a grin like a 1950 Buick.. And a name like "Ramon", "Juan", "Pedro" or "Tico". He had to smoke unfiltered Luckies, Camels or Raleighs. He wiped the tables down with a sour wash rag that smelled like a billy goat's crotch and always said, "How are choo navee mans tonight?" He was the indispensable man. The guy with credentials that allowed him to borrow Slim-Jims, Beer Nuts and pickled hard boiled eggs from other beer joints when they ran out where he worked.

The establishment itself; the place had to have walls covered with ship and squadron plaques. The walls were adorned with enlarged unit patches and the dates of previous deployments. A dozen or more old, yellowed photographs of fellows named

"Buster", "Chicago", "P-Boat Barney", "Flaming Hooker Harry", "Malone", "Honshu Harry", "Jackson", "Douche Bag Doug", and "Capt Slade Cutter" decorated any unused space. It had to have the obligatory Michelob, Pabst Blue Ribbon and "Beer Nuts sold here" neon signs. An eight-ball mystery beer tap handle and signs reading: "your mother does not work here, so clean away your frickin' trash." "Keep your hands off the barmaid." "Don't throw butts in urinal." "Barmaid's word is final in settling bets." "Take your fights out in the alley behind the bar!" "Owner reserves the right to waltz your worthless sorry ass outside." "Shipmates are responsible for riding herd on their ship/squadron drunks."

This was typical signage found in any good liberty bar.

You had to have a juke box built along the lines of a Sherman tank loaded with Hank Williams, Mother Maybelle Carter, Johnny Horton, Johnny Cash and twenty other crooning goobers nobody ever heard of. The damn thing had to have "La Bamba", Herb Alpert's "Lonely Bull" and Johnny Cash's "Don't Take Your Guns to Town". The furniture in a real good liberty bar had to be made from coal mine shoring lumber and was not fully acceptable until it had 600 cigarette burns and your ship's numbers or "F**k the Navy" carved into it. The bar had to have a brass foot rail and at least six Slim-Jim containers, an oversized glass cookie jar full of Beer-Nuts, a jar of pickled hard boiled eggs that could produce rectal gas emissions that could shut down a sorority party, and big glass containers full of something called Pickled Pigs Feet and Polish Sausage. Only drunk, Chiefs, and starving Ethiopians ate pickled pigs feet and unless the last three feet of your colon had been manufactured by Midas, you didn't want to get anywhere near the Polish Napalm Dogs.

No liberty bar was complete without a couple of hundred faded ship or airplane pictures and a "Shut the hell up!" sign taped on the mirror behind the bar along with several rather tasteless naked lady pictures. The pool table felt had to have at least three strategic rips as a result of drunken competitors and balls that looked as if a gorilla baby had teethed on the sonuvabitches.

Liberty bars were home and it didn't matter what country, state, or city you were in, when you walked into a good liberty bar, you felt at home. These were also establishments where 19 year-old kids received an education available nowhere else on earth. You learned how to "tell" and "listen" to sea stories. You learned about sex at \$10.00 a pop! -- from professional ladies who taught you things your high

school biology teacher didn't know were anatomically possible. You learned how to make a two cushion bank shot and how to toss down a beer and shot of Suntori known as a "depth charge."

We were young, and a helluva long way from home. We were pulling down crappy wages for twenty-four hours a day, seven days a-week availability and loving the life we lived. We didn't know it at the time, but our association with the men we served with forged us into the men we became. And a lot of that association took place in bars where we shared the stories accumulated in our, up to then, short lives. We learned about women and that life could be tough on a gal. While many of our classmates were attending college, we were getting an education slicing through the green rolling seas in WestPac, experiencing the orgasmic rush of a night cat shot, the heart pounding drama of the return to the ship with the gut wrenching arrestment to a pitching deck. The hours of tedium, boring holes in the sky late at night, experiencing the periodic discomfort of turbulence, marveling at the creation of St. Elmo's Fire, and sometimes having our reverie interrupted with stark terror. But when we came ashore on liberty, we could rub shoulders with some of the finest men we would ever know, in bars our mothers would never have approved of, in saloons and cabarets that would live in our memories forever.

Long live those liberties in WestPac and in the Med! They were the greatest teachers about life and how to live it.

"Golly gee fellas, that sure sounds like fun. Wish I could have been there. Sounds like stories BMs and GMs told to new Coxswains."

Skip Moore, F Div, 1951-1953
anchorman1@bellsouth.net